

# MUTE WITNESS



Robert L. Fish

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**ROBERT L. FISH**

sadly enough, also sufficient to distinguish him from almost everyone else in the novel.

The relentlessness of Clancy's work and the endlessness of his days and nights are emphasized by the chapter breaks, which always keep track of the exact date and time during his round-the-clock work. Clancy is exhausted, and Fish periodically informs us of the scant hours of sleep his protagonist is catching. But no one can be trusted to anything adequately or honestly, so Clancy has little choice.

Although his orders are just to guard the marked man Rossi, Clancy, impelled by something more than his fears of losing his job, begins to investigate the questions he is not supposed to ask, let alone answer. He is over his head and working beyond the scope of his duty, but in Fish's world, it is growing alarmingly unclear what his duty even is and to whom he owes it.

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*This Book Is for  
My Parents  
And for Ruth and Harold*

her eyes from the necktie to glance behind her, as if to pretend concealment of some inner smile of triumph. "I hope you like it there, Lieutenant."

"I like it fine," Clancy said evenly, and stared over her head to the massive inner door that led to the Assistant District Attorney's sanctum. His eyes came back to the faintly gloating secretary. "Is Mr. Chalmers apt to be busy very long?"

"I'll tell him you're here."

She swung her heavy body about almost coyly, squeezing her large bust past the typewriter; her finger found and pressed a button. There was a harsh rasping answer from the intercom, and then the tone clarified.

"Yes?"

"Lieutenant Clancy is here, Mr. Chalmers."

"Clancy? Oh." There was a moment's pause. "Well, tell him to wait."

The words were clearly audible to the tired man in the faded blue suit. He twisted his hat in his hands, his thin face unrevealing, and turned towards the leather-upholstered sofa that served as a waiting bench against one wall. There was another squawk and the intercom suddenly spoke again.

"Mrs. Green." There was a moment's hesitation, as if the author of the unseen voice wasn't quite sure. "On second thought we might as well get it over with. Send the Lieutenant in."

Clancy moved from the upholstered sofa with its promise of restful comfort, going to the inner door, conscious of the slightly sardonic smile on the fat face of the secretary. He pushed his way through and closed the door behind him,

“We’ll do it quietly.” Clancy fitted his hat squarely on his head. His dark eyes were completely expressionless. “And we’ll deliver him on time. And in one piece.”

He turned to the door. The Assistant District Attorney’s voice was ice behind him.

“Deliver him alive,” Chalmers said.

Clancy bit back the first words that rose to his lips.

“Yeah,” he finally said, and pulled the heavy door closed behind him. He tramped in silent fury across the large outer office; the busty secretary leaned over her typewriter, pressing against it, smiling; her teeth were large and white.

“Good-by Lieutenant.”

Those teeth, Clancy thought with savage disgust as he pushed his way through the door to the corridor. Like you and your smile and your boss Mr. Chalmers. And probably your chest. White, bright, and false ...

### **Friday — 10:15 A.M.**

Detectives Kaproski and Stanton sat listening to their instructions in the dingy room in the 52nd Precinct that served Lieutenant Clancy as an office. The difference between this office and that of the Assistant District Attorney in the Criminal Courts Building was impressive; here worn and stained linoleum rippled unevenly over the warped floor rather than the rich, deep carpeting that Clancy had experienced an hour before. A small battered desk that had served Clancy’s predecessor as well as several before him, took the place of the broad polished mahogany desk that graced Mr. Chalmers’s office. The tiny room had bare walls and hard wooden chairs; together with the scratched and battered filing cabinets they crowded the

little office. And the view gave, not on the East River with its magnificent bridges and colorful, jaunty boats cutting white check-marks across the blue surface, but on a clothesline bent across a narrow air-shaft and sagging dispiritedly under a load of limp underwear and patched overalls.

Clancy swung back from his contemplation of the window scene.

“That’s the story,” he said quietly. “In the room with him, twelve hours each, on and off.” His finger picked up a pencil and he began to twiddle it. “It’s only until next Tuesday.”

“Sounds peachy,” Stanton said. “Where’s the Farnsworth?”

“Over on 93rd, near the river. A small residential hotel. Probably like all of them over there.”

“I never heard of it,” Stanton said.

“I wouldn’t be surprised that’s why he picked it out,” Clancy said. He stared at Stanton quietly. “Do you suppose there’s any possibility he picked it out for the reason that nobody ever heard of it?”

“Maybe,” Stanton said, and grinned.

“Johnny Rossi,” Kaproski said musingly. He teetered his chair back against one of the filing cabinets and slowly eased his weight back. “That’s something, ain’t it? That’s really something. We got to be watchdogs for a no-good hood like that.”

“Yeah, it’s something,” Clancy said. If he felt any reaction at hearing his own sentiments repeated, he did not show it. “Anyway, that’s the job. Whether we like it or not.”

“I’ll tell you somebody ain’t going to like it,” Kaproski said sagely. “That’s his big brother Pete. And the mob the two work for.”

“Lots of people aren’t going to like it,” Clancy said philosophically. “On the other hand, lots of people are.”

“Well,” Kaproski said thoughtfully, “when and if he spills — which I still ain’t convinced he’s going to do — the coppers out on the coast ought to be busy a year just picking up the pieces.”

“As long as they aren’t his pieces until after he tells his story,” Clancy said, “I couldn’t care less.”

“You know,” Stanton said in a puzzled tone, “I don’t get it. Johnny Rossi ...”

“Don’t get what?” Kaproski asked, turning his head carefully so as not to disturb his equilibrium. “Why he’s blowing the whistle?”

“Not that. Though I’m damned if I get that either. What I don’t get,” Stanton said, “is that you’d think a hood like that could arrange bodyguards for himself from here to South Chigary. What’s he need us for?”

“Bodyguards in that outfit work for the Syndicate like everyone else,” Clancy said flatly. “They’re day-workers, with all the loyalty of an alligator. One whisper that he was going to peep and his bodyguards would be the first to cut him down.”

“Yeah, but ...”

“I know.” Clancy sighed and ran his hand through his hair. “The whole deal is screwy. Well, that’s not our worry. Our job is simply to see that he’s healthy enough to go up before the Crime Commission next Tuesday. Under his own power.”



rose with them. The fourth floor was deserted when they gratefully emerged; they closed the elevator door behind them and walked down the worn carpeted hall.

One turn in the narrow corridor and they faced Room 456. Clancy tapped.

There was a hesitant shuffling sound from behind the door. A throat was audibly cleared. "Who ... who's there?"

"The name is Clancy ..."

There was the sound of a chain sliding back; the door edged open and an eye surveyed them cautiously. The door swung open; the man in the opening glanced quickly up and down the deserted hallway and then stepped aside to allow the two detectives to enter. He closed the door behind them, fumbled a bit as he tried to slip the chain into place once again, and then finally managed it. He turned a bit nervously to face the two men; his hand wiped itself against his thigh and was then stretched out in greeting.

"Hi, Lieutenant. Mr. Chalmers said you'd be here."

Clancy pointedly ignored the outstretched hand, measuring the famous figure with cold eyes. He saw a stocky, well-built man in his late thirties, with black curly hair, a high smooth forehead; a pencil mustache covered the sensual full upper lip. Large, almost liquid eyes peered at him from beneath eyebrows that had obviously been recently trimmed. He was wearing a loud, expensive dressing gown over light brown Italian silk trousers and a white silk shirt, open at the throat. Not quite the same picture as the mugshots in the police folder down at Centre Street — the advantages of money and good grooming since the early days, Clancy thought. The large eyes began to narrow at the continued snub; the outstretched hand fell.

“I’ve got a good cover for your man,” the stocky man said. His voice seemed to indicate a willingness to assume a part of the responsibility. “If anybody asks, I can say he’s my cousin from the coast ...”

“Very bright,” Clancy said with disgust “That certainly ought to fool your brother. And the rest of that west-coast mob that have known you all your life.” He shook his head, “Look, Randall; don’t complicate simple things. Nobody is going to find you. And if they do, leave everything to Stanton here. That’s what he’s here for.”

The broad smooth forehead wrinkled. “Look, Lieutenant ...”

“And don’t leave the room,” Clancy added coldly. “For any reason whatsoever.”

“Don’t leave the room?”

Clancy looked over at Stanton. The large detective nodded. “He won’t leave the room, Lieutenant.” He cleared his throat. “What do you do for food in this joint?”

Randall’s frown deepened at this interruption. He swung around impatiently. “The bellboy goes down to some restaurant over on Broadway. You can get anything you want.” He turned back to Clancy. “Look, Lieutenant ...”

Clancy stared at him. “Well?”

The stocky man searched for words. “This deal is worth dough. I don’t see where anything can go wrong ...” He hesitated as if in admission that he could easily see where many things could go wrong. He wet his lips. “Well, anyway, there’s dough in this. And I’m no hog.”

He looked at Clancy significantly.

“Save your money,” Clancy said dryly. “Buy cemetery lots. I hear they’re a good investment.”



## Chapter Two

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### Saturday — 2:40 A.M.

The shrill insistent ringing of the telephone finally wormed its way through Clancy's heavy sleep, dragging him reluctantly back from a wonderful dream world where there was no crime and therefore — beautiful thought — no police department. He lay there a moment, trying to awaken, and then rolled over, groping for the bed-lamp. His fingers found it and flicked it on; the ringing continued stridently. His blurred eyes found the clock on the night-stand and he could have wept with frustration. Less than three hours since he'd finally managed to get to bed and already some miserable bastard was calling to disturb him! His hand went out, picking up the telephone, jamming it against one ear.

"Yes? Hello?"

"Hello, Lieutenant? This is Kaproski ..."

Premonition swept the man in bed. He sat up, swinging his feet over the side, cringing a bit at the dampness of the bare floor. His hand clutched the receiver tighter; he shook his head violently, trying to clear the remnants of sleep from his brain. The whisper of traffic came up softly from the deserted street below.

"What's the trouble?"

“I don’t know.” The large detective calling from the hotel room sounded more puzzled than worried. “He’s sick, I guess. Rossi, I mean. He’s moaning and groaning and hanging onto his belly like he was afraid somebody was going to try to take it away from him.”

“When did that start?”

“Just a little while ago. He was all right before.”

“Does he have a fever?”

“Naw. He doesn’t seem to. From the racket he’s making you’d think he ought to be hotter than a Mexican phone-booth, but he ain’t. I felt him; he feels O.K..”

“What did he eat?”

“It couldn’t be that, Lieutenant. We both ate the same thing. As a matter of fact he wasn’t too hungry and I finished up what he left over. And I’m all right.”

Clancy was tempted to ask if it had been *pâté de foie gras* but didn’t. The thought, however, inspired another. “Did he have anything to drink?”

“He sent down for a bottle, but all he had was one shot ...” There was an embarrassed pause, and then Kaproski continued bravely, “... it couldn’t have been that, either, Lieutenant.”

Clancy disregarded the implied confession. He clutched the telephone, thinking. Kaproski cleared his throat, breaking into the silence.

“Lieutenant, he wanted to go out and see a doctor ...”

“At almost three o’clock in the morning?” Clancy stared at the telephone in disbelief.

“That’s right, but I shut him up and called you instead.”

Kaproski without speaking, running to the front of the ambulance. He thrust his face toward the driver.

“What ...?”

The driver was already shirting gears anxiously. “Look, mister, no time for talk now if we want to save this guy’s life ...”

His voice trailed off; the ambulance was already in motion. Clancy was forced to jump aside. He watched it careen away and then turned to find Kaproski at his side.

“All right, Kaproski.” Lieutenant Clancy’s eyes were black with suppressed fury; his voice was edged. “I thought I told you to wait until I found a doctor and got over here. Since when don’t you pay any attention to what I tell you?”

Kaproski’s voice was high. “You don’t understand, Lieutenant ...”

“You’re damned right I don’t understand! All I understand is that you didn’t obey your orders. And why aren’t you in that ambulance with him? You weren’t supposed to let him get out of your sight. You were supposed to be guarding him!”

Kaproski swallowed nervously. “Jeez, Lieutenant, let me talk, will you? I had to wait for you. I had to tell you what happened.”

“All right,” Clancy said harshly, his eyes boring mercilessly into Kaproski’s. “Tell me. But make it quick.”

Kaproski looked unhappy. “Well, about five — six minutes after I got through talking to you, this Rossi character really starts moaning and grabbing his belly, so I figured I’d better get hold of a bellhop with some ice cubes. You know, to put on his gut just in case. So I calls downstairs. Well, when somebody comes knocking on the door a couple of minutes

“Well, Jeez, Lieutenant; nobody was supposed to know he was here ...”

“Only somebody did know!”

He stamped up to the small desk in the lobby; the night clerk, a young boy with pimpled face and a uniform much too big for him, hurried over from the windows where he had been watching the excitement in the street. Clancy picked up the desk phone with a jerk, waving the youth towards the PX board in the corner.

“Let’s have a line.”

The clerk sat down hurriedly, rumbling with cords. Clancy dialed and then waited, his jaw clenched.

“Hello? Fifty-second Precinct ...”

“Sergeant? This is Lieutenant Clancy. Are any of the boys around? What? None of them? Well, pick a patrolman, then; one who’s wide-awake. Who? Barnett? Well, all right. Get him over to the Uptown Private Hospital on the double. No; I’ll meet him in the lobby. I’ll tell him when I see him. We’ll fill in the blotter in the morning. That’s right. And tell him not to drag his feet. I’ll be waiting.”

He hung up, turned from the desk, and then turned back. His eyes were cold on the young desk clerk listening from his corner with open mouth. “You. This is police business. Anything you heard here tonight, keep to yourself. Don’t talk to anybody. Do you understand?”

The desk clerk nodded wordlessly, his eyes big.

“Good.” Clancy turned and walked out of the hotel, Kaproski tagging along. Doc Freeman was still waiting at the curb, his bag in hand. His eyebrows raised as Clancy came down the two steps to the street level and started towards his car.

Clancy's lip curled savagely. "Not as rough as Chalmers is going to be on me when he finds out about this."

"After all," Doc said reasonably, "Kap only did what most anyone else would have done. It was just one of those tough —" He paused. "Did you say Chalmers?"

"That's what I said."

"Did he give you this watchdog job?"

"Oh, I got it officially enough," Clancy said. "Sam Wise called me — he's home sick in bed — but Chalmers is the one who arranged it."

"Oh." Like everyone else on the police force, Doc Freeman was familiar with the history of Clancy's transfer to the 52nd. "That's too bad. Chalmers isn't the most reasonable person in the world. He'll do everything in his power to make you look bad over this."

Clancy stared at the road before him. "I look bad enough without his help." He glanced up, a faint smile crossing his lips. "Don't let it worry you, Doc. The worst they can do is bust me, and right now a desk Sergeant's job looks pretty good. At least I'd get to sleep nights."

Doc Freeman reached into a pocket and came up with a cigarette; he leaned over to press the cigarette-lighter on the instrument panel. Clancy dug out a pad of matches and handed them over.

"That doesn't work." He shook his head, his smile disappearing, his jaw tightening. "Christ! Some days nothing works!"

Doc Freeman lit his cigarette and looked at the hard face of the man driving the car.

“Cathy? You say somebody wanted to see me?” His tone indicated clearly that he would much prefer to clean up and rest rather than engage in conversation at that hour.

Chalmers was on his feet in an instant. He hurried over, interposing himself between the young doctor and the paper-strewn desk. “Are you Dr. Willard?”

“That’s right.”

“I’m Assistant District Attorney Chalmers, and this is Lieutenant Clancy of the 52nd Precinct. How’s that gunshot wound doing? The one that you’ve been working on?”

The doctor turned to the nurse with a veiled question in his eyes; she nodded slightly and then looked down at her desk, hiding her face. The young intern’s eyes came back to the two men facing him; his eyebrows raised slightly.

“As well as could be expected. He caught a lot of shot in his chest and neck; some of it in his face.”

“Is he going to live?”

The young doctor hesitated. “I hope so.”

“You hope so?” Chalmers snorted. “Well, let me tell you this, mister; he’d better live! You’d better see to it that he does! Do you know who that man is you’ve been operating on? He’s Johnny Rossi —”

Clancy caught his breath and then looked ceilingwards in disgust. Good God! This man ought to be used during newspaper strikes — he’d get the word around. Secrecy! The young doctor blanched.

“Johnny Rossi? You mean the gangster?”

“That’s right! And he happens to be a very important witness for me. He happens to be — oh hell! It’s got nothing



to do with you. I want a decent doctor to look at him. And I want him transferred to a decent hospital ...”

The young intern’s face tightened at these insults. He swallowed, holding his temper. “He can’t be moved yet. If you want another doctor to look at him, that’s your privilege. But he can’t be moved at this moment; he’s still under anesthesia.”

“Then I’ll have someone here in the morning!” Chalmers turned around to face Clancy. “And I want a man at his door every minute until we can get him out of here.”

Clancy faced him quietly. “There’s a man with him now; one of my men. Hell stay right there.”

Chalmers jammed his hat viciously onto his head. “Well, I suppose that’s something, anyway. Even though it’s a bit like locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen.”

Clancy started to retort and then kept quiet. Chalmers moved to the lobby doors, pausing with his hand on the glass.

“I’ll see to it that a reliable doctor is here in the morning. I don’t have to tell you people how important this is.” The pale eyes sought out the young intern. “By the way, what’s your full name?”

The young doctor whitened. “William Willard.”

Chalmers nodded. “I’ll remember it. I’m holding you responsible for that man’s life. I have a certain influence in this town, Doctor. Poor medical practice in this county can be fatal to more than the patient. Don’t forget that!”

He pushed through the door, disappearing into the night. The intern turned to Clancy, his face flushed, his eyes blinking.

the crowded intersection. “I just want to stop in and check at the hospital a minute. Then we’re going over to the Farnsworth Hotel and put the manager through the wringer.”

He glanced over at the big detective beside him. “Did you find anything last night?”

Kaproski shook his head. “Not a thing. I sealed the room; then I went through all the linen closets and broom closets and out in the service areas and down in the basement; I even checked out all the junk they got in that stinky elevator out in back. Nothing.”

“How about the other guests?”

“Nobody new checked in within a week. Hell, half the hotel is empty; the other half, they been living here since the year one.”

“Did you see the manager?”

“Sure.” Kaproski seemed a bit uncomfortable. “Lieutenant — I don’t think he had anything to do with it.”

“No?” Clancy glanced at him curiously. “If Chalmers is telling the truth, the hotel manager is the only one who could have seen and recognized him. And I don’t think Chalmers is lying. His trouble isn’t stupidity — you don’t get to his job in the D.A.’s office by being stupid — his trouble is ambition. And the manager is also the only one who could have known the room number. What makes you think he’s clean?”

Kaproski stared out of the window. “You got to see him in person to know what I mean.”

“Well,” Clancy said. “we’ll see him in a few minutes.”

He pulled up before the hospital, forced to double-park, and turned off the ignition. He stared at the solid row of cars

parked on both sides of the street as far as the eye could see.

“A NO PARKING sign sure seems to impress the people in these swank neighborhoods,” he said with disgust. “You stay with the car; if somebody pulls out, you park it. I’ll be back in a minute. I just want to check on Rossi and see how he’s doing.”

“Sure, Lieutenant.” Kaposki slid over behind the wheel.

Clancy moved from the car with a shake of his head and walked into the hospital lobby. He came across the tile floor, advancing on the desk. The same pretty nurse was on duty; Clancy’s eyebrows raised.

“Hello, nurse. What do you do — work twenty-four hours?”

“Good morning. Lieutenant. No; I’m on from midnight until eight in the morning.” She smiled at him sympathetically. “It’s been less than four hours since — since you were here last night, you know.”

Clancy grinned, running his hand over his face.

“I lose track of time,” he said. He walked to the small elevator and then paused. “That young intern — doctor, that is. Willard. Is he still on duty, too?”

“Yes, he is. The doctors’ offices are on the fifth floor. Do you want me to call him?”

“No, that’s all right. I’ll see him after I check on our boy. What room did they put him in, do you know?”

She nodded. “Six-fourteen.”

He got in the elevator, smiling his thanks, pushed a button, and rose smoothly to the sixth floor. The doors of the elevator opened automatically; he stepped out, walked down the bright corridor and turned a corner. Barnett was

stared at the head on the pillow; then his face darkened and he swiftly laid a pair of fingers across the thick, open lips. He froze. Oh Jesus! he thought. Oh Christ!

In an instant he was at the window, tugging the cord that opened the blinds. Light flooded the room. He returned to the bed, studying the sheets bunched unevenly over the body there; he flicked them back with a muttered curse. Bright sunlight lit the room, revealing a kitchen knife sticking from the chest of the twisted body. The light touched the copper rivets that held the wooden handle; glinted from the small amount of blade between the handle and the body. With an oath Clancy went to the door, swinging it wide.

“Barnett!”

“Yes, Lieutenant?” The chair in the hallway came down with a thump; Barnett stuck his head in at the door. The sight of the body on the bed brought him further into the room. His eyes widened, fastening on the knife in astonishment. “Who ...?”

Clancy swung the door shut savagely. “That’s right! Who? Who came into this room?”

“Nobody, Lieutenant! I swear it! Nobody!”

Clancy stamped to the windows, glared at the curved latch still locked in place. He came back to the bed, forcing his voice lower. “Barnett,” he said quietly, dangerously. “What did you do? Go out for coffee?”

“Honest to God, Lieutenant!” The big patrolman’s face was ashen. “I swear it! On my mother’s grave! I didn’t move from here from the time they wheeled him in. Not even to go to the John!”

“Hello, Lieutenant. You’re up early. Want some coffee?” His hand went out tentatively to a thermos on the desk.

“No, thanks.” Clancy stared about the office. His eyes, expressionless, came back to the intern’s face. “How’s our patient?”

“All right. Pretty good, as a matter of fact. The last time I looked in on him he was coming along fine. His pulse and respiration were all that you could expect.”

“And how long ago was that?”

The young doctor glanced at his wrist-watch. “Oh, about an hour or so ago, I’d say.” He took another sip of coffee, and then looked up. “Want to go up and take a look at him?”

“If you don’t mind.”

“Not at all.” The young doctor finished his coffee, set the cup down on his desk, and swung his feet to the floor. He dug a stethoscope from a drawer, slung it around his neck, and got to his feet. “He’s coming along all right, especially considering the shape he was in, but between you and me, I’ll be happy when they take him someplace else.”

Clancy didn’t answer. He led the doctor down the deserted corridor; they mounted the steps side by side, the young intern silent in his rubber-soled shoes. At the top of the steps they turned in the direction of Room 614; as they came around the corner leading to the room the doctor’s eyebrows went up.

“Where’s the guard?”

“Inside the room.”

Dr. Willard stared at the man beside him with an odd expression; he increased his stride, pushing through the door with Clancy immediately behind him. He caught his

breath audibly at the sight that greeted him, and then hurried forward, staring down. His fingers automatically reached for and lifted an eyelid; he released it and felt for the wrist. He dropped the flaccid arm and started to reach for the knife; then his hand stopped and wiped itself against his white trouser leg.

“He’s dead ...”

“That’s right.

“But he was doing so well. He was ...” His eyes were fixed on the knife-handle, his mouth slightly open.

“Yeah.” Clancy reached down, drawing the sheet back over the knife, carrying it on up until it also covered the tortured face. He stepped back, unconsciously wiping his fingertips together. “How many doctors are there in the hospital?”

“Doctors? How many —?” The eyes of the young intern finally came away from the knife; they showed surprise at the question.

“That’s right. Don’t worry about my questions and don’t try to analyze them. Just answer them.”

Willard nodded blankly. “There are six doctors listed as being on the staff. I’m the only intern; the only one on night duty, too, as far as that goes. You see, this is more a nursing home, rather than a regular hospital ...”

“I know.” Clancy was impatient. “If I hear it once more I’ll scream. How about nurses?”

Willard stared at him. “What about them?”

“*How many?*”

“Oh! I don’t know. Eight or nine on nights, I guess. I can find out if it’s important.”

“It’s not important.” Clancy looked over at the patrolman standing silent and guilty to one side. “Barnett — go downstairs and get Kaposki. He’s in my car, either in front of the hospital or parked someplace near. Bring him up to the fifth floor where the doctors’ office are.” He turned. “Come on, Doctor. We’re going to have a little meeting downstairs.” He stared at the door. “Can these rooms be locked?”

The young intern reached into his pocket, dragging out a bunch of keys, selecting one. “They can be, yes, but —”  
“Let me have the right one.”

Clancy waited as the doctor fumbled the proper key free from the ring. He took it from the nerveless band, led the way outside, locked the door, and slipped the key into his pocket. Barnett silently took the elevator as the other two walked to the steps and descended. Inside the small office Clancy stared about as the young intern fell into a chair. Then he seated himself on a corner of a desk, his face screwed up in deep thought. The two men waited in silence; quick footsteps finally sounded in the hallway and the door burst open to admit Barnett and an excited Kaposki.

“Jeez, Lieutenant! Barnett tells me ...”

Clancy held off the other’s outburst with a raised hand.  
“Yeah.”

“Holy Mac, Lieutenant; what will Chalmers say?”

“Forget Chalmers.” The lean Lieutenant stared at the other three men somberly. Weariness washed over him; he forced his mind to concentrate on their problem. “Sometime less than an hour ago somebody dressed in a doctor’s outfit went into that room and knocked off our boy. With an

time to look for a killer.” He paused, and then added, “And that’s what I’m interested in.”

Kaproski shook his head solemnly. “Jeez, Lieutenant! You’re sticking your neck out a mile.”

Clancy looked over in his direction calmly. His mind was made up. “It’s my neck, And you tell me how it could possibly be further out than it already is right now.”

The doctor was still frowning sullenly. “I don’t like it ...”

Clancy turned back to him. “Look, Doctor; I’ll take the full responsibility if anything goes sour. And I might mention that this is the only way to keep you and the hospital out of trouble. You don’t know Chalmers.” He paused and then shrugged. “You heard him. He holds you responsible for Rossi. If he steps in now it’s going to be rough on everybody. This boy can be vindictive ...”

“And it’s just for twenty-four hours?”

“That’s all. At the most. I’ll be lucky if I can keep him off my neck that long. And if the roof falls in, I promise you I’ll see to it that you stay in the clear.”

“Well, all right.” The young intern didn’t sound very happy. “I just hope you know what you’re doing, Lieutenant.”

Clancy grinned the beaten grin of at least partial triumph. “That’s two of us. Doctor.”

“Three,” Kaproski said.

Clancy’s eyes surveyed the tall, heavy detective speculatively. “Are you with me, Kap?”

“I’m with you, Lieutenant. Hell, this is mostly my fault, I guess. If I’d been sharper in the Farnsworth none of this



cup, staring into its murky depths as if the answer to some great secret was imbedded in the coffee grounds at the bottom. "So my pigeon is dead ..."

"Your pigeon?" Clancy cocked an eye at him.

"Yeah. I was into him for sixty bucks and change at gin. On the cuff; or at least we were going to settle up before Tuesday." Stanton drank his coffee and set the cup down bitterly, trying not to slam it. "I should have known it was too good to be true!"

Clancy shook his head sadly. "We all have our troubles," he said sarcastically.

"Yeah." Stanton dismissed his ill-fortune with a philosophic shrug. He turned his head. "Do you have any ideas on this thing, Lieutenant?"

"None that are very clear." Clancy frowned. "Whoever blasted him at the hotel could have known they missed and that they took him to the hospital. If they stuck around, that is. And they could have known the name of the hospital from the ambulance. The thing is, who knew he was in the hotel? Only the manager." He looked at the other thoughtfully. "Were there any phone calls yesterday?"

"Not while I was there. Neither in or out."

Clancy shrugged. He finished his coffee, snubbed out his cigarette in the dregs of his drink, and pushed himself to his feet "Well, let's get over to the hotel and get this thing rolling."

They came out of the coffee-shop, each immersed in his own thoughts, and turned down 93rd Street, walking quickly along the noisy sidewalk, anxious to get on with the job. The light at the corner of West End Avenue held them up

over that room again. One of my men, Kaproski, had it sealed last night.”

“Oh, yes, I remember him. I met him.” The blue eyes smiled at them. “He seemed to be a very pleasant man.”

“He’s a doll,” Stanton said. “Let’s go, Lieutenant.”

“Just a moment.” Clancy turned back to the white-haired man. “How about any phone calls? Either to or from Room 456?”

“I was just checking the night slips when you came in,” the old man said helpfully. He hobbled over to a small table set beside the rocking chair and came back with a thin pad. He began leafing through it. “456 ... Yes. There were two ...”

“Two?” Clancy reached out, taking the pad from the gnarled fingers. “Murray Hill 7 — hell, that’s mine. And this other one is the Uptown Private Hospital ...” He tossed the pad down on the desk again. “These were the only calls from 456 yesterday?”

The old man retrieved the pad, automatically smoothing the sheets with his crooked hands. He nodded seriously.

“Those were the only ones last night. The boy on the desk at night is pretty good. There was another one yesterday, in the morning, when I was here. That was just a few minutes after Mr. Randall — or Mr. Rossi — checked in.”

Clancy’s eyes lit up. “Do you have a record of that number?”

“I should have.” The old man wrinkled his forehead in thought; he hobbled back to the small table and fumbled in a drawer. Several similar pads came to light; he stared at them closely, discarded all but one, and came back to the counter, leafing through it. His fingers stopped; he nodded.

“Here it is. University 6-7887.”

tiny brush, stuffed it back into one of the bottles, twisted it, and leaned back. "There we are. How do you like it?"

She held her hand out at arm's length to study it, and then reversed it for Clancy's inspection. "You know they call this stuff Sun-Bay Tinge! What a name! I'd call it Tuchus Pink myself." Now that her hands were free she pulled her dressing gown closed over her full bust and frowned at him. "You're late, Pop."

Not a muscle moved on Clancy's face. "What I always say is, better late than never."

She laughed. "Is that what you always say? I always say, a penny saved is a penny earned, and for want of a nail a kingdom was lost." She leaned back, inspecting her fingernails again in a pleased manner. "One thing I never say is, money is the root of all evil." Her eyes came up; Clancy noted that they were a sort of violet. A very beautiful girl, he decided, and far from stupid. "Well, Pop, I'd love to sit here and trade proverbs with you all morning, but time's awasting. Did you bring the tickets?"

Clancy maintained his poker face. His hand tapped his inside jacket pocket. The girl nodded, pleased.

"Good. Tell me, Pop, have you ever been to Europe yourself?"

"Twice," Clancy said. He sat there relaxed, looking at her. "Of course, once was with the Army, and I guess that really doesn't count." He didn't mention that the other time was to bring back a particularly vicious murderer, and only got him as far as London Airport where the British police were holding his man.

Her eyes softened; she leaned forward almost eagerly. "And is it really as beautiful as everyone says? You know; Copenhagen, and Paris, and Rome?"

“My name is Clancy,” Clancy said. He seemed to be completely at ease in his deep chair, but his dark eyes were watching the girl very closely. “I’m a Lieutenant of police.”

“Police —!” She stared at him. There was neither panic nor fear in her expression; she seemed surprised, but not particularly alarmed. Clancy frowned. Either this one was the world’s most accomplished actress, or his lone clue was shaping up to be a complete dud. He shrugged; to add one more proverb to the morning’s collection, in for a penny, in for a pound. He nodded.

“That’s right. I’d like to ask you some questions.”

She sat down again, abruptly, her face a blank. “Could you show me some identification?”

Clancy handed over his wallet. She studied it and handed it back.

“All right. Lieutenant. I haven’t the faintest idea of what this is all about, but go ahead and ask your questions.”

“All right,” Clancy said. He tucked his wallet back into his pocket. “Let’s go back to my first one: tickets for where? And for whom?”

“I can’t answer that, Lieutenant.” She saw Clancy’s eyebrows raise. “I’m sorry. There’s nothing illegal involved; it’s just that I’m not in a position to answer that question at this time.” She hesitated and then, as if despite herself, a small grin formed on her pretty face. “To tell you the truth, I don’t even know why I was asked to keep it a secret, but I was and I am.” The smile faded. “And in any event, I don’t believe it’s any business of the police.”

Clancy sighed. “The police prefer to determine for themselves what is or isn’t their business.”

There was a sudden change in her attitude, but it still was not fear. It was merely a certain sharpness, and added alertness. "Yes, I've heard of Johnny Rossi. What about him?"

Clancy weighed the chances of revealing too much and decided to go ahead. He walked over from the telephone stand and stood before the girl, hands clasped before him, his dark eyes on her unwaveringly.

"Did you know that Johnny Rossi registered into the Farnsworth Hotel here in New York yesterday morning under an assumed name? And that right after registering he made a telephone call from there to this apartment?" He paused for a split second and then continued. "And that last night somebody showed up at the hotel and blasted him with a shotgun?"

For a moment the violet eyes looked into his blankly; then, as the impact of his words struck her brain, Clancy got all the reaction he could have wanted. The girl's face blanched; the violet eyes that had been staring at him opened wide in horror and then closed. For a moment he thought she was going to faint. Her newly-painted fingers, set along the edge of the couch pillows, tightened spasmodically, clutching and twisting the brocaded cloth. She looked ill.

"No!" she said in a sick whisper. "No! I don't believe it!"

"Believe it," Clancy said cruelly. "It's true."

"No!" Her face twisted, fighting tears and shock. "You're lying. It's a trick. He would have told me ... It's a trick. They wouldn't!"

"Who wouldn't?" Clancy was leaning over her fiercely now, his voice beating at her. "Who wouldn't?"

The girl leaned over in a daze, her fingers unconsciously tearing at the pillows, her hair falling unheeded over her face, her eyes fixed unseeing on the floor.

“It must be a mistake. They wouldn’t.” Her eyes came up blankly; her words were directed not at Clancy but at some inner image. “They wouldn’t. Why would they?”

“Come on!” Clancy said roughly. “Who shot him?”

There was no answer; the girl seemed to be studying the pattern of the rug. She took a deep shuddering breath, fighting herself, and then began shaking her head slowly from side to side. The little moans in her throat died away; she brought her hands together clasping them tightly in her lap. She sat that way for several moments, staring blankly at the floor. When at last she looked up her face was drained of expression. “What did you say?”

“I asked you who shot him,” Clancy said harshly, almost savagely. “You know! Who shot him?”

She looked at him without seeing him, without hearing him. Her mind was slowly encompassing the facts, seeing her own innocence, her own stupidity. Resolution slowly replaced all other emotions. She pushed herself wearily to her feet, turning from the couch.

“I have to go out,” she said a bit vaguely, looking about the apartment as if faintly surprised to find herself there, as if puzzled that so short a time ago she could have rejoiced in being here, in being happy here. Her glazed eyes passed over Clancy as if he were another piece of furniture, or a floor-lamp placed undecoratively beside the couch.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Clancy said coldly. “You’re going to answer my question. Who shot him?”

cab swooped in to the canopy; the girl bent over the driver, saying something, and then jumped into the rear seat. The cab took off; Stanton pulled away from the curb, swinging smoothly behind. The two cars disappeared around the corner.

Clancy rubbed his hands together with satisfaction. Action! Things were finally beginning to move; at least the beginnings of a case were shaping up into form from the fog surrounding him. Now back to the precinct to start checking on some of the other leads that were sure to follow. And then his face fell. Also back to the precinct to start facing the music — which was apt to be pretty much off-key. Chalmers! He grimaced humorlessly, shrugged, straightened his hat squarely on his head, and went to the curb to flag down a cab.

### **Saturday — 11:30 A.M.**

Clancy pushed his way quickly through the precinct doors, his tiredness fading at the thought of work. The Sergeant looked up; his broad vein-ribbed face creased in a smile that neatly combined pleasure and relief.

“Boy, am I glad to see you in the flesh. Lieutenant! Everybody and his brother has been calling you every two minutes all morning! You want me to get Mr. Chalmers’ office first? He’s the one’s been calling the most.”

Clancy waved the Sergeant to silence abruptly. “No calls. Did Kaposki get back yet?”

“Yeah, he’s here, but, Lieutenant, about those calls ...”

“I said, no calls. Send Kaposki into my office.” He paused, thinking, recalling the schedule his mind had mapped out during his return to the precinct. “And have somebody go

out and get me a copy of this morning's New York Times. I forgot."

"Sure, Lieutenant. But Captain Wise has been calling, also. From his home ..."

Clancy stared at the wall. Where was that schedule he'd calculated so carefully? He rubbed his face wearily; five hours sleep in over two days just wasn't enough. "All right, I'll talk to Captain Wise. Call him back at home. But nobody else." He suddenly remembered another item on his mental list. "Except Stanton. If he calls I want it and I want it fast. And line up a plain-clothes policewoman; Stanton may need her in a hurry."

"Yes, sir."

Clancy walked into his office, threw his hat on top of a filing cabinet and sat down, swinging his chair to stare blankly out of the window. A battery of overalls faced him, strung out on the sagging clothesline like children's cut-outs; he suddenly wondered if they were the same overalls he had seen the previous day, or different ones. He tried to remember if or when he had ever seen the clothesline there completely free from clothing; he couldn't. Possibly it was clear on Columbus Day, he thought; now where was I on Columbus Day?

There was a cough at the door; he swung around, nodding, and Kaproski came in carrying a bulky bundle under his arm. The telephone rang before they could speak; Clancy waved the large detective to a chair as he reached over to pick up the instrument.

"Hello. Who?" His face wiped away expression. "Hello, Captain."

The heavy voice at the other end; thickened by a bad cold, boomed at him in pure Brooklynese that Clancy normally



enjoyed listening to. At the moment it grated on his ears. He closed his eyes. Let's get it over with, he prayed. Quickly. There's work to be done.

"Clancy, you black-Irish maniac! What are you, crazy or something? Here I am sick in bed, gripped up to my ears I can't even breathe good, yet, and I got to keep getting my ear bent by every big-shot in the department! What are you trying to do? Give me ulcers on top of everything else?"

"What do you mean, Captain?"

There was a sharp, suspicious intake of breath. "And what's all this 'Captain' crap? Since when did you suddenly start calling me 'Captain'? Since when wasn't I 'Sam' to you? Why all this sudden formality all of a sudden, if I may ask?"

"All right, Sam. What's on your mind?"

"What's on my mind, he asks! What's on my mind! He snatches the hottest bum since that bum Hitler, hides him God alone couldn't find him, and then he asks me just like this, what's on my mind!" The gravelly voice suddenly dropped, becoming persuasive. "Look, Clancy, we're old friends. If you don't feel so good, your head hurts or something, you should tell your old friends. Who else is going to help you, huh? Who else is going to be an old friend if it isn't an old friend, huh? Answer me that."

Clancy glanced wearily across the battered desk at Kaposki. The big detective was waiting patiently, nursing the bulky bundle as if it were a child sleeping in his arms. Clancy returned his martyred gaze to the telephone receiver.

"I feel fine, Sam."

"You feel fine." The deep rasping voice was outraged at Clancy's fitness. "That's great. I'm glad you feel fine. I don't suppose that you know that Mr. High-Nose Chalmers of the

“... And you know as well as I do that if it wasn’t for that *momser* Chalmers I’d be calling you ‘Captain’ instead of the other way around. That’s how long I know you,” it added in complete *non sequitur*, and then asked suspiciously, “So?”

“So I want twenty-four hours, Sam. Without Chalmers breathing down my neck. Can you get me twenty-four hours?”

“Do you want to tell me about it, Clancy?”

“I’d rather not, Sam. Not just yet.” Clancy sighed. “Can you get me twenty-four hours?”

“I can try.”

“I’d appreciate it.”

Captain Wise took a deep breath. “All right, Clancy. You never did anything *meshuga* before, and I know you, so you must have a good reason for doing it now. I’ll hold the wolves off as long as I can, but I’m in a sick bed here, you understand, and I can’t guarantee anything. And even if I do hold them off, you know it won’t be for long.”

“Thanks, Captain.”

“You’re welcome, Lieutenant. I just hope you know what you’re doing.”

Clancy stared at the telephone.

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll keep in touch.”

“You do that, Clancy. And I’ll do the best I can.” There was a pause and then quiet affection crept into the heavy voice. “Good luck, Clancy. *Mazel*.” There was a click from the telephone.

Clancy hung up and swung around to Kaposki. The big detective placed his bundle on the desk and began stripping paper from it. Clancy looked up at him.

“What’s that?”

“Doctor’s outfit. Complete.” Kaposki’s voice revealed his satisfaction. He folded back the brown paper, disclosing a pile of white clothing. A cotton skullcap and face-mask lay on top, together with a pair of white tennis-shoes.

Clancy fingered them. “Where did you find them?”

“They got a boiler-room, in this hospital, on the first floor in the back, with one of them automatic boilers. This stuff was jammed underneath it, not even out of sight. The thing — this boiler thing — stands a couple of feet clear of the floor.” He paused, remembering. “And there’s a door to the back alley outside. It wasn’t closed.”

“You mean it was open?”

“Not open open,” Kaposki explained. “Unlocked. Anybody could have come in or out.”

“Was it usually like that?”

“Just about always, I guess.”

Clancy frowned. “Don’t they have a maintenance man that always stays around the boiler?”

“They got a maintenance man, but he was up on one of the floors fixing a faucet or something around the time Rossi caught it, near as I could figure. He’s the night man. But he ain’t down there much, anyways. Like I said, this boiler’s one of them automatic deals. Practically runs itself.”

Clancy thought awhile. He fingered the pile of clothing. “Anybody recognize this stuff?”

“Yeah.” Kaposki leaned over, dug into the pile and came up with a white jacket. Two letters were hemstitched in red thread over a pocket. “There’s a locker-room next to this boiler-room, where the doctors change their clothes. I checked on the lockers and this stuff come out of the locker belongs to a Doctor P. Mills. P for Paul. He’s on vacation; been gone about ten days. He’s due back in a couple of days.”

“Were the lockers locked?”

Kaposki shook his head in disgust. “Naw. I’m telling you, nothing’s locked in that joint.”

Clancy frowned in thought. “It seems simple enough on the surface, but even so ... Even knowing from the ambulance at the hotel where Rossi was taken, it seems like a pretty chancy way to knock a guy off. It’s quite a gamble, finding a doctor’s outfit where you want it and when you want it. I don’t know ...”

“I’m not so sure. Lieutenant,” Kaposki said. “Anyplace but this, maybe I’d agree with you, but this place ain’t like Mount Sinai or Bellevue. There ain’t hardly nobody around the place — no regular floor nurses, no nothing. And they don’t lock nothing up. A guy could case the joint in perfect safety. Hell, you could probably walk out with a couple of rooms full of furniture and nobody would know.”

“Yeah,” Clancy said slowly. “How about the knife?”

“Well, we didn’t pull it out of him, of course,” Kaposki said. “We put him down in that storeroom just as he was, but it looked like a regular bread-knife. They got a kitchen there, but the cook is out half the time, and everybody wanders in and out getting coffee or making a sandwich for themselves — and nobody knows what knives they got or don’t have. I’m telling you, this place is Liberty Hall. It ain’t like Bellevue

of the phone book; check the closest ones first. Of course she may have gotten them from a downtown agency, but the chances are she picked a small one, right in the neighborhood.”

“Sure, Lieutenant,” Kaposki said. “But who’s she? And what am I checking for?”

“Somebody bought two tickets for Europe by steamer and probably a first-class cabin for two. The name could be Renick, or it might not be.” He hesitated, remembering the happy carefree face of the girl when they first met. “I have a feeling it is, but I could be wrong. Anyway, the woman who bought them is twenty-nine years old, blond, violet eyes, five-six in height; a real beauty. I want to know in what name the tickets were bought; and if they were bought in the name Renick, I want to know who the other ticket is for. If you locate the agency that sold them, they may still have the passports. Or they may remember.” He drummed the table a moment staring down at the newspaper. “And where they are for and when they sail, of course.”

“Right.” Kaposki was scribbling rapidly in his notebook, his big fist dwarfing the slender pencil. He looked up. “How about checking with the steamship lines directly?”

“If you want to start there, you can. If the tickets were in the name Renick, they’ll be able to help. But if the tickets were bought in any other name, of course, the only way to get anywhere is with the description. And only the agency can help you there.”

“Right. I’ll see what I can dig out.” Kaposki hesitated. “Do you have any idea at all when they were going to sail?”

“No. One of these days soon, I’d guess. The girl mentioned last-minute shopping, and last-minute packing, but I don’t know ...” Not for the first time Clancy regretted his lack of

knowledge concerning women. "I don't know if a woman does her last-minute shopping a day before or a month before she goes somewhere."

"But it was to Europe?"

"I'm pretty sure of that. I don't think she was giving me the magoo at that point. I'd forget any steamship line going anywhere else, at least for the time being." He leaned over, tearing the list of sailings from the paper and handing it to Kaposki. "Hop to it."

Kaposki straightened up. "Right." He tucked his notebook into his pocket together with the list and went out. Clancy swung around, picking up the telephone.

"Sergeant; I want to talk to the I.D. man in the Los Angeles Police Department."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll hang on."

He leaned back waiting, the telephone receiver tucked under his ear, his other hand fondling the pair of white tennis-shoes on top of the pile of clothing before him. The shoes seemed lumpy; he pushed his hand into one, brought out a stiff white sock and then dug a second sock from the other. He tossed them to one side and patted the flat pockets of the white jacket. Nothing. He laid the jacket aside and started to unroll the wrinkled trousers, when the Sergeant's voice came through.

"Here's your call. Lieutenant."

He sat up straighter, pushing the pile of clothing to one side. "Hello? This is Lieutenant Clancy at the 52nd Precinct, New York City. Who am I talking to, please?"

“This is Sergeant Martin, here. I.D. What can I do for you, Lieutenant?”

“I’d like all the information you have, or can get in a hurry, on an Ann Renick, that’s R-E-N-I-C-K, age twenty-nine, hair blond, height five-foot-six-inches, eyes violet ...”

“Is that Anne with an ‘e’? And is it a nickname or her real name?”

“It’s her real name. No ‘e’. A-N-N.”

“Married or single?”

“I don’t know. All I had on her was a California driver’s license, issued in Los Angeles County.”

“Any address?”

Clancy could have kicked himself. “I didn’t get it.”

“Any criminal record? There in New York, I mean.”

“Nona that we know of. We haven’t checked.” In self-defense, Clancy added, “Yet.”

“Did you notice the back of the license? Were there any violations?”

“There weren’t any.”

“Anything else?”

“That’s all I’ve got, Sergeant. I know it’s not very much ...”

“It’s enough,” the Sergeant said. “If she was issued a driver’s license in this county we can check her out, and pretty thoroughly. How soon do you want this information?”

Clancy laughed. “Yesterday.”

“I’ll call you back.”

Clancy thought a moment. "You say the Syndicate may be unhappy with the entire family. Is his brother Pete in with Johnny on this?"

"I don't know." Porky Frank seemed a bit unhappy at having to admit this hiatus in his knowledge. "I hear there's nothing to indicate he is, but you know the Rossi boys. Those two have been closer than a photo-finish since they were kids. My guess is that the Syndicate accountants are checking pretty hard right now trying to find out."

"I see. And where's Johnny Rossi now?"

This was one question that took Porky by surprise. He looked over at Clancy queerly. And took a long pull of his drink and set his glass down on the table again.

"You wouldn't bull an old bull-artist, would you, Mr. C?"

Clancy froze. "What do you mean?"

Porky stared at him without expression. "That's why I thought it odd you wanted to discuss the Rossis. I thought that Johnny Rossi's new address was one of the things you might be able to tell me."

Clancy's eyes bored into the other's. His jaw was rigid. "Is that the story going around?"

Porky lifted a hand. "Not you, Mr. C. Just fuzz, that's all. Empire State buttons." He looked at Clancy curiously. "You have secrets where you work, too?"

"Yeah." Clancy was thinking.

Porky raised his thick eyebrows comically. "Any statement for the boys of the press?"

Clancy stood up, his face a hard mask. He didn't bother to answer the question. He put his hat squarely on his head and edged from the booth. "I'll see you around."



“Oh, Mr. C.” Porky Frank looked truly apologetic. “That Bar-Fly — he was a real dog. He ran out.”

“Oh.” Clancy dug into a pocket, unfolded and counted some money, and placed it on the table.

“Thank you.”

Porky tucked the money carelessly into his pocket and remained staring thoughtfully into his glass. Clancy pushed his way through the semi-darkness of the bar, walked to the curb, and flagged a cab.

Damn that Chalmers and his big mouth! So the word was out that the police had Rossi tucked away somewhere. Great! As he climbed into the cab that drew up for him, he pushed aside the thought and tried to assess the value of what he had learned. Not much more than he had already guessed, but at least it was partially confirmed. Actually very little. Just one more loose end, he thought bitterly. And the trouble with loose ends is the more you unravel them, the looser they get. He sighed and leaned back against the cushions, closing his eyes.

### **Saturday — 2:05 P.M.**

The desk Sergeant looked up as Clancy tramped wearily through the door of the precinct. One look at the lined, fatigued face and he knew it would be pointless to mention the continuing telephone calls from Mr. Chalmers. Pointless and possibly dangerous. I only hope the Lieutenant knows what he's doing, the Sergeant prayed.

Clancy caught the look in the other's eyes and correctly interpreted it. He smiled. “Is Chalmers still calling?”

He wrote the amount on the manila envelope automatically, and then turned to the slip of paper, opening it. A brief smile crossed his lips as he read the opening words scrawled in pencil in Stanton's large hand:

This is just as I found it I didn't touch it, but sixty bucks of this is mine, or would be if there was any justice. Which there isn't. Anyway, there wasn't any identification of any kind. Nowhere in the room. Pockets completely empty except for this. No labels, no marks, no nothing. One small airplane-type bag, the kind you carry abroad, with no ID and marked SAS. He probably used it to carry his dressing-gown and pajamas. Outside of that, nothing. Not even a clean shirt in the room. No extra shoes; not even a clean pair of socks. Nothing; but nothing. I left everything as was, in case you want to re-check. *Stan.*

Clancy fingered the billfold, his smile fading, his forehead wrinkling. If Stanton said there was no identification, then there wasn't any. But such complete anonymity was hard to understand, particularly in a man who carried his identification on his face. Not even a spare pair of shoes, or even a clean shirt — or even a pair of socks for a change. Sockless Johnny Rossi, Clancy thought; first-baseman on the San Quentin Nine.

He studied the billfold once again, and then tucked the money back into place, slid the wallet into the envelope and the envelope into the center drawer. Later it would have to go into the safe, but that was later. No help there in any event. No help anywhere, he thought bitterly; maybe if I weren't so bushed I could see something that's probably right in front of my nose. A good night's sleep would probably do more toward solving this case than a hundred clues.

The phone rang again, breaking into his thoughts. He reached over, picking up the receiver, stifling a yawn.

“Yes?”

“Lieutenant; there’s a man here says he wants to see you.” The Sergeant hesitated, his voice dropping. “It’s Pete Rossi ...”

Clancy sat up, his eyes narrowing in thought, his weariness falling from him. “Send him in.”

“Your sandwich is here, too.” The Sergeant sounded stymied. “Should I hold it until you’re free?”

“Send that in, too. He’s seen a man eat before.” He hung up and scratched his jaw thoughtfully. He suddenly realized he needed a shave. A shave, and a new suit, and about two days sleep, he thought. And the answers to a lot of questions if I’m ever going to clean this up in twenty-four hours. Or a month of Sundays.

A policeman appeared at the door, entered, and laid a paper-wrapped sandwich and a cardboard container on the desk. As he left, his place was taken in the doorway by a man in his late forties, impeccably dressed, but with the tough uncompromising face of a professional hood that no amount of prosperity could disguise. A three-hundred-dollar suit draped neatly over the wide hulking shoulders, and a fifteen-dollar Sulka tie managed to encase the bullneck. An older and tougher edition of the man at the Farnsworth, Clancy thought; the family resemblance was strong. The stocky man stood in the doorway, looking over the small room. His tiny eyes skimmed the battered desk and the scratched file cabinets; took in the dismal view from the window. His lip curled.

didn't stop or get out or anything. That's what took all the time." He hesitated. "And, Lieutenant, you ought to get a good mechanic to take a look at that car. You've got a piston slap you can hear a mile."

"I know," Clancy said. "Is that all?"

"That's it. She went back into the apartment house and Mary Kelly is down the block yakking with a couple of old ladies and keeping her eye on the place, and I'm in here telephoning to you. And then I figure on getting a sandwich and a cup of coffee."

Clancy had been thinking during this last discourse. Now he leaned forward, gripping the phone.

"Forget your stomach; you'll eat later. You tell Mary Kelly to watch the place; I'll get somebody over there right away to work with her. You get back to the New Yorker. I want to know what floor she got off at, and then you check the floor-maids or anyone else, and see if you can find out what room she visited. And if you can't, see if you can find out what floor at least and check at the desk on everyone on that floor. Check on the names Renick, Randall, Rossi ..."

"They all begin with 'R'?"

"So far," Clancy said. "As a matter of fact, that's a thought. Bring me a list of everybody registered on that floor. And then go down and see if the mail-clerk remembers anything about that envelope — the one the blonde picked up. Maybe it had a business address in one corner, or something. And if the envelope she left there is still there, bring it in. If they try to give you an argument about it, let me know. And if it's already been picked up, see if the clerk remembers the name on it, or at least who picked it up — what he looks like."

"Anything else?"

He stared out of the window, disappointed in Kaproski's lack of success. The clothesline caught his eye. One day that line had been empty and he wished he could remember when. Christmas? New Year's? St. Patrick's Day? He turned back to his report, giving up on the problem. And how, he suddenly wondered, facing the pages before him, did the police department ever manage to function before the invention of the typewriter, and the pencil, and the pen? Especially the ballpoint pen? Do you suppose that before reports were invented, with multitudinous copies in blue and pink and buff and beige, that policemen had more time for catching criminals? Is that possible? Without the aid of the me cabinet, and the mimeograph, and the ball-point pen? And the waste-basket?

Highly dubious, he thought. Very doubtful. He pushed the report away again, this time with decision. When I've had a good night's sleep and a decent meal, I'll get back to it, he promised, and then paused. The events he was attempting to outline in that report had happened less than thirty-six hours before, and the details were already beginning to fade from his memory. Maybe reports do have their place in the scheme of things, he conceded. Or maybe a good night's sleep is the real answer.

The phone rang again. He pulled his mind back from the soft bed in his apartment to his drab office with a profound sigh, picking up the receiver.

"Yes?"

"Lieutenant, it's Kaproski again."

"Put him on."

As he waited for the connection he dug out his crumpled pack of cigarettes, pulled the last one out and slipped it

between his lips, lighting it. The empty pack was crushed and consigned to the wastebasket.

Kaproski's voice came on the line, vibrating with suppressed excitement. "Lieutenant? I think we got a break. Same place I was calling you from before — Carpenter's Travel Agency over here on Broadway and 108th. Your idea did it. Listen; isn't this Pete Rossi's real handle Porfirio?"

"That's right," Clancy said, remembering. "But everybody calls him Pete. Why?"

"Well," Kaproski said, unable to hide the triumph in his voice, "after you suggested also checking on the name 'Rossi,' I figured I might as well start right here.

And I found out they made a reservation in the name of Porfirio Rossi. And already delivered it."

Clancy's eyes narrowed. "For one or two?"

"Just one."

"Where to?"

Kaproski's voice lost a bit of its triumph. "That's the only thing, Lieutenant. It ain't on a steamship; it's on an airplane. And it ain't to Europe; it's to California. Los Angeles."

Clancy stared at the telephone. "Are you calling from the agency?"

"From a public phone they got here. A box over in the corner. Why?"

"Ask them when the reservation was requested. And when it's for. When is he flying west?"

"Hold it."

a guy like Mr. Chalmers who's like the Town Crier, you might say ..."

"Look, Doc; are you going to help me, or not?"

There was a sigh from the telephone. "I'll help you, Clancy. You know I'll help you. But if the guy's dead he can wait a few minutes. I'm just staining some slides."

Clancy's voice was tight. "Let somebody else stain the slides, Doc. He's dead, but he can't wait."

"He can't, or you can't, Clancy?" Doc Freeman's voice was soft. "All right; give me time to just change my clothes and I'll be with you. Where do we meet?"

Clancy glanced down at his wrist-watch. "Uptown Private Hospital." There was a startled intake of breath from the other end of the line, but Clancy disregarded it. "No — wait a minute. Make it the corner of 98th Street and West End Avenue, a block from the hospital instead." He paused, considering. "Kaproski and Stanton are both out on jobs; I'd like them to be there, too. I'll try and get hold of them where they are. So let's say we meet in about an hour. Make it six-thirty."

"Six-thirty?" Doc Freeman sounded aggrieved. "How long do you think it takes to stain slides?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. And I couldn't care less. If you have time, swell — go ahead and stain your slides. Just be at the corner of 98th and West End at six-thirty."

"I'll be there," Doc Freeman said.

"Good. And by the way — thanks, Doc."

Clancy put the receiver back on the hook and swung around to the report he had been working on, but his mind was not on his work. His ear was waiting for a ring from the

telephone, for word from either Kaposki, or Stanton, or both. Fifteen minutes passed before he gave up his vigil and heaved himself to his feet. He slipped off his jacket, opened the top left-hand drawer of his desk and took out a shoulder-holster complete with service revolver. He pulled the straps over his shoulder, drew them tight, and removed the revolver, checking it. He placed it back in the leather holster and shrugged his jacket back on, buttoning the bottom button. He stared at the open right-hand drawer of the desk with its exposed pile of wrinkled white clothing, and the tight smile came over his lips once again.

Reaching over, he closed the drawer gently, came around the desk and started out of the room. A sudden thought brought him up short; he returned to the desk, fumbled in the top left-hand drawer once again, coming up with a set of keys and pick-locks. Satisfied at last that he had everything, he left the room and walked briskly down the narrow corridor.

The Sergeant looked up.

“Going out for supper, Lieutenant?”

“Just going out,” Clancy said. “Listen, Sergeant, I’ve got some jobs for you to do. I want you to call the Pendleton Hotel and see if Kaposki is there. He’s had ample time to find out what he went there to find out; he should have called in by now. In any event, I want him to meet me at the corner of 98th and West End at six-thirty.” He paused, reviewing his plans. “If he calls in, give him the message, but tell him to get all the dope at the Pendleton before he leaves.”

“Right.” The Sergeant was scribbling notes. He looked up. “But what if I call there and he’s been there and left?”



first door is the locker-room where the doctors change clothes. The second door is the storeroom.” He frowned, recalling. “Then after that they got the restaurant — kitchen, that is — where they cook ...”

“Hold it,” Clancy said. “All right. It’s on the same floor two doors down from the boiler-room. That’s all I wanted to know. We’re going in there. I want Doc to look at the body.”

“Why?” Stanton asked. “Something open up?”

“Yeah,” Clancy said. “My brain. Lets go.”

They started down the street side by side; Clancy drew back.

“Two and two,” he said. “Kaproski, you and Doc in front. We don’t want to look like some chorus line, or a bunch of college kids from Columbia out on a drunk ...”

“I should live so long,” Doc Freeman said. “I didn’t even look like a college kid from Columbia when I was a college kid from Columbia.” But he fell in step beside the heavy-set Kaproski, while Clancy and Stanton brought up the rear.

They crossed 97th Street; the hospital front was before them, distinguished from the adjoining apartment buildings only by a small electric sign already lit in the growing shadows. An arrow, neatly mounted on a white stanchion posted at the curb, pointed to the ambulance driveway. Kaproski and Doc Freeman marched past the front entrance evenly, Doc’s bag swinging at his side. Clancy and a puzzled Stanton followed, turning into the driveway without pause.

The ambulance was in place, nosed into the curbing at the rear of the paved area, but without driver or attendant. Kaproski led the others past it without a backward glance, walked to a door set in the building wall a few yards

began to speak again he seemed to be talking more to himself than to the others. "Every time I begin to get an idea about this affair. Buster here keeps screwing up all my pretty theories. So I want to clear him out of the way once and for all."

"So what do you want me to do?" Doc Freeman asked with heavy sarcasm. "Make out a death certificate for coronary thrombosis?"

Clancy looked at him. "I want you to give me your opinion as to what killed him."

Doc Freeman's eyes dropped to the knife stabbed so fiercely into the fleshy chest, and then came up sharply to meet Clancy's. Kaposki, standing to one side, stared at the Lieutenant as if his superior had suddenly gone out of his mind.

"Oh," Doc said. "I see."

His pouchy eyes came back to the corpse. He bent down with a sigh, bringing his heavy bag up and placing it on one of the shelves at his side. He opened it, withdrew a pair of rubber gloves, and then paused in the act of slipping them on.

"How about fingerprints on the knife?"

"There won't be any," Clancy said positively. "He used surgical gloves. But if you want to, try easing it out without touching the handle."

"Right."

Doc Freeman nodded again. He pulled on his rubber gloves, stepped forward, and slowly withdrew the kitchen knife from the wound, pinching it by the small bit of exposed blade between the handle and the body. He studied the weapon a moment and then laid it carefully aside; his eyes

narrowed as he examined the exit mark of the weapon. His two hands returned to the body and he compressed the chest on both sides of the wound with steady pressure. A lip of blood slowly appeared along the edges of the wound. Doc Freeman nodded and then spanned his fingers from the corner of the collar-bone, accurately locating the knife-cut in relation to the other anatomy of the dead body. A final steady pressure against the abdomen completed his examination; he straightened up. His eyes moved across solemnly to those of the Lieutenant waiting patiently at his side.

“I see what you mean,” he said slowly. “One thing is fairly sure — his heart had stopped pumping blood before that knife went into him. Whoever stabbed him was stabbing a dead man.”

Clancy let out his breath.

“That’s what I thought,” he said with deep satisfaction. “That’s exactly what I wanted to hear. Now how about taking a look at his gunshot wound, Doc?”

Doc Freeman nodded again. Still studying the corpse, his fingers sought and found a pair of scissors in his bag, and he slowly began to snip away the thick bandages that still covered the chest and neck. With patient fingers he clipped through the layers of surgical tape, and then slowly stripped the wadded bandage away from the congealed wound. Kaproski, peering over, turned away feeling slightly queasy.

“Not a bad job,” Doc said almost admiringly. “The surgery, I mean. The shooting wasn’t a bad job, either ...”

He bent over, staring at the wound, studying the evident passage marks of the shot, attempting to calculate their force and direction. He straightened up, shaking his head.

“Just because he was dead,” Clancy said. “It took me awhile to get it, but I finally did. Come on — tuck him in and let’s go. Let’s have a heart-to-heart talk with Dr. Willard.”

Doc Freeman was stripping off his gloves. “When do we get the body downtown for a complete post, Clancy? That’s the only way we’re really going to know what killed him.”

“Soon,” Clancy promised. “Very soon. Come on.”

He waited until the Doc had closed his bag and then led the way back to the corridor. He shut the door after them, tried the knob to make sure the snap-lock had caught, and strode in the direction of the elevator. As he passed the boiler-room he suddenly remembered Stanton; he opened the door and looked in.

“Come on, Stan. You come with me.”

“A pleasure. It’s hot in here.” Stanton cocked a thumb at me little maintenance man. “How about Little John?”

“Let him read his paper.”

The four went down the hall in a cluster, seemed to recognize the silliness of this, and then spread needlessly far apart while waiting for the elevator to arrive. Clancy pressed a button after they entered, and they all stood silent as the soundless mechanism rose and came to a smooth halt at the fifth floor. Clancy looked at the worried face of Doc Freeman and despite himself grinned. He turned to Kaposki.

“How do you say ‘Take it easy’ in Polish?”

Kaposki looked at him, amazed. “You’re asking me?”

“Excuse me,” Clancy said, and led the way to the row of doctors’ offices that flanked the corridor. He opened the door, expecting to find the office empty, but Dr. Willard was

sitting at the desk, a thermos bottle in one hand. He looked up, trying to control his features, and set the thermos back on the table. His eyes swung from one graven face to the other, finally settling on Clancy's.

"Hello, Lieutenant," he said. He hesitated; his hand made a small motion as if to offer coffee to his visitors and then stopped and settled down again. When he spoke it was with a forced smile.

"Come to take your man away? I hope?"

Clancy sat on the edge of the desk; Kaproski and Stanton moved over unobtrusively to cover the door. The doctor noted the gesture; a sheen of sweat began to appear on his forehead. Clancy reached for a cigarette and then remembered he didn't have any. His hand came out of his pocket, stroking his thigh.

"Do you want to tell us about it, Doctor?" he asked softly.

The eyes of the doctor rose, ready for denial, and then fell hopelessly. He shook his head as if at his own foolishness. "You knew, didn't you? All along ..."

"I should have known all along," Clancy said. "But I was stupid — I didn't. I should have known when Barnett told me the doctor went in twice and that both times he was wearing a mask and gloves, and a skullcap that hid the hair. I could understand a killer doing it the second time as a disguise, but why would you wear all that garbage the first time? Doctors don't visit their patients dressed up like they're ready for surgery." He stared down at the bowed head before him.

"But even saying that you did go in looking like Ben Casey, there was the uniform you ducked under the boiler — the tennis-shoes had socks tucked into them. Well, if a man is changing clothes in a hurry, as a killer would have been

hospital, and dead when he came out? Anyway, that's what I thought at the time. I know now I was wrong. But at the time ... especially with that Mr. Chalmers ..."

He looked up broodingly. "I'm holding you responsible, Doctor ...' I couldn't take a chance ..."

"It strikes me you took more of a chance this way," Clancy said.

"You don't understand," the young intern said hopelessly. "You don't know the story. I can't stand any investigation." His eyes glazed, staring into the past.

"Why do you think I'm here, at this broken-down nursing home? Changing bedpans like an orderly? I was at Children's Hospital in Cleveland; I lost a patient, a young boy, through no fault of my own. But you couldn't convince the parents. And they were on the Board. I was kicked out ..." He stared at Clancy bitterly. "Do you know what it is for an intern to be kicked out of a hospital? Can you imagine? I was lucky to get this post, and only because Cathy stands in with the Director." He shrugged. "I'm telling you this because you'd find out anyway ..."

A sour grimace crossed his face. "All I need was for Mr. Chalmers to dig that up when he found his precious witness dead ... I'm sorry. I had to take the chance. Otherwise I was finished anyway." His eyes came up bitterly. "Why did you have to send him here in the first place? Why didn't you send him to Bellevue where he belonged?"

Kaproski looked away in embarrassment; the young intern cut off the pointless thought and pushed himself dispiritedly to his feet.

"All right," he said evenly. "I'll come along. Let me just change my clothes and I'll be ready. One of your men can come with me to see that I don't run ..."

“I don’t want you,” Clancy said quietly. “Sit down.” He pushed the young man back into his chair. “There’s a law against what you did, but frankly I’d hate to try and make it stick, especially against a doctor. You’d be ruined professionally, but I doubt that the law would hurt you much. The thing I ought to charge you with is obstructing justice. You made me lose a lot of time and thought. But jailing you wouldn’t help me right now; and frankly I can see how you must have felt.”

“You mean you don’t want me?”

“That’s what I mean.” Clancy nodded evenly. “I just wanted to get one puzzle out of the way, to bring it back to just one attack on Rossi and not two. And in return, I want you to keep the body in the storeroom for the time being.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all. Except I want you to continue to keep this quiet.”

The newly-born hope in the young doctor’s eyes faded. “But they already know ...”

“Nobody knows —” Clancy began and then stopped, understanding beginning to dawn on him. “Who did you tell? Who?” He pushed to his feet and bent over the young doctor, glowering. “Well, who?”

“Mr. Rossi — Pete Rossi, his brother,” the doctor said haltingly. “That’s how I knew they wouldn’t really ... He came here and wanted to know where his brother was. I ... I couldn’t lie.” His eyes fell. “I was afraid.”

There was a stunned silence, broken at last by Doc Freeman.

“Great!” he said softly. “That’s broken it. All right, Clancy; now are you going to call in Homicide?”

couldn't recall their entering. On the sidewalk they regrouped.

"Clancy," Doc Freeman said desperately, "how long are you going to keep up this idiocy? Call Homicide and let them take over. Now that Pete Rossi knows ..."

"He won't say anything," Clancy said positively.

"Why not?"

"I don't know, but he won't. If he were, he would have done it already."

"You're tired, Clancy," Doc Freeman said. "You need a good meal and a good night's sleep."

"I need all that," Clancy said, "plus a good swift kick in the pants. I ought to listen when somebody talks, even somebody as stupid as Barnett. I wasted half a day on something I should have seen at once. Maybe if I hadn't we'd have been someplace now."

Kaproski finally seemed to have gathered the ends of the conversation together.

"So if the doctor didn't kill him," he said with a puzzled frown, "then we're right back where we were before. The character that blasted him in the hotel is the killer."

"Right," Clancy said.

"And we don't know who that is."

"That's right," Clancy said. "But I'll bet I know somebody who does. That Renick woman. I was too damned polite to her this morning, but the time for chivalry is long gone. We're going over there and get a simple answer to a simple question: who shot our pal Johnny Rossi? And why?" He turned to Doc Freeman.



“Well?”

Mary Kelly was a woman in her late thirties, with a rather plain but pleasant face, and a very decent figure. Her outstanding feature was her eyes, but she didn't know it. She also didn't know why nobody had ever called her just plain 'Mary' instead of her full name of 'Mary Kelly,' but they hadn't. Mary Kelly also thought that a nice man like Lieutenant Clancy shouldn't live without a wife to warm his bed; Clancy was not entirely unaware of her feelings. He recognized the compassion that his tired figure evoked in her warm brown eyes, and he repeated his question a bit more brusquely than was quite necessary.

“Well? Is she still inside?”

“She's still there,” Mary Kelly said. She looked up to the drawn shades of the second-floor apartment across the street. “The lights are still on.”

“Where's Quinleven?”

“He's around in the back, pretending to do something with the telephone wires.”

Clancy nodded. “We're going in to talk to her. I'll leave Kaposki outside with you.” A woman came through the locked door leading from the interior of the apartment; she glanced curiously at the two standing in the foyer. Her eyes passed over Mary Kelly's face and she muffled a smile of sympathy. Clancy swallowed and lifted his hat to Mary Kelly.

“Thank you for the information, ma'am,” he said, and quickly followed the smiling woman into the street. Mary Kelly's rich voice came softly from behind.

“You're welcome,” she said.

lying in disarray on the carpet. Even the carpet had been pulled loose from its tacks at one edge and ripped back. The three men stared at each other. Without a word they deployed, going into the other rooms of the apartment.

The kitchen was empty. Clancy had just started to leave it when a low cry came from Stanton. He swung away, hurrying down the darkened hallway past the bathroom to the bedroom. He and Doc Freeman bumped in the doorway and then paused, staring with frozen faces at the body on the bed.

The long blond hair was tangled, as if a huge hand had grabbed it and twisted, brutishly trying to pull it out by the roots. The body was nude, the full breasts marked with a series of cigarette burns that trailed down the flat stomach, across the thighs to the groin. The mouth was taped with adhesive tape, the hands and feet drawn tautly apart in a spread-eagle and taped tightly to the corner-posts of the bed. A knife handle stood stark between the lush breasts. A trail of blood, already drying, led across the stomach and the curved side to a dark puddle where the wide hips depressed the mattress. The violet eyes stared at the ceiling fixedly, no expression marking them.

Doc Freeman hurried forward. Stanton was already struggling fiercely with the bonds that held the body to the bed; Doc's hand detained him even as his eyes took in the condition of the body.

"Leave her alone. Don't touch anything. She's dead."

Clancy stood in the doorway, shocked. He came slowly forward, standing alongside the bed, staring down, studying the tortured body, his mind churning. He clasped his hands tightly before him. Doc Freeman heaved a sigh.

I'm calling this in." Doc Freeman started towards the living room but Clancy stepped in front of him, clamping a rigid hand on his arm.

"There's no time, Doc! Don't you see that? If Homicide comes into this right now, we'll all be tied up here for hours. And the killer will get away once and for all!"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm telling you!" Clancy dropped the other's arm and swept his hand about the room. "Look at this! Go out there and look at the living room again! You say you're a police officer? Well, what do you make of this mess, then?"

"The killer was looking for something, of course." Doc Freeman's eyes narrowed in sudden suspicion. "Are you trying to say you know what he was looking for?"

"Of course," Clancy said, almost contemptuously.

"Steamship tickets. To Europe. And he found them."

"Steamship tickets?"

"It would take too long to explain. Doc, but take my word for it."

"And how do you know he found them?"

"Look around you," Clancy said, almost fiercely. "He tore the whole living room apart. And half of this room. And then he stopped before he got to that dresser. Why? He certainly wasn't disturbed; Mary Kelly and Quinleven are still outside spotting the place. He stopped because he found what he was looking for. Or because she finally talked and told him where they were. And that's when he stabbed her."

He shoved his battered hat back on his head, jammed his hands into his jacket pockets, and started to stride about the restricted space. His mind was racing. "That's why

“You’re a fast talker, Clancy,” the Doc said at last. “And I’m a damned fool.”

“Thanks, Doc.” Clancy nodded in appreciation. He turned to Stanton. “How about you, Stan?”

Stanton looked at him evenly. “The way I see it is this, Lieutenant — when you get in a hole as far as you’ve got, about the only way out is through the other end. I’m with you, Lieutenant.”

“Good. Then let’s get out of here and back to the precinct. There’s work to be done.”

“What about Mary Kelly?” Doc asked. “Aren’t you going to check on who came in and out of the building?”

“I’ll check with her,” Clancy said. “But let me do the talking. There are enough of us police officers with our necks out a mile; no sense in putting Mary Kelley on the spot, too.”

“She wouldn’t mind, Lieutenant,” Stanton said. “Not for you.”

Clancy chose to disregard this; he led the way to the front door. They backed out, and Clancy paused to reach up and flick off the living-room lights. He locked the door and the three tramped slowly down the steps to the street. They crossed to the other curb; Mary Kelly and Kaposki came over to them. Mary Kelly’s eyes lifted to the now-darkened windows.

“She’s in bed,” Clancy said quietly. He studied the upturned face of the plain-clothes woman. “Did she have any visitors tonight?”

“A number of people went in and out of the building tonight,” Mary Kelly said. She made a *moue*. “I don’t know if they visited her or not I didn’t pay any particular attention to

“We’ll eat later,” Clancy said shortly, “When this is cleared up.”

“Sure,” Kaposki said willingly. “But I’m not talking about eating. I mean just a sandwich ...”

“Later,” Clancy said in a tone of finality that closed the subject. He continued down the corridor to the front desk. The night-Sergeant looked up as the Lieutenant walked up.

“Evening, Lieutenant,” he said pleasantly. He reached over, picking up some slips, bringing them close for inspection.

“Mr...”

“... Chalmers called three times,” Clancy said wearily.

“That’s right,” the Sergeant said, amazed as always at Clancy’s ability. “He said for you to call him whenever you got back here. He said it was real urgent. Want me to get him for you? He left a number.”

“No,” Clancy began; at that moment the telephone at the Sergeant’s elbow rang. Clancy waited as the large man behind the desk picked up the phone. There was a brief conversation and the Sergeant hung up.

“That was Doc Freeman calling from your office,” the Sergeant said. “He said to send somebody out for four coffees.”

“All right,” Clancy said disinterestedly.

“And then how about Mr. Chalmers?”

“No! Don’t call him. And I don’t want to take any incoming calls from him, either. Anything else?”

“Los Angeles,” the Sergeant said, checking one of the slips in his hand. “The I.D. branch out there called for you personally. A Sergeant Martin.”

“I’ll take him as soon as you can get him back,” Clancy said. His sunken eyes stared at the Sergeant. “But nobody else.”

“Right, Lieutenant.” The Sergeant’s fingers were already dialing.

Clancy went back down the corridor to his office, tossed his hat neatly onto a filing cabinet, and peeled off his jacket. As the others watched silently, he unstrapped the holster from his chest, tossed the gun into the top drawer of his desk, and replaced his jacket. He pulled it neatly about his sparse frame, buttoned the bottom button, and fell into his chair. Doc Freeman lifted his eyebrows in surprise; Clancy had a reputation in the department for eschewing guns.

“A gun?”

“I knew that young doctor was desperate,” Clancy said, really not interested. “Desperate people get panicky, and I never try to second-guess panicky people.” He swung around, dismissing the subject, staring through the window; the air-shaft beyond was black with night. I wonder if there are any clothes hanging there now? he thought. Maybe at night it’s free; maybe that’s when I saw them. Or do I mean didn’t see them? He turned back to the others.

“All right,” he said, his voice tired and flat. “Let’s get to work. You first, Kaposki. What happened at the Pendleton?”

Kaposki, advised during his absence of the events at No. 1210 West 86th Street — and properly impressed — already had his notebook out. He licked a finger and flipped a page.

“Well, like I told you on the phone from Carpenter’s, Lieutenant, this Rossi character had a room there at the Pendleton. He checked out just before I showed up — four-

characters are asleep at that hour, and who's to say different? But not this Rossi character — I mean this Pete Rossi character. He calls down for a drink from the bar about every half-hour from” — he checked his notes — “from about one in the morning until nearly four A.M..”

“From the bar? They have a bar?”

“Yeah. Though for my dough it ain't much of a bar.”

Kaproski's words seemed to come back to him; he looked up guiltily and cleared his throat. “Well, I had to check, of course ... Anyways, there doesn't seem to be much doubt.”

“Who brought him his drinks?”

“The same waiter every time,” Kaproski said, happy to change the subject. He frowned. “If Rossi left his room, it would have to be between drinks, and frankly, that don't seem possible. Between ordering his drinks, and waiting for them to get upstairs — or at least being there in his room when they arrived —” He shook his head. “The Farnsworth is near by, but it ain't that near by. Of course we could check on cabbies, but they don't have a stand at the Pendleton, and to walk to the corner would take time. Even to run. And to depend on the chance of picking up a cruiser at that hour ...”

Clancy frowned. “They have a bar — open all night, apparently — but they don't have a cab-stand?”

“Well, it ain't open all night,” Kaproski said. “It closes at four-thirty, but sure. Bar but no cab-stand. Hell, Lieutenant, lots of these small hotels got liquor licenses but no cab-stand.”

“Let's get on with it,” Clancy said. He inched his pad closer to him and picked up a pencil, preparing to take notes. “So he didn't leave his room all night. Or at least not during the time we're interested in.” He looked up suddenly. “You're sure about the waiter?”

There was a surprised silence for a moment. “Nothing in the information we turned up so far. Of course, we weren’t looking for anything like that. You didn’t ask ...” The Sergeant paused. “Wait a second. Hold the line.” There was silence for several moments; when the Sergeant came back on his voice held a touch of satisfaction. “I thought the name of that hotel where she worked sounded familiar! I don’t know if you can call it a connection or not, but the beauty parlor she worked in is in the same hotel where Johnny Rossi lives.”

Clancy felt the old familiar tingle run along his spine like barefoot mice. He gripped the receiver tighter. “Can you find out if they ever met. Sergeant? And in what circumstances — assuming they did?”

“I don’t know if I can today.” Sergeant Martin sounded dubious. “I doubt it. It’s after six, here; the beauty parlor in the hotel is probably closed at this hour, but we’ll do the best we can. If I can’t get it tonight I’ll check it out first thing in the morning. And I’ll have somebody go back and talk to the husband tonight if he’s home; although of course he could have gone with her, you know. I’ll have the used-car lot checked on tomorrow, too. And I’ll have someone talk to the neighbors again. Tonight, I mean.”

“The sooner the better,” Clancy said. “Call me anytime; as soon as you have anything. This thing is hotting up, and you might just have the answer out there.”

“We’ll get right on it. Now that we know the story we can do a lot better job. Anything else?”

“That’s about it for now. No, wait — how about a picture?”

“We’ll ask the husband for one. If he’s home, that is.” The Sergeant hesitated. “We’ll have to break it to him, anyways ...”



“I’d hold on that,” Clancy advised. “After all, the only identification of the dead woman we have is a sketchy description taken from a driver’s license. We could be wrong, you know. It might not even be her. A picture, of course, would help a lot.”

“You may be right.” Sergeant Martin sounded relieved. “The man who went over to talk to the neighbors said they said Renick has been nervous as hell lately, anyway. No sense in upsetting him if there isn’t any good reason ...”

“But you’ll get me a picture?”

“We’ll get one for you somehow,” the Sergeant said. “I’ll have it out on the teletype inside of half-an-hour. Like I said, they only live a couple of blocks from here. We’ll handle the husband somehow. Or he may not even be mere.”

“As long as I get a shot,” Clancy said. “And thanks a lot.”

“We’ll get right on it,” Sergeant Martin said, and broke the connection.

Clancy hung up slowly, his mind nibbling at the thought that the dead woman had worked at the same hotel where Rossi had lived. In California. And now the two of them were dead, murdered, in New York; both killed within a day of each other. Coincidence? Hardly ... And then there was the fact that Pete Rossi was in town, and preparing to go back very soon. But he hadn’t made any plane reservation until after he had discovered his brother was dead. Why? Could he have been the trigger? That didn’t sound very much like the stories he had heard about the Rossi brothers and their closeness to each other. Nor did it seem very logical if the Syndicate was suspicious of both of them. Unless, of course, the Syndicate had given Pete the job just to prove he was clean, and he couldn’t leave until he knew he hadn’t slopped up the job at the Farnsworth. But he had

been at the Pendleton, in his room, when the shooting took place, unless Kap was wrong. And Kap was seldom wrong on things like this. None of it made any sense ...

He was suddenly conscious of Stanton talking. He looked up.

“What did you say?”

“I started to give my report,” Stanton said.

“Oh,” Clancy moved his pad closer, picked up his pencil and nodded. “Well, start again. I wasn’t listening.”

“O.K.,” Stanton said agreeably. He referred to his notes. “Well, like you told me, I went back to the New Yorker and checked on that elevator operator and the starter, too, but neither one of them remembered anything about the blonde. The operator ...”

“Was it the same crew?”

“Yeah. The shift hours there are twelve hours on and twelve off, four days. They got a screwy setup.” He paused, considering. “But nowhere near as screwy as the police department. Anyways, this operator tells me he don’t remember a thing. He says all passengers look alike to him. He don’t know it, but all elevator operators look alike to me. Anyways, that was no soap, but I got an idea. You know the bellhops in those big hotels punch a ticket every time they take somebody upstairs — to make sure they don’t goof off, I guess. I figured maybe a bellhop might have been on the same elevator; when I come into the hotel that first time she was just getting into the elevator and I couldn’t see if it was full or not. Or who was on it. So I got hold of the bell-captain and we started checking the slips.”

“Good thinking,” Clancy said approvingly. “Any luck?”

Somewhere ... and in connection with the case. At the hospital? No ... His eyes suddenly narrowed; that was the description of the man who had pushed past him into the reconverted brownstone when he had first visited Ann Renick; the rude bastard. He sighed deeply. It was probably also the description of half the inhabitants of reconverted brownstone-fronts all over New York City. He turned back to Kaposki.

“Did the doorman hear where they were going?”

“No; he was too busy loading me trunk. And he didn’t recognize the driver, either. It was a Yellow, but that’s all he noticed.” Kaposki leaned over the desk. “We can find the cab easy enough, Lieutenant.

From his route-sheets when he checks into the garage tonight after work. It’s simple.”

“Yeah,” Clancy said bitterly. “Or tomorrow.” He banged his fist on the desk. “Time! That’s the problem, don’t you understand? We don’t have time to wait for cab-drivers to check into garages; or for anything else, either! Time ...” He sighed, fighting off his feeling of depression and frustration. “You’re right, of course, Kap.

Well; if we don’t get anything else tonight, we’ll check on the garage.”

Doc Freeman frowned. “Who’s this Roland?”

Clancy looked at him. “Probably the first violinist of the Philharmonic catching a train from Penn Station for Philadelphia. Or a sign-painter from Weehawken. With his short but stacked wife. I told you I was catching at straws.” He pulled himself to his feet, reaching over to the filing cabinet for his hat. “Well, let’s get on our way.”

Where?" Doc Freeman asked.

"To eat?" Stanton asked.

"Down to Centre Street," Clancy said. "That picture ought to be coming in on the teletype by now." He looked at the others evenly. "Unless somebody has a better idea?"

There was utter silence.

"That's what I thought," Clancy said flatly, and led the way from the room.

gets here! Why in the name of God don't you learn to do things when you're told, without a million questions!"

Kaproski's eyes widened, showing hurt. "I was only just asking, Lieutenant."

"I'm sorry, Kap. I haven't any right to talk to you that way, or to anyone else. God knows you've done as much work on this case as I have, and a lot better work, too. You'll just have to accept my apology. I'm a little on edge. I'm sorry, Kap."

Kaproski's heavy features softened. "That's all right, Lieutenant. You're just tired, is all."

Clancy looked up at the big solicitous face. "How about you? You've been up as long as me. Probably longer."

"Me? I'm a tough Polack." Kaproski grinned. "I'll wait for the picture in the teletype room, Lieutenant."

He strode off down the hall, side-stepping passersby alertly, his wide shoulders a bit straighter for Clancy's words. Doc Freeman glanced at the Lieutenant curiously.

"You're a funny guy, Clancy."

"Hilarious," Clancy agreed.

"I don't mean about Kaproski. I mean, what do you want to see Sam Wise for?" Doc Freeman shook his head in non-understanding. "Haven't you had enough cops-and-robbers for one day? If Sam's in with the Inspector, all you're going to be asking for is grief, going in there. Why don't we tell Kaproski to bring that picture down to that little Italian restaurant in the next block? At least that way we can be having something to eat while we're waiting."

"Sure," Stanton said in complete accord. "That's an idea, Lieutenant."

nothing. Captain Wise took a pipe from his pocket and sucked on it noisily without lighting it.

“You look like the wrath of God, Clancy. I’m the one that’s supposed to be sick. How’s it going?”

Clancy closed his eyes, abandoning the mystery of the Captain’s presence. “Horrible.”

Captain Wise seemed to tense a bit. Inspector Clayton entered the act. “What’s on your mind, Clancy?”

“Retirement,” Clancy said softly, opening his eyes and staring over Captain Wise’s grizzled head, over Inspector Clayton’s carved features, at the blank wall beyond.

“Retirement, and a small fishing stream somewhere in the hills, and a little thatched cottage with roses twining around the Goddamned door ...”

“Balls!” Sam Wise’s brusqueness turned into a shamefaced sigh. “All right, Clancy; yell at me. Go ahead and yell at me. But believe me, I did everything I could ...”

“Yell at you?” Clancy’s eyes returned from the vision he had actually — to his own surprise — been able to conjure up on the blank wall. He sat a bit straighter in his chair, waking up. “Why should I yell at you?”

“I did everything I could,” the Captain repeated quietly. His eyes sought affirmation from the stiff figure of his superior. “Believe me. Ask the Inspector. But I’m only a Captain, you understand. I’m not the Commissioner.”

“For which we praise the Lord,” Clancy murmured, and then grinned, avoiding the eye of Inspector Clayton, “No, that’s not true. I wish you were the Commissioner, Sam. Come on; what’s on your mind?”

Captain Sam Wise took a deep breath. His eyes avoided the Lieutenant's. "Chalmers didn't get hold of you?"

This was interesting. Clancy's eyes went from one to the other. "Chalmers? No."

"What time did you leave the precinct?"

"About twenty minutes ago. Maybe a few minutes more. Traffic was a bitch. Why?"

"You must have just missed him, then," Captain Wise said. He looked at the tired figure beside him with a touch of compassion. "He ... he has a warrant ..."

Clancy sat up. Storm clouds began to gather in his angry dark eyes. "A warrant? For what?"

"A habeas corpus. For Johnny Rossi." Captain Wise returned the glare of the other evenly. "Where did you hide him, Clancy?"

"I asked you for twenty-four hours," Clancy said bitterly, accusingly. "I thought you were my friend!"

"I am your friend," Captain Wise said quietly. "You're tired; you're not thinking. I said I'd do the best I could and I did. But I'm still only a Captain." He shrugged. "And you didn't give me a hint, even, of what was going on. You haven't been in touch once all day. You could have called me at home, you ... You didn't give me any ammunition ..."

"Ammunition?" Clancy smiled coldly. "I didn't have any ammunition." His eyes studied the stocky figure across the desk from him; Sam Wise returned the look a moment and then his eyes fell. A suspicion suddenly formed in Clancy's mind. "What else, Sam? Give me all of it."

The Captain swallowed. "He says he's going to bring charges, Clancy. Dereliction of duty, obstruction of justice

... He was talking pretty wild over the phone after he got that writ.”

“That’s a laugh,” Clancy said disgustedly. “If it hadn’t been for Chalmers this thing would have been handled altogether differently from the start.” He shook his head hopelessly. “Well, I suppose it’s too late to worry about that now.”

“Clancy, Clancy!” Captain Sam Wise was leaning over, speaking intently. “Why not beat him to the punch? Tell us where you’ve got this hood stashed, and why. Tell us everything you’ve dug up. We’ll get every man on it we can.” His eyes sought confirmation from the Inspector, who nodded quietly.

Clancy stared at the two men. “I’ve dug up so much it would take all night to tell it. And none of it makes any sense.”

Try!” Captain Wise said imploringly. “It has to make sense. Why not trust us, Clancy? It’s the only way to save your neck.”

“I suppose I’ll have to tell you,” Clancy said, and smiled faintly. “But it won’t save my neck.”

“We’ll see about that. Why not start — well, at that picture you’re waiting for from teletype. Who is it?”

“That?” Clancy shook his head dispiritedly. “That’s nothing. It’s just a routine identification on someone we’re pretty sure we’ve already identified anyway. It was just another straw to grab at, is all.”

There was a tap at the door. Stanton put his head in without an invitation.

“Chalmers,” he said quickly. “He’s coming down the hall, Lieutenant.”



He was pushed aside even as he spoke; from the doorway the trim figure of the Assistant District Attorney stared at me occupants of the room with a cold smile of triumph on his thin Ups. He turned, closed the door in Stanton's face, and then turned back.

"Well, gentlemen," he said softly.

"Have a seat," Clancy said wearily. He jerked a thumb toward the chair at his side.

"I'll stand, if you don't mind," Chalmers said, purposely repeating Clancy's words of the previous day, and repeating them with obvious relish. He reached into his pocket, bringing out a legal-sized paper. His pale blue eyes were cold. "How long did you really think you could avoid me, Lieutenant?"

Clancy didn't bother to answer the question. He looked at the paper in Chalmers's hand. "Is mat for me?"

The thin smile remained fixed. "Yes, Lieutenant. It's for you. It's a writ of —"

"I know what it is," Clancy said shortly. "Consider me served."

He reached up, twitched the paper from Chalmers' fingers and shoved it into a pocket without looking at it. The cold smile on Chalmers' lips faded. "Well, Lieutenant?" "Well, what?"

Chalmers took a deep breath. "Well, are you going to honor that writ, or not?"

"I'll honor it," Clancy said. "Right now I'm resting. I've had a long and hard day. I'm tired. Why don't you sit down, Mr. Chalmers?"

Chalmers glared at him. “Now you listen here. Lieutenant; you’re in enough trouble without any more stalling ...”

“I’m not stalling,” Clancy said. “I’m simply tired. Believe me.” He yawned widely to prove his contention and then looked at his wrist-watch without actually seeing it. “In any event I don’t suppose it makes much difference now ...”

There was another tap at the door. Kaproski stuck his head in.

“The picture. Lieutenant.” He shoved some papers toward Clancy with nervous fingers, aware that he was interrupting a meeting. “There was a message with it, too.”

“Thanks,” Clancy said, and took the papers. Kaproski stared at the others a moment and then closed the door behind him.

Chalmers leaned over importantly. “What’s that?”

“You’ll find out soon enough,” Clancy said. He glanced down idly at the teletyped message that had accompanied the picture.

Nobody at home at the Renicks [it read]. This is the only picture we could get, borrowed from the neighbors. It’s a shot of the wedding breakfast. Will try to get a proper portrait tomorrow — will also check out all other details and inform soonest Martin.

Clancy shrugged, shoved the flimsy piece of paper into his pocket, and turned to the picture. It showed a large room with a happy bunch of people seated in relaxed poses around a laden table; bowls of flowers decorated the tablecloth, spaced evenly, bright and gay. Someone in the immediate foreground was holding a glass of what appeared to be champagne up to the camera with a silly drunken grin on his face; the glass seemed to be in danger

with mouth open, towering beside the others with a puzzled frown on his face; and Clancy bending forward staring excitedly at the picture in his hand.

“Yeah? What is it, Lieutenant?”

Clancy looked up; the tableau was broken. He looked at his wrist-watch again, seeing it this time.

“Stanton — out to the airport! United Airlines flight 825 for Los Angeles from Idlewild! It leaves a few minutes after midnight — Pete Rossi has a reservation on it ...”

“Right!” Stanton said. He started towards the door and then paused.

“Yeah,” Clancy said dryly. “It’s better to know what you’re going for. His luggage. I want you to let him check it in; once it’s on the conveyor belt, you go downstairs to the loading area, get hold of his bags, and open them ...”

“What am I looking for, Lieutenant?”

“A shotgun,” Clancy said quietly. “It will have been dismantled to fit into his suitcase; don’t touch it. There may be prints, although I doubt it, wrapped that way in all those clothes ...”

“Do I arrest Rossi?”

Clancy stared at him. “That shotgun is a murder weapon. What do you think?”

“I think I arrest him.”

“I think so, too,” Clancy said abruptly. “Get going.”

“He done it?” Kaproski asked, amazed. “He blasted his own brother?”

“He was an accessory,” Clancy said grimly. “They fry, too.” He looked around. “Where’s Doc Freeman?”

“He must have got tired waiting,” Kaposki said. “He just got up and wandered away.”

Chalmers had been watching the scene with frozen face; now he interrupted. “Murder weapon? A killing? What’s this all about, Lieutenant?”

“Quiet,” Clancy said. He started to rise and then settled back again, his eyes bright with thought. “Kap; let me have that list of sailings for tonight.”

Memory was clicking sharply now; he took the piece of newsprint from the large detective’s hand and ran his finger quickly down the list. His finger stopped; he looked up.

“Kap; you didn’t check on freighters, did you?”

“You didn’t say nothing about freighters.”

“That’s because I was stupid,” Clancy said. “They take passengers, too.” He nodded as the last piece of the puzzle fell into place. “If I hadn’t been stupid I wouldn’t even have needed that picture. It was all there.” He folded the list, tacking it into his pocket.

“Inspector, I’ll need a squad car.”

Inspector Clayton nodded, reached for his telephone without asking questions, and then paused.

“How many men, Lieutenant?”

Clancy calculated. “Three should, be enough, together with Kaposki and myself. Plain-clothes; and armed.”

“Together with me, too,” Captain Wise said. He waved aside any possible objections. “I’m all right. This is maybe the medicine I need, and not chicken soup.”

the low barrier that fronted the water beyond Pier 17. There was silence as the lights were extinguished; the men slowly emerged.

The *S.V. Aalborg* was in the process of finishing its final preparations for departure. Deck winches on the 12,000 ton motor-vessel were hooked onto the hatch-covers, slowly lowering them into place. Spotlights mounted on the corners of the long pier warehouse aided in lighting the work; deckhands trotted about, obeying the orders of the deck-officer calling to them by megaphone from the heights of the bridge above. Friendly lights winked from portholes, indicative of a separate life within. Clancy led his group to one side, into the shadows of the still adjoining warehouse that bulked in darkness from Pier 17.

“We’re after a double killer,” he said quietly. There was a gasp from Chalmers, but he continued without paying attention to it. “He’s undoubtedly armed, so let’s not take any chances. The main thing is that we can’t let him get away — ten miles from shore on that ship and he’s out of our hands. Sam, you and two of your men cover the entrance to the pier. Kaproski, you and I and ...” He tilted his head questioningly towards the third plain-clothes man.

“Wilken, sir.”

“... and Wilken will go inside. If the passengers have already cleared Customs and boarded the ship, we’ll have to try and take him in his cabin. I hope that’s not the case, because I don’t want to start an international incident, but if they haven’t, and they’re still on the pier, we’ll take him there. Just remember; he’s armed.”

“This guy we’re after,” Captain Wise said. “What’s he look like?”

“He’s a medium-sized guy, stocky, set up to look like one of those beatniks,” Clancy said. “He’ll probably still be sticking to his disguise; a beard — false — and dark glasses.”

“Who is this man?” Chalmers demanded.

Clancy paid him no attention. “He may be accompanied by a short blond woman.” He looked around. “We’re wasting time. Come on.”

Chalmers jutted out his jaw, the perfect picture of a crusading Assistant District Attorney. “I don’t know what this is all about, Lieutenant, but you’re not getting out of my sight. I’m going with you.”

Clancy looked at him disinterestedly. “Good. If there’s any shooting, stick around.” He turned back to the others. “Kap, Wilken and I will go first; you follow. Let’s not bunch up too much. If anything happens inside, don’t leave that exit unguarded. The thing is to bottle him up on the pier, even if we louse things up inside.”

Captain Wise nodded. Clancy turned and started to walk evenly along the waterfront, accompanied by Kaposki and Wilken. Chalmers hurried forward, catching up. The prow of the motor-vessel loomed over them now, the numbered depth-markings sharp and clear in the white glare of the spotlights. Voices from the deck drifted down to them, intermingled with the muffled roar of automobiles speeding past on the expressway over their heads. They came to the corner of the warehouse on Pier 16A; the lights from the ship disappeared behind them. The darkness of the night seemed even more complete for sudden contrast. Clancy paused, looking about, and then approached the pier entrance. The huge doors fronting the silent warehouse had been folded back sufficiently to allow automobile entrance

back into the cover of a pile of palletted sacks, dragging the others with him. He peered about them in the direction of the doorway; beyond the figure hurrying down the empty aisle he could see Captain Wise and the others drifting across the entrance, blocking it.

“It’s aim! Get ready, Kap!”

He waited, one eye locked to a space between the corners of the bulging sacks, holding his breath, his pulse quickening. Behind him he could hear the muffled breathing of his two companions. Luck? No, I don’t think so, he thought to himself; and then shoved the thought forcibly away, maintaining his view of the approaching man.

His quarry passed beneath one of the overhead lights; for an instant the face beneath the broad-brimmed hat was partially revealed. The spade beard could be seen, and the reflection from the dark glasses; then he passed the cone of light and the taut face disappeared into shadow once again.

He came towards the stack of palletted bags without actually seeing them, his spectacled eyes fixed on the gangplank and the two men standing there. Clancy waited, tense; and then, as the hurrying figure was about to pass his hiding place, he stepped sharply from his cover, interposing himself between the man and his object. The stocky figure pulled up short; the dark glasses swung about at this unexpected obstruction. There was the barest pause and then, with a hoarse cry, he stepped back and reached for his pocket. Kaproski’s thick fingers clamped on the other’s arm; the man tugged back fiercely, panting. Footsteps clattered across the concrete as Captain Wise and another ran up, converging on the struggling group in the center of the warehouse. Wilken and the ship’s officer

were also running up. The man suddenly ceased fighting; the white face buried itself in the collar of the raincoat.

“What is this?” The voice was muffled by the cloth. “What do you want?”

“It’s all up,” Clancy said evenly. “You’re under arrest, Mr. ‘Renick.’ For two murders.”

The man clamped in Kaproski’s rigid grasp seemed to collapse. Chalmers had had all he could stand. He shoved his way to the front.

“What’s this all about, Clancy?” he demanded. “Who is this man?”

Clancy stared at him. All of the fatigue and weariness of the past two days welled up in him. Now that the case was over, the drive that had carried him through the past few hours seemed to disappear. He looked at Chalmers blankly.

“Him?” he said at last, dully. “You wanted him badly enough to issue a writ for him. This is Johnny Rossi ...”





## Chapter Ten

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### Monday-11:30 A.M.

Lieutenant Clancy, clean-shaven and with a rested look on his face, swung through the doors of the 52nd Precinct with a thick envelope tucked under one arm. He smiled brightly at the desk Sergeant but received a rather worried look in return, "Good morning, Sergeant. What's the trouble?"

"Good morning, Lieutenant." The Sergeant bent over his desk a bit conspiratorially. "Captain Wise is waiting for you in your office. He's been there nearly a half-hour ..."

"I know," Clancy said cheerfully. "Is he alone?"

"Doc Freeman's with him," the Sergeant said, happy that his news had been received so equably.

"Good." Clancy grinned at him. "Get Kaprold and Stanton, will you? Tell them to bring their reports into my office. We've got work to do."

He walked down the corridor, a soundless whistle on his lips accompanying the rhythm of his springy step. He stepped into his office, scaled his hat neatly onto a file cabinet and sat down at his desk. He tilted his head pleasantly in the direction of his visitors.

"Good morning, gentlemen."

"Where've you been?" Captain Wise said evenly. "You said eleven."

with him, and then when I take a measly two minutes to go to the toilet ...”

“Yeah.” Captain Wise turned back to Clancy. “What report? I don’t even know what this is all about. You blow right after that business at the dock ...” He held up his big hand.

“Sure, I know you were tired. And sure, I know that was Johnny Rossi we picked up on the pier; and sure, Pete Rossi had me shotgun stashed in his suitcase at the airport. And sure, I believe they killed the Renicks — whose bodies you finally got around to telling us where they were. But I should try to explain it to somebody else? When I don’t know for myself what happened?”

Clancy grinned. “I’ll excuse you, Sam, but not Doc: He was in on the thing from the beginning; he should have seen the light.”

“Who, me?” Doc Freeman snorted derisively. “It took you long enough, and you’re supposed to be a detective. Me, I’m no detective. I’m a doctor. Which reminds me — I’ve got work to do. So let’s get on with it.”

“Yeah,” Captain Wise agreed. “It’s almost lunchtime. Let’s get going.”

“That also held me up,” Clancy said almost absently. “I stopped and had a second breakfast on my way back ...” He saw shocked frowns beginning to form on the two faces across from him.

“All right,” he said quietly. “I’ll tell you the story. From the beginning. Doc can confirm the part he knows, and Kaproski and Stanton have their reports. I’ll put the whole thing together and see that you get it later, Sam. Captain.”

“So don’t talk so much,” Captain Wise said. “And say something.”

Clancy paused to tuck a cigarette between his lips and light it. He flipped the match into the ash tray on his desk, picked up a pencil, and began to twiddle it.

“Here’s the story,” he said quietly. “Let’s start out in Los Angeles with the Rossi brothers —

“The Rossi brothers are tapping the Syndicate till and putting the money away in different foreign countries, laying up against the day when maybe the law will break up the whole profitable organization. Or against the day when they might want to retire, which the Syndicate often frowns upon. Or maybe they just couldn’t stand seeing all that long green passing through their hands without getting itchy fingers. I don’t know; but in any event they were doing it. From what I heard from Porky Frank last night, they must have been doing it for some time. Well, as it must to all men, intelligence eventually came to the accounting section of the Syndicate. They began to wonder what happened to the law of probabilities out on the west coast all of a sudden — their take from that area wasn’t at all what it should have been, according to their mathematical wizards. They started checking. And the Rossi brothers awoke one fine morning with a fistful of trouble about to graduate in their direction.”

“Just tell it,” Captain Wise said sourly. “Don’t sing it.”

Clancy grinned at him cheerfully. “Well, just about that time a new manicurist came to work at the beauty parlor of the Drake Hotel — which is where Johnny Rossi lived — and one day she’s called up to his suite to give him a manicure, and in the course of polishing his pinkies she laughingly happens to mention that he’s the spitting image of her husband ...”

The others were listening intently. “That was the teletype picture?” Captain Wise asked.

“That was the picture. I found myself looking at the man we had talked to at the Farnsworth Hotel.” Clancy shrugged, his smile fading. “Of course I should have been able to see through the deal even without the picture, but I didn’t. Well, let’s go on —

“So a patsy is born. Mr. Johnny Rossi gets himself a wonderful idea. He sits down with his big brother Pete and says something like this: ‘Here’s the answer to our problem. All we have to do is arrange for all the blame for the shortages to be laid at my door — and then have me knocked off. The pressure will be off you, and I’ll be in Europe with the dough when you finally make it.’ The ‘me’ to be knocked off, of course, being Mr. Albert Renick, innocent used-car salesman and husband of our manicurist.

“So he arranges another manicure as soon as possible, and while the girl is trimming his cuticles he says to her, ‘Say; I’d like to meet your husband. I may be able to put something in his way ...’”

Stanton couldn’t help but interrupt. “And she was stupid enough to think a hood like Rossi was handing out premiums?”

“I don’t say she was stupid,” Clancy said. “Let’s say she was inexperienced. Anyway, she couldn’t see any harm in introducing her husband to the big-shot living in the best suite in the Drake Hotel, with money to bum. And once Rossi had Mr. Renick all alone, he made him a simple proposition: either go along with an impersonation, and get a lot of money and a trip to Europe out of it — or face the possibility that his wife might suffer an acid mud-pack ...”

knew he was at the Farnsworth?” He looked at his superior steadily. “And then there were rumors that Rossi was being hidden by the New York police; somebody had to start those rumors. I think we’ll find that Pete Rossi started them himself. Then there was the fact that the man in Room 456 didn’t play *gin* rummy — I’ll admit that wasn’t a big thing by itself, but it sounded a bit odd for the head of west-coast gambling. It was just another nibble; another itch. And later, when we found he didn’t even have a toothbrush with him, or a clean shirt, or a spare pair of socks ...”

“What about that?”

“Well, obviously he never intended to stay until Tuesday, so why had he asked for police protection that long? I don’t pretend to know what story Rossi fed this Renick; maybe we’ll find out, when and if Rossi tells everything he’s got to tell.”

“He’ll tell,” Captain Wise promised.

Clancy nodded. “He probably will.” He thought back. “And that young doctor in the hospital screwed me up for awhile with his idiotic knifing of a dead man, but that really didn’t lose us too much time. I couldn’t figure out at first why Pete Rossi, after being so insistent on knowing where his brother was — which I could understand — quietly arranged to go home after he had seen his brother’s dead body. Once I saw the whole picture, of course, it became clear. The idea was that the patsy had to be killed — Pete Rossi couldn’t leave until he was sure the shotgun blast had been fatal. He knew we couldn’t hide the body forever; he knew that eventually Chalmers would insist on knowing where his witness was, even to the extent of getting a writ of habeas corpus — and then the whole story would come out. And I’m sure he felt that if he was back on the west coast when it did, it might be better all around.”

“But even so ...” Captain Wise began. Clancy lifted a hand.

“When I was in the girl’s apartment, all she had on her mind — until she found out I was from the police — was that boat trip. She offered me a drink, and she said: ‘We’ve got about everything except Aquavit ...’ And when she was talking about the trip she asked me: “Do they speak English on board?’ which was a clear clue that she wasn’t going on either an American or a British ship. And then, later, when she was asking me if I’d ever been to Europe, she mentioned some cities there, and the first one she mentioned was Copenhagen ...”

“Now you want to remember that her trip was on top of her mind. And when I looked at the list of freighters sailing, and found that one of the non-American two that were going to Europe Saturday night was bound for Oslo, and the other was the *Aalborg*, bound for Denmark ...”

He shrugged. Silence fell in the little room, broken at last by Doc Freeman.

“They drink Aquavit in Oslo, too,” he said quietly.

Clancy grinned. “That’s what Porky Frank told me last night. Fortunately I didn’t know that before. Anyway, the Norwegian freighter sailed at ten o’clock Saturday night, even before that wedding picture came over the teletype.”

“And if Rossi had been on that one?” Captain Wise asked.

“He wasn’t,” Clancy said, and smiled gently.

Captain Wise thought about it a moment and then nodded and heaved himself to his feet. Doc Freeman followed and then, more slowly, Stanton and Kaproski.

“Well, I guess that does it,” Captain Wise said, looking down at Clancy with poorly-concealed pride. He straightened his face. “I’ll want it written up and turned in as soon as possible; but at least I can face the reporters now. If they want details, maybe the Rossi boys can clear them up.”

“If they change their minds and don’t feel like talking for the record,” Clancy said, “just threaten to throw them out on the street. The word I got last night from Porky Frank is that Chicago is exporting some talent this way.”

“We’ll take care of them,” Captain Wise said. His eyes softened. “It was a good job, Clancy. But a little close ...”

Doc Freeman broke in hastily. “I’ll get the autopsy results to you as soon as possible to include in your report.”

“Thanks,” Clancy said. “I’ll write it up and get it into your office right away, Sam.”

The four men looked at the slender Lieutenant a moment in silence, and then one by one they filed out. Clancy leaned back comfortably, staring at the reports left by Kaposki and Stanton, the envelope he had from Sergeant Martin, and the notes he had begun to make himself. He sighed and sat up, reached for all the papers, and swept them together in front of him. His other hand fumbled in his jacket pocket for a cigarette; he pulled one out, lit it, and then turned to flip the burned matchstick out of the window.

And then he froze.

The air-shaft was free of clothing. The clothesline hung limp and empty between the hovering tenements. He stared, mouth open. Was it possible? Was it on a *Monday* that he had seen the miracle of the bare clothesline? On a *Monday*?

Only in the 52nd Precinct, he thought with a tight grin, and turned back to his desk, drawing the papers together in front of him, reaching for his pen. Only in the 52nd Precinct

...

THE END