

GRIPPING, SMASHING DETECTIVE STORIES

★ BLACK MASK ★

SEPT., 1933
20¢

"A WOMAN
CAN KILL"

By RAOUL WHITFIELD

"WHISPERING JUSTICE"

An ED JENKINS story

By ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

A brand new story of Capt. STEVE MACBRIDE

By FREDERICK NEBEL

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Whispering Justice

Date of first publication: 1933

Author: Erle Stanley Gardner (1889-1970)

Date first posted: Mar. 27, 2022

Date last updated: Mar. 27, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220371

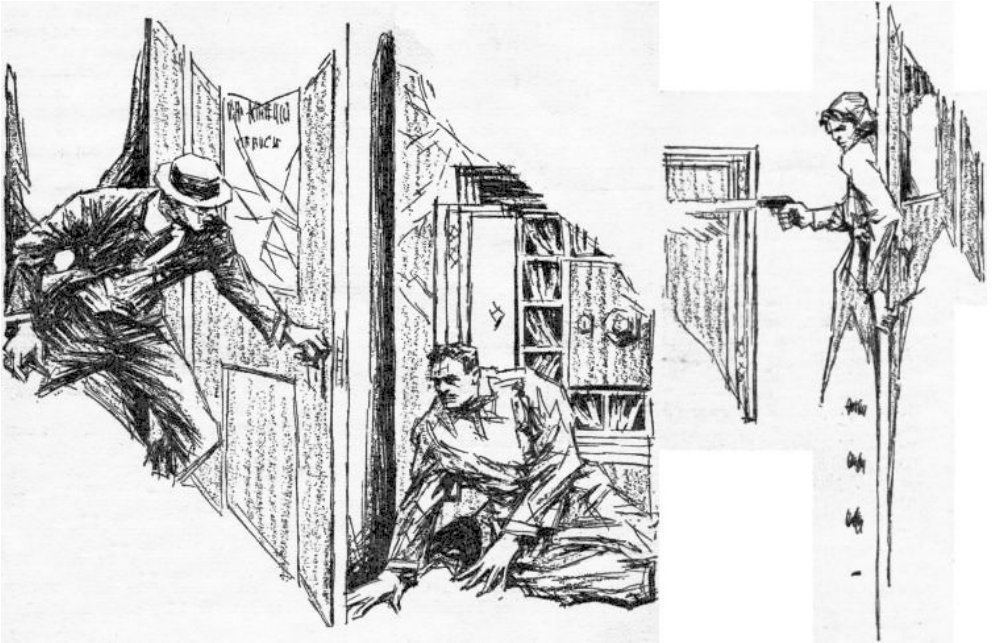
This eBook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Whispering Justice

A story of ED JENKINS, The Phantom Crook

By
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

First published *Black Mask*, September 1933.



Ed Jenkins invades the slimy web of crime to get loose an innocent victim



he sound of the siren purred through the loud-speaker on my roadster. Then came the voice of the police announcer repeating in a mechanical monotone: “Calling car thirty-one.”

I slowed the motor to listen.

The voice of the announcer continued in its same expressionless tone: “Car thirty-one—go to 659 Porter Street. Make a quick run. Howard Cove, having an apartment at that address, found a woman burglar ransacking his rooms. There was an exchange of shots. The burglar is believed to be wounded.

“Here is a description of the burglar: A woman twenty-four years old, height about five feet three inches, weight about one hundred ten pounds, hair dark, eyes dark, wearing imitation Mink coat, brown skirt, suede shoes. She ran from the back door of the apartment, down an alley, and disappeared. She will probably be found in the neighborhood, as it is believed she did not have an automobile. We will repeat the description . . .”

I flung the car out from the curb, and stepped on the throttle, without bothering to listen to a repetition of the description.

I was on Ninth Street, and the next block was Porter. I was in the beat of police radio car thirty-one, but probably nearer to the address than the police car. I swung to the right and crossed Eighth Street. Midway in the block I saw a young woman walking towards me with nervous, rapid steps. She wore an imitation Mink coat, a brown skirt, and a tight-fitting hat.

I swung the car in a circle and in to the curb.

“Hello, cutie,” I said.

Her face was white, save where the orange rouge on the cheeks showed painfully distinct, but her eyes were glittering. She flung up her chin in a gesture of contempt.

“Oh come on, cutie,” I said, “nobody’s going to bite you. Just a little ride, and maybe a picture show.”

A siren screamed in the distance.

The girl paused, standing as rigid as a startled deer.

Then she smiled.

“I don’t mind if I do,” she said, and walked towards the roadster.

I flung the door open. She got into the car, and dropped back against the cushions with a tired sigh.

The siren on the police car sounded measurably closer.

I coaxed the car into speed and skidded a bit at the corner.

She kept up the pretense.

“Well, big boy,” she said, “you seem to be in a hurry.”

I sped down Eighth Street and slowed for a right-hand turn.

Abruptly, the loud-speaker underneath the dash burst into sound, as a siren wailed its demand for attention, and the mechanical voice said in emotionless tones: “Calling car twenty-nine. Swing in towards 659 Porter street. Keep an eye out for a female bandit with black bobbed hair, a close-fitting hat, black eyes, an imitation Mink coat, brown skirt and suede shoes. She is about twenty-four years of age; height five feet three inches; weight about one hundred ten pounds.”

The girl gave a little gasp, turned towards me with eyes that were wide and startled.

“A cop!” she exclaimed, and reached for the door of the car.

I slammed my foot on the brake, grabbed her left arm.

“Take it easy, sister,” I said, “I’m not a cop; I’m a crook.”

She had the door open, one foot out on the running-board, the wind whipping her skirt. She stared back at me over her shoulder, with a doubtful expression.

“What are you doing with that thing on your car?”

“Simply checking up on the cops.”

“How do I know you’re telling the truth?”

“Because you aren’t wearing bracelets right now. Do you think I’d have let you go this far, without making a pinch, if I’d been a dick? There was a call came through just before I picked you up, calling car thirty-one, reporting a robbery of a man named Howard Cove in an apartment house at 659 Porter Street. The description fits you.”

She made a grimace of disappointment.

“Ain’t that just my luck?” she asked.

“What?” I wanted to know.

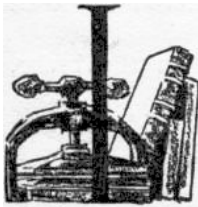
“To pick up a crook, when I wanted a nice, genteel petting party. I don’t know where they got the description from, but I’m not the one who was in the stick-up. I’m a manicurist who went out to the *Rex Arms Apartment* to doll up the fingernails of a cutie who was stepping out and couldn’t come to the shop. Then you come along and proposition me. I pull the virtuous stuff until I get a look at your eyes, and then decide it’s okey, and here you turn out to be a crook, and you think I’m one. What a hell of a break I get.”

Her eyes stared steadily at me, straightforward and sincere.

I removed my hand from her arm. It was wet and sticky. I looked down at the discolored palm.

“Okey, sister,” I said, “but you’ve got to get that bullet wound fixed up.”

She swayed towards me, then slumped forward in a dead faint.



didn’t like the doctor, but I hadn’t expected to, so I was nothing out. Doctors who make a specialty of dressing gunshot wounds, with no questions asked, are not, as a rule, the leaders of their profession.

He was tall, thin and cold-blooded, with a black mustache and wary, watchful eyes.

“You’re Doctor Krueg?” I asked.

He nodded. His eyes didn’t change expression. The man seemed standing perfectly still and holding his breath; like some long, thin spider feeling a preliminary tug at his web, but waiting until the fly should enmesh itself more securely, before coming into the open.

“‘Two-pair’ Kinney told me about you,” I said. “He told me the password was the last name in the telephone book, in case I should forget it.”

The black eyes bored into me with glittering scrutiny.

“What was it you wanted?” he asked.

I indicated the girl who was clinging to my side. Her left arm was out of the coat now, and a handkerchief which I had tied tightly around it, had checked the bleeding.

“It’s a simple wound,” I said. “The young woman, here.”

He stared at me, rather than at the wound.

“‘Two-pair’ Kinney, eh?” he said.

“Yes,” I told him.

He turned abruptly towards his private office.

“Come in here,” he said, “both of you.”

We walked into the private office. The girl was weak from excitement and loss of blood. I held her up with a supporting arm around her waist. At sight of the white-walled operating room, with the grim table, the glitter of instruments, and the glare of a cluster of lights, she shuddered.

“Keep your grit,” I told her. “It doesn’t amount to much; just a clean wound, but it’s got to be disinfected.”

Doctor Krueg raised his voice.

“Miss Tiel,” he called.

A door opened, and a young woman in the uniform of a nurse stepped into the room. She was cool, calm and efficient. She cast me a single appraising glance, then let her eyes drift to the left arm of the young woman, and the blood-stained handkerchief.

Doctor Krueg merely nodded.

The nurse came forward. With swiftly competent hands she slipped the imitation Mink coat from the girl's shoulders, untied the handkerchief, produced a pair of blunt-nosed scissors and clipped away the soggy sleeve of the waist.

The girl fainted again when she saw the round hole with the welling blood seeping down her forearm.

The nurse nodded to me and indicated the operating table. I lifted the girl on to it. Doctor Krueg filled a bowl with hot water from the tap, dropped three white tablets into the water from a blue bottle. He took a piece of cotton, dropped it into the hot water.

"Nothing serious," he said.

"Better make it snappy," I told him, "while she's still in a faint, then she won't know anything about it."

He continued to move with the same mechanical efficiency.

"If she doesn't like it, she can always faint again," he said.

The nurse held the bowl of warm water. Doctor Krueg washed the wound with antiseptic. He stopped the bleeding. The girl was regaining consciousness as the doctor wound bandage around the arm.

"The dressing should be changed tomorrow afternoon," he told me.

I nodded and pulled a wallet from my inside pocket.

"One hundred dollars," he said.

I gave him two fifties. He nodded and pocketed the money. The nurse held the fur coat up to the girl and indicated the blood-soaked sleeve.

"You'd better carry it over your arm," she said. "Wash it out with water when you get home."

I nodded and arranged the coat so that the sleeve was on the inside, and concealed the bandage on the girl's arm.

"Come," I told her.

As I closed the door, Doctor Krueg was looking at us with that inscrutable stare of glittering black concentration. He said no word of farewell; nor did I.

I piloted the girl down the long corridor of the building to the elevators, and down to the car, which I had parked in the alley. There was a convenient parking place there which was only apparent after you drove into the alley. "Two-pair" Kinney had told me about it. He said that Doctor Krueg kept it there because it was near the freight elevator, and bad cases could come up that way.

"He charged a hundred dollars?" the young woman asked.

"Yes," I said, "that's his specialty. He treats only emergency cases and never asks names."

"I'll pay you back," she said, "if you'll open my handbag for me, please."

"That can wait," I told her. "Where do you want to go?"

"Some hotel," she said.

"Haven't you got an apartment?"

"Yes, but I can't go to it."

"Why?"

"I can't explain why. I can't go to it. Take me to a hotel, please."

"You can't go to a hotel with your arm wounded, and in those clothes. You'll have to get some other clothes first," I told her.

"I can't get any other clothes," she said.

"Why?"

“Because I don’t dare go back to my apartment.”

“Look here,” I told her, “there’s no use kidding yourself about this, you’re in a jam. In the first place, if you go to a hotel without any baggage, that will arouse suspicion. In the second place, the morning papers will have a description of the woman bandit, and an account of the robbery. The bellboys or the clerk at the hotel will start checking up on your description, then they’ll tip off the police. You’ve got a wounded arm and you’ve got no baggage. What’s more, it’s late.”

She looked at me with a tired, pathetic look in her eyes.

“Have you got a spare bed?” she asked.

I nodded.

“That’s where I’m going to stay,” she told me.

I started to protest.

“It’s all right,” she said. “I’ve been around, and I know a square shooter when I see one.”

“I told you,” I said, sternly, “that I was a crook.”

“So’m I,” she told me, settling back against the cushions of the car with a little snuggling motion, and smiling up at me.

“Home, James,” she said, and closed her eyes.



had told her I was a crook, and had not lied. Yet, I could as well have told her that I was a private detective.

The city knew me as Bob Sabin, a private detective, whose business success had been based upon an uncanny knowledge of the underworld. The police also sought for me as Ed Jenkins, calling me The Phantom Crook, because I had so often slipped through their fingers. Neither public nor police suspected that Bob Sabin, the detective, and Ed Jenkins, the crook, were one and the same.

The police have announced a smug axiom: “Once a crook, always a crook.” Perhaps not even the police realize how frequently the truth of the axiom is demonstrated because of this attitude. Let a crook get sufficiently in the limelight to attract public attention, and immediately he becomes the goat for every unsolved crime that the police either cannot, or do not care to clear up.

In my own case, I had been wanted by the police of a dozen States. I had fought for years to clear up my record only to find that the police continued to blame crimes on me, whether I had been within a hundred miles of the scene or not.

And among the police, who are human, there is a small percentage who are crooked. These crooked police found me a very convenient means for hiding their misdeeds. Tagging me with their own crimes freed them from suspicion of guilt.

On the other side was the underworld. Those sinister prowlers, drawing their livelihood from crime, to whom human life and suffering are meaningless words, knew me, feared me, hated me. Too often, to save myself, I had enmeshed them in their own slimy webs, in which they had sought to ensnare me, to their own extermination or to such effect that they paid the penalty for their crimes.

Crooked police and the underworld alike sought my destruction or capture to be faced with a long term from which, a labeled crook, I could not escape. I was never at peace; always alert, my life and freedom ever at stake. And I had to live.

In the morning sun which streamed through the apartment window, I could see every little expression on the girl's face. And I could see that she had reached some definite decision during the night.

"My name's Edith," she said. "What do I call you?"

"Call me Ed," I told her.

She nodded her head.

"You said that you were a crook."

"Yes," I said, waiting for what was to come.

"What sort of a crook?"

"Well—I've never gone in for stick-up stuff or booze running."

She leaned forward across the table, and balanced her coffee cup on the edge of her plate.

"How about doing a job for me?" she asked.

"What sort of a job?" I wanted to know.

"The job that I fell down on last night."

"You were after something particular?" I asked.

She nodded.

"What?" I wanted to know.

"Look here," she said, "you knew about the Vivian Loring gems?"

"Only generally," I said. "That they had been taken to a jewelry store for cleaning and polishing; a messenger was returning them when a car drove up to the curb, and a man tried to hold up the messenger; the messenger put up a fight, shots were exchanged, the messenger was killed, the bandit got the gems and escaped, was subsequently captured by the police, and the gems are still missing. The bandit never would tell what he did with them."

"That's the newspaper version," she told me.

"All right," I said, "what's yours?"

She set her coffee cup back in the saucer, moved her left arm, winced with pain, and reached out with her right for a cigarette.

"Arm hurt much?" I asked.

"Sore," she told me.

"Any fever?"

"A little, I think, but not much. I feel sort of groggy."

"Slept all right?"

"Fine."

"All right, what's the inside dope on this Loring case?"

"Howard Cove did the job," she said.

"I thought it was a chap named Frank Jamie."

"That's the one the police arrested."

"All right," I told her, "go on from there."

She looked me full in the eyes.

"I'm Frank Jamie's pal," she said, and waited for me to make a remark.

I made none.

"We had an apartment together," she told me. "All my clothes are there."

I knew, then, why she hadn't dared go back to the apartment the night before, but said nothing.

"Frank had been one of a gang," she said. "I'd been a pal of his. I never thought very much about how he made his living. Probably you're not interested in my story?"

I nodded.

“Go on,” I said.

“Frank was arrested. He got a jolt and came out. He left me enough money to carry on. I carried on and waited for him.”

“Then what?” I asked.

“I didn’t want him to go back to it,” she told me. “I’d had a chance to think things over while he’d been away. Frank was young and attractive. I wanted him to make something of himself.”

“Then what?” I asked.

“Then the gang started to bring pressure to bear on him. They had some jobs they wanted him to do. He wouldn’t. He was looking for work.”

“Did you have any trouble persuading Frank to go straight?” I asked her.

She lowered her eyes for a moment.

“At first I did,” she said. “He didn’t want to go back on his pals, and they made him feel that he was running out on them. For a couple of months I wasn’t certain, and then . . .”

She ceased speaking for a moment, then suddenly raised her eyes and stared directly into mine.

“Go on,” I told her.

“It was the day he told Howard Cove that he was finished, definitely, finally, once and for all. Two days later the Vivian Loring gems were stolen. Frank didn’t know anything about it. He was with me at the time. We had a car—a Ford Eight. It had been parked in front of our apartment. Frank went down to get it to drive around to the gas station for some gas and oil. We were going to the movies. He came back to the apartment with a funny look on his face and told me the car had been moved, the motor was hot, and someone had put in gasoline. I went down with him to look at the car. There was a bullet hole in the back, and a place where another bullet had struck one of the headlights. Just then the officers came along. They arrested Frank. I told them he’d been with me. They were going to arrest me for a while. Finally they told me to beat it, and took Frank.

“You know how much chance Frank stands of beating that rap—a man with a criminal record, his car used in the stick-up; the only alibi he has that I would testify he was with me. I can just hear the District Attorney commenting to the jury on the weight they should give to *my* testimony—an unwed wife.”

There was bitterness and anguish in her tone. I looked for tears to come, but her eyes were dry, bright and steady.

She saw my look.

“I can take it,” she said, “don’t worry about that. When the time comes I’ll stand up and take it on the chin, but it won’t do any good. What I wanted was to do something that would do Frank some good. I wanted to get the gems. The insurance company has offered Frank probation if he’ll turn in the stones.”

I smoked for a while in silence.

“What’s the insurance company?” I asked.

“I’m not certain of the name, but I think it’s the Inter-Indemnity Exchange.”

“Where can I get a list of the jewels that were taken?” I asked.

“I’ve got it,” she said, “in a newspaper clipping in my coat pocket.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“I want you to pick up Cove and get those jewels. Then the insurance company will see that Frank gets a light sentence. It’s the only thing to do. We can’t beat the rap—not with his record. We’ve got a little money. I’ve got it in American Express checks; not much; a little over a thousand dollars. You can have it all.”

“All?” I asked. “Even if they give Frank a light sentence,” I said, “he’ll be where he can’t work for a while.”

She nodded again.

“If you give me all your money,” I asked, “what are you going to do?”

She stared at me steadily.

“I’ll find something,” she said quietly.

There was nothing helpless or beseeching in her eyes; merely a calm, steady determination that I liked.

I got up and put on my hat.

“Promise me,” I said, “that you will wait here and make no attempt to leave the apartment until you hear from me.”

She nodded.

Perhaps it was the expression in her eyes, as I turned away, and she didn’t see that I was watching her, or it might have been intuition, but I knew then that she had more to contend with than even she had told me.



Willie The Weeper” made a business of selling and re-selling information in exchange for dope or for money, but he preferred dope.

He knew me as Bob Sabin, the private detective.

I shoved the two cubes of morphine across the dirty, sticky table towards him. He grabbed them with a claw that trembled. His eyelids fluttered as he looked up at me. Tears came to his eyes and trickled down

his pallid skin.

“Gawd, Bob,” he said, “you’re good to me! If it wasn’t for you, I don’t know how I’d get by. You’re one of the real friends that I’ve got in the world. You always think of me.

“Some of these other guys only come in here when they want to buy some information. You come in every once in a while and pay me a friendly visit. I don’t know what I’ve done to deserve your friendship.”

His shoulders shook with sobs. Tears followed one another in trickling procession down his cheeks.

I didn’t say anything. It was all part of the game with Willie. It was easier for him to cry than not to cry. It made a good line.

After a while he brushed the tears away with the sleeve of a ragged coat and pulled a blackened tablespoon from a drawer in the table.

“You don’t mind, do you?” he asked.

I shook my head.

I watched him and said nothing.

“Willie The Weeper” had been on the hop too long to quit. Take it away from him now, and he’d die. Even the authorities knew that. They didn’t bother “Willie The Weeper.” He made it up to them by peddling bits of underworld gossip.

Where he got his information, I never knew. It was encyclopaedic, and, for the most part, accurate. He was a veritable clearing-house of everything that happened in the underworld.

After the shot he felt better. There was a sparkle to his eyes; almost a trace of color in his skin. He looked at me and nodded his head sagely.

“What you working on now, Bob?” he asked.

“That Loring gem robbery,” I told him.

“They got the man that did that, didn’t they?” he said, and I thought there was a knowing leer about his face.

“They got the man,” I said, “but they didn’t get the stones. I’m after the gems.”

“Oh,” he said, “representing the insurance company?”

“Yes,” I told him, “the Inter-Indemnity Exchange.”

“They tell me,” he said, “that you pulled the old line on Frank Jamie about giving him a light jolt in return for the stuff, and Jamie fell for it.”

“Not so we got the stones,” I said.

I lit a cigarette and was conscious of the man’s bright eyes staring at me in glittering fascination through the haze of the first smoke exhalation.

“There’s something funny about that case,” I said.

“Yes?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said, “I’m not so certain that Jamie did it at all.”

He laughed; a harsh, cackling laugh, but said nothing.

“Jamie doesn’t seem to know the inside dope,” I said.

The cackling laugh had faded into a smile. Now the smile faded from his lips, and his eyes were hungry for information. Information was the thing that kept “Willie The Weeper” going.

“What do you mean,” he asked, “the inside?”

“He doesn’t know what was taken,” I said.

“Why, the newspapers gave a list of everything that was taken.”

I laughed sarcastically.

“Be your age, Willie,” I told him.

He was leaning forward now, his mouth open, his eyes wide.

“No,” he said, “I don’t know what you’re getting at. What’s the low-down?”

“The newspapers,” I said, “published the facts that we gave them, but they didn’t get all the facts. The stuff that they listed was stolen all right, but there was a lot of other stuff in the loot. The messenger was carrying it in a black bag. In addition to the Loring stuff, he had the Matlink necklace and the Rajah’s Seal. Those two things are worth three times as much as all the rest of the Loring jewels put together.”

“Willie The Weeper’s” face showed incredulity, and then a cunning comprehension.

“But why weren’t those things reported as stolen?” he asked.

“Because,” I said, “the messenger was pretty badly shot up. He was unconscious when he got to the hospital. Mrs. Loring knew only about the stuff she gave out to the newspapers. Mr. Loring had made a clean-up on a business deal, and he’d bought the Matlink necklace and the Rajah’s Seal for her. He was sending them out as a surprise.

“After the first announcement in the newspapers, the police decided it’d be better to keep the other stuff quiet, and see if they couldn’t spot the crook because of his knowledge that the other stuff had been taken.”

“Willie The Weeper” stared at me as though I had given him a new lease on life.

“And you’re for the insurance company?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said.

“Are you playing with the police?”

“Only to help us get the stuff back,” I told him. “What we want is the stuff, and we’re willing to pay big for it. We’re willing to make a payment and no questions asked.”

“Jeeze!” he said. “What a swell chance that is for the crook who pulled the job.”

“What do you mean?” I wanted to know.

“Just suppose,” he said, “that it had been a gang job, planned by a gang, but pulled by one man? Suppose that the crook had grabbed the bag and found that extra stuff in there, and had turned over to his gang only the stuff that the newspapers published as being lifted? Gawd! What a sweet chance it would be for a crook to hold out on his own gang! The Matlink necklace and the Rajah’s Seal. Jeeze, what a sweet break!”

I nodded moodily.

“Of course, Willie,” I said, “don’t say anything about that end of it. We’re working under cover, but I’m willing to pay a hell of a price for the stuff. I thought, perhaps, you’d know who I could make an offer to.”

He shook his head.

“No, Bob, I don’t, and that’s gawd’s honest truth. I’ll cross my heart and hope to die.”

He made a swift mechanical gesture of a cross over his heart.

“Well,” I said, “don’t say anything about it.”

He stared at me steadily, put out an uncertain hand until he touched my arm.

“Bob,” he said, “you’ve been like a brother to me. You’re one of the few men I can depend on. I wouldn’t double-cross you by telling anything you didn’t want me to tell for all the money in the world. Wild horses couldn’t drag it out of me.”

He started to weep, then his shoulders quivered, and the weep became a blubber. Tears coursed down his cheeks.

Willie was like that.

They say he’d had a college education at one time, and started out as an architect. A woman had jilted him, and he’d tried to forget his troubles in booze. The booze had mastered him and he’d switched to dope.

That’d been twenty years ago.

I sat and watched the man weep, the shoulders shaking with the convulsive sobs, the tears dropping unheeded to the table.

It was part of his stock in trade. Guys that didn’t know him well said he was nuts. It was just a habit of his. Back of all that weeping was a mind that was keenly alert to any bit of underworld news.

After a little while he straightened up and the coat sleeve smeared the moisture over his face.

“Just like a brother,” he said.

I waited and said nothing.

“How much would your company pay to get the stuff back, Bob?” he asked me.

“Plenty,” I told him.

“How much is that in money?”

“I’d have to bargain with the man who could produce the stuff, and with the company.”

“Maybe I could help you, Bob,” he said.

“You know where the stuff is?” I asked him.

He shook his head with such eager vehemence that I knew he was lying. There wouldn’t have been any occasion for so emphatic a negative if he hadn’t known.

“Honest to gawd I don’t, Bob. And I’d tell you in a minute if I did. You’ve been just like a brother to me. But,” he went on, “I get around. Every once in a while I pick up a little piece of gossip here and there. I might be able to help you.”

“You would if you could, wouldn’t you, Willie?” I asked him.

He nodded and started pawing at my arm again.

“Well,” I told him, “I’m on my way. I just had a couple of cubes and thought I’d bring them in for you. Keep your ears open, Willie, and if you hear anything let me know.”

He was weeping again as I went through the door.



Willie The Weeper” had his hide-out in a place that was near the border of Chinatown. There were cheap, fire-trap structures huddled together in dirty proximity. It was a fine neighborhood for shadowing. Every few feet was a doorway, and the street was narrow and dark.

I planted myself in a doorway and had the car parked in an alley by the corner. I didn’t think Willie would use a taxicab, but I couldn’t tell. I knew there was no telephone in his room.

I waited for not more than ten minutes.

“Willie The Weeper” came out and looked up and down the street, not because he suspected anyone might be tailing him, but simply because it was a matter of habit.

“Willie The Weeper” was one of those creatures who are of the shadows. Turn them loose in a desert where there wasn’t a human being within a hundred-mile circle, and they’d still slink from shadow to shadow, hugging the sage and skirting the cacti, peering, pausing and listening.

He fooled me, at that. He stepped to the curb and started looking for a cab. I had to wait until one came along and Willie had climbed in, before I could duck around the corner into the alley and start my roadster.

I tagged along behind the cab, keeping it in sight but not being too ambitious.

The cab swung down towards the streets of the high-class shopping district, went through the district, and along a side street, until it came to a locality that didn’t have any individuality whatever. It wasn’t respectable, and it wasn’t tough. It was simply a place that had been outgrown. Once it had bordered the better grade of stores, then the better grade of stores had moved away and left the district high and dry.

The place that “Willie The Weeper” went into looked like a speake with a restaurant on the ground floor, a bar downstairs, and bedrooms upstairs. I didn’t know the place, and I didn’t dare follow “Willie The Weeper” any farther. I had to content myself with sitting in my roadster and cooling my heels.

Willie had discharged the taxicab, and he remained inside for what must have been fifteen or twenty minutes.

When he came out, I knew that his mission, whatever it had been, was completed, and completed very much to his satisfaction. There is no one who is more prone to moods than the dope fiend, and no one who is more ready to show those moods by tricks of mannerisms and expressions.

When “Willie The Weeper” had gone into that speake he had been hopped up with morphine, and yet his manner had been uncertain. His clothes hung on his bony frame, and there was a nervous uncertainty about him.

When he came out, he had swelled up to fit his coat, and someone had telephoned for a cab for him, because a cab swung around the corner and into the curb about the time “Willie The Weeper” reached the sidewalk.

I wasn’t interested further in “Willie The Weeper.” He had discharged his function.

I sat and watched the door of the speake. I figured that if any of the known crooks had come out, I would have spotted them. I sat and waited for them to come out.

No one came.

I waited an hour; two hours, wondering if I could have been wrong, puzzling over what my next move would be.

Then I saw Carl Rankin, one of the torpedoes of the gem stick-up game; but Carl Rankin wasn’t going *out*; he was coming *in*, and he looked as though he was going some place with a very definite mission.

I stuck around.

People came and went from the speake. Once or twice I spotted faces that I knew as being on the shady side of the borderland, but they were not the faces of gem men.

Twenty minutes after Rankin had gone in, Sam Stillwell showed up.

Sam Stillwell was one of the men who kept pretty much in the background on underworld activities. He was one of the spotters who would get the lay of the land and figure out a job. Then he would get some gang to back the job, collect the most minute information about the whole lay, and be a hundred miles away when the job was actually pulled.

Things commenced to look interesting.

Five minutes later, three men came out and stood waiting at the curb. There was Carl Rankin, Sam Stillwell, and “Frank The Fixer.”

“Frank The Fixer” had been a fixer in a law office. He knew almost all of the big shots in town, and knew the best way of approaching them. It was said that he had been one of the best in the business. Then he got tired of working for other people, and decided to branch out for himself. His activities were shrouded in a veil of mystery, but I had heard rumors of big gem jobs that had been cooked up between “Frank The Fixer” and Sam Stillwell. Carl Rankin was the torpedo who had pulled the jobs.

The men stood at the curb for less than thirty seconds, when a big Buick sedan swung around the corner and to the curb. A garage attendant jumped out, saluted “Frank The Fixer,” received a tip, touched his hat, and walked away.

I got the roadster warmed up.

Carl Rankin climbed in behind the steering wheel of the Buick. “Frank The Fixer” and Sam Stillwell got in back. The Buick snorted away from the curb and started going places in a hurry. I tailed along behind.

I’ll say this for Carl Rankin—the boy could drive.

And it took more than mere ability as a driver to go the places they went in the time they went. It took a supreme contempt for traffic regulations; a certain knowledge that anything they did could be squared somewhere along the line.

I kept along within sight, but momentarily listened for the wail of a siren pulling me over to the curb. As it happened, we were all lucky.

I knew where they were going by the time they had turned into Seventh Street, and I lagged a little bit behind and let them turn down Porter, without making any attempt to follow, giving them a few minutes before I rounded the corner.

The Buick was parked in front of 659, but across the street from it. Carl Rankin was at the steering wheel, and the motor was running. I could see little puffs of smoke coming from the exhaust. But only “Frank The Fixer” sat in back. Sam Stillwell had gone up.

I couldn’t exactly get the sketch. I’d figured that “Willie The Weeper” would go to someone; that the someone would go to someone else, and somewhere in between the two I’d have an opportunity to learn more than I knew at the start. This business of getting a convention of crooks, and waiting until everyone could be in attendance, didn’t sound just right, but I’d started the play and the only thing to do was to stick around.

Sam Stillwell came out of the apartment house and shook his head. He walked across the street and stood by the side of the running-board of the sedan, chatting for a few minutes. Then he got in, and someone pulled curtains down in the back and on the sides, which suited me all right. The little spurts of smoke continued to come from the exhaust, keeping the motor warm for a quick getaway.

I waited.

The afternoon shadows became dusk; the dusk deepened into twilight. Then a taxicab went past me, going fast. I saw the red brake-light flare into angry brilliance as the cab swung in to the curb. The door nearest the apartment house opened, and a man stepped out and tossed the cab driver a bill.

The man was tall, rather slender, carried an overcoat over his arm, and walked with a quick, nervous manner.

The taxi started to draw away from the curb.

I knew then, but it was too late.

Little spurts of ruddy flame flashed from the side of the sedan. I heard the explosion of firearms, the spatter of bullets against the pavement and the front of the apartment house, and I heard, also, that peculiar, unmistakable *thunk*; the sound which is known to sportsmen and crooks the world over; the sound that a high-powered, steel-jacketed bullet makes when it impacts flesh.

The tall man staggered, his left arm straightened, and the overcoat dropped to the pavement. He went down on one knee, lurched forward, caught himself with his left elbow on the cement, and tugged a gun from a shoulder-holster.

The little spurts of flame came with mechanical regularity from the parked sedan.

The man on the curb fired twice. One bullet struck the glass on the window of the Buick. I saw chips of glass fly, and heard the tinkle of glass particles striking the running-board and fenders. The second shot went high in the air as the man slumped forward, flat on his face, and the gun slid from his nerveless fingers.

The sedan crawled into motion.

Here and there a head was thrust out of windows. A woman was screaming somewhere, but the sidewalk was deserted, so far as pedestrians were concerned.

I had my car in motion before the shooting had died away, and swung it in to the curb just as the tail-light of the Buick was skidding around the corner.

I jumped from behind the wheel and went to the man.

It was Howard Cove, and he was still alive. He felt something like jelly as I picked him up.

I saw his eyes open and stare at me in puzzled bewilderment, then his head drooped.

I loaded him into the roadster and stepped on the throttle.

I was around the corner before any pedestrians hit the street. I'd left his overcoat and his automatic behind. Those things couldn't be helped.

He slumped down on the seat, an inert mass, and blood seeped through his clothing and welled in little pools along the leather cushions.



wo-pair" Kinney had told me there was always a big packing box and a hand-truck parked in the rear of the building where Doctor Krueg had his office. I swung the car into the parking place and found the big packing box and the hand-truck.

It was a messy job, getting Cove out of the car and into the packing box, but I did it, and covered him over. The packing box went on the hand-truck, and I rang the bell at the rear entrance. I thought possibly I might have trouble with the janitor, but he was in on the play.

"Special package of medicine for Doctor Krueg," I said. "It's got to go right up."

"Okey," he said, "let's go."

From the way in which he handled the box, I knew I didn't have anything to fear from him. The freight elevator rumbled upward. When we came to the floor, the janitor, himself, took the box on the truck and trundled it down the hallway. We met no one. There was a light in Doctor Krueg's office. I pushed open the door.

"Not this door," said the janitor. "It goes in that other door."

He went to one marked private and knocked.

The door opened, and Doctor Krueg's glittering black eyes stared at us in cold-blooded appraisal.

"A case for you, Doctor," I said. "The case of medicines you wanted in a hurry."

"In this way," he said.

The janitor set the box down on the floor in front of the operating table, and held out his palm.

I handed him ten dollars. He kept the palm out, and I handed him ten more. He folded the bills, thanked me and went out. Doctor Krueg lifted the lid of the packing box.

"Miss Tiel," he called.

The door opened and his nurse came in. He indicated the figure in the packing box.

The three of us lifted him out and got him on to the operating table.

"I want to use the telephone," I said.

"Go ahead," he told me, "you'll find it in the other office. This is going to be a job."

I went to the outer office, found the telephone and dialed the unlisted number of my apartment.

While I was waiting for an answer I stared speculatively at the big safe which was over in the corner. It was different from the ordinary type of safe.

There were years when I specialized on opening safes that other men couldn't touch. My interest in this one was pardonable. The more I saw of it, the more respect I had for it. It had been made to look innocent enough on the surface, with the conventional black finish, and the painting of the pastoral scene which gave it an old-fashioned look, but it wasn't old-fashioned at all. It was a safe that a cracksman could have wasted a lot of time on and still not get anywhere.

Why the devil should Doctor Krueg have a safe like that in his office?

I turned the matter over idly in my mind, and had come to the conclusion that it was filled with dope that the doctor dispensed on the side, when I heard Edith's voice on the telephone.

"Yes," she said, timidly, "who is it?"

"Ed," I told her. "How's the arm?"

"I was waiting for you," she said. "It's throbbing pretty badly."

"All right," I told her, "get a taxicab and come directly to Doctor Krueg's office. I'm there. Pretend that you just happened in, without knowing that I would be there, and don't be surprised at what you see, no matter what it is."

"In a hurry?" she asked.

"In a hurry," I told her, and hung up.

I went back to the operating room. The nurse looked up at me and put a finger to her lips. Doctor Krueg was busy.

I'll say this much for him—his veins may have been filled with ice water, but he was a good workman and a fast workman. He probed, bandaged, disinfected. From time to time he consulted his watch and clamped a finger over the patient's wrist. Twice he nodded to the nurse, and the nurse gave the man a hypodermic.

Cove lay on his back, his face white as marble, unconscious.

Once I saw his eyelids flutter, and occasionally I could get the motion of his chest that showed he was breathing.

No one said anything. The room was so still that the rustle of the physician's garments as he moved hastily about, or the sound of a surgical instrument grating against the edge of a pan of antiseptic, sounded startlingly loud. I kept over in the corner, out of the way, watching, waiting and saying nothing.

Abruptly, Doctor Krueg turned to me.

"What do you want him to do?" he asked.

"I want him to get well," I said.

"He won't."

"All right," I told him, "I want him to talk."

The doctor nodded, motioned to the nurse. He snipped off a last bit of bandage, took the hypodermic which the nurse gave him, and jabbed the needle into the man's white skin.

"I think," he said, "he'll regain consciousness."

There was the jangle of a bell somewhere in the office, and the doctor looked significantly at the nurse. She walked through a door, towards the outer office, was gone for a moment, and then came back.

"It's the arm case," she said.

Doctor Krueg looked at me, and I nodded.

"Sure," I said, "it's okey so far as I'm concerned."

"All right," Doctor Krueg said, "show her in, Miss Tiel."

Edith came in. She looked at me, smiled, then saw the figure on the operating table, and recoiled.

"It's all right," I told her, "you're interested in this, too."

Doctor Krueg watched us both and said nothing.

Howard Cove's eyes fluttered. He opened them and looked at me. There was recognition in them.

"Thanks, buddy," he said.

He rolled his head and looked around him at the white walls of the physician's office; the surgeon standing there in his white robe, splashed here and there with red; the nurse in the background.

"Have I got a chance, Doc?" he asked.

Doctor Krueg's face changed expression by not so much as a line. His eyes remained hard and glittering.

"Not a chance in the world," he said.

Howard Cove closed his eyes, then he opened them and looked at me.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm a friend," I said. "I was coming to see you. I can't tell you who I am right here and now, but I had a proposition to put up to you about those Loring jewels."

A spasm of expression twisted his face—whether of pain or anger I could not tell.

"Did you see who gave me the works?" he asked.

"'Frank The Fixer,' Sam Stillwell and Carl Rankin," I told him.

"How did you know?"

"I tagged them and tried to tip you, but it was too late."

"The dirty double-crossers," he said, "they ratted on me."

I nodded and waited.

"I pulled the job," he said. "Rankin covered me. 'Frank The Fixer' was back of it, and Sam Stillwell cooked it up."

I said nothing.

Edith pressed forward so that she could hear. Doctor Krueg stood a little way behind us, his manner purely professional and cold-blooded.

"Listen," said Cove, "they tried to double-cross me, to make me the goat."

I nodded again.

"Perhaps," I told him, "if you could tell me where the stuff is I could fix it so it wouldn't help them any."

He thought for a moment, then a smile twisted the corners of his lips. His eyes closed and remained closed for several seconds. I thought at first he was sleeping. Then I saw Doctor Krueg reach forward and feel the man's wrist. The doctor stepped back. I looked at him questioningly. He shook his head. After a moment Cove's eyes opened again.

"I turned all the stuff over to Carl Rankin," he said. "He's got a room in the *Continental Hotel*. Pull the bureau drawer out all the way and you'll find the stuff in back of the drawer."

He sighed peacefully, as though drifting off to sleep.

I leaned towards him.

"Quick, Cove," I said, "what's the number of his room, do you know?"

"Five nineteen," he said, "and if you can get the stuff it suits me swell."

He sighed, opened his eyes.

"Sure I've got a chance, Doc," he said, slowly. "I feel swell."

Doctor Krueg turned and nodded significantly to the nurse. She tiptoed from the room. Doctor Krueg didn't lower his voice.

"It won't be long now," he said, "the stimulant is wearing off. He'll lose consciousness and probably never regain it."

The man on the operating table smiled peacefully.

I heard a gasping intake of the breath. It was Edith, but she wasn't crying, she was standing with her knuckles pressed to her teeth, her eyes big, round and dark with sympathy,

staring down at the man who had shot her.

Doctor Krueg turned to me.

“Let me know if there’s any change,” he said. Then he took Edith’s left arm, stripped back the sleeve and unwound the bandage.

Howard Cove opened his eyes once and looked up at me.

“You still here?” he asked in a voice that was thick, as though it was difficult for him to move his tongue.

I nodded.

He grinned again.

“So am I,” he said.

Doctor Krueg finished dressing the arm, came over to the man on the table, felt the pulse, pulled back an eyelid, looked at me and shook his head.

“You’ve got to get him out of here,” he said.

“Do we dare to move him?” I asked.

“It won’t make any difference to him,” he said. “Even with the best of care it’s only a matter of an hour or two.”

“Well?” I asked.

“That’s the understanding,” he said. “I patch them up, but I don’t sign any death certificates and I don’t make any explanations. You take care of your own bodies.”

“How do I get him out of here?” I asked.

Doctor Krueg looked significantly at the packing case.

“All right,” I said, “let’s not have any misunderstanding about this. You and your nurse both heard the man’s confession, that he pulled the Loring job.”

Doctor Krueg’s black eyes stared at me, glittering and cold.

“I heard nothing,” he said.

“Your nurse heard it,” I said.

“She heard nothing,” he told me. “If ‘Two-pair’ Kinney told you the truth about me, he told you that I merely give first-aid service. In extreme cases I have a couple of beds in an adjoining room. But I sign no death certificates, I ask no questions, and I hear no comments.”

“But, my God, man!” I told him. “There’s an innocent man in jail for this crime. The guard was shot up and may die. It may be a murder rap.”

Doctor Krueg shrugged his shoulders.

“You owe me,” he said, “fifty dollars on dressing the arm case, and two hundred dollars on this case.”

“Isn’t that steep?” I asked him.

“That,” he said, “is the price of the service, with no questions asked and no reports made. If you’d prefer to pay regular rates and have me notify the authorities that you’re here with a gunshot case, it suits me all right.”

I took out my wallet and counted out the money.

“I could give you more,” I said, “if you could remember what you heard.”

“I didn’t hear anything,” he told me, pocketing the money.

We loaded the man into the packing case and trundled him back down the freight elevator. The janitor was nowhere in sight. Edith held the back door open for me, and I wheeled the packing case out to the loading platform. Then the door closed behind us, and the spring lock clicked into place.

I paused for a moment to take stock of the situation.

“Where are you going to take him?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. “My car’s out of the question. There’s blood all over the seat. I’ve got to take it somewhere and ditch it.”

“And Cove?” she asked.

“We’ve got to ditch him.”

“But he confessed,” she said.

I looked at her bitterly.

“Try to make anyone believe it,” I said—“the word of two crooks to support a confession.”

“But he told us where the stuff was.”

I nodded. “That,” I said, “is the only break we’ve got.”

I wheeled the hand-truck out to the curb, leaving the roadster where it was. Edith hailed a cab.

“*Continental Hotel*,” I told the driver, “and be careful of the box. It’s got some stuff in it that might spill.”

The cab driver helped us load the box on the side of the cab. He held it in place with a strap. Edith and I got in the car.

“It’s only five or six blocks from here,” I told her.

I felt her shudder every time the cab jolted to a stop or lurched in motion, but said nothing. My mind was busy hatching out a scheme that might hold water.

The cab slid in to the curb. I told the driver to wait while I went in and hunted up the head bellboy. I got a room on the third floor, and the bellboy took a hand-truck and brought up the packing case as though it had been filled with gun cotton. The girl and I closed and locked the door behind the bell captain and opened the packing case.

Cove was just about finished. We managed to lift him out and get him on the bed. He was unconscious and his face was slowly turning a putty gray.

“What are you going to do?” she asked me.

“Wait here, will you?” I said.

She nodded.

I slipped out into the hall.

It took me but a matter of seconds to run up the two flights of stairs, and to find 519. I knocked at the door. There was no answer. A passkey put me inside, and I clicked on the light. I didn’t have time to use any caution.

I pulled out the bureau drawer, set it on the bed, looked in back of the place where the drawer had been. There was a cunningly concealed wooden receptacle which had been fashioned by some skilful cabinet-maker. I had to get out two more drawers before I could work out the receptacle. It was lined with cotton. I took off the cover and shook it.

It was empty.

I must have sat there for ten seconds, staring at the empty cotton-lined receptacle. Then I put it back into position and replaced the bureau drawers.

I switched out the lights, slipped out into the corridor and locked the door behind me with my passkey.

stood in front of the door of Doctor Krueg’s office and emptied my wallet.



A man who stands outside the pale of organized society must carry a roll. There is no place where the truth of the axiom "Money is power," is more evident than in the underworld.

I had approximately eight thousand dollars in the wallet. A couple of thousand, in hundred dollar bills, I left in the wallet. The balance, in five hundred dollar bills, I made into a roll, snapped with an elastic and put into my hip pocket.

I walked to Doctor Krueg's office door, pushed my way inside. I could hear the jangle of the bell in the back room.

The nurse came to the door.

She was a pretty thing, with a pair of wide-set eyes, clear and innocent, a face that was youthful and virginal.

She looked at me without expression.

"You?" she said.

I nodded. "I have to see the doctor right away."

"What about?" she asked.

"I'm afraid that one of the bills I gave him was bad," I told her.

She stepped to the inner office.

Doctor Krueg came out in a moment. His manner was warily watchful.

"Yes?" he said.

I pulled the wallet from my pocket.

"One of the bills I gave you was bad," I said. "One of the hundreds."

The nurse came to the door and stood by him. Doctor Krueg took his wallet from his pocket, took out the two one-hundred dollar bills I had given him, handed them to the nurse. The nurse brought them to me. I looked at them, nodded, put one in my pocket and replaced it with one I had taken from the wallet.

She took them back to Doctor Krueg. He turned the one over and over in his fingers, looked up at me and nodded.

"Very well," he said.

I turned to the door, and, as I did so, jerked a handkerchief from my hip pocket. I had placed that handkerchief so that the roll of bills came from my pocket and fell to the floor.

I mopped my forehead with the handkerchief, turned and grinned at Doctor Krueg.

"Gosh," I said, "I was frightened about that. Don't think that I'm shoving the queer. It was just a bad one that was given to me, and I was holding it to get it redeemed by the chap who gave it to me."

"It's quite all right," he said.

I replaced my handkerchief and stepped out into the corridor. The door closed behind me.

I walked rapidly down the corridor, in the direction of the elevator.

After a moment I detoured back, walking silently and hugging the far side of the wall.

Doctor Krueg had a suite of offices. I had been in three of them. There were five adjoining doors, each marked private. I picked one of the doors that was dark, and wasted about fifteen seconds getting a key that would work the lock.

It was a good lock.

The door swung open and I stepped into a room. It was a room containing three hospital beds. Two of the beds were occupied. One of the figures was still. The other raised on an

elbow and looked at me in staring curiosity, then his right hand started groping under the pillow.

“Take it easy, brother,” I told him. “It’s okey.”

I walked across the room to the door which communicated with the other office. It had a spring lock on it, and I clicked back the lock and stepped into the operating room.

It was deserted. I walked on through it and into the other office.

Doctor Krueg just had the safe open. He was standing in front of it, with the roll of bills I had dropped in his left hand; his right held a key that he fitted into a lock on the inner steel door. Then he twirled the knobs on the combination. There was both a lock and a combination on that inner door.

The door clicked back and I stepped quietly behind the tall form of the doctor.

There was still another lock to work, and then a door disclosed a little vault in the interior of the safe. Doctor Krueg was just dropping the bills into this vault when, somehow, he sensed my presence.

He whirled.

I caught the glitter of his eyes—cold rage and a murderous impulse. His right hand swung to his hip.

My blow caught him squarely on the jaw. He slammed his head against the edge of the safe as he went back.

I eased him to the floor and looked in the vault.

My roll of bills was the first thing that went into my pocket. Then I took stock. The Loring jewels had been too well described to be easily mistaken. I dropped them in my pocket.

God knows by what devious chain of battle, murder and sudden death the other gems in that safe had found their way into that vault-like compartment! But I was absolutely certain they hadn’t come there by legitimate means.

I had just reached the outer door of the office, when I heard the half-scream of a woman.

I turned, to see the nurse standing in the doorway. Then I caught the glitter of the light on nicked steel.

The shot shattered the glass front of the door as I slipped into the corridor. There were no more shots. Doctor Krueg was not in a position to court publicity.

I reached the *Continental Hotel* and went to the seventh floor, just in case the elevator boy would remember too much about me later on. Then I dropped down to the fifth, by taking the stairs two steps at a time.

Carl Rankin was still away. I slipped into his room, turned on the lights and pulled out the bureau drawer. The Loring diamonds dropped back into the cotton-lined compartment. Then I replaced the bureau drawers, locked the drawer, raced down to the third floor, and caught sight of the drawn anguish on Edith’s face as I slipped into the room.

I raised my eyebrows.

She nodded.

“Just now,” she said. “He never did regain consciousness.”

I walked over to the bed, sat down beside the corpse and took the telephone.

“Police Headquarters,” I said.

I got the desk sergeant on the line and lowered my voice to a point to which it was barely audible.

“Get this,” I said. “I’m Howard Cove . . . *Continental Hotel*. . . . Carl Rankin covered me on the Loring job . . . I did it . . . ‘Frank The Fixer’ and Sam Stillwell backed it . . . they gave

me the works tonight in front of my apartment . . . six five nine Porter Street . . . the diamonds are in Rankin's room behind . . . behind bureau drawer . . . room five nineteen *Continental* . . . I'm finished. . . .”

I banged the receiver on the floor, and hit the transmitter against the side of the bed. Then I closed the fingers of the dead man's hand about the receiver, and let the telephone itself lay on the floor.

I got the packing case apart and made two bundles of the light boards.

“Come on,” I said to the girl.

There was a back way out of the hotel. We made it without anyone seeing us and got rid of the boards in the alley.

I glanced across the breakfast table at the girl. The headlines of the morning paper told the story.

“Spectacular Raid Recovers Loring Gems.”

Down below, in smaller headlines:

“Police Smash Gem Ring, Solve Murder.”

The account was the usual line of hooey, about the wonderful detective work of a couple of the big shots in the police department; the manner in which they had patiently trailed the criminals for days, only finally to run their quarry to earth in a cheap downtown hotel, where they found one of the men dead from gunshot wounds received in a gang war. The man had been shot in front of his apartment house on Porter Street, and, in some mysterious way, had managed to get to the hotel.

The article stated that the police were looking for a surgeon who had made a visit to the dead man's room in the hotel and had given first-aid treatment.

In the hotel, the police had raided the room of Carl Rankin, a notorious gangster. They had lain in ambush for him; had arrested him when he came to his room. The gangster had refused to heed the police warning, and had opened fire. In the fusillade he had been fatally shot. Before he died, he made a complete confession, naming “Frank The Fixer” and Sam Stillwell as accomplices in both the robbery and the murder of Howard Cove.

The newspaper went on to state that police were investigating a rumor which was circulated in the underworld, and which was substantiated by the confession of the dying gangster, to the effect that the loot taken from the messenger who was delivering the Loring gems was much more extensive than had originally been suspected. In fact, it was the failure to account for some of this additional valuable loot that had precipitated the gang war.

“Is it true,” Edith asked, “that Cove held out some of the loot?”

I shook my head.

“What makes them think he did?”

“A blunder on my part,” I told her.

She raised her eyebrows.

“The line the police handed your man,” I told her, “was a stall. It wouldn't have done him any good to have returned the stones, but I thought I could find out who did the job and perhaps get a confession from one of the men, so I trapped a crook into rushing to the head of the gang that pulled the job, with fictitious information, figuring they'd start moving around

and I could get somewhere. But they thought Cove had crossed them on the delivery, and gunned him out.”

“But,” she said, “Cove was a double-crosser, himself. He crossed Frank Jamie by framing the crime on him, and he tried to kill me. I wasn’t robbing his apartment at all; just pleading with him to come across and he pulled a rod and took a shot at me.”

“I figured it like that,” I told her. “He was a crook, but the doctor was also a crook. They heard Cove’s confession when he gave it to us, and the doctor had the nurse slip out and hijack the stones for him. I had to pull some rough stuff to get them back.”

She pointed her finger at the last paragraph of the newspaper account.

“What does that mean?” she asked.

I looked at it.

It was a statement to the effect that there was an underworld rumor linking the activities of Ed Jenkins, The Phantom Crook, with the gang war that had resulted in Cove’s death, but that as usual, The Phantom Crook had left no tangible clue for the police; only an underworld whisper.

I thought of “Willie The Weeper” and of Doctor Krueg and wondered.

“Just newspaper talk,” I told her.

“I hope,” she said, “that if the police have heard an underworld whisper, the whisper was that The Phantom Crook had done only simple justice, where the police couldn’t, or wouldn’t, act.”

“Don’t worry,” I told her, “the police don’t hear whispers of justice; only whispers of guilt, and you can forget The Phantom Crook stuff. It’s just newspaper talk.”

“All right, *Ed*,” she said, “I’ll forget it.”

But her eyes were starry with gratitude, and the emphasis on my name had been just a little too pronounced to be casual.



[The end of *Whispering Justice* by Erle Stanley Gardner]