



A hush blanketed the courtroom as the millionaire's wheelchair jerked two paces nearer Daniels

Sand In the Snow

By NORBERT DAVIS

CHAPTER XX

THE WITNESS TAKES THE STAND

BOKEN was shouting over the noise in the room: "Your honor, your honor! I protest against the slanderously criminal accusation made by the attorney for the defense! I did *not* coach the witness! She was temporarily overcome by the horror of coming face to face with the defendant again. The remarks were uttered as a result of momentary hysteria!"

Daniels said: "She certainly isn't a very reliable witness if her hysteria results in such confusion even before she starts to testify."

"Mr. Daniels!" Pooley shouted. "Your

remarks and your conduct are in contempt of the dignity of this court! I fine you the sum of one hundred dollars!"

"That won't bother him much," Boken said in a barely audible tone. "His wife has plenty of money."

A muscle in Daniels' face twitched. He was white with restrained fury, and he controlled his voice with an effort that shook him. "Mr. Boken, won't you repeat that remark in a louder tone? I don't think everyone here heard you."

Boken backed up a step, raising one arm in an awkward half-gesture of defense.

"Mr. Daniels," Pooley said. "Mr. Daniels! I impose an additional fine of fifty dollars!"

Daniels turned his head slowly to look at him. He didn't say anything, but his expression was so eloquently savage that Pooley's face lost a little of its color.

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"Thank you," said Daniels in a low voice. "Thank you, your honor."

Pooley moistened his lips. "You may pay the fine to the clerk at the end of this session."

"I shall do so," said Daniels. He sat down in his chair, and the tension that had gripped the room relaxed slightly.

There was a rustling murmur from the audience, and the clerk rapped sharply for order. Henrietta Parkins was sworn, and sat down in the witness chair. Boken had lost his air of confidence. He made a visible effort to regain it, but his voice shook a little as he asked the first formal question.

Henrietta Parkins had an air of righteous indignation. Yes, she snapped, she certainly did remember the day of August 17th. She would, in fact, never forget it as long as she lived.

"Tell the jury in your own words what happened on that day," Boken requested.

HENRIETTA PARKINS turned and faced the jury with an important little bustle. It was obvious that she was going to enjoy this. Her watery eyes glistened eagerly behind the thick lenses of her spectacles.

"I was washing that day. I always wash twice a week. I say a body can't keep things proper and clean just washing once a week.

"The Hyde cottage is about a hundred yards further up the Canyon than mine. I can see it from my back porch where I wash. I could see that poor, dear girl working and scrubbing around the house."

Henrietta Parkins paused to dab gingerly at her cheeks with a wadded handkerchief.

"Please try to control yourself, Miss Parkins," Boken said. "I realize that this is a great strain on you."

"It is," Henrietta Parkins agreed tearfully. "Oh, it is!" She drew a deep tremulous breath and went on bravely: "After a while, as I was rinsing my clothes, I saw a little smoke coming out of the chimney of the Hyde cottage. I knew that Dolly

had started to get supper for her dear, brave father and brother. A little later I went outside to throw away my rinse water, and then I smelled something burning."

She paused to nod tragically at the jury. "Little did I realize the awful thing that was happening, but I thought it was queer because Dolly was such a good, industrious little girl and such a fine cook. I had never known her to burn anything before, so I stood there on the back steps watching, and it was the will of Providence that I did, because I saw the murderer!"

"Yes?" said Boken eagerly. "Yes? Who did you see?"

"Peter Carson!" Henrietta Parkins spat the name out as though it were a loathsome thing.

"What did you see him doing?"

"He was running away from the back door of the Hyde cottage, running and stumbling and falling, and looking back over his shoulder. His face was all twisted up like he was crazy."

"Thank you, Miss Parkins," Boken said. "Thank you for your bravery in testifying to this horrible matter."

Henrietta Parkins closed her eyes. "It was my duty," she said dramatically.

"Your witness, Mr. Daniels," Boken said.

Daniels stood up. He picked up a pamphlet from the table in front of him and held it up, opening it at random. "Read this, Miss Parkins," he requested.

"Now I protest," Boken said. "It's obvious that no person with normal eyesight can read that fine print at that distance."

Daniels said smoothly: "Miss Parkins does not have normal eyesight. She has phenomenal eyesight. She can see through the walls of a house a hundred yards away. Compared to a feat like that, reading print at this distance should be very easy."

"She never testified to that," Boken snapped.

"Oh yes, she did, by implication. She said that she saw the murderer, whom she identified as my client. How about that, Miss Parkins? You did say that Pete

Carson was the murderer, did you not?"

"I certainly did!" said Henrietta Parkins with an emphatic nod. "He is!"

"Did you see him commit the murder?"

"I saw him running away."

"Answer my question Miss Parkins. Did you see Pete Carson commit the murder?"

"Well—no. But I know he did it."

"That's interesting," said Daniels. "How do you know?"

"I saw him running away—"

"That's it," said Daniels. "Now Miss Parkins, the district attorney left you on your own back steps. What did you do after that? After you had seen Pete Carson running away?"

"WELL—I wondered what had happened. I kept smelling the burning food stronger and stronger and I thought there was something mighty suspicious about the way Pete Carson was acting. So after he had gone I walked down to the Hyde cottage and around to the back door. I called Dolly's name and when she didn't answer, I rapped on the door. It was kinda half open and when I rapped on it, it opened further and I could see inside the kitchen."

"So?" said Daniels. "And what did you see?"

Miss Parkins shivered realistically. "I saw that poor, poor girl stretched out on the floor and all the blood—"

"Yes?" said Daniels. "And then what did you do?"

"I—I screamed—and then I turned around and ran—"

Daniels interrupted sharply: "Ah! You ran! You ran away! But you just got through telling me that you knew Pete Carson committed the murder because *he* ran away. If that is the basis on which we are to judge a person's guilt of murder, then there is just as much reason to believe that *you* are guilty of murder. Did *you* murder Dolly Hyde, Miss Parkins?"

Miss Parkins screamed shrilly and flopped over sideways in the witness chair. An attendant came running with a glass of water.

Boken shouted: "I object to this brutal intimidation of my witnesses!"

Half the audience was standing up, trying to see, and Judge Pooley's gavel thundered out a command for order.

"You needn't worry," Daniels said to Boken. "I have no more questions to ask this witness, but it seems very strange that a person who is glib about accusing other people of murder, exhibits such distress when she, herself, is accused."

"Order!" Pooley shouted. "Mr. Daniels, sit down! The attendant will remove the witness. Silence in this court!"

Henrietta Parkins was removed from the room, sobbing hysterically, and Boken summoned for his next witness Constable Ham Grey.

Ham Grey was as round as a ball and he walked to the witness stand with a decided waddle. He had a pinkish hairless face and small wide-set blue eyes with a humorous twinkle in them. He identified himself as the police force of Petersville, which was, in turn, identified as a wide space in the road occupied by a general store, a couple of pool halls, a beer tavern and several oil stations, two miles north of Coldiron Canyon.

Boken said: "I direct your attention to the date of August 17th of this present year. Do you recall the date?"

"Yup," said Ham Grey. "Sure do."

"Tell the jury what occurred on that day."

"Well," said Grey comfortably. "I was sittin' on the bench in front of old man Meekin's general store. It was a right hot day and I was just a-sittin' and a-lookin' and not thinkin' about much but maybe goin' and havin' a bottle of beer for myself, when I heard this voice a-hootin' and a-hollerin' down the road."

"What did you do then?" Boken asked.

"Well—I sorta got up and looked around."

"Did you locate the owner of the voice?"

"Yup. I seen Pete Carson a-comin' larrupin' down the road a-yellin' and a-hollerin' fit to kill."

"What did you do then?"

"Well, I couldn't hardly figure it out. Pete, he looked somethin' terrible with his face all twisted up and white and yellin' like he was. I woulda thought maybe he'd taken himself too much to drink only I know'd Pete never drank nothin' at all, so I up and hollered to him and says: 'Hi, Pete! What's ailin' you anyway?'"

"And what did the defendant answer?" Boken pressed.

"Well, I couldn't hardly make head nor tail of it. He said somethin' about Dolly Hyde bein' murdered up to her house, and I thought maybe he was just jokin'. But then I see he had some blood on his hand and on the knees of his overalls, and so I thought it was maybe serious. And I says, 'Pete, you just better trot along with me now, while we go into old man Meekin's store and give a ring to the sheriff and see what's what!'"

"And then?" said Boken.

"Well, it was like that. We went into the store, and I rung the sheriff, and he said that there had been a murder reported up at the Hyde cabin, and that they was lookin' for Pete Carson. So I said that I had him."

"You saw the blood on Peter Carson, the defendant's clothes and on his hands?"

"Sure did," said Ham Grey reluctantly.

"You are certain that it was blood?"

"Sure am," said Ham Grey. "Seen a lot of it in my day."

BOKEN went back to his table and returned carrying a wrapped bundle of cloth. He unwrapped it, taking his time and heightening the suspense as much as he could. He uncovered an old pair of coveralls and held them up in front of Ham Grey.

"Are these the clothes Peter Carson was wearing on the day in question?"

"Sure are," said Ham Grey.

"People's exhibit C," said Boken. He held the coveralls up before the jury. "Ladies and gentlemen, I call your attention to these stains on the knees."

The coveralls were clean, and the stains on the knees were obvious—great dark,

smears, and the jury goggled at them in horror.

Boken turned toward Daniels. "If the defense wishes, we will offer proof that these stains are blood and were fresh stains on the day in question."

"Stipulated," said Daniels quietly.

Boken blinked and looked a little surprised. He handed the coveralls to the jury and said to Daniels, "No more questions. Your witness."

Daniels got up and nodded in a friendly way to Ham Grey.

Ham Grey nodded back and said: "Howdy."

"Howdy," Daniels answered. "Mr. Grey, have you known the defendant long?"

"Sure enough," said Ham Grey. "Known him ever since he wore three-cornered pants."

"Like him?" Daniels asked.

"Shucks, yes."

"Did you ever arrest him before the time in question?"

"Pete?" said Ham Grey, surprised. "I should say not. Why should I wanta arrest him for?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Daniels answered. "Did you know Dolly Hyde?"

"Yup," said Ham Grey. "Nice girl."

"Do you know her father and brother?"

"Yup."

"Have you ever arrested them?"

"Objection!" Boken said sharply. "There was no proper foundation for that question. The subject was not touched in the direct examination."

"Objection sustained," said Judge Pooley.

Daniels shrugged easily. "No more questions."

Ham Grey was dismissed from the witness stand, and the court adjourned for the noon recess.

CHAPTER XXI

THE COURT TAKES A REST

BOKEN had worked carefully, building his case bit by bit, one piece of cold, inescapable fact after the other, enclosing

Pete Carson in a mesh from which no artifice could extricate him, and like many another better workman, he had saved his best and most dramatic piece until the last. He was ready to use it now.

At the beginning of the afternoon session he called Pappy Hyde. Pappy Hyde had prepared himself for the occasion. He was spruce and clean, and his scanty brown hair was slicked down over the bald spot on top of his head. He wore an ill-fitting blue suit that was obviously new, but there was nothing that could take the expression of wolfish, hard leanness out of his features or conceal the malevolent glitter in his dusty little eyes.

His two sons were present to back him up, sitting in the front row of the spectators' seats. Their faces had a bitterly savage likeness and they stared at Pete Carson and Daniels with unwavering scowls.

Pappy Hyde's given name, it appeared, was Ranse. He was sworn, and in answer to Boken's careful question, identified himself as the father of the victim.

"Do you know the defendant, Peter Carson?" Boken asked.

Pappy Hyde's lips curled away from his yellowish teeth. "I do."

"What was the occasion of your acquaintanceship with him?"

"He was tryin' to keep company with my daughter."

"And did you object to that?"

"Sure did," said Pappy Hyde bitterly.

"Why did you object?"

"Ain't havin' no dirty rat like that in my family."

"Was Pete Carson aware of your aversion to him?"

Pappy Hyde nodded violently. "You bet he was. I told him so myself. I told him to keep away from my daughter. So did my boys. We told him that we didn't want to catch him around our house no more."

"Tell us why you objected to his attentions to your daughter."

Pappy Hyde glared at Pete Carson. "He's been talkin' loose about her and spreadin' scandal. He ain't no good. He's

a loafer and a bum, and always was. I didn't want her havin' no truck with him at all. I told her about him, and she promised me she wouldn't never see him no more."

"Do you know if she ever did see him after you had told her not to and she promised she wouldn't?" Boken asked.

"She seen him once," Pappy Hyde snarled. "When he killed her!"

Boken held up his hand quickly. "But other than that, Mr. Hyde?"

Pappy Hyde shrugged his thin shoulders. "Dolly was a good girl. She wouldn't do what her pa told her not to. She was kind-hearted, though, and she didn't want to hurt nobody's feelin's—not even his."

"How long before the date of her murder did you forbid her to see the defendant?"

"Couple months," said Pappy Hyde. "Couple months or maybe more."

"Did she feel badly when you told her?"

"Pretty bad," Pappy Hyde answered. "She was just a young girl, and she didn't know nothin' about such fellas as he is. When I told her she cried some, but she wouldn't do anything I told her not to. She understood I was only lookin' out for what was best for her."

"You said that you spoke to the defendant about the same matter. Did he exhibit any signs of anger over your decisions?"

"Huh!" said Pappy Hyde contemptuously. "Him? I should say not. He was scared to. He might come sneakin' around and try and soft-soap Dolly, but he was a-scared to talk to us."

"Did the defendant, to your positive knowledge, ever try to talk to your daughter after you had forbidden him to?"

"Yeah," said Pappy Hyde. "Two days before he killed her, I come home early, and I found him there a-talkin' to her. He was a-yellin' and talkin' mad to her, and she was cryin'. I chased him, but he seen me comin' too quick, and he got away from me."

"Did you exchange any words with the defendant at that time?"

"Not nothin' but swear words," Pappy Hyde said. "He shook his fist and swore at me when he was runnin' away."

"Now, Mr. Hyde," said Boken, "let me summarize your testimony for the benefit of the jury. If I am incorrect in any matter, please correct me. You, as the father of Dolly Hyde, had certain objections to the attentions Peter Carson was paying your daughter. You so informed him and forbade him to attempt to see her. You also forbade your daughter to see him further."

"Your daughter was willing to abide by your wishes in the matter, but Peter Carson evidently was not. He tried to see your daughter subsequently, and when he was discovered he exhibited bitter anger and resentment against you. And further than that he exhibited anger against your daughter by abiding by your decision. Is that correct?"

"It sure is correct," Pappy Hyde said. "He was a-scared to come back at us, so he come back at her, and it wasn't none of her fault at all." Pappy Hyde got up out of the witness chair and extended a rigid, trembling arm straight at Pete Carson. "But you're gonna pay for it! You hear that? You're gonna pay!"

Pete Carson's face was white and twisted and scared, staring back at him.

JUDGE POOLEY banged his gavel for order, and two attendants hurried forward and seized Pappy Hyde and led him out the back door of the courtroom, still struggling vainly in their arms.

"The People rest!" said Boken in a loudly dramatic voice.

Judge Pooley said: "Mr. Daniels, if the defense wishes to question the witness, I will declare a recess until he has sufficiently recovered himself."

Daniels shook his head. "The defense has no questions, but since the defense did not anticipate that the prosecution would close its case so abruptly, we are not fully prepared at this moment. I would like to request an adjournment until tomorrow morning."

Pooley looked at Boken. "Mr. Boken?"

Boken shrugged elaborately. "The defense never will be prepared, but we have no objection to an adjournment."

"So ordered," said Pooley.

In the uproar that accompanied the closing of the court, Jonathan Smythe leaned close and murmured in Daniels' ear. "That put a large nail in the coffin. Why didn't you cross-examine him? A lot of that stuff was phoney as hell. You could have tripped him up."

Daniels shook his head. "No. Not that way."

"What are you going to do tomorrow?" Smythe asked.

"Put Pete on the stand and let him sink or swim by his own story."

"He'll sink," Jonathan Smythe said gloomily, "like a rock."

"Perhaps," Daniels admitted. "But it's the one thing we can do. And tomorrow I want you to have the two Hyde brothers and Pappy Hyde sitting in the front row of this courtroom."

"They'll be there," said Jonathan Smythe grimly. "They'll be there with bells on. I'll see to that little matter personally. What happens if they are?"

"I'm going to put on a little entertainment especially for their benefit," Daniels said.

CHAPTER XXII

FOLEY TAKES A LOOK

IT WAS not yet dusk when Daniels drove the old sedan up the steep slant of the driveway and parked it in front of the three-car garage, but the sun was close to the mountaintops and the blue haze lay close in the bottom of the valley, distorting all that it touched and giving it a queer, pleasant fuzziness. There was no stir of life from any of the other houses along the canyon. The silence was a strange, invisible weight over everything, and Daniels wondered at it vaguely as his feet crunched in the gravel of the drive.

He pushed back the gate in the wall

and stared straight into Cora Sue's white, strained face. She was standing rigid in the center of the terrace, and when she saw Daniels she gave an audible gasp of relief.

"Oh, Jim!"

Daniels was tired and sick with the strain of the trial, and with the bitter, beaten feeling of failure, and the sight of Cora Sue there waiting for him was a refreshing thing that seemed to wash away the hard lump of discouragement in his throat. She was suddenly nearer and dearer to him than she had ever been before, and he took her in his arms and held her close.

Her voice came muffled a little against his shoulder.

"Jim, they're having some championship tennis matches today down at the club and all the others went down to see them. I guess everyone along the canyon went, but I wanted to stay and wait for you."

"Thank you for that, dear," Daniels said. He felt her tremble a little, pressed against him and he released her and pushed her back, his hands on her slim shoulders. "What's the matter?"

Cora Sue was trying to smile, but the smile twisted and quivered on her soft lips. "Jim. I'm—I'm afraid. I'm terribly afraid—I rode downtown with the others when they went and then walked back, and there's no one around anywhere. There's—no noise." She made a helpless little gesture. "I'm afraid, Jim—afraid . . ."

Daniels said comfortingly: "You shouldn't have waited here for me, dear. You got to thinking about Morris and what happened here last night, and naturally that's enough to make anyone afraid."

Cora Sue's voice was taut. "It isn't that. It's something else. It's something here right now. Jim, Annie and Bill aren't anywhere around. They didn't say they were going away, but when I came back I called and called and they didn't answer—"

"Probably went for a walk," Daniels said. "Come, let's go inside. You'll feel better in there."

"No!" said Cora Sue sharply.

Daniels stared at her puzzled. "But why not?"

"I don't know—there's—there's something in there—"

Daniels took her arm. "You come on. All this business has given you a bad attack of nerves, and I don't blame you a bit. We'll go in and play the radio or something, and then you'll feel much better."

She went with him reluctantly across the terrace and in through the big French windows. The low living-room was shadowed and dim and comfortable looking.

"You see?" said Daniels, smiling down comfortingly at her, "There's nothing in here—" His voice died in a little hiss of expelled breath.

"Nothing but me," said another voice, finishing his sentence.

THE man was standing in the doorway across the room. Standing quite still, with an alert tenseness. He was not large and he wore a dark blue suit and a dark hat with the brim pulled down low over his eyes. His face was pink, a queer light pink like rubber, and there were no lines in it at all. It looked like a mask only it was not a mask. But the thing that Daniels noticed was his eyes—sharp, beady and malevolent. No wonder they were so recognizable that Foley had been able to spot them, even in a photo.

"Raker!" said Daniels. "The man with the bandaged face!"

"Yes," said Raker. "Stand still, both of you."

He had a stubby revolver in his right hand, and he came closer to them now with quick cat-like strides, his eyes never wavering, never blinking.

"What do you want?" Daniels demanded.

"I'm going out of here," Raker said. "I'm taking your wife with me. Now get this. I've got it figured right. I'll hole up for one day with her. I won't hurt her a bit, if you do what I tell you. You get in touch with her old man and tell him to have the Feds pulled off the border,

so I can get through. As soon as I get past that border, I'll let her go."

"You're a fool," said Daniels. "A. J. Bancroft can't call off the Federal men."

"He can," said Raker. "He's got a hundred million dollars, and anybody with that many millions can do anything. I tell you, it's the only way I can get out!"

His voice wavered some on the last word and Daniels knew that the man's nerves were tied up into a tight, jittering knot of fear, that he was half hysterical with strain, and that he was all the more dangerous because he was.

Daniels let go of Cora Sue's arm and shook his head slowly.

"It *will* work!" said Raker. "It had *better* work!"

"No," said Daniels. His voice sounded dull and thick in his own ears. "No. You're not taking Cora Sue."

Watching him, Raker raised his stubby revolver until the barrel pointed straight at Daniels' face.

"You're not going to take her," Daniels said in the same dull, desperate voice.

The hammer of the revolver clicked lightly.

"Jim!" Cora Sue said in a breathless gasp.

Daniels suddenly dove at Raker's legs, and he knew even as he did it that it was a foolish and futile thing to do. It was a thing that wouldn't work, that would never work, not with a man as desperate and as quick as Raker. It was a thing that only movie heroes could do successfully.

And then while he was still in the air, hurtling forward, there was a world-filling blast of sound that seemed to strike him and hurl him, flattened and breathless, against the floor. There was no pain, but there was a terrible lassitude that held him, and he couldn't move and couldn't think. Dimly far away he heard Cora Sue scream and then scream again.

He got up without ever remembering getting up or ever remembering how long he had been lying on the floor. The room was empty, and Daniels walked across it

like a man in a dream. His feet were leaden clods and he could not lift them. They shuffled along the thick rug, raising little ridges ahead of them.

HE CAME to the front door. It was partially opened, and he went through it. He didn't remember the step down, just outside, and he fell on his face and gravel cut the palms of his hands. He got up again very slowly and laboriously and he saw Cora Sue and Raker going down the path toward the main road in the canyon. Raker had one hand clamped tightly over Cora Sue's mouth, and he was dragging her along beside him.

"Raker," said Daniels.

Raker whirled around, whirling Cora Sue with him, and looked back up the path. Daniels was coming, one step after the other, still dragging his leaden feet in the gravel.

"Raker," he said.

Raker had Cora Sue held in front of him like a shield, and he was pointing the stubby revolver over her shoulder. His voice was thin and high with fear:

"Get back there! Get back!"

Daniels plodded on toward him, wincing with the effort of each step. He saw the muzzle of the revolver quiver a little and then steady. He knew Raker was going to shoot in the next split-second and that he would not miss. He knew that he could never reach Raker, but he kept on, plodding, plodding . . .

There was a quick, flat burst of sound from the floor of the canyon. Just that one sound and no more, and then Raker stepped back away from Cora Sue. He raised his hand in a little fumbling gesture toward his temple, and then he turned and fell, sprawling full length on the path with his arm spread out in front of him.

Cora Sue seemed much closer to Daniels. He reached out one wavering arm and his fingers touched her shoulder. "Cora Sue!" he said, and then he knew he was falling and he couldn't stop.

. . . A little later he came wavering up out of the darkness of the mist, and

he could see and think clearly for measured seconds. He was lying on his back. Cora Sue's face, all trembling and smeared with tears was close above his. There was another face, too. Mike Riley's face, with her eyes staring in wide, unbelieving awe.

"If I hadn't seen it—" Mike Riley was saying in a slow, incredulous wonder—"him walking right into that gun." Mike Riley was holding a gun herself. It was a long, slim .22 target pistol. "Lucky I kept this," she said absently. "I was going to pawn it, but it used to belong to my dad, and he taught me how to shoot with it, knocking tin cans off the corral fence. I had it in the car, and when I saw you and that man I ran down and got it—"

THE black curtain snapped down over Daniels' mind again. When he regained consciousness the second time, he was lying on the couch in the living room of Blair Wiles' house. Cora Sue's face was still there, white and anxious, and Mike Riley's, too. There was a third face—a man's face, grave and professional looking. The man's hands were working on the spot of fiery pain that centered high on Daniel's right shoulder. He was speaking to Cora Sue:

"That'll fix it. Not serious, Mrs. Daniels. Not serious at all. But it came damned close. The bullet hit him on the top of the shoulder and nicked a piece out of his collar bone. It didn't miss his spine very far. It must have been a terrific shock. I don't see how he ever got up and walked afterward."

"He walked, all right," said Mike Riley. "You should have seen him."

"Jim," said Cora Sue quickly, seeing his eyes open.

The mists were clearing away, and Daniels smiled up at her. "Is everything—all right?"

Cora Sue squeezed his hand. "All right, dear."

Daniels' eyes sought Mike Riley. "It was—you?"

Mike Riley nodded silently, embarrassed.

There was someone else pushing forward, and then Biggers' earnest perspiring face peered anxiously at Daniels.

"You all right, boy? Is he okay, doc?"

The doctor stood up. "Yes. No excitement, now. No moving around for awhile."

"It was Raker, all right," Biggers said, nodding eagerly to Daniels. "And him with a brand new face, too. He just got it in time to be buried with it. He's deader than a kippered herring. That bullet was only a .22, but you don't need any bigger one if you git it right in the temple." He glanced admiringly at Mike Riley. "That was some shooting, lady. Over fifty yards with a .22. I'd hate to try it."

"My dad spent a lot of time teaching me to shoot," Mike Riley said.

"He sure done a good job," said Biggers. He rubbed his hands, winking at Daniels. "We got things kinda tied up now, huh? There'll be a lot of newspaper boys down here pretty quick. Could you sort of give me the outline?"

Daniels' whole body felt heavy and weak and helpless, but his mind moved with a sharp, quick clarity. He said: "I can tell you a lot of it. I'm sure it's right, but you can check it up later."

"Morris had been hiding Raker, while Raker recovered from an operation Morris had performed on his face. Mrs. Gregory brought that \$100,000 out here for Raker. That was his getaway money. But he didn't get it. Someone killed Mrs. Gregory and stole the money. Raker found her dead at the Phantom Lake Lodge that night, and he found that she had been stabbed with Morris' hunting knife."

"Later he found her money belt hidden some place that incriminated Morris further. Morris knew that Mrs. Gregory was going to bring that money to Raker, and naturally Raker thought that Morris had killed her and stolen the money. He put the money belt and the knife on Morris' bed then, to show Morris that he knew Morris was doublecrossing him. Actually Morris was not. He didn't know anything about the money or the murder."

"But Raker was desperate and terror-stricken, crazy to get away from here. He knew he would be caught if he stayed. Morris couldn't persuade him that he didn't know anything about it, and the other night, when I interrupted them, and Morris tried to tackle Raker, Raker killed him."

Biggers looked blankly dismayed. "But—but that leaves us still in the hole."

"I know that," said Daniels. He was silent for a moment, thinking. "You know, the reason why this isn't all clear to us now is because there's a part of this pattern that is missing. There's a part that has never been in the pattern from the very first. That's why we can't see it. If we could only find that part . . ." He squinted absently at the ceiling. "There's one thing that has kept bothering me from the first. It keeps prodding and prodding at my mind, and there's no sense to it really but it's always there. Tell me, were there any witnesses to Blair Wiles' accident?"

Biggers nodded blankly. "Yeah. One."

"I'd like to talk to that witness just to get it out of my mind."

"Why, you *can't* talk to her."

"Why not?"

"The witness is dead. She was Dolly Hyde."

DANIELS blew out his breath in a long sigh, and he was smiling. "That's it. That's the missing part of the pattern. I could feel all the time that there was some connection between Pete Carson's trial and this house. It was something deep and hidden, something underlying, and I was right!"

Cora Sue's voice was small and tight with horrified comprehension. "Jim—Jim—you don't think that Blair Wiles—"

"No," said Daniels. "No, of course not. It couldn't have been Blair Wiles. Don't you see? That's the answer."

"Oh," said Cora Sue. "I—I—I don't see, Jim. Who—who is the murderer?"

Daniels said slowly. "It's a man you never heard of, dear. A man named Ran-

dall. And now all I have to do is to prove it." He sighed lengthily. "But let that go for the moment. Mike Riley—I can't even begin to express my thanks for what you did for Cora Sue and me."

Mike Riley shrugged uneasily.

Daniels said: "It's none of my business of course, and you certainly did arrive at just the right time, but I can't understand why you didn't come down here sooner. I told you that Dak Hassan was down here or was coming down. I expected you to come a couple of days ago."

Mike Riley's voice was suddenly bitter. "I guess you might as well know now as later. I'm a liar."

"A liar?" Cora Sue repeated blankly.

Mike Riley nodded once. "Yes. The reason I didn't come down here sooner is because I didn't have any money. Dak Hassan borrowed the last fifty dollars I had. I had to sell my aeroplane—it's just an old box kite tied together with bailing wire—before I could get money enough to come down here."

"But—but—you told Dak Hassan—a million dollars—"

Mike Riley made an abrupt gesture. "I know I did. That's why I'm a liar. I was trying to make an impression on him. I thought a million dollars would. All I had in the world was that old aeroplane and an old broken-down cattle-ranch without any cattle on it.

"I do have a little credit through my father's friends, and Dak Hassan is so nice and sleek and polite—and he has that title—and I thought we could start a dude ranch for society people near Reno. I thought Dak Hassan, being in society himself, and being a prince, rich people would come there . . . And then—and then—Oh, hell! I love him, darn it!"

"Why I think that's a wonderful idea," Cora Sue said.

There was a sudden altercation at the door and as though he had timed his entrance to the split second, Dak Hassan burst into the room.

"My dear lady!" he said to Cora Sue.

"My dear, dear lady! I have just heard of your horrible experience, and my heart bleeds—" He saw Mike Riley then, and for the first time since Daniels had known him, he lost his dapperly insolent air. "You!"

"Yes," said Daniels. "Meet your future wife!"

"Her?" said Dak Hassan. "Marry her? Me? Never!"

"Well," said Daniels, judicially. "Of course, you have an alternative. You can go to jail for petty theft, although I think serving a sentence for petty theft would be a little wearing both on your title and on your social position, if any."

"Petty theft?" Dak Hassan repeated. "What are you talking about?"

"You stole fifty dollars from Mike Riley."

"It's a lie!" Dak Hassan shouted.

Daniels moved his one good arm casually. "All right, if you want to be defiant, but I think I must warn you that the jury when they get an inkling of your reputation will be much more likely to believe Mike Riley's story than yours. But there is no use arguing. Better take him away, Biggers."

"With pleasure," said Biggers.

"Wait!" said Dak Hassan, quickly. "Wait, please! A Dak Hassan in jail for petty theft? The thing is preposterous! It's impossible!" He glanced inquiringly at Mike Riley. "My dear, beautiful girl. You wouldn't do this to me?"

"Oh, yes I would," answered Mike.

Dak Hassan gulped, took a deep breath and recovered his suavity. "Now, my dear girl—and you other people—consider this matter reasonably. The fifty dollars was a loan, and surely there is nothing criminal in a man's borrowing money from his"—here Dak Hassan had to pause and draw another deep breath, but he finally got the words out—"intended wife?"

Mike Riley gasped unbelievably. All the other people in the room stared at Dak Hassan. He had the center of the floor again, and he smiled in his old courteously charming way.

"Of course! You see, Miss Riley is my future wife."

"It had better not be very far in the future," Daniels warned.

Dak Hassan made an airy gesture. "I shall attend to it at once—at once." He nodded at Daniels. "You have won, my friend, temporarily. But I have won, too. A million dollars is not so bad, eh?"

Mike Riley started to protest, but Daniels cut her off quickly. "A nice round sum to have," he agreed gravely.

"Come, my dear," Dak Hassan said, taking Mike Riley's arm.

"Oh—Dak Hassan," Daniels said. "I just wanted to tell you something. Did you notice the man lying dead on the path outside?"

"Yes," said Dak Hassan.

"Your future wife just shot him," Daniels said. "She is an excellent pistol shot. That would be a good thing for you to remember."

Dak Hassan's mouth opened a little. He glanced uneasily at Mike Riley. "Interesting," he said, in a subdued voice. "Very interesting. I shall remember it. Come, my dear."

THEY went out, with Mike Riley pausing in the doorway for a second to glance back with an expression of startled, unbelieving, frightened happiness on her face.

Cora Sue said uncertainly: "I don't know. I'm worried. She's so nice and she loves him so much and we owe her such a great deal and Dak Hassan is—is—"

Daniels chuckled weakly. "Something tells me that Mike Riley is pretty well capable of handling him. I have an idea that Dak Hassan is going to make a very good host for a dude ranch, whether he likes it or not."

"He ought to like it," Biggers said. "She's a swell-looking girl, although personally I would be a little leary of anybody who can shoot like she can. I'd hate to have her come after me with blood in her eye."

"Dak Hassan will be just smart enough

to behave himself for that very reason," Daniels said. "I'll wager that's going to be an extremely happy marriage." He winked at Cora Sue. "And I've managed to get rid of one of my rivals."

"Huh?" said Biggers blankly. "Oh. Oh say, what's the idea about this Mrs. Gregory bringing money for Raker? What did she do that for?"

"I don't know," Daniels admitted. "We'll have to check on that. There must be some connection between Mrs. Gregory and Raker."

There was another altercation at the door, and Foley came strolling in. He was still wearing his woolly bathrobe, and he was so drunk that he teetered on his heels. "Hello, my good people," he said gravely. "Alarums and excursions—shooting, shouting and murder. Are you all alive?"

"More or less," Daniels said.

"How did you get in here?" Biggers demanded.

Foley waved a limp arm. "You forget, my fellow worker, that I am a deputy-sheriff. I am now investigating this interesting case, and, if I may say so myself, I have made a very vital discovery. I examined the face of our dead friend outside before the coroner took him away. He bears a remarkable resemblance to the former Mrs. Gregory."

"How can you tell?" Biggers demanded skeptically. "Doc Morris made his face all over."

Foley shrugged elaborately. "I don't mean the exterior features of his face. I mean the bony structure. The framework. It is noticeably similar."

Biggers scratched his head. "Charley Raker did have a sister. I've been looking into his case carefully. This sister dropped out of sight ten or fifteen years back when Raker took his first rap. She put up the dough to defend him that time. I've never heard of her since."

"That must be the answer," Daniels said. "Foley, you have a most remarkable ability to identify people. Just how does that come about?"

Foley was wavering back and forth dan-

gerously. "Before I was elevated to my present position of prominence as a gag man, I used to be a cameraman. Cameramen don't just look at a person's face. They look at his features one by one. That's the way you can tell whether a face is photogenic or not. And also, incidentally, it's a very good way to identify a person if you only see one of his features. I think that I will go to sleep now." He suddenly let himself go and fell over backward on the floor with a sodden thump and began to snore instantly.

"Some guy," said Biggers in astonishment.

"As a guest," said Daniels, "he's very easy to entertain. And now I want to make some arrangements with you for tomorrow."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHERIFF TAKES HIS MAN

IT WAS Cora Sue who drove Daniels to San Benito the next day, following the path cleared by the county motorcycle police Biggers had assigned to them as an escort, and it was Cora Sue, aided by Jonathan Smythe, the motorcycle policeman, and two court attendants, who protected Daniels from the attentions of the thrill seeking crowd that seethed outside the courthouse.

Daniels was wearing a cast on his right shoulder that bulked hugely clumsy under his coat and shirt. His upper right arm was strapped close against his side, and his forearm was fastened across his chest. His face was pale and sick with pain. He had come over the protests and against the orders of his doctor. But he had come.

He had a driving eagerness to see this thing through, to win against the tremendous odds that were piled against him, and for the first time he believed that he had a chance to do that. If only, weakened and nauseated with pain as he was, he could summon the power and the force he needed.

The courtroom was packed solidly with spectators again, and this time Cora Sue

sat at the defense counsel's table beside Daniels, watching him with anxious concern.

When the court was called to order, Boken arose and said with some reluctance, but with his eye on the reporters who were grouped at a table inside the railing next to the jury's box:

"Your honor, it has come to the attention of the People that the counsel for the defense, Mr. Daniels, was gravely wounded last evening in an effort to protect his wife from injury at the hands of a notorious criminal. If the defense wishes to interpose a request for an adjournment at this time, the prosecution has no objection."

Pooley looked at Daniels. "Mr. Daniels?"

Daniels shook his head slowly. "No. No, thank you. The defense is ready to proceed at this time, and as our first witness we wish to call the defendant himself, Peter Carson, to the stand."

Pete Carson had only the one suit, and it was wrinkled and soiled from its days of use in the court. His thin face was alternately white with panic and red with embarrassment as he took the oath. He couldn't control his voice. It squeaked once, and he brought it back to normal with a startled gulp. He looked very small sitting in the witness chair, bewildered and woebegone and scared. He watched Daniels with the same blind, unreasoning faith that a dog gives its master.

Daniels stood up.

He was still a little uncertain of his balance, and he had to steady himself against the defense table before he could walk across the room. He took his stand in front of the witness stand, leaning back against the railing that circled the jury box.

"Pete," he said, thoughtfully, "you know that you have been on trial for your life here in this courtroom. You know that I am the only means that you have had with which to defend yourself. I know that I have done and said a great many things that you haven't understood, a great

many things that you have had to accept on pure blind faith in me, and yet you never protested or questioned me. Do you still trust me, Pete?"

"Yes, sir," said Pete, without any hesitation at all.

"Why?" Daniels asked seriously.

Pete wiggled uneasily in the witness chair. "Well—well—I don't know, Mr. Daniels. It's just the way you looked at me and talked to me that night up at Phantom Lake. I don't know . . ."

"Do you still think that I was right to have you surrendered to the authorities that night?" Daniels inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Why, Pete?"

"Whatever you say for me to do is right, Mr. Daniels."

"Thank you," said Daniels. "Thank you, Pete. It was right in this particular case, at least. Now I'm going to prove it. Your honor, at this point I would like to request that the court order that no one is to leave the room for the next hour."

BOKEN spoke up. "Your honor, I am fully aware of the defense counsel's weakened physical condition, and I have no desire to further obstruct him, but I must object to this theatrical hocus-pocus."

"You have a reason for that request, Mr. Daniels?" Pooley asked, cautiously.

"A very good reason," said Daniels. "So vital a reason that I think if the request isn't complied with it will reflect very gravely upon this court." His voice was deadly serious, and there was no mistaking the fact that he meant exactly what he said.

Pooley blinked and then blinked again and finally nodded at the attendant at the door. "The court orders that no one is to leave this room for any reason for the next hour."

"Thank you," said Daniels. "And now there is one thing more I would like to ask before we start. Are Pappy Hyde and his two sons in this court?"

"You bet they are!" Jonathan Smythe

answered emphatically. "Right there!"

Pappy and Lee and Jeff Hyde were sitting in the front row next to the aisle looking suddenly very uneasy and uncomfortable as the attention of the whole room was called to them.

"Thank you," said Daniels again. He turned back toward the witness chair. "Now, Pete, you were present here yesterday when Pappy Hyde testified. Was what he said at that time true?"

"Well—" Pete said uneasily.

"Answer me, Pete, was it true?"

"No, sir," said Pete, "not all of it wasn't."

"Is it true that you spoke scandalously of Dolly Hyde?"

"No!" said Pete emphatically.

"Is it true that you had any immoral intentions toward her?"

Pete's thin face twisted. "No. No, it ain't a bit true! We was gonna get married, just as soon as I could get enough money!"

Daniels nodded. "Pappy Hyde admitted that by implication during his testimony yesterday. He said that he didn't want you in the family. But that's beside the point. Why didn't he want you in the family, Pete?"

Pete started to squirm in the witness chair again. "Well—"

"Why?" said Daniels inexorably. "Tell me why, Pete."

"Well—well, I used to work in a gas station up on the Phantom Lake Road. That ain't so far from the Coldiron Canyon across country. Jeff and Lee and Pappy Hyde, they wanted me to give 'em a little gas."

"Give them gas?" Daniels repeated. "You mean they wanted you to sell them gas?"

"No," said Pete. "They wanted me to give it to 'em."

"Did you own the gas station, Pete?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then, if you gave them gas you would be giving them something that didn't belong to you, wouldn't you? You'd be giving them your employer's gas. You'd

have to steal the gas, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Pete miserably. "They said I could do it easy, and I guess I could have. There's always some shrinkage and spillage in a gas station, and with a big tank the boss wouldn't miss five or ten gallons, I guess. That's what the Hydes said, anyway. They said there wasn't no chance of me being caught—"

"But you wouldn't do it?"

"No, sir."

"You wouldn't steal for them?"

"No, sir."

"And that's why they got mad at you? That's why they disapproved of your going around with Dolly? Is that it?"

"Yes, sir. They said they wasn't going to have no gutless rabbit in their family."

"I see," said Daniels quietly. He turned around and looked at Boken. "Does the district attorney believe that the defense can't prove without a shadow of a doubt the truth of the testimony the defendant has just given?"

BOKEN'S square face was red as a beet under the stiff pompadour of his hair. He didn't say a word. Daniels turned a little more and faced the audience. "You—Pappy, Lee, and Jeff, stand up!"

The three of them stood up, the two sons tall and gangling and shamefaced beside their shrunken little father.

"Look at them," said Daniels, in the same even quiet tone. "Look at Lee and Jeff Hyde. There are the two men who did not want a brother-in-law who wouldn't steal for them. Look at Pappy Hyde. There is a man who wouldn't let his daughter marry a man who wasn't a thief. There's a man who sat on the stand yesterday and perjured himself, for all of you to hear." His voice suddenly snapped: "I demand here and now that a warrant be issued, and Pappy Hyde arrested for perjury!"

Boken stood up, his face still flushed. "Your honor, no one regrets this occurrence more than I do. I assure you that I had no knowledge that the testimony in question was so biased. I agree that

the witness, Pappy Hyde, should be severely censured, but under the circumstances, speaking as he was of a man he believed guilty of his daughter's murder, I think it would be impossible for me to obtain a verdict of perjury."

Daniels was standing up straight now, his weakness forgotten, and his voice cracked like a whip: "You won't have to worry about that, Mr. Boken, because *you* won't prosecute them! Because *you* won't be the district attorney very much longer! By your stupid stumbling inefficiency you have allowed the completion of the most vicious murder plot of which I have heard! More than that you have *aided* in the plan!

"You sat here and prosecuted an innocent boy, as the murderer knew you would, because he knew what a fool you are! While the murderer himself ran at large and did his bloody deeds without the slightest hindrance from you! He might never have been apprehended except for the brilliant deductive work of your opponent and successor, Jonathan Smythe, sitting *there!*"

Daniels extended his good arm and pointed at Jonathan Smythe, who was staring back in wide-eyed consternation and surprise.

Daniels singled out Sheriff Grimes who was sitting back in a corner on the other side of the judge's dias. "And you, Sheriff! You also aided in this murder plot! You concealed it by running your department with such dimwitted inefficiency that the murderer could have gone on and killed off half the people in this county and you would have never suspected it!

"And he would *be* going on and on now, not even touched with the faintest shadow of suspicion, if it hadn't been for the efforts of the next incumbent of your office, your own deputy-sheriff, Biggers, who worked against your orders, who specifically disobeyed you! Because he did, he solved the murder."

Daniels' voice stopped, and there wasn't another sound in the court room. Slowly he turned around to look up at Judge

Pooley. He didn't say anything, but he frowned in a speculative way.

The skin on Judge Pooley's face looked like unwashed canvas. He tried once, twice, and then finally managed a weakly uneasy smile.

Boken suddenly came to life. "I object!"

Pooley cleared his throat, still trying to hang on to his smile. "Mr. Daniels, if you would just go on with your questioning—"

"All right," said Daniels.

Pooley blew out his breath in a long gasp of relief. He looked like a man who had been granted a temporary reprieve from execution.

Daniels nodded at the Hydes. "You can sit down now. Don't try to leave this room."

THE three of them sank back awkwardly in their chairs, vainly trying to avoid the accusing glances of the spectators near them. "Now, Pete," said Daniels, "we'll proceed. Tell the jury just what happened on the day of Dolly's murder."

Pete's hands twisted together uneasily in his lap. "Well—I wanted to see her awful bad—awful bad. So, after work, I sneaked up to her cottage."

"Why?" Daniels asked. "Did you think she wanted to see you?"

"Why, sure," said Pete, surprised.

"Why didn't she come and see you then?" Daniels asked.

"She was afraid. Her brothers and her father, they give her a couple of beatin's for seein' me."

"Nice people, the Hydes," Daniels commented. "Tell me what else happened that day."

"Well, there ain't much else. I went up there and rapped on the back door and there wasn't no answer, and so I opened the door and looked inside and called. And then I seen her—I seen her lyin' there—"

"Yes?" said Daniels. "Yes, Pete?"

"Well—there was blood and I run in and grabbed her, and I seen she was dead—and—and I just went crazy—I couldn't think of nothin' but gettin' help for her—"

and I went out and run and run and run until I found Ham Grey—”

“Yes,” said Daniels. “That, I think, accounts for all of the testimony that the district attorney has presented. But I want to ask you something else, Pete. I want you to think hard and try to remember now. Do you recall the day of April 2 just four years ago?”

“No, sir,” said Pete blankly.

Daniels said: “I will refresh your memory. An accident occurred on that day—a very serious accident.”

“Oh, yes. Sure. That was the day Blair Wiles had his accident. Dolly saw it happen.”

“Yes, Pete,” Daniels said. “Dolly saw it happen. Tell me more about what occurred that day.”

“I was workin’ in a garage then,” Pete said. “A little garage and service station up near the top of Phantom Lake Road.”

Daniels interposed a question. “Were you keeping company with Dolly Hyde at that time?”

“Oh, sure,” Pete answered. “We been goin’ together ever since we was in grade school. Why, on that very day she come up to bring me some cookies that she had baked. It was a pretty long walk for her, but she liked to walk, and it was a nice day. But she dropped the cookies somewhere. She come runnin’ into the garage all hysterical and wanted me to call an ambulance. She said that she had seen Blair Wiles drive off a cliff down the road a ways.”

“Did she know Blair Wiles by sight?” Daniels asked. “Well enough to recognize him, I mean?”

“Oh, sure,” said Pete. “Everybody knew Mr. Wiles. He had a great big red car, and he was always drivin’ fast in it.”

“What did Dolly tell you about the accident?”

Pete squinted his eyes, trying to remember. “Well—she was all mixed up and hysterical. She said that she saw Blair Wiles and that stooge of his, go past her real fast in his red car. Blair Wiles was driving. She said that right ahead of her

they went off the road and down into a canyon. It was a deep canyon, and she could hear the car crashin’ and bangin’ all the way down. She was scared stiff, but she run forward and looked down over the edge of the road. She could see the car down there burnin’ like everything.”

“Go on,” requested Daniels. “What else did she say?”

Pete shrugged. “Well, she was all mixed up about it. She said one of ’em was flung free of the car, and that he was crawlin’ around and rollin’ on the ground and yellin’ and that his clothes was all on fire. She said that one was the chauffeur, but of course she was all hysterical and mixed up and got it wrong.”

“No, Pete,” Daniels said gently. “She didn’t get it wrong. She got it right, and because she got it right she was murdered.” He turned back toward Judge Pooley. “Your honor, as you will note, it lacks five minutes of being an hour since the time I requested you to order no one to leave the courtroom. I did that because I mean here and now to expose the murderer. He is not in this courtroom, but I did not want to take the chance of anyone getting out and warning him. In exactly five minutes he will come through that door.” Daniels pointed toward the front door of the courtroom.

THE tension in the room mounted until it was a crackling, invisible force that pressed down palpably on the brain of every person present.

Daniels stood perfectly still, waiting. There was a long, breathless eternity of suspense. The minute hand crept forward with sly, infinitesimal hesitation, and then it touched the numeral on the dial and covered it. In that second the courtroom doors swung open and the mutter and babble of the crowd outside sounded plainly.

Blair Wiles’ wheelchair was pushed into the room, and in it Blair Wiles was a lumpy, blanket-wrapped bundle. His horribly scarred face was dark with blood,

and his eye stared with redly distended rage. Biggers was pushing the wheelchair, and over Blair Wiles' grotesque face his own square, commonplace one looked awed and uneasy.

Daniels walked to the gate in the railing and pointed straight down the aisle. "There is the murderer!"

For a moment or two the silence held, breathless and enormous. The wheelchair continued to come on noiselessly; then suddenly it stopped, and that seemed to break the stunned pause.

Boken jumped up incoherent with rage. "Outrage! I protest! I won't stand for this—"

Daniels' voice rode his down. "He is a murderer, and you took money from him for your campaign expenses and so did Sheriff Grimes! Sit down and think up an excuse for that! You'll need it!"

But Boken remained on his feet there. His lips were working, but he could not find words; he could only stare now, his face gone white.

Blair Wiles' voice came thick and choked and low: "You're mad. You're mad, Daniels, but mad or not you'll pay for this! I'll hound you out of the country!"

Pooley finally got up enough courage to speak: "Mr. Daniels, surely you're not suggesting that Blair Wiles—why—why what reason, what possible reason could he have . . ."

Daniels said: "Blair Wiles *could* have no reason. Blair Wiles is not guilty of murder. That man is not Blair Wiles. That is Randall, Blair Wiles' ex-chauffeur and bodyguard."

Suddenly his voice rose to an impassioned shout, relentless and logical and unanswerable. "Yes, that man is an imposter! And how ridiculously easy it was for him! Think of it for a second! He didn't have to *look* like the old Blair Wiles, he didn't have to *talk* like the old Blair Wiles, he didn't have to *write* like the old Blair Wiles, he didn't have to *act* like the old Blair Wiles! No! Everyone *expected* him to be different. He had gone

through a horrible accident that had supposedly altered him completely!

"Dolly Hyde was right. Randall was thrown clear of the car. He was horribly injured, and his clothes were burned off him. Blair Wiles died in the car, but at the time they were picked up both were so terribly mangled that no one knew which was which. Then Randall was taken to the hospital, and Dr. Morris treated him. Dr. Morris found out that he was Randall, and the idea of the substitution of Randall for Blair Wiles was Dr. Morris' idea.

"Dr. Morris was a crook. Here was a marvelous chance to make more money than any crook had ever thought of making before. Dr. Morris took it. He persuaded Randall to accept the identity of Blair Wiles. I admit that freely.

"Dr. Morris was the moving force in this thing at the first. It must have been that way. Randall was too seriously injured to have thought up and carried through a plan of this kind. And Dr. Morris continued to be the moving force in the plot and everything went through without the slightest suggestion of a hitch. Randall was accepted by everyone as Blair Wiles—a shadowy, twisted, burned and grotesque Blair Wiles, but nevertheless the real Blair Wiles.

BUT as time went on, Blair Wiles began to resent his own subordinate position in the plot. Perhaps nothing would have come of that if it had not been for Charles Raker. Now Dr. Morris was, and had been, a crook. He had served criminals before, and once you have gone through that, it is not so easy to drop all contact with your former clients.

"Raker came to Morris and wanted a facial operation, and Morris had to perform it and had to hide him while he was doing so because of the knowledge Raker had about him. That started the whole train of events. Randall liked his position as Blair Wiles and he had no intention of relinquishing it. He knew that Dr. Morris' attention to his criminal clients would,

sooner or later, bring a lot of unwelcome attention to both Dr. Morris and Randall. He wanted to make his own position secure.

"The first move was the murder of Dolly Hyde. She was the only witness to the accident. Randall went to talk to her. He had planned it very carefully. Being a cripple and being unable to stand except with the greatest effort, he, of course, sat down. He sat down at the table which Dolly Hyde was setting in the Hyde kitchen. He knew about the Hydys and Pete Carson. He had egged the Hydys on in their treatment of Pete Carson.

"He went to Dolly Hyde as Blair Wiles, as a friend, to talk to her about Pete. That is the criminal, vicious, ruthless part of this. He went as a friend that she trusted, offering to help her and Pete. He brought the conversation around to the accident, and he found that she *did* know that it was Randall and not Wiles who had been thrown clear of the car. She had attached no importance to that fact and neither had anyone else. It was thought that she was just hysterical, and the inquiry into the accident was very casual.

"But Randall could take no chances on someone investigating further and believing Dolly Hyde. He murdered her there in the Hyde kitchen, and he left the way he had come, sneaking through the woods up the canyon, fighting his way through the underbrush with his cane, keeping out of sight of Henrietta Parkins.

"Then Pete Carson came as Randall knew he would come and was blamed for the murder as Randall planned that he should be blamed. And because the district attorney was stupid and subservient to the name of Blair Wiles, he aided the murderer in his plan. And because the sheriff was anxious for more campaign contributions from Blair Wiles, he made no effort to really investigate the murder. So that part of the plot went off exactly as it was planned. And then it was time for the next step.

Mrs. Gregory was Raker's sister. He

needed money, a great deal of money, to get himself out of the country safely and to stay under cover when he got out. She brought him that money. Morris knew about it, and he told Randall. Randall killed Mrs. Gregory, and he arranged that murder so it would appear to Raker that Morris had done it.

"He stabbed Mrs. Gregory with Morris' hunting knife, and later he hid the money belt Mrs. Gregory wore in Morris' possession where Raker would find it. Raker *did* think Morris had double-crossed him, and, as a result, he killed Morris just as Randall had planned that he would. And then Raker himself was killed trying to escape, as Randall was sure that he would be. He knew that Raker would never surrender. There was no use in him surrendering. He would have been hung if he had. There then, is the whole pattern completed, and there was no one alive who knew that Randall was Blair Wiles!"

BLAIR WILES twisted under his blanket like a swollen, venomous spider. One scarred hand came free, and it was holding a heavy cane. He turned and swung the cane at Biggers' face, and the swish of it going through the air was plainly audible.

Biggers jumped back, ducking, as the cane, unimpeded, struck down across the heavily braced back of the wheel chair and splintered in its center.

Daniels said, "That cane, Randall, isn't quite as strong as the one you murdered Dolly Hyde with."

Randall turned toward him. He clawed his way free of the blankets. He got up and tried to walk toward Daniels. His face was a distorted, writhing smear, and saliva bubbled on his scarred lips. He started falling forward, and the splintered cane was no support.

He sprawled full length in the aisle and all the time his one reddened, distended eye was fixed implacably on Daniels, and he was making thick, mouthing, animal-like sounds in his throat.

For a split second he was there alone

on the carpet, clawing like a crippled, enormous bug. Then Biggers and two of the court attendants hurled themselves upon him and merged with him into a scrambling fighting tangle out of which the slobbering, mad animal sounds rose and rose to a crescendo and then died out in choking gasps.

The frantic struggles were stilled now; the quick, harsh breathing of the captors was unnaturally loud, for there was no other sound in the courtroom.

Daniels turned around to face the jury. "Ladies and gentlemen, the defense rests its case."

As if his words were the signal, the room broke into a frenzied uproar, with people scrambling and pushing and fighting for the aisle.

In that first moment, the exhaustion that Daniels had fought off for so long claimed him suddenly. He looked out at the courtroom uproar through a kind

of haze; he was aware that his legs were trembling a little. Then he felt a hand supporting him.

Cora Sue was close to Daniels, holding tight to his good arm, and smiling up into his face with an expression that was both proud and worried. Very quickly she led him out through the rear door into the back hall of the courtroom. It was quiet here, suddenly and strangely quiet. Empty because all the loungers had left to participate in the excitement at the front of the court.

Daniels and Cora Sue walked down the hall together and Daniels said, smiling weakly down at her: "I'm not going to give you any more arguments, dear. I *do* need a vacation now."

"Oh, no," said Cora Sue. "No more vacation for you. You're going right home and rest up from the rest you've just had." She steered him firmly down the hall toward the door.

THE END

NOT GUILTY

—by reason of insanity!

The verdict of the jury fell like a thunderclap on the ears of **Ed Harley**. . . *Framed for a murder of which he was innocent . . . railroaded to an asylum for the insane . . . condemned to live his life as a madman . . . Harley was desperate.* The real murderer roamed free as the air. Something had to be done about it. **Harley** starts the fireworks in an exciting, moving mystery yarn by **Dale Clark** entitled

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Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



WE HAVE about decided that what we lack is cosmic consciousness. Space leaves us cold, and we have no more desire to ferret out the secrets of energy and matter that we have to rummage through a bureau-drawerful of somebody else's old love letters.

We give you an example.

Take, for instance, the symbol of the perisphere and trylon—which, incidentally, is becoming increasingly difficult for residents of this snug little island not to take. Supposedly representative of infinity and progress—and we hope we have got at least that much straight—they fail utterly to goad us to super-earthly thoughts. They are merely a huge ball and something vaguely reminiscent of a grossly exaggerated billiard cue to us. And it takes a lot more than *that* to send this department scurrying on any imaginary scalings of the stratosphere.

Our small and possibly over-ballasted soul cringes rather than zooms when confused with trillions of light-years, or when asked to ponder the endless array of glittering pinpoints that make up a galaxy.

It will respond instantly to the sound of a hurdy-gurdy rumbling out last year's hit parade or to the goodly smell of a crackling wood-fire. It will do handsprings at the pleasure of reading a well-turned sentence or at the sight of, say, Myrna Loy. But even when brought face to face with matters astronomical, chemical, interspatial and the like, it merely goes and hides under the bed until the storm is over.

Possibly this has resulted in what some of our reader-experts consider a cavalier

attitude toward such things, on the pages of this magazine. Certainly it causes us to lean heavily on the intelligence and accuracy of the men who write for us about them. As they have slipped, so—we are afraid—have we. . . .

Apparently one reader is convinced that we were unfair to Astronomy. Certainly we didn't mean to be; we admire the science greatly, if from a distance. And so our sincere apologies to Astronomy and to

R. L. MORRIS

I am writing this letter to tell you how much I enjoy reading ARGOSY. I consider it to be one of the best weekly magazines on the market, owing to the fact it has more variety in its stories.

One of the finest yarns I have read for a long time was A. Merritt's "Ship of Ishtar". It was unusual in its theme and a type of story I like very much. Also may I mention the Captain Hornblower sagas. We don't often have yarns of high adventure like them.

I do not like any of the phantasies of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Personally I think the man ought to be in a psychopathic ward, for his stories in my opinion are pure tripe. If there are any human beings on Mars, be sure they are of a finer type than Burroughs pictures them. I firmly believe there is a much more brainy human on Mars than there is on Earth, and the reason they haven't got in touch with us through radio is due primarily to the Heavyside Layer which will not permit ordinary wave lengths to penetrate. Or else, which is more than likely, they consider us inferior forms of life, and I don't blame them.

I am looking forward very much to "The Axe Bites Deep" by Philip Ketchum, and more particularly "Non Stop to Mars" by Jack Williamson, as he is an old favourite of mine.

In parenthesis, I don't like your remarks anent astronomy which you made some time ago when some of your readers were making disparaging remarks about that fatuous story