

Shannon took a healthy swing

# Help! Murder! Police!

By CLEVE F. ADAMS

*Watch us take the lid off Big Town—where Corruption holds high revel and an honest cop doesn't dare turn his back on his neighbor. Sure, Big Town is a tough nut to crack—but "Irish" Shannon swears it can be done. Beginning a thrill-a-second novel . . .*

## CHAPTER I

### BLACK IRISH

THERE was a corpse on the table in the autopsy surgeons' room adjoining the morgue. The surgeon's deft fingers probed for the three slugs that had turned a captain of detectives into a corpse. Lieutenant John J. Shannon took a pull at a pocket flask to fortify his stomach. Outside, in the anteroom, reporters and cops buzzed like flies, but in here it was very quiet; only the faint metallic snick of the instruments as the surgeon laid them on the porcelain tray.

Presently even that ceased and there was no sound at all.

The surgeon's face was tired, gray and disillusioned under the glare of the cone light. Shannon's was tired too, younger but just as bitterly cynical. He had a dark skin and very dark eyes and a big nose and a thick shock of pepper-and-salt hair that you somehow knew was peppered prematurely, not with age. A hard guy until you looked at his mouth. The mouth was a give away. It was as fine and sensitive as a woman's and it had to be deliberately twisted into either a snarl or a sneer to keep you from knowing how soft he was.



He watched the surgeon put the three slugs into a little envelope and lick the flap. It was like an official seal on a document of state. Shannon's eyes met the dead eyes of the man who had been his boss. Almost roughly, he pulled the edge of the sheet higher. Then he and the surgeon went out into the bedlam of the anteroom.

Jack Hardy of the *Telegram* grabbed Shannon's arm. "Tough on you, fella, but it's something to know they got his killer. It *was* Duquesne, wasn't it?"

Shannon glanced briefly at the olive face of Acting Chief George O'Meara. "O'Meara says so, doesn't he?"

O'Meara overheard him and gave him a dark smile. "Was that a crack, Shannon?"

"Maybe," Shannon said. He shook Hardy off, shouldered through the crush and went out the side door into the fresh coolness of the night.

FOG swirled above Civic Center as though trying to cleanse the already pristine buildings. Shannon was reminded of a paint ad: *Save the Surface and You Save All.*

He wondered if the guy who was responsible for that slogan had ever been in politics. Alone out here, crying would have been a relief. He wanted to cry, to get rid of that terrible ache in his throat and the stuffiness in his chest. But he couldn't cry, because he was Shannon. Presently he went over to the cab rank on the corner and rode down to his hotel. Upstairs, in his room, he lay on the bed, fully dressed, and stared at the ceiling. The skipper's dead face kept intruding and the eyes kept saying, "It *was* a frame, John J. I didn't do it."

"I know that," Shannon said, just as though Captain Goudy were really there in the room with him. He didn't believe that the gambler Duquesne had shot the skipper; he didn't believe that Duquesne's five-grand check, found in the skipper's pocket, had come there with the skipper's knowledge. Nor with Duquesne's, for that matter.

After a while there was a knock on the door. "Come in," Shannon said. He didn't bother to get off the bed.

The door opened and Frances McGowan came in. She'd been crying, but even with the marks of it still plain around her eyes she was something to look at. You have looks and a shape or you don't get to

model five hundred dollar gowns in the salons. You have a certain amount of intelligence or you don't sell many detective stories. Fran McGowan did both.

She sat down on the edge of the bed. "I just heard, Shan. I knew how you'd be feeling. I'm sorry."

"Thanks."

She got up and moved over to the windows. She had on a pair of silver foxes that would have set Shannon back a couple months' salary. "You don't want me here, Shan?"

"Sure." Quite suddenly he rolled over and buried his face in the pillows. She came and put cool fingers on his neck, rubbing it a little, not saying anything.

After a little he sat up. "You'd better ring for a drink, kitten."

"All right." She went to the phone. Shannon went into the bathroom and washed his face in cold water. When he came out he looked almost normal and the bellhop had come and gone. Fran was pouring the drinks. "What are you going to do, Shan?"

"I don't know yet. I haven't had time to think. They're holding Duquesne for the job."

"I know." She nodded. "Acting-chief O'Meara gave a statement to the papers and the networks. He hated to uncover what was bound to make a department scandal, but the check proved that Captain Goudy had been shaking Duquesne down. It is believed that Goudy squeezed once too often and Duquesne got tired of it."

"That's the way it's meant to be believed. Goudy never took a crooked dime in his life. Not only that, but Duquesne is a square gambler; one of the squarest I've ever known. He didn't have to pay off because he never had a squawk."

"Then what's behind it all, Shan?"

"Election's three days away," he said significantly. "I wish Regan was in town."

"Where is he?"

He laughed bitterly. "At a police chiefs' convention in Florida. A fine time to be horsing around the country!"

"Why don't you go to the mayor?"

"Maybe I will. Trouble is, I haven't got a thing to go to anybody with. If those slugs check with Duquesne's gun, and I think they will, even if they have to fake it somehow, it's going to be his neck and nobody would believe him on a stack of Bibles."

Fran shook her head. "I don't get it. What does O'Meara stand to gain by all this?"

"That's something else that's over my head," Shannon said gloomily. He put on his hat. "I think I'll go down and have a talk with Duquesne."

"May I come too?"

He looked at her. "Don't be a fool, Fran. This is big stuff. The skipper's dead and everybody in town knows what I thought of him. The minute I start getting in anybody's hair I stand a good chance of being found dead too. I'm going to have to watch my step and I don't want to be worried about you."

"Well, isn't that fine! Isn't that just dandy! *You* don't want to be worried about *me*. Why do you suppose I came up here in the first place? Why do you think I'm always around under your feet? Because you're a second Einstein?"

"I don't know." He shrugged. "Anyway, I've got to handle this thing my way. For a while, at least."

Her shoulders drooped. "All right." At the door she turned, facing him. "Would you mind kissing me just once, Shan? You never have, you know."

"I never knew you wanted me to," he said. He bent and kissed her on the mouth. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"You're a fool, John J. Shannon!"

"Sure," he said. "All cops are fools. If they weren't they wouldn't be cops." They went downstairs and he put her in a cab. It was eleven o'clock when he got back to Civic Center.

FLOYD DUQUESNE was in one of the detention cells on the top floor of the Hall of Justice. He was a tall man, tall and very slender, and Shannon had never

seen him before when he wasn't dressed in perfect taste; quietly unobtrusive but complete down to the minutest detail. He was in shirt and pants now and there were sweat stains under his arms. They had been working him over all right, even though there wasn't a mark on his face. His gray eyes had the look of a caged eagle's, bleak but watchful.

"Hello, Shannon."

"Hello," Shannon said. He watched the turnkey down at the end of the corridor. "They allow you to send for counsel yet?"

"O'Meara took a message. I don't know whether he forwarded it. Probably he didn't."

"Who did you ask for?"

"Duffield."

"All right," Shannon said. "I'll see you get him."

Duquesne's small mustache curved upward in a brief smile. "What's your angle, Shannon?"

"The skipper was a friend of mine."

"I'm supposed to have killed him. Or hadn't you heard?"

Shannon made rumbling sounds in his throat. "I could let them hang you."

"Or even help them a little, eh?"

"If I thought you did it I'd shoot you down right here," Shannon said. He would have, too. He waited till the stiffness went out of Duquesne's shoulders. "Where were you tonight?"

"Home. I told them that. I couldn't prove it."

"And was your gun home too?"

"It still is as far as I know." Duquesne spread his fine, well-cared-for hands. "I'm not much of a gun-toter, Shannon."

"I know that." Shannon curled strong fingers about the bars, leaned his face close. "You've been a thorn in the side of the gambling ring for a long time, Floyd. Because you wouldn't conform. Because, according to your lights, you played the game straight and gave the sucker an even break. It's Lombardi that's doing this to you, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't know, copper."

Shannon was up against the same old

blank wall. These guys always figured they could take care of things themselves.

"All right," he said doggedly, "we'll skip that. Was the check they found in the skipper's pocket on the level? Was it yours?"

"They didn't let me see the check."

"Remember giving out a five grand check recently?"

"I cashed one at the bank about a week ago. I made it out to bearer because I expected to send someone else after the money. Then I had to go down anyway so I cashed it myself."

"Where do you bank?"

"The Third National."

There was a clang down at the end of the corridor and Shannon turned around. O'Meara pounded hard heels toward him. His darkly handsome olive face was flushed and his eyes were hard, antagonistic. "What's the idea, Shannon?"

"I thought I'd work on the case a little. Mind?"

"What is there to work on?"

"Nothing, I guess," Shannon said. "I can see by the look on your face that the slugs checked with Duquesne's gun."

"You're damned right they did!"

Shannon put his hands in his pants pockets so O'Meara couldn't see how they were balled into fists. He said, "Duquesne tells me he asked for Duffield as counsel. You send for him yet?"

O'Meara's eyes shifted. "I was just going to when I heard you were up here fooling around."

"Well," Shannon said carefully, "I'll go with you while you send for him. That way I'll be sure of one thing at least."

"Look here, Shannon, I don't like your tone! Aren't you forgetting something?"

"What? That you're acting chief while Regan's away? No, I'm not forgetting it." He saluted mockingly. "Lead on, Chief." They went up the corridor together. In the elevator Shannon could feel O'Meara's eyes covertly watching him. Presently O'Meara said under his breath. "There's a captain's berth vacant, Shannon. How would you like to be a captain?"

"I'd like it fine if it didn't make a heel out of me."

"Or maybe a corpse like Goudy."

"Meaning what?"

O'Meara let a string of gutter-oaths dribble out between set lips. "How would you like to have me break you, Shannon?"

"It might prove something."

"What, for instance?"

"It might prove that you're afraid of me. Are you?"

O'Meara looked startled. "Hell, no!"

"That's nice," Shannon said. "Then I'll probably go right on being a cop for a while."

## CHAPTER II

### FIREWORKS

**I**N THE press-room Shannon found Jack Hardy with a limp copy of the *Telegram*, still damp from the presses. A bunch of legmen from the other sheets were sitting around theorizing as to what the murder would do to the administration. Hardy shoved the paper at Shannon. A banner and a couple of sub-heads carried the main facts. In a series of boxes were comments by various officials.

Mayor Arbogast: "I can't believe it."

District Attorney Jorgensen: "I have always found Captain Goudy an efficient police officer. However, my office has been aware for some time that the metropolitan force has been honey-combed, if not by actual bribery, then by an amazing lack of cohesion. Evidence furnished this office is often so incomplete that successful prosecution is impossible."

Acting-chief O'Meara: "I could have followed the usual procedure and white-washed a brother officer, but to me there is a higher duty. I shall probably be censured by men inside the department. Actually I believe my life to be in danger for the stand I have taken, but my oath of office demands a strict accounting to the public which pays my salary. I shall give it, let the axe fall where it may. It is unfortunate that Chief Regan is not at his desk at this time."

An editorial commented on the fact that Captain Goudy had been a close

friend of the mayor and also of the absent chief of police. By innuendo you gathered that all three were tarred with the same stick and that it might not be entirely coincidence that Chief Regan was in Florida.

Shannon ripped the paper to shreds. "You'd think the skipper was on trial instead of lying dead in the morgue! What is this, anyway?"

"Election time," Jack Hardy said.

Three or four of the other guys got up and joined hands and did a little dance around Shannon. "For I'm to be Queen of the May, mother!" They weren't particularly hard; they were just newspapermen. The thing hadn't touched them as it had Shannon. He went across the hall to the telegraph bureau and sent a wire to Regan at Miami. "If you like being a police chief you'd better get back here. John J. Shannon, detective-lieutenant." He then went over to City Hall.

The anteroom of the mayor's office was as crowded at midnight as a bargain basement at nine in the morning. A dozen committeemen, a bunch of lobbyists for the contractors, a couple of ministers and, over in one corner with a little clique of his own, Nick Lombardi. Shannon knew them all. A little silence fell as he came in. He shoved through to one of the secretaries' desks.

"Tell His Honor Lieutenant Shannon would like to see him." He didn't even try to lower his voice. The girl looked scared for a minute, then as everybody started talking again she picked up a phone and said something into it.

Shannon went over and planted his feet in front of "Big Nick" Lombardi. "My skipper never took that check or any other, and anybody says he did is a liar."

Lombardi looked at him, sleepy-eyed. He was a fat-faced Italian, slow moving, almost lethargic in his manner. It was rumored that he never got up before two in the afternoon and that he had to have somebody bathe him. He had shiny, crinkly black hair and eyes as soft as a cow's.



He smelled of lilac vegetal. "No doubt you're right, Lieutenant." His voice was liquid velvet.

"You're right I'm right!"

"Sure."

The two guys who acted as Lombardi's bodyguards deliberately turned their backs and pretended to be very interested in what was going on in the street ten stories below. A couple of reporters came over and asked Shannon if he wanted to go on record as defending the dead man's integrity.

"Why not?"

They scribbled in their notebooks. The girl secretary touched Shannon's arm. "The mayor will see you now, Lieutenant." He went through the solid-paneled door.

**P**AUL ARBOGAST was not a big man, nor did he strike you as being a strong one. In private practice he had been an excellent attorney, not brilliant perhaps, but competent. His years in public office had done little to change this impression. The papers quoted him occasionally on topics of the day, so that you knew there was a man named Arbogast in the mayor's office, but there had been no issues of vital importance to make him an outstanding figure. Any one of the city's five councilmen was better known. He had sandy hair and a short-clipped sandy mustache and he wore pince-nez. His desk was much too big, too ornate for him.

Shannon took off his hat, not out of respect but because it irked him. "What kind of a statement was that—you can't believe it?"

"It was a safe statement."

Shannon turned purple. "Safe! The guy was my friend, and your friend, and you sit there and talk about a safe statement! Who cares?"

"You are talking to the mayor of this city," Arbogast said.

"No kidding!"

Arbogast's glasses glinted in the light and his rather fragile fingers played a little tattoo on the desk. "Just why did you come here, Lieutenant?"

Shannon took a deep breath, expelled it slowly, carefully, as though afraid that if he let it out all at once he'd collapse like a punctured balloon. He went over to the window. "I seem to be bucking the whole town on this thing. Nobody gives a hoot about a dead police captain, or how his reputation is slimed up. All any of you can think about is how it's going to affect you."

He turned, put his two hands flat on the broad desk. "All right, even on that basis you can't afford to sit still and twiddle your thumbs. They'll pull you down, and they'll pull Chief Regan down. You think if they could frame that check on the skipper that they can't frame you? Already the papers have hinted that there is a tieup, that Regan is off the scene because he's afraid."

"What do you want, Shannon—a promotion?"

Shannon made an inelegant sound with his mouth. "The best you could do is make me a captain and I've already been offered that. I want the real killer of the Old Man and I'm going to tear this town to pieces to get him."

"You don't think Duquesne did it?"

"Do you?"

More drumming of fingers. "I don't know, Shannon. Honestly I don't." The brown eyes behind the pince-nez steadied on Shannon's face. "You see the spot I'm in about O'Meara, don't you?"

"Sure. You remove him as acting-chief and they'll say he was an honest cop trying to do his duty and you were afraid of what he'd uncover. Leave him in and he'll uncover something if he has to manufacture it first. Either way you're sunk. That's what this whole thing is about and it's the only reason I think you're an honest man. What do you owe Nick Lombardi?"

"Lombardi's votes put me into office."

"But you haven't panned out as good as he expected?"

"I don't know, Shannon. On the surface he's still friendly. It may be the opposition that is causing all this trouble."

When someone wants to be mayor badly enough, or district attorney badly enough, almost anything is possible."

"The D.A. isn't worried."

"No, Jorgensen isn't worried. He'll win, no matter what happens to me. In fact, he can use this police business to further his own ends. The city is all the opposition wants, not the county."

Shannon nodded. "The big dough is in the city. Has Nick Lombardi got anything on you?"

"No. I've done him what favors I could without its costing the taxpayers anything. Chief Regan has never had orders from me to lay off anything criminal."

"Lombardi ever ask you to?"

"He's asked me to speak to Regan a time or two. I told him Regan was handling the police department."

Shannon put on his hat. "Okay, I'll be seeing you."

"I hope so." He let Shannon get to the door before he added, "You sent a wire to Chief Regan."

Shannon whirled. "Things certainly get around, don't they?"

"O'Meara didn't like it very well."

"So what did he suggest?"

"That you be suspended."

"Well, am I?"

"Not yet," Arbogast said. "Just watch your step."

Shannon went out the side door, caught a down elevator and went over to the police garage and got in the car he always used. Nobody tried to stop him. At the far end, where the mechanics' benches were, a bunch of cops were standing around a wrecked prowler car. Shannon stepped on the starter and the whole world seemed to explode in his face.

**H**E WOKE up in the emergency ward. An interne was trying to pour some whiskey down his throat. He sat up and looked around. Besides the interne and a male nurse there wasn't anybody that seemed to give a jitney slug whether he lived or died. His left arm was broken.

"Pretty lucky, copper," the interne said.

"Yeah."

The street door opened and Captain O'Meara came running in with Jack Hardy, and a couple of other reporters. "What happened, Shannon?"

"Somebody gave me a trick cigar," Shannon said. He wobbled over to a mirror and looked at his face. There wasn't a mark on it. He said, "I thought explosions did things to you."

"The steering wheel hit you in the heart," the interne said. "That's what knocked you out. You broke your arm falling out of the car afterward."

"Imagine that." He sat on the edge of the operating table while they set his arm and mixed a batch of plaster and finally hung the arm in a sling around his neck. Sweat rolled down into his eyes but he never said a word.

Jack Hardy said, "You can take it, fella."

"And I can dish it out." He looked at Captain O'Meara. "You publish the story in your own way, Chief. I don't know what happened. I just got in the car and stepped on the button. It's a very funny joke on somebody."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I only busted an arm. It should have been my neck." He looked around for his hat, finally found it, put it on at just the right angle and walked out. He went up to the mayor's office. The same gang was still there, and the same little silence fell when he went in, only everybody looked at the bulk of his broken arm instead of his face. He walked directly across the room until he stood in front of Nick Lombardi. Then he made a fist of his right hand and smacked Lombardi in the mouth. One of the two bodyguards was very fast with his gun. He had it out and shoved in Shannon's belly almost before the sound of the blow had died away.

Lombardi touched an immaculate handkerchief to a drop of blood on his lips. "Never mind, Sticky."

Sticky put his gun away with an air of frustration. "Hell, Nick, it would be

self-defense, wouldn't it? There's a whole roomful of witnesses that he asked for it."

"I said to let it go, Sticky."

The guy must be made of lard, Shannon thought.

One of the ministers came over. "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword."

"You hear that, Shannon?" Lombardi asked softly.

"I hear it," Shannon said. "But at least a sword's clean."

He turned and walked out.

### CHAPTER III

#### A CHECK FOR FIVE GRAND

**L**IEUTENANT GUS VOGEL was a round-bellied little man with a pinkly fat moon face and blue eyes as naïve as a child's. He owned the only derby in the department. He was masticating a wad of gum with cowlike placidity and watching Shannon search Captain Goudy's desk.

"Well, now, look, John J.," he remarked after a while, "there ain't no sense in you being dead too."

Shannon cursed him without looking up from what he was doing. Vogel stuck a finger in his mouth and snapped his gum. Shannon jumped as if he'd been shot. "Why don't you be your age?"

"Okay," Vogel said resignedly. He took off his derby and stared into its green-black interior with great concentration. One of the phones rang and Shannon picked it up. The guy in the telegraph bureau said they hadn't been able to locate Chief Regan in Miami.

"Keep trying," Shannon said. He went back to searching the desk drawers. He didn't know what he was looking for. It wasn't very likely that the skipper had known in advance that he was going to be killed and made provision for the apprehension of his murderer, but sometimes you find a lead where you least expect it.

Shannon finished the desk without finding a thing.

His broken arm bothered him. It wasn't only the toothache pain of it, but the

awkwardness of the thing hung across his middle. Every time he moved he bumped it into something; and his nerves, already frayed, were jumpy. The vertical lines at his mouth corners had deepened in the last couple of hours and his eyes had a half-dazed look in them.

Vogel coughed apologetically. "I'm a funny guy, John J."

"You're telling me!"

"I know," Vogel said, "I know what you're thinking. You're thinking about all the times I've tripped over my own feet, and made things tougher for you when we happened to be working a case together. You're thinking that the Dutchman is pretty thick between the ears and that all he's interested in is what he's gonna have for breakfast. You're forgetting that I worked for the skipper as long as you."

"So what?"

Vogel's moon face turned beet red. "So I'm trying to tell you, John J., that if you need any help all you gotta do is say so."

Shannon stood up, stuck out his good hand. "I'm a heel, Gus. Lots of times I've been a heel to you. I'm sorry."

"Sure."

Neither man said anything more for a while. Shannon finally picked up a phone and called the Glendale airport. There was a plane due down from 'Frisco in an hour. Duffield, Floyd Duquesne's attorney, would be on that.

Vogel said, "Why do you want to see Duffield?"

"Because he's got one of the best minds in the country. I need that kind of a mind."

"He'll have to be a wizard if he springs Duquesne."

"The hell with Duquesne. You and I could spring him in a minute if we wanted to. At least we could fix it so that any two-for-a-nickel shyster could spring him."

"How?"

"Maybe I'll show you after a while. Right now Duquesne is doing all right where he is. Once on the streets again he'd be playing right into the hands of the



guys that framed him in the first place."

Vogel's forehead wrinkled. "I don't see that."

"Say he was turned loose; say he disappeared after that—for good. Would there be any doubt that he was guilty? Not much, there wouldn't! I'm surprised our friends haven't figured that out."

"O'Meara?"

There was a knock on the door and Shannon put a cautioning finger to his lips before he went over and unlocked it. Frances McGowan stood there looking at him.

"Well, aren't you going to invite me in?"

"I thought I told you to stay away from me."

She glanced at his broken arm. "You told me you were going to handle this in your own way, too. I think it's a bum way, if you ask me."

"I didn't ask you."

A couple of dicks going past in the hall looked at her curiously. "You'd better come in," Shannon said. He closed and locked the door after her.

GUS VOGEL stood up on his short, thick legs and put his derby on so that he could make the polite gesture of taking it off again. "How do you do, Miss McGowan?"

"Hello, Gus."

He said, "Now look, Miss McGowan, about this last story of yours I read? What I want to know is—"

Shannon yelled at him. "What is this—the Tuesday Afternoon Club?" He pushed Frances down in a chair. "When are you going to get it through your head that I meant what I said? I'm poison. You've simply got to stay away from me."

Her gray eyes studied him curiously. "I can't make up my mind about you, Shan. You're either being very smart, or crazier than usual. Either way you're worrying me sick. First I hear that somebody planted a pineapple in your car, then I hear that you smacked Nick Lombardi in front of forty-seven witnesses."

He scowled. "One cancels the other."

"I see," she said. "A cut lip for a broken arm." She stretched her legs out in front of her. "It looks to me as though you got cheated. What makes you think Lombardi tinkered with your car?"

"I don't think he did. Not personally, anyway."

"Then why did you smack him?"

Shannon stopped pacing up and down the room. "Look, kitten, Lombardi has more or less run this town for years. He wants to go on running it. Guys like Floyd Duquesne and Chief Regan have been making it tough for him, and Mayor Arbogast hasn't turned out as well as he expected. With election less than three days away Lombardi has two choices. He can use this mess to break Arbogast and put another man into office, or he can use it to make Arbogast listen to reason. Regan's being away at this damned convention just makes it easier, is all. I think O'Meara wants to be chief."

"So you smacked Nick Lombardi and fixed the whole thing."

"That was insurance. If anything else happens to me, people will remember that I pasted Lombardi in the mouth and they'll wonder if maybe he didn't do something about it. He may do something anyway, but he'll have to be pretty careful."

She looked at him. "That was smart, Shan."

"Sure it was smart! But what good is it going to do if you keep tagging me around? If they find out how much I—if they think I know you they'll cop you off and use that as a leverage to stop me."

She stood up. Her eyes were shining and there was a little smile on her lips. "That's the closest you ever came to telling me anything worthwhile, Shan. Be careful, will you?"

"Take her home, Gus," Shannon said.

"Well now, look," Vogel demured, "first I gotta know where you're gonna be." He rolled his eyes at Frances. "He is a very trying guy, Miss McGowan."

"Very trying indeed," she agreed. She

looked at Shannon. "Did you find out anything about that business down in the garage?"

"No."

"Have you tried?"

"Of course. There are around four thousand men in the department who have access to the garage. Any one of them could have done it."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to work on Floyd Duquesne's five-grand check. The one they found in the Old Man's pocket. Duquesne cashed that check himself. Somehow it got out of the bank without being stamped and I've got a good idea how it happened."

"Well?"

"Nick Lombardi is on the Third National board of directors."

#### CHAPTER IV

##### YOUR BADGE, LIEUTENANT!

THERE was a high fog riding the airport. Shannon, pacing the concrete promenade between the administration building and the fabricated steel fence that enclosed the landing field, was oppressed by the feeling that he too was a pilot trying to land blind. He didn't even have the beacon, or the banks of floods or the border markers to guide him.

There weren't very many people around. At two in the morning the sightseers are usually in bed and it was a safe bet that those who were left had business here. He was surprised to see Sticky, the fast gun who belonged to Nick Lombardi, come out onto the ramp from the lobby waiting room. Sticky didn't see Shannon at first. He was a tall, lanky guy with a thin, down-drooping mouth, very natty in a double-breasted Chesterfield. He sought the shadows beside one of the closed novelty shops and just stood there quietly.

Shannon went over. "Hello, pal."

"Hello, there," Sticky said. He didn't seem a bit put out by Shannon's presence. "Quiet tonight, isn't it?"

"I hadn't noticed," Shannon said. "I've been pretty busy, myself."

Sticky looked at the empty left sleeve of Shannon's overcoat. "How's the arm?"

"Fine." They were just two casual acquaintances passing the time of day. You'd never know that an hour or so ago one had been ready to shoot the other for smacking his boss in the mouth. Shannon glanced aloft as a plane droned. "Meeting someone?"

"Unh-unh. I just like to see them come in. I'm going to horse one of those things around some day myself."

"If you really want to do that," Shannon said, "you hadn't better pull a rod on me again."

"Next time I pull one," Sticky yawned, "it'll probably go off. I hope you're not in front of it." He flicked a pocket lighter aflame, touched it to his dead cigar. His mouth was faintly smiling but his eyes were cold.

NUMBER 11 came down out of the clouds, rolled a little way, squatted down. A couple of porters pushed the canopy out to it. Sticky moved forward into the light, watching the pilot and co-pilot get out, and then the stewardess, and then three or four passengers. Ames Duffield came through the gate, carrying a briefcase.

Shannon stepped forward. "Duffield."

The lawyer paused. He had a club foot and he favored this a little as he walked. It was his only distinguishing feature. The rest of him was gray, inconspicuous. Even his face was gray. "Yes?"

"I'm Shannon. Headquarters."

"Yes?"

"I'd like to ride in with you."

"All right." They went into the rotunda and got Duffield's suitcase and Shannon, carrying this, flagged a cab. The guy Sticky had disappeared. As the cab got under way Shannon could feel Duffield's eyes on him. Presently Duffield said, "Official escort?"

"Not exactly," Shannon said. He couldn't tell whether he was going to like this guy or not. He'd seen him in court, knew him for a legal wizard, but of the man himself he knew nothing. He got out a pack of cigarettes, offered it.

Duffield accepted one without comment and they smoked in silence for a moment or two. Shannon moved his shoulders irritably. "You a friend of Duquesne's?"

Duffield considered this. "Why?"

"Hell's-fire, don't you ever talk out of court? What kind of a guy are you, anyway?"

"I'm Floyd Duquesne's counsel. He's supposed to have shot a policeman. You are a policeman. It's rather obvious, isn't it?"

"Nuts!" Shannon said. "I'm the guy that helped Duquesne's hurry-call get through to you."

"Why?"

"There you go again!" Shannon complained. "Look, the guy that was killed was not only my skipper, he was my best friend. I know Duquesne didn't do it and I want the guy that did. Is that plain enough?"

"You have proof?"

Shannon told him of the things that had happened.

"None of that is proof, my young friend."

"All right," Shannon grated, "all I've got is absolute faith in my skipper's honesty. If the check they found in his pocket was sour then it's dollars to doughnuts that the rest of it is sour too. Will you do something for me? Will you leave Floyd Duquesne in the can?"

"I probably couldn't do anything about it either way. I've been in touch with a source or two down here and I understand Duquesne's gun checks with the slugs they took out of the body. You don't spring a man on that kind of evidence."

"Play with me, -counsellor, and I'll prove the evidence was phony."

"Why don't you do it now?"

"Because I don't want Floyd Duquesne on the streets. If he turned up missing, all the evidence I could collect or frame wouldn't mean a thing. He'd be guilty."

"You have a personal motive in this, Shannon? Besides your natural feeling over Captain Goudy's death?"

"You're right I have! I've got a busted

arm that could just as well have been my neck."

"All right," Duffield said, "I'll play with you for a day or two. We won't even make an attempt to spring Duquesne."

THE cab drew up before the Hall of Justice. There was quite a crowd on the steps and in the lobby. Sighting Duffield, a dozen reporters swarmed down upon him. "I guess you won't be needed, counsellor. Your client just escaped."

All Duffield said was, "Indeed?"

Shannon didn't say anything. He was so mad it hurt even to breathe. Finally, when he couldn't stand the chattering of the reporters any longer, he climbed the steps and went up to Acting-chief O'Meara's office.

There was a crowd up here, too. O'Meara was at his desk, very busy with the phones. A turnkey was slumped in a chair and a couple of dicks were giving him first aid. He had a lump on his forehead the size of a walnut and there was a deep gash in the top of his head. He was sobbing hysterically.

O'Meara beat Shannon to the punch. "Did you have anything to do with this?"

Shannon's jaw dropped. And then, by an effort so great that it drained all the blood out of his face, he swallowed the hot retort that bubbled on his lips and looked about the office. Everybody seemed to be staring at him with a mixture of awe and disgust. Jack Hardy of the *Telegram* deliberately turned his back.

O'Meara said, "You've been bucking me all the way on this thing, Shannon. First you intimate that we arrested the wrong man; then you go up and get chummy with the man himself. Now the man is gone and I'm asking you what you had to do with it. Where have you been this last hour?"

"I've been out to the airport!" Shannon yelled.

"Why?"

"Meeting Duffield if you've got to know!"

A little smile flicked over O'Meara's lips. He looked around the room. "You

see? Here is a man who professes great friendship for a dead superior, yet he consorts with the murderer and the murderer's attorney." His eyes bored into Shannon's. "I'm trying to be very fair, Lieutenant."

Shannon's voice sounded thick, even in his own ears. "I can see that." He looked at the turnkey. "What happened?"

The guy tried to talk and couldn't. O'Meara said wearily, "Never mind. If you had seen who conked you all this wouldn't be necessary." He glanced obliquely at Shannon. "Still trying to be fair, Shannon, I'll repeat what happened. We had Duquesne down for questioning again and he was left in one of the detention rooms for a minute with only the turnkey as guard. Somebody knocked the turnkey out and Duquesne just disappeared. I hope you can prove you were at the airport."

Duffield came in, his club foot making little clumping sounds on the bare floor. "He can prove it." He looked around. "I hope I am sufficiently well known to all you gentlemen so that my word will be enough?"

O'Meara said, "Of course, counsellor." He was making no direct accusation of complicity against Duffield. Shannon had a flash of insight which told him that O'Meara was actually afraid of the gray-faced Duffield. O'Meara said, "I suppose you'll be going back north in the morning?"

"No," Duffield said. "No, I shall stay down here for a day or two. In case Duquesne is picked up I should appreciate hearing from you. I'll be at the Corinthian." He turned and clumped out without looking at Shannon.

O'Meara said, "Well, Lieutenant, is there anything else I can tell you?"

"Not without putting your neck in a sling," Shannon said.

A blanket of complete silence fell over the room. O'Meara stood up. "I think I shall have to ask for your badge, Shannon."

"I was going to turn it in anyway," Shannon said. "I'm not very proud of being a cop any more." He fumbled the little

leather case out of his pocket, laid it on the desk. "Goodnight, gentlemen—and Captain O'Meara."

## CHAPTER V

### THREE LITTLE SLUGS

THE laboratory was a series of cluttered-looking rooms on the tenth floor of the Hall of Justice. At two in the morning almost everyone had gone home and Shannon was hoping that the two technicians who were left hadn't heard about his dismissal. You don't get much coöperation from a police laboratory unless you're entitled to it. He pushed through the swing gate in the long counter and dropped into a chair, watching Ziegler, the little ballistics wizard, play with his microscopes.

Ziegler looked up. "Hello, Lieutenant." He had a face only a mother could love. At one time he had been a bantamweight fighter, not a very successful one, and each one of his features was a record of his various failures. "How's tricks?"

"Tricks," Shannon said, "are just swell." He made a great business of lighting a cigarette one-handed. Ziegler didn't offer to help him. To Ziegler a broken arm was not even a minor injury.

Shannon said, carefully casual, "Who turned the slugs from Goudy over to you?"

"O'Meara. Why?"

"I just wondered. I saw 'em taken out." He took a couple of drags on his cigarette before he added: "They were still in a sealed envelope, of course?"

Ziegler bridled. "What is this? You think I don't know my business. Of course they were in a sealed envelope!"

"Okay. Am I arguing?" Shannon got up and wandered around the room. The other technician put on his hat and went out for a cup of coffee. Shannon looked at Ziegler. "Seems to me it was Captain Goudy who gave you your first real chance in the department. You ought to feel almost as bad about him as I do."

"Maybe." They stared at each other for a while. Finally Ziegler said, "What's your angle, Shannon?"

"The envelopes could have been switched," Shannon said. "I didn't see the surgeon put any identifying marks on it."

"O'Meara put them on."

"He could have put them on another envelope, couldn't he?"

Ziegler fiddled nervously with things on his table. "You're playing with dynamite, Shannon. What's more, you're asking me to play with it." He shrugged irritably. "They bring me a gun and three blood-stained slugs. I match 'em. My responsibility ends there."

"Does it?" Shannon said gently.

Ziegler wiped sudden beads of sweat off his forehead. "All right, what do you want?"

Shannon dropped his cigarette to the floor, put a heel on it. "I have the feeling that the skipper wasn't killed just to frame Duquesne. The frame was an afterthought. I believe Goudy had something and was killed on account of it."

"But the slugs and the gun checked, I tell you!"

"Sure they did. But the slugs you got might not be the ones that did for the skipper. You can prove it quite easily."

"How?"

"I saw the autopsy surgeon remove the slugs and seal them in an envelope. Presumably he gave the envelope to O'Meara, who brought it to you. If it's on the level you should find the surgeon's prints on the envelope, right?"

Ziegler snapped his fingers. "It's a thought!" Then he paused. "But the slugs had blood on them! If Captain Goudy wasn't killed with them it's a cinch somebody was. Who?"

"I don't know that," Shannon said. He made a bitter mouth. "Probably, though, we'll have a few more corpses turn up before this election is over. Maybe it'll be one of them." He went to the door. "This'll be about the last time I'll be able to contact you direct, Heinie. I'm on the outside looking in. Anything you turn up you can pass on to Gus Vogel. Okay?"

"So they tied the can to you!"

"A whole string of cans," Shannon said.

"Every time I move I sound like a guy trying to get through a barbed wire entanglement. I had to see you just once, though, before I went into retirement."

"Yeah."

"Well, goodnight, Heinie." He went out and down to the street and caught a cab to his hotel.

FLOYD DUQUESNE was sitting on the edge of Shannon's bed. "Hello, Shannon." He had a gun in his hand.

Shannon let out a string of profanity a yard long. "Well for crying out loud, what is this?"

Duquesne smiled thinly. "I escaped."

"You're telling me!"

"I escaped twice."

"That's swell. I'm very glad to know you, Mr. Houdini." Shannon didn't sound very glad about anything. He reached behind him with his good hand and snapped the lock on the door. Then he went over to the dresser and poured himself a drink. He sipped this meditatively, eyeing Duquesne. The gambler had managed to get some clothes somewhere, some of his own, apparently, because he looked his usual immaculate self. Shannon said, "There are lots of other places you could have escaped to besides this. I've already been accused of helping you."

Duquesne toyed with the gun. "I'm giving you credit for being a square copper, Shannon."

"Thanks a million, pal. Only you're wrong. I'm not a copper any more. I'm just an indignant citizen."

"They broke you?"

Shannon nodded. "In forty-seven pieces." He put his empty glass down on the dresser, smacked his lips. And then with a motion incredibly swift his right hand buried itself in the slash pocket of his raglan, curled about his gun. "That makes us about even, Duquesne. You've got a gun and I've got a gun. What do we do next?"

Duquesne said, "If I'd wanted to shoot you I'd have done it long ago, wouldn't I?" He let the gun slide off his knee to the floor.



Shannon flushed dully. "Yeah, I guess you're right." He took his hand out of his pocket. "I guess I'm a little jittery tonight, not in the mood for games."

"Did you get hold of my brother?"

"Your what?"

"I'm just showing you that I trust you, Shannon. There aren't many people that know. Ward Duffield, the eminent attorney, is my brother."

"The hell you say!"

Duquesne nodded. "A fact. We just happened to have different ideas about things when we were younger. I changed my name so I wouldn't embarrass him."

"You couldn't embarrass that guy," Shannon grunted, remembering the unemotional gray man with the club foot. "Why didn't he tell me?"

"Would you have?"

Shannon considered. "Well, no, I guess I wouldn't have, at that. So you want to know where he is?"

"That's right."

"All right, I'll tell you. But you've got to tell me a few things first. I find you here in my room with a nice fresh outfit of clothes and a gun in your hand. This don't exactly fit in with my theory that you were sprung by your enemies. What happened?"

"A couple of guys walked into the detention room. At first I thought they were dicks. Then one of them slugged the turnkey and I didn't think they were dicks any more. They walked me out under a pair of guns."

"Okay, okay," Shannon said impatiently. "Then what?"

"Then I had a little luck," Duquesne admitted. "One of these punks was a reckless driver. He took a corner on two wheels and this threw me against the other punk and I got his rod." The gambler spread his hands. "I shot both of them."

Shannon took a deep breath. "Just like that, huh?"

"Just like that. Then I got hold of a friend of mine and he rustled me some clothes. The gun belongs to one of the punks I drilled."

"Who were they?"

Duquesne shrugged. "I wouldn't know."

Shannon lost his temper. "Look here, Duquesne, you claim you trust me. I've tried to do what I could for you, because I don't think you killed the old man. But if you think you're going to carry on a nice little private feud and leave me out in the cold you're crazy. Who were these punks?"

"I don't know, I tell you. I didn't wait to find out." Gray eyes, very like his brother's, met Shannon's in a stare that told absolutely nothing. "Every cop in town is looking for me with orders to shoot on sight. A guy doesn't just stand around asking for it."

"All right, your brother is at the Corinthian. I'll want to see him, myself later on. Meantime, I want to know two things: where did you shoot these two mugs and which one of the Third National tellers cashed that five-grand check for you?"

Duquesne stood up, retrieving the fallen gun. "The teller was a kid named Frank Little. The—ah—accident happened out in Gopher Flats, around Riverside and Terhune." He walked to the door. "Anything else, Shannon?"

Shannon shook his head. "Not a thing, Floyd. Every detail of the whole setup is now as clear as mud. Maybe I'll be seeing you around, though. If I find you've crossed me up it will be just too bad. Keep that in mind, will you?"

"I'll remember it," Duquesne said. He went out.

Shannon waited till the sound of his footsteps had died away down the corridor, then picked up the phone and called Precinct 5. "There was a shooting out your way an hour or so ago. Near Riverside and Terhune."

"What kind of a shooting?" the sergeant asked cautiously. You could tell he had been ribbed before.

"There's supposed to be a couple of dead hoods lying around out there somewhere. A guy just told me."

"He must have been kidding you, then. I ain't heard nothing about it." There was

a brief pause. Then: "Just a second. Car 17 is reporting in." Presently the sergeant's voice again: "You tell your pal he's all wet, fella. Seventeen ain't even seen a kid with a B.B. gun tonight. Nuts!"

"Thank you," Shannon said. He hung up.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHERE'S THE WARRANT

DUQUESNE'S lie seemed rather a pointless one. Why should he have come to Shannon with it in the first place? If he'd been able to contact the friend who got him his clothes he certainly could, with time, have located his brother. He didn't need Shannon. Or did he? Say it wasn't a lie. Say the gambler had been sprung in the manner he'd described; say he'd really shot the two guys and lammed before he'd had a chance to identify them. Not knowing that Shannon had been kicked off the force, trusting him to at least a certain extent, he had come here hoping Shannon could point him to an identification of the two hoods and the guy behind them. You could be sure of that much, at least. Floyd Duquesne was very eager to meet the guy who had spotted him in the first place.

It was quite a mess.

Obviously Big Nick Lombardi was dissatisfied with the coöperation he'd gotten from Mayor Arbogast and Chief Regan. Arbogast had as much as admitted this. He'd said that he had refused to interfere with Regan in the performance of his duty. Chief Regan, then, must have stepped on some of Lombardi's underlings to the point where it was becoming a nuisance. Lombardi had to do something about this or lose his hold on his own men. So what? There was nothing new here. Nick Lombardi was out to put a new man in the mayor's office and either break Chief Regan to harness or, through the new mayor, appoint a new chief. It was obvious that Acting Chief George O'Meara rather fancied himself for the job. Was O'Meara on Lombardi's payroll or was he acting independently?

Shannon sourly regarded his reflection in the dresser mirror. "You're a sucker," he said. His reflection mocked him. It said, "You're a sucker," right back at him. This seemed to make it unanimous.

But why, if all the foregoing were true, had they picked on Captain Goudy to kill? Why frame Floyd Duquesne and Duquesne's five-grand check in the deal? Duquesne, of course, had been taking money out of Lombardi's pockets by operating outside the ring. Okay, getting him hung would be a swell move. But why the skipper?

Why had Captain Goudy been killed? Just to cast a reflection on Mayor Arbogast's administration? No, Shannon decided, there was more to it than that. It would have been just as easy to frame Arbogast himself, or the absent Chief Regan, instead of sort of implicating them by proxy as it were.

Tackling the problem from the only other possible angle Shannon decided definitely that Captain Goudy had something on someone, and was killed to shut him up. The framing of Duquesne for the job, the besmirching of a dead man's good name, was just an added touch, an astute political move by an opportunist.

You wouldn't think that a guy could forget a broken arm, but Shannon had. Not in the physical sense, perhaps, but in the equation of cause and effect. The broken arm went back to a bombing in which something besides a broken arm was supposed to have happened. Say a neck, for instance. Someone had tried very earnestly to murder Shannon after succeeding with Shannon's skipper.

Goudy had been killed because he was holding cards that would have ruined somebody. The attempt on Shannon's life was motivated by the belief that Shannon, being Goudy's friend, might also know something. The fact that Shannon didn't know didn't help matters much. If a guy believes you've got something he wants, telling him different doesn't do a lot of good. Especially when you don't know who the guy is.

The only bright spot—or black, depending on the point of view—was that certain parties might still believe Shannon was holding aces and would try for him again. He decided to be very circumspect indeed in the immediate future.

Trying to figure out the most circumspect thing to do, and still produce results, he began opening dresser drawers looking for a clean shirt. He found the shirt. He also found that someone had been messing around in his personal effects, though probably not in search of a shirt. Things had been put back very carefully; a little too carefully, in fact. Shannon's mind went to Floyd Duquesne. Had Duquesne searched the room? Was this the real reason for his visit, and the rest of it just a stall? Or had it been someone else?

IN EITHER case Shannon derived a deal of satisfaction from the search itself. It proved that there was something tangible being sought, something you could get your two hands on. Ergo, Shannon had just as good a chance of finding it as anybody. He went to the phone and called Duffield at the Hotel Corinthian.

The attorney's voice was carefully non-committal. "Yes, Shannon?"

"Look," Shannon said, "a certain guy who said he was your brother left here a little while ago. I understood he was going to see you. Is he there?"

There was a brief pause. Duffield's voice, when it came, was a bit more harsh than usual. "I don't know what you are talking about."

Shannon cursed without warmth. "Would he have told me what he did if I wasn't to be trusted? You lawyers make me sick. So look, whether you admit it or not, this brother of yours was here and gave me a song and dance about killing a couple of guys that have since disappeared. He is on the loose. If I were in his shoes I'd probably be looking for the guy that framed me. You'd better stop him."

Duffield didn't say anything. There was a knock on the door and Shannon, carefully laying the receiver on its side, went

to the door and unlocked it. Two dicks from the homicide squad pushed in. One was a very tough hombre named Costigan. He had been up on charges two or three times for shooting first and asking questions afterward. The other guy was a little rat whose only reason for being on the force was that he was Captain George O'Meara's brother-in-law.

Shannon was very careful about keeping his hand away from his overcoat pocket. "Hello, mugs."

"The chief wants to see you," Costigan said.

"What about?"

"Floyd Duquesne was seen leaving this hotel a few minutes ago. O'Meara thinks you might know where he is."

Shannon raised his voice. "How should I know where Duquesne is? This is a public hotel, isn't it? And if you saw him leaving it why didn't you pick him up?"

The rat-faced dick said, "We didn't see him. It was another guy and he didn't know who it was until it was too late. So he called in. You want to argue about it?" He got a sap out of his hip pocket, very casually. Costigan took out a gun.

Shannon backed toward the table, screening the phone. "Is this a pinch?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. O'Meara wants to talk to you."

"O'Meara probably wants to beat the tar out of me."

"We could save him the trouble," Costigan suggested.

"All right," Shannon said, "I'll go down with you. Can I call my attorney?"

"No."

Shannon let his shoulders droop in resignation. Rat-face sidled up and took the gun out of Shannon's pocket. The three of them went down in the elevator and got in the squad car and went down to headquarters. It was three o'clock in the morning.

Night janitors were busy swabbing down the long marble halls. A telegraph key clicked fitfully in the Communications Bureau, but there weren't many people around. Most of the ground-glass office

doors were dark, the graveyard shift either out on the streets or asleep.

CAPTAIN O'MEARA was alone in his office. His olive face looked haggard and there were pouches under his eyes from lack of sleep. Costigan closed and locked the door. Then he lifted a fist and smacked Shannon in the mouth. Shannon sat down in the chair that Rat-face had thoughtfully placed behind him. Nobody said anything for a full minute.

O'Meara looked at Costigan. "Have any trouble?"

"Unh-unh."

"You frisk him?"

"We got his gun, is all."

Shannon wiped a little blood off his mouth with his free hand. His eyes were red hot. "I thought you wanted to see me about Duquesne."

"That's right," O'Meara said. "You don't mind if the boys turn out your pockets, do you?"

"Would it do any good if I did?"

Rat-face and Costigan did everything but rip Shannon's clothes off him without finding anything that O'Meara seemed to want. They weren't particularly careful of his broken arm: Little beads of sweat stood out on his forehead when they'd finished, and the nostrils of his big nose were flared, like a horse's after a hard run, but he hadn't lifted a hand. They couldn't say afterward that he had put up a fight.

O'Meara leaned back in his chair. "Where is Duquesne, Shannon?"

"I don't know."

Costigan took a sap out of one of the desk drawers, hefting it. Somebody knocked on the door. O'Meara flicked a worried glance toward the hall, motioned for Costigan to put the sap away. "See who it is, Charlie," he told his brother-in-law. Then, as Rat-face started to obey, "No, wait a minute." He jerked his head at a communicating door leading into an inner office. Rat-face and Costigan closed in on Shannon.

Shannon yelled, "In here, Duffield!"

The glass door shivered under a series

of blows. O'Meara shrugged. "Okay, let him in."

Costigan went over and unlocked the door. Ward Duffield limped in on his club foot. He had Jack Hardy of the *Telegram* with him. He was quite a guy, Duffield. Shannon guessed that there weren't many tricks in the bag this gray-faced lawyer hadn't memorized.

Duffield looked at O'Meara. "Warrant?"

O'Meara's eyes had a harried expression. "Now see here, counsellor, what's your interest in this thing?"

"I understood that Mr. Shannon had been arrested."

O'Meara glared at Costigan and his brother-in-law. He couldn't figure it out and neither could they. Shannon didn't tell them he'd been talking to Duffield and had deliberately left the line open.

Duffield apparently never wasted a word. He said again, "Warrant?"

O'Meara had to admit he didn't have one. He said, "This wasn't a pinch, counsellor. We just wanted to have a talk with Shannon. Another client of yours was seen leaving Shannon's hotel."

"Was he seen in Shannon's company?"

"No."

Duffield stirred the little pile of Shannon's pocket-junk with a slender forefinger. "No doubt you thought Mr. Shannon had my other client in his pockets?"

Jack Hardy was looking at Shannon's bruised lip. "You run into a door, keed?"

O'Meara stood up suddenly, thrusting his chair back so hard it crashed into the far wall. "All right!" He pointed a shaking finger at Shannon. "But you watch your step, Irish! One more caper out of you and we'll nail you to the cross." He looked hot-eyed at Duffield. "You're playing with dynamite, counsellor."

"Dynamite has its uses," Duffield said. He gave Jack Hardy a fleeting smile. "Better luck and a better story next time, my young friend." He took Shannon's arm and they went out and down to the street.

There was a taxi waiting. In it, heading down Broadway, Shannon said, "Thanks, Duffield."

The gray man smiled. "You're smarter than I gave you credit for, Shannon. You knew I'd come, didn't you? You sort of had me over a barrel."

"Because I knew he was your brother?"

"Because he *is* my brother. There's a little distinction there. If Floyd thought enough of you to tell you that, then you must be all right. In spite of his faults Floyd knows men."

"Have you seen him?"

"Not yet. I left word at the hotel that I'd be back shortly. He may be waiting."

Shannon looked out the rear window. "We're being tailed."

"Of course. O'Meara isn't exactly a fool."

The gray man's face set grimly. He knew the game they were playing and knew that the stake was high.

"I'll drop off around the next corner," Shannon said. "Unless Floyd was lying to me he doesn't know who jacked him out of the can. On the other hand, maybe he does know. Find out if you can. I'll call

you in the morning." He leaned forward, tapped on the glass. "Take the next turn fast, fella, then brake it a second till I fall off." He opened the door as rubber screamed, landed running and sprawled into the protecting shelter of a darkened store entry.

The cab vanished around the next corner. So did the prowler car following it.

Shannon stood for a moment, his face puckered in thought. There was nothing more for him to do right now. Just to be low.

Shannon walked three blocks to an all-night drug store, bought two packs of cigarettes, walked another block to a small second-rate hotel across from his own and asked for a room on the fourth floor. Presently he was sitting at a window which commanded a good view of the deserted street, the entrance to his hotel and even one of the windows of his own room. He had an idea someone might come looking for him again. Before anyone did he went to sleep.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



## A HEALTH WARNING!

Printed in the interest of public well-being!

**IF YOU'RE** nursing a cold—see a doctor! Curing a cold is the doctor's business. But there are certain precautions which, if taken in time, may help you to ward off a cold.

For instance, your own doctor will tell you that when your body resistance is high, you are not apt to "take cold so easily." And he'll also tell you that "keeping regular" is a great aid in maintaining a higher resistance.

So, keep your bowels open! And when a laxative is needed, use Ex-Lax! Ex-Lax is mild and gentle, yet thoroughly effective. And Ex-Lax is a real pleasure to take—it

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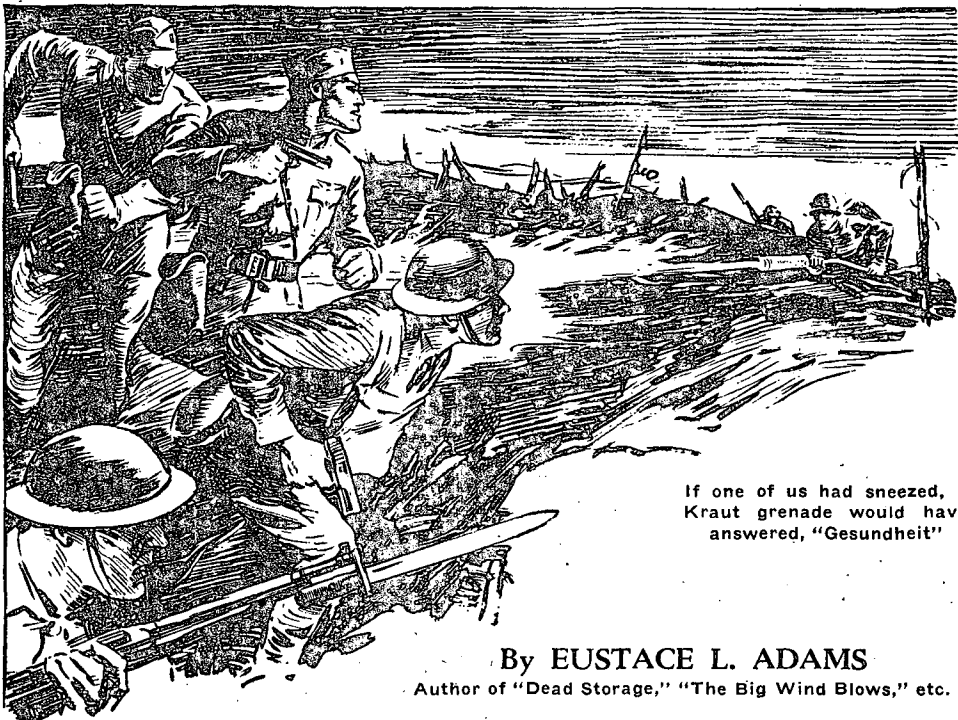
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# EX-LAX

THE ORIGINAL CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE





If one of us had sneezed, a  
Kraut grenade would have  
answered, "Gesundheit"

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Author of "Dead Storage," "The Big Wind Blows," etc.

## Flame-Thrower

*He was just one inch shorter than a telegram, but he packed more mayhem than an Army mule. He'd rather fight than eat. The time he tackled two mammoth marines as well as most of the Kaiser's troops was tops, even for "Poison" Lee*

LEUTENANT "Poison" Lee glanced up from his maps and made a quick grab for his gun. I ducked. The chances were no better than five to three that he was going to take a slap at me with the butt end of it. What with the flame-thrower across the way getting all ready to cook us down to soup-stock—the way they had already done to the outfit of French Alpine Chasseurs we had relieved—and with not sleeping for three nights on account of worrying so much, Poison Lee was pretty low in his mind.

And in spite of his size, which was knee-high to a Missouri jughead, when Poison Lee was low in his mind he craved

action—rough action—and seldom failed to get it.

The lieutenant, however, did not even look at me. A couple of strange guys were coming down the steps of the cellar we used for a dug-out. Their cordovan boots were muddy, but their puttees glistened like a bar-fly's nose. The sight of those gleaming puttees did not help the disposition of our half-pint lieutenant any, he not having had his gunboats unlaced for a month came next payday.

Moreover, no guy in B Company, One Ninety-Ninth New York, had even seen the color of his boots for weeks on account of the mud. So these two mugs