

Hocus Pocus Homicide

By Gene D. Robinson



Detective Ned Cain applied all the tricks of his trade to produce that missing banker. For the magician murder suspect had pulled a vanishing act. And Cain had to add a little sleight-of-hand sleuthing himself to keep from becoming a presto-chango corpse.

OLD MAN FLANNAGAN rubbed a hand over his bald head and pushed aside some papers. "Yes, Miss Andrews," he prompted. "What can I do for you?"

The girl who faced Flanny across the desk might have come directly from winning a beauty contest. That was Flanny's line of thought. She said rather nervously:

"I came to engage your best detective to

come to Korris immediately to investigate the strange disappearance of my uncle, Aubrey Sparks."

Flanny frowned as if he couldn't be bothered with such trifling happenings. "Korris is the county seat of Ponger County I believe," he said. "A typical East Tennessee mountain town. Suppose you—"

"I'm anxious to get back home before dark," she interrupted, studying her watch.

"I'm afraid to drive over those mountain roads after nightfall. Why"—smiling persuasively—"can't your detective go back with me? I can give him the details on the way."

Flanny looked across the office at Ned Cain who sat at ease, paper open at the sports page. "Guess this is down your alley, Ned," he said. "Did you hear the lady?"

Cain had not only heard, he had looked approvingly at the girl. He tossed the paper aside, gave the girl a friendly smile.

"You said strange disappearance, Miss Andrews," he repeated as he opened a clothes locker and got his packed bag, then as the girl started to reply, "No, don't bother. You can explain as we speed along. I keep my bag packed. Everything in it from a pair of dice to a crystal ball."

The girl paused at the door. "About your fee. I shall—"

"You'll hear from me," Flanny said brusquely. "No time to lose. Ned is my best investigator." He reached for his old cob pipe.

No words were spoken as Jane Andrews pushed her polished coupe through the traffic, reached the city limits, and turned left on the concrete highway. Then she began talking.

"My uncle is mayor and president of the bank and quite wealthy. He disappeared three nights back when Wondrous locked him in a trunk and made him disappear in a cloud of smoke."

Cain gave her a quick glance. Her face was quite sober. He said, "Don't tell me he was in a chariot. If it's not too much to ask, who is Wondrous?"

"I forgot you don't know Wondrous," she returned, smiling. "That isn't his real name. His real name is John Ald. For years he toured the country as a magician. When he decided to retire he picked Korris, bought the old Stacey place, and moved in. The bank held a mortgage on it, and somehow

Wondrous grew to dislike Uncle Aubrey. He became Unc's enemy."

She moved around a truck, picked up speed again. "But Wondrous finally paid off the mortgage and seemed to lose his hatred for Unc. He even invited him to the big house, along with others, for the parties he gave.

"Wondrous would exhibit his magic tricks. You know, card tricks, catching canaries out of the air, turning water to ink, and so on. One of his favorites was placing Jarvis—his valet—in a big trunk, exploding a smoke bomb, displaying the empty trunk. In a few minutes Jarvis would come in the front door. Wondrous wouldn't expose the secret of the trick, even to me."

Cain clucked like an old hen. "I take it, then, you were a special friend of Wondrous?"

She bit her lip vexedly. "The town gossip will tell you anyway. Wondrous likes me. He's a handsome man with magnetic eyes and compelling actions. But leave that to the gossips.

"On this night when he asked for a volunteer to enter the trunk, Unc stepped forward. Wondrous always asked for a volunteer, but never expected one. He seemed surprised. So was everybody else. They began laughing and joking at Unc. This goaded him into going through with it."

She paused a few moments. "So Unc got in the big trunk and was locked in. Wondrous exploded his smoke bomb and opened the trunk. Unc was gone all right. But after the proper wait he failed to come in the front door. Wondrous looked perplexed. He shouted to Unc to come on in. But Unc did not appear. And he has never reappeared."

Cain looked thoughtful. "Where was Jarvis during this?"

"He helped put Unc into the trunk. Wondrous sent him to look for Unc. He soon returned and reported he couldn't find him.

Everybody thought it was part of the trick. But as time came for the guests to depart and Unc failed to show up, they began eyeing Wondrous ominously. Bill Smuts—he's our chief of police—stepped forward and sternly ordered Wondrous to produce my uncle.

"Wondrous admitted that he couldn't produce him; that he didn't know where Unc was. So Smuts led the other men in a search of the house. They found nothing at all. Smuts didn't know what to do or what to charge Wondrous with. He finally clapped Wondrous in a cell, but after forty-eight hours had to turn him loose. Smuts ransacked the house from top to bottom as crowds of curious people filled the yard. He found no body and not a sign of Unc.

"It's very mysterious. The town has taken sides. One side says it was a frame-up between Unc and Wondrous. Unc has always been a bear for publicity. The other side"—she looked embarrassed—"whisper that Wondrous and I did away with Unc so I would get his wealth; that later we planned to marry."

She looked as if she would weep. "So I decided to hire a detective to clear the thing up."

Cain rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "You mentioned marriage. I take it Wondrous is unmarried. Has he ever been married?"

She looked as if she were reluctant to answer. "I've been waiting for you to ask that question. The town doesn't know about his former affairs. I might as well tell you, though Wondrous told me in strict confidence. However, it's so serious I won't keep anything back. Wondrous has been married and divorced twice.

"Then there was another affair"—she looked decidedly uncomfortable—"in a little town in Missouri. He took a man's wife away from him. The man was named Joe Feagan. After a year or so she killed herself with a dose of poison. Wondrous would never tell me why."

"Quite a Casanova, wasn't he?" Cain said dryly. "Look, are you the only relative?"

"I suppose so. Unc had no children. His wife is dead. There was Britt Sparks, a nephew. But months ago he was reported missing in action over France. We think he's dead, as he was never reported a prisoner of the Germans. "

BY THE time they reached Korris, Ned, Cain had the history of the town in his vest pocket. She dropped him off at the inn. Cain wrote his name on the ledger, winked at the baldish, long-nosed, little man behind the desk. Winked because he thought Jim Hough had winked. But he was wrong. Hough had a twitching of his eye muscles that made him wink.

"Welcome to our city, Mr. Cain," he said in a fluty voice. "Are you by chance one of Aubrey Sparks' unknown relatives?"

Cain looked important, leaned over. "No, not that. I'm a Ferris wheel salesman. Know any prospects? We pay well for tips which lead to sales. We make the highest wheel in the world."

Hough tried to decide whether he was being joshed. Cain looked very serious. Hough said, "I'll show you to your room."

Cain had just finished his meal when he was called to the phone. "This is Wondrous, Mr. Cain. Can you come up and see me? You can. That's fine. I'll be expecting you."

Cain walked up the hill to the biggest house in town. When he stepped on the top step the porch light flashed on and the front door opened. He passed through the doorway expecting to find Wondrous awaiting. No one was in sight. There was a lighted room at his right and the door was open. He walked over.

Wondrous wasn't in the room, but his body was. Cain saw the corpse lying at the foot of the divan. A table had been overturned, the rug was scuffed up. A floor lamp had been knocked down. Wondrous lay

on his back, white shirt-front crimson.

Cain knelt. The body was still warm. A stab through the heart had produced death. The man's long, black hair was awry. The glazed eyes had fixed in a look of stunned surprise. Cain pushed the hair back from the forehead, whistled lowly.

Penciled in red on the forehead was the name, *Bernice*.

Cain rose and let his eyes roam about the room. Wondrous had fought for his life. His white collar was torn half off. There was a gash on his right forearm.

"Wonder where Jarvis can be," Cain muttered. He left the room and began knocking on doors. He got no response downstairs, went upstairs.

At a back room he kept pounding till he won the sleepy query, "Who is it and whatta you want?"

Cain pushed the door open, found the switch snapped on the light. A stout-shouldered man, with towseled head, sleepy-looking eyes, sat up in bed, his lean-chinned face a picture of surprise. "Who are you?" he growled.

"Where is Wondrous?" Cain asked, studying the man's face. "Isn't this a bit early to go to bed?" He picked up Jarvis's clothing, examined it piece by piece. As far as he could see there were no blood stains.

"Say, what's the big idea?" demanded Jarvis, watching in astonishment.

"Who the hell are you? What do you want with Wondrous? He's downstairs. Anyway he was when I went to bed."

"Wondrous was stabbed to death in the reception room," Cain said casually, watching Jarvis's face keenly. "As for me, I'm a detective."

Jarvis's mouth fell open. "Dead? It can't be. I don't believe it." He jumped out of bed, threw on shirt and pants, encased his feet in slippers.

Cain led the way. Jarvis's face turned to chalk when he gazed at the body. Cain went

out to the phone and called Bill Smuts:

"Better get up here at once, Smuts. Wondrous has been killed. This is Ned Cain, detective."

He faced the stunned Jarvis. "Look, Jarvis, you better start talking. I find Wondrous stabbed to death, his body still warm. Then I find you in bed at this chicken-roosting hour. Don't tell me you slept peacefully through this. Look at that name on his forehead. Who is Bernice?"

Jarvis had already looked. "Mister, I tell you I didn't know he was dead till you woke me. I'm a heavy sleeper. Didn't see or hear a thing till you pounded on my door. I didn't kill him. Why should I? He was the best friend I ever had."

Bill Smuts strode in the front door. He gazed at the corpse a few moments. "Who found him?" he grunted. Before Cain could reply, Smuts saw the name on the forehead.

"I'm a bugle-blowing bullfrog!" he gasped. "Look at that. Bernice, huh? Reckon that tells me plenty."

"What for instance?" Cain asked.

Smuts looked darkly at Jarvis. "Wondrous took up with a girl here named Bernice Lamb, a pretty roadhouse singer who takes her men as she finds 'em. He ditched her when he threw out his line for Jane Andrews. This Lamb is a lion, if you get what I mean, I know two men she slashed with a knife. She got liquored up, come up here, and stabbed Wondrous to death. Just for the hell of it, she wrote her name on his forehead."

Cain seemed awed by the quick solution. "Wanted folks to know she did it," he said dumbly. "Look, there was a struggle in here. Chairs and table knocked over. Floor lamp smashed. And Jarvis went to bed with the chickens. Claims he heard no evil, saw no evil, and did no evil."

"He's a liar," snapped Smuts. "I'll take him in, then go and arrest Bernice Lamb. I'll have a confession out of her by daylight."

And this cuckoo will talk too.” He glowered darkly at Jarvis.

Smuts stepped to the phone, dialed a number. “That you, Doc? Wondrous has been killed. Bernice Lamb done it. Better get up here. And say, tell Beech Burgess to come after the body.”

“I think I’ll look over the house,” Cain said meekly.

“Go ahead,” snorted Smuts. “I’ve searched the cockeyed place a dozen times since Aubrey Sparks disappeared here.” He pulled out a plug of tobacco, bit at it savagely, glared at Jarvis.

“That’s something I want to talk to you about. Don’t want no more of your lies either.”

Cain snapped on lights as he went, and looking into every room, closet and cubbyhole he could find. When he had finished upstairs, he went into the attic. An old trunk, covered with a dusty carpet, caught his eye. It was filled with odds and ends, pictures, old letters, mostly old business correspondence.

In the bottom, wrapped in a silk handkerchief, he found a small packet of letters. Opening the top one he beamed his flash and read it. He thrust the letters into his pocket, went down to the basement.

A huge furnace was in the middle. With concrete floor and walls, the place looked like scores of other basements. Finding nothing of interest he went back upstairs.

CAIN returned to town. After a few inquiries, he went six blocks to a frame cottage where Jane Andrews lived with her stepmother. Jane was at home. He wondered whether she had heard.

“Wasn’t that terrible about Wondrous?” she said in shocked tones as she led him into the parlor.

Cain countered with a query of his own, “What were you doing in Wondrous’s house early in the evening?”

She looked as if she had been caught stealing sugar. “Why, how did you know I was there?”

He handed her a silver compact. “Even if I hadn’t recognized it, your initials are on it. Found it on the divan.”

“Yes, I did call on him,” she admitted, biting her lip vexedly. “I told him I had hired a detective to unravel the mystery. I asked him to co-operate with you. He promised he would. But he insisted he was as much in the dark as ever about Uncle Aubrey. I believed him.”

Cain asked more questions, then left, and went to the jail. Bill Smuts looked at him sourly.

“Can’t locate the Lamb girl,” he growled. “Which ain’t unusual. Sheriff’s crew is hunting her. That liar, Jarvis, won’t unbutton his lips. Won’t say nothing. You found out anything?”

Cain rolled his tongue in his cheek. “Where can I find a nice bouquet of red roses?”

Smuts looked disgusted. “Plenty on the courthouse yard. What in tarnation you want with roses?”

Cain left, picked the roses, carried them to the telephone office. He rapped on the door till an angry-faced spinster opened up. He thrust the flowers into her hands.

“Ah, Miss Daker, they belong in your hands,” he said, bowing politely. “I’ve heard so many nice things about you. I know it’s after hours, but I know you won’t mind putting through a long distance call for me.” An hour later he left the office with a satisfied look and an invitation to dinner next day from Miss Daker. He accepted. He went to the inn, tried to elude Hough but was unsuccessful.

“Why, Mister Cain, I thought you’d be out helping run down that Lamb girl,” Hough said curiously, following Cain up the stairs. “Say, why do you reckon she wrote her name on Wondrous’s forehead? Was it in

blood like everybody says?"

Cain halted, fixed Hough with a mysterious look. "Look, this is off the record. She had a list of six names; a skull and crossbones at the top. Wondrous was number one. His name was crossed out. Your name was sixth on the list. What have you done to her that she has marked you for death? But you'll be safe, at least until she rubs out the next four men." He left Hough standing like a statue, pulling nervously at his ear.

Cain rose about nine next morning, went down to his bacon, eggs, toast and coffee. Hough nervously gave him the early morning news:

"They caught Bernice Lamb. Found her out at Roy's place. She was high as a Georgia pine. Couldn't tell where she'd been or what she'd done. They got her in jail."

He eyed Cain anxiously. "When you talk to her, you tell her I ain't got nothing agin her. Had to put her out of my place once. You tell her the law made me do it."

"Perhaps," Cain suggested gravely, "you better send her a friendly note."

Hough looked scared. "Nope, they might think I was in cahoots with her. You just tell her, but don't let nobody hear you."

Cain went to see Smuts. That lean individual was sourer than ever. "Can't get head nor tail about anything from her," he growled disgustedly. "Says she don't remember nothing since yesterday afternoon. Jarvis keeps his mouth shut like a trap door. Couldn't nobody have kilt Wondrous without him knowing something. Can't nobody tell me he don't know how Aubrey Sparks disappeared."

Cain looked impressed, and Smuts talked on, "Course I know how the trick was done. The trunk had a secret opening. When Wondrous raised that smoke cloud, Jarvis opened the trunk, raised up a trap door in the floor, helped Sparks get down and through it. Aubrey, he was supposed to come outa the

basement, hurry around and walk in the front door. But he never showed up."

He nudged Cain with his thumb. "Say, I bet that Lamb girl was in that. Bet she was waiting down there and stabbed Aubrey to death. Then she got scared Wondrous was going to squeal, and kilt him."

Cain gave him an admiring look. "Yeah and you know what," Smuts went on. "When Jarvis went out, he helped drag the body off and hide it. We didn't search the yard. No telling where the body is now."

Cain snapped his fingers. "Then you better keep Jarvis and the girl separated. He might kill her to shut her mouth, or vice versa."

Cain walked out to the snug, little cottage Miss Daker resided in. She served the meal on the screened, back porch, fragrant with honeysuckle vines. She fluttered about in a freshly laundered, red-dotted voile frock, new permanent and white pumps.

Cain skillfully guided the conversation around to the surprising fact of Aubrey Sparks consenting to act as Wondrous's stooge in the disappearing act.

"I can't account for it, Miss Daker. A dignified man like Sparks would hardly volunteer for such a thing. He must have had a previous invitation from Wondrous—perhaps a phone call."

She looked about cautiously. "He did get such an invitation. A phone call from Jarvis." She puckered her lips thoughtfully. "Not that I make a habit of listening in. I just happened to leave the wire open. Jarvis told him to say nothing about it; that Wondrous had asked him to make the request. Mr. Sparks promised to follow instructions."

Cain put in the afternoon talking to various persons. When he went to the inn, he felt like a runner stranded on third with the winning run.

HOUGH was waiting with a question, “Did Bill Smuts find Aubrey Sparks’ body in Wondrous’s yard?”

Cain looked bored. “I don’t know. Did he?”

“He had been poking all over the yard,” Hough said, looking wise. “Smuts says the Lamb girl killed Aubrey. What do you think?”

“How would I know?” Cain said indifferently. “Look, what do you know about Whit Stacey? The fellow who used to own the Wondrous house.”

Hough looked puzzled. “Didn’t nobody seem to know much about Whit. Come here from down state and bought the place. Spent a barrel of dough fixing it up. Put on dog with automobiles, fox hounds, and hundred-dollar suits. Everybody said he made the liquor he sold, but I never heard of the law discovering where he made it. He finally got caught with a load and was sent up for a year. Sold his place to the bank.”

Cain didn’t look interested. “I’m going to bed early, Hough. Don’t let anyone bother me.”

He did go to bed, but rose at two in the morning, dressed in old clothing, and slipped out the back way. Through side streets he made his way to the Wondrous house. He entered the basement through a window. Using a small flash he gave the place a thorough going over. The answer was in this basement, he felt. But it eluded him.

Removing his shoes he went upstairs, made his way stealthily to the attic. Another hour’s search and he was still stymied. He slipped back into the basement, went over it again. He finally gave it up, went back to the inn and bed.

It was around noon when he rose and went down to breakfast. He wore a puzzled frown. A man came in and delivered a package of meat to Hough. When he had gone Hough winked at Cain.

“I used to walk ten blocks to Sam’s store to buy meat from him,” Hough said, grinning. “But now he brings it to me. That’s the way to handle people; make ’em come to you.”

Cain paused in the act of lighting a cigarette. “Hough,” he said pleasantly, “that’s the smartest thing I’ve heard you say.”

He went to the jail, found Bill Smuts seated glumly under a shade tree. To Cain’s, cheery queries he grunted sourly. Smuts was thoroughly disgusted.

“Look, Bill I want you to do me a favor,” Cain said. “I want you to take Jarvis into your office and fire questions at him for at least thirty minutes. Any questions. I don’t care what you ask, him. All I want to do is look at him. Then I want you to take his clothes from him and give them to me.”

Smuts looked flabbergasted. Muttering under his breath about half-cracked detectives, he went after Jarvis. Cain sat and studied the fellow as Smuts snapped out questions. Finally Smuts took the man back to his cell. Cain heard Jarvis cursing over orders to remove his clothing. When Smuts came back with the clothes, he growled:

“Reckon you know what you’re doing, but it looks cockeyed to me.”

Cain wrapped up the clothing, took it to his room. Locking his door, he removed his own clothes, put on Jarvis’s. Opening his bag he sat before the mirror and went to work. “Lucky Jarvis and me are about the same size,” he chuckled.

He stained his face to gain the dark complexion of Jarvis. The fellow had bushy eyebrows, bulby nose, and a three-inch scar on his left cheek. Cain quickly had the same. Their hair was practically the same color, dark brown. Jarvis wore sideburns and needed a haircut. Cain gave himself sideburns, congratulated himself on putting off a haircut for weeks.

He rose and practiced Jarvis's mechanical, plodding walk, worked his eyes into the squint Jarvis used when looking at anyone. One detail remained and Cain didn't like it. But he put a huge chew of tobacco in his left jaw, hoping it wouldn't make him ill.

Slipping out the back way he walked rapidly till he reached the Wondrous place. He entered the yard with Jarvis's slow, plodding gait, chewing his tobacco vigorously. Working up an angry frown, he stomped up the steps, and opened the door. He slammed it with a bang.

Mouthing loud curses at Bill Smuts, he walked up to Jarvis's room, threw aside Jarvis's felt hat and got into bed. He held his pistol at his side. Lying on his back he closed his eyes to mere slits. After a reasonable wait he worked up the snore he knew Jarvis was guilty of.

Unseen eyes, he felt, had watched him as he entered the house. He hadn't been accosted, he reasoned, because a certain person was suspicious lest he was followed. Would his trap work? He thought so and carried out his act patiently.

He had a thirty-minute wait before he saw the door knob softly turn. The door opened and Cain saw a swarthy, slim man with black, curly hair, and eyes that reminded him of a cat. Cain snored on.

"Wake up, Dan," the man growled. Then, as Cain paid no heed, he walked to the side of the bed. "Dan, wake up," he said gruffly.

His only answer was a snore. He reached over to shake the pseudo Jarvis. Cain came to life. Grabbing the fellow's arm he jerked him down, tried to wrap a stranglehold about his neck. He found he had a tiger by the tail.

Bucking like a wildcat, the fellow pumped his knee to Cain's stomach, followed it up with a clout to the jaw. Cain gasped. Wrenching free, the fellow leaped from the bed, made for the door.

Cain jumped up, went after him. In the

hall the detective saw him making for the basement stairs. "Stop or I'll shoot!" Cain shouted. The man kept going.

Cain fired, but the fleeing figure darted down the basement stairs, the detective close behind. Once down the steps, the fellow raced for the big furnace. On the side opposite the feeding door he halted.

Cain closed the gap just in time to see a curved door swing open. He jammed the muzzle of his gun in the man's back.

"Get your hands up or I'll put a bullet through you!" he said sternly. "It's all up, Feagan! Walk over there against the wall and put your hands behind you. Don't try any tricks if you want to stay alive."

BILL SMUTS was the last person asked by Cain to come to the house. When he reached the open doorway of the reception room he stopped abruptly, his jaw sagged, his eyes widened.

"Aubrey Sparks!" he gasped bewilderedly. "Where in—I thought you was dead!"

Sparks, a heavy man with thinning hair and large paunch, grinned wanly. "Hello, Bill," he said weakly.

Cain pushed a chair over for Smuts. Bill pulled his gaze from Sparks, fastened it on a swarthy man who sat glumly in the far corner. "Who in the devil is he?" asked Smuts.

"Sit down, Smuts," Cain invited. For the first time Bill looked at him. He blinked so oddly it made Jane Andrews laugh. Cain still looked like Jarvis. It took several minutes for comprehension to dawn on Smuts. He sat there speechless and befuddled.

"Bill, you didn't find Sparks' body because he wasn't dead," Cain began. "Let's begin with the disappearing act from the trunk. Jarvis pressed a secret button and the rear side of the trunk came open. Behind the smoke screen, Jarvis opened a trap door in the floor and helped Sparks through it. When

Sparks reached the basement floor, this fellow”—pointing to Feagan—“poked a gun in his back and forced him into the furnace.”

Cain enjoyed the astonished expressions. “But not to burn him. Oh, no. Half of that big furnace is sealed off. In that half are steps leading down to a secret chamber under the basement. Wondrous didn’t know about the chamber. But Jarvis did. Feagan forced Sparks down there, fastened the curved door behind. No one—myself included—thought to investigate the furnace. When Sparks failed to walk in through the front door, Wondrous was as surprised as anyone. Sparks has been held prisoner down there by Feagan. Simple, isn’t it?”

Smuts swallowed hard, glared at Feagan. “Who is this cuckoo anyway? What was his idea in holding Sparks?”

Cain leisurely lit a cigarette. “Several years ago Wondrous and Jarvis played in a little town in Missouri. Wondrous made a play for Bernice Feagan, wife of Joe Feagan, the man seated over there. He took her away from Feagan. She followed him. But after a year or so Wondrous tired of her, kicked her out. I found some old letters she had written to Wondrous. She killed herself with a dose of poison. Somehow Feagan won Jarvis over to scheming revenge on Wondrous. I don’t know how. Probably the two were friends to begin with.

“Anyway, Jarvis kept in touch with Feagan. When Jarvis stumbled on the secret of the furnace, he hit on the scheme of kidnaping Sparks, pinning it on Wondrous. Feagan fell in with the plan. They planned to extract fifty thousand dollars from Sparks. When Sparks had paid, Feagan would vanish.

“As Sparks had never laid eyes on Jarvis during his imprisonment, Jarvis could not be

implicated, so they figured. Jarvis planned to have Wondrous stumble on Sparks and release him. Who would believe Wondrous’s story? No one.”

Feagan’s gaze was hate-filled as Cain continued, “The secret chamber was constructed by Whit Stacey. There’s the slickest liquor-making outfit down there in nine states. When the scheme was concocted, Feagan stole into town. Jarvis phoned Sparks, told him Wondrous wanted him to volunteer for the trunk trick. Sparks agreed. He says he did it for a lark. All went along smoothly. Feagan guarded Sparks and fed him. The first stumble came when Sparks refused to pay them fifty thousand. In fact, he refused to pay them anything. They hung on, hoping to break him.

“Then Miss Andrews paid a visit to Wondrous. She told him she had hired a detective and asked him to co-operate. Wondrous agreed. When she left he phoned me to come and see him. Jarvis probably heard the phone conversation, hurried down and informed Feagan. Feagan became scared. He probably thought Wondrous was wise to the plot. Anyway, he slipped up here and killed Wondrous. Seething with hatred, he wrote the name of his dead wife on Wondrous’s forehead.”

Bill Smuts looked wise. Cain sighed, punched out his cigarette. “I don’t believe Jarvis knew Feagan was going to kill his employer. I don’t think Jarvis would have stood for that. I searched this place with a fine comb, but failed to find the secret room I felt sure was here. So I used a little trick to smoke Feagan out”—he looked at Smuts and grinned—“and it worked.”

“I think you did a wonderful job, Mr. Cain,” Jane Andrews said smiling.