

Trap the Man Down

By Harold Gluck

This traffic cop almost gets his homicide signals mixed up.



YESTERDAY my wife warned me in her most charming manner, "Johnny Sanders, don't you dare get a swelled head. The newspapers have been saying such wonderful things about you. All the women tell me how lucky I am to have you for a husband. But just the same, remember to see that your head fits your hat."

Of course I still pinch myself to see if it is true. Up to last month I was a traffic cop attached to Squad B of the 25th Precinct; It seemed as though my life consisted of directing cars up and down the street, getting dizzy watching those traffic lights change, and warning the kids not to beat the cars. Now and then I helped an old lady make the other side of the street. As for summonses, they said I had the lowest average on the force. Any guy could talk me out of a ticket.

And now I am a full-fledged first-grade detective. Mind you, the police commissioner didn't make me a second-grade detective or a third-grade one. He promoted me right to the top and there in front of all the city officials he said:

"When a cop uses his head the way Johnny Sanders did, he certainly deserves this promotion."

And that made me feel good, especially the increase in pay. I don't have to tell you about prices. The wife is going to have a baby, so the extra cash will come

in handy.

Maybe you were busy at the time and didn't read all the details in the papers about the Killing Blackmailer. So let me give you some of the high spots in the case. I got a clipping book that must be about five inches thick. If you have a night free, call me up and you can look through it.

Lou Rogers, the columnist, wrote in his nice breezy way that a new type of blackmailer was loose in the city. He would call up his victim on the phone and say, "Tomorrow I am going to kill So-and-so. If you don't pay me what I ask, you will be next. Go to the cops and you're a dead duck."

That's enough to send the creeps down your spine, especially if you pick up the paper the next day and find out the person was killed!

The commissioner called Rogers down to headquarters and for an hour he refused to talk. Then he opened up.

"Okay, commissioner, it may be my death warrant. But there is a killing maniac in this city. Either he is plain nuts or the most cold-blooded criminal this community has ever had as its guest. He asked me for ten thousand dollars. This was over the phone. Told me he would kill a man by the name of Ed Grayson on Main Street.

"I thought it was a gag. But the next day a hit-and-run driver killed Ed Grayson as he was crossing Main Street. I have twenty-four hours to pay the cash or be killed. And I have since learned from three

people that they have paid cash to this blackmailer.”

SINCE I had the afternoon shift outside the office of the *Daily Call*, where Lou Rogers worked, I received orders to keep my eyes open.

“If necessary, you can leave your post,” said Captain O’Reilly to me. “I am keeping two detectives in the neighborhood.” Orders are orders, and my fat bald-headed boss insisted on discipline.

Well, about three o’clock in the afternoon it all happened. Lou Rogers crossed the street on his way home and said a forced, cheerful hello to me. You know the kind I mean, something between a short grunt and an absent-minded stare.

I watched him turn down Hudson Boulevard to take the short cut across the alley. Then I noticed a blind man, led by a seeing-eye dog and walking in back of the columnist.

The thought popped into my mind. “If Rogers goes through that alley, it would be a perfect setup for murder.”

I left my post, crossed the street, and nearly got bumped by a car, at that. I headed in the direction of the alley. Then I heard a terrible scream. I ran, and there near the side of the building, was the limp body of the columnist. A knife with a wooden handle was stuck in his throat. He was as dead as could be.

At the other end of the alley, I could spot the blind man with the dog. I ran after him and caught up to him in a minute.

“Did you hear a man scream?” I asked.

“Certainly,” he replied. “And in addition, I heard a man running in my direction.”

I looked up and down the street but couldn’t see anyone. It was necessary to take the blind man to the police station as a material witness. He protested mildly, but I told him it was his duty as a citizen to

come with me.

THE next day I got a tongue-lashing from Captain O’Reilly. “You blockhead,” he shouted at me in his office, “do you want to make this department the laughing stock of the country? You pick up a blind man as the only witness to the killing. You should have been out looking for the killer himself. Instead, you bring us an honest respectable citizen. His name is Peter Simpson and he lives in a house by himself on Parkson Lane. He goes from office to office selling magazine subscriptions, with that dog guiding him. And you bring him in as a material witness!”

“But,” I protested, “he could have done the killing himself.”

“But,” snapped back my chief, “he can’t see, and I can’t see how much longer I am going to put up with your nonsense.”

I swallowed my pride and went into the outer office to apologize to the blind man. His blank stare, his black graying hair and buck teeth, sort of gave me the creeps.

“We all make mistakes,” he said, and then as a final sort of insult added, “I forgive you, son.”

He left the police station and crossed the street. Since I was on my way home, I went in his direction, walking slowly behind him. Boy, was I mad!

At Pine and Maple Streets he waited with his dog on the corner before crossing. A motorcycle cut in across a car. His dog started up, but I heard him say, “Down, Luster. Wait till the traffic is clear.” A few moments later he said, “Up, Luster, across we go.”

I followed them both across the street and then went home. I couldn’t eat much supper that night, and hit the hay about ten.

It was about three o’clock in the

morning when I awoke in a cold sweat. All night long something had been bothering me. I would toss to one side of the bed, then the other. Dogs, dogs, that was all I saw. But now I knew the answer! Peter Simpson wasn't blind. He could see perfectly, and he must be the killer and blackmailer! It was so clear, after the truth came to me, I wondered how I could possibly have missed it earlier.

A real seeing-eye dog, you know, is trained to lead his master. He is so perfectly trained that if the master wants to do the wrong thing, the dog can be intelligently disobedient. In crossing a street, it is the dog who leads the blind man, not the man who leads the dog! When Simpson gave orders to his dog, that was the tip-off that he wasn't blind and his dog wasn't a seeing-eye dog.