



The stars had forecast her death. Professor Astrio had got the message. "Dear Miss Banning:" he had written, "I see a rope noose dangling about your head, and your life-line ends very suddenly." No wonder the movie star had wanted protection—but what could mere flesh and blood do against super-natural powers?

THE HOROSCOPE CASE



By Robert Leslie Bellem

I WAS CRUISING along Wilshire Boulevard, not thinking about anything in particular. It was too late in the evening to go to a show, and too early to go to bed. And for once in my misspent life I didn't feel like getting fried. So I was killing time by taking myself for a spin.

Then all of a sudden I heard a girl's voice call out: "Dan! Dan Turner!" I slapped on my anchors. Then I headed for the curb in front of a big apartment-house. Somebody came running up to my jalopy. It was a jane. I recognized her. She was Evelyn Anderson, west-coast editor of one of the big movie fan-magazines.

Evelyn was tall and red-haired and lithe. She poked her head inside my heap and said: "Going anywhere in particular, Dan?"

I grinned. "No. Want to go along?"

She shook her head. "I don't. But I know someone who does."

I looked at her.

She said: "The little girl who lives in the apartment next to mine has got to get to Grand Central Airport. She's got to catch the ten o'clock plane for New York. She phoned

a taxi, but it hasn't arrived. "When I saw you driving by, I thought—"

I looked at my wrist-watch. It was nine thirty-five. "Where is she? We might make it, with luck."

Evelyn turned, dashed back toward the apartment-house; I saw her whispering to someone in the deep shadows alongside the building's entrance. Then a cutie came running toward me. She was young and curvesome and little, and she was carrying an overnight bag. "Are—are you Dan Turner, the private detective?"

"So I've always been led to believe. And you—?"

"You wouldn't know me. I'm Diana Banning. I—"

I said: "Of course! I'm dumb or I'd have remembered. I met you one night at a party—at the Coconut Grove." Which was a lie. I'd never met her before in my life. But I'd seen pictures of her in the papers and the fan magazines. She was a Wampas baby star under contract to R. K. X. Studios. Also, it was whispered covertly that she was Saul Romne's favorite of the moment. Saul

Romne, of course, being the high mogul of R. K. X.

Diana Banning said: "Evelyn tells me you won't mind rushing me to the airport—"

"Hop in!" I told her. There's not much time to waste."

She got into my bucket. I jazzed the motor and we went away from there. The Banning quail sat very close to me. She was trembling. I could feel her thigh quivering against mine.

I said: "Unexpected trip?"

She nodded without saying anything.

After a while I said: "You'll find cigarettes in my coat pocket. Light a couple and shove one into my mouth. I need both mitts for the wheel."

She looked at the speedometer. It was registering sixty-three. Then she fumbled in the side-pocket of my coat. She lighted a pair of gaspers, gave one to me. Out of the tail of my eye I could see the way she smoked hers. She did it with quick, short, nervous puffs. She seemed scared of something—or of somebody.

I took another surreptitious hinge at her. She had dark brown hair and a lovely profile. Also, she possessed the prettiest pair of tiddleywinks I ever saw. They jutted forward like resilient cushions. Her gams, stretched nervously forward under the dash, were plenty nifty in the dim glow of the light under the instrument-panel. I couldn't blame Saul Romne for falling for her, if the rumors were actually true.

I took the turn into Los Feliz Boulevard on two wheels. And then, all of a sudden, a big Buick sedan zipped up alongside me and started shoving my coupe over to the side of the road. I said: "What the hell—!"

Then I felt something hard being shoved into my right ribs. Diana Banning said: "Step on it—quick!" in a hysterical whisper. I looked around at her. She had a roscoe jammed against my kidney.

IT WAS my own gat. She'd slipped it out of my coat pocket when she was fumbling around for cigarettes! That's what I got for not keeping it in the shoulder holster where it belonged.

I didn't like having it aimed at me. Neither did I like that big Buick sedan alongside. I acted fast. I slammed my throttle all the way down to the floor-board. My vee-eight leaped ahead like a greyhound with a burr under its tail. Then I took a wild chance. I let go of the wheel for the fraction of a second, squirmed around, slapped the Banning wren square across the kisser with the back of my hand. Not enough to hurt her—but hard enough to accomplish my purpose.

She gasped; the automatic wavered in her fingers. I grabbed it away from her. In the same motion caught hold of my wheel again. Simultaneously, the Buick sedan crowded up alongside me once more. It let loose with a spine-chilling blast of its siren.

"Cops!" I gritted.

Diana Banning crouched down, white-faced. "Don't let them take me!" she whimpered. "I didn't do it! I didn't kill her!"

I said: "To hell with you, my dear. I'm not hunting for trouble with John Law." And I punched my foot against the brake-pedal. My coupe slewed over toward the curb. The Buick nosed in diagonally in front of me, blocking me. A husky uniformed copper popped out and strolled toward me. He had a ticket-book in his hand. He looked plenty tough.

Diana whimpered again. "Don't let them take me!"

I said: "For God's sake shut up, sweetheart!" Then I got out of my jalopy, met the advancing cop. "Okay, buddy. What's the score?"

"Let me see your driver's license."

I took out my card-case and showed it to him. My license was on one side of the case. My police card was on the other. He took a

good look. Then he stared at me. "Are you Dan Turner?" He had respect in his tone.

"Yeah. And I'm in a hell of a hurry. If you're going to give me a ticket, let's get it over with."

He growled disgustedly "Nuts! You'd have the damned thing squared in thirty minutes. Why should I waste my lead pencil?" Then he added: "But I wish to God you'd drive a little slower."

I said, "All right. I will."

"See that you do." He got back into his Buick, shoved off.



I CLIMBED in under the wheel of my chariot. I stepped on the starter, turned around in the middle of the block. I headed back toward Hollywood.

Diana Banning clutched at my arm. "He—he wasn't after me?"

"No."

She breathed a deep, quivering breath. Then she said: "I want to go to Grand Central Airport. Wh-where are you taking me?"

"You'll find out soon enough, sweetness. Who was it that you *didn't* kill?"

Her piquant puss went corpse-white. "I—I was joking. I didn't mean anything when I said—"

"Okay," I told her calmly. "You were just joking. You weren't afraid of that bull. And you shoved a roscoe into my gizzard

just for a gag. I'm satisfied if you are. And you can get out here." I pulled over away from the center of the street, slowed down.

Her red lips trembled suddenly. "No—no!" she whispered frantically. "You—you can't desert me now! They'll get me—!"

"Who'll get you?"

"The—the p-police!"

"So the cops *are* looking for you, eh?"

She nodded miserably. "You've got to help me!" she trembled. "Please!"

"I might help you. But first I want to know what it's all about."

She said: "Th-there's a d-dead woman in my apartment. M-murdered. Somebody shot her from the window. But I didn't do it!" her voice rose hysterically.

"All right—all right!" I said. "Keep your trap buttoned and I'll do what I can."

Five minutes later I pulled up in front of my own apartment stash. I helped the brown-haired doll out, took her inside with me. When we were in my flat with the front door locked, I poured out two stiff slugs of Vat 69 and handed her one of them. "Drink this. It'll quiet your nerves." Then I tossed off my own jorum.

She choked on hers. Then she looked at me. "Wh-what am I to do?"

"You're not to do anything yet. Except tell me the name of the bim that got chilled in your tepee."

"I—I don't know her name. She called on me and started to fight with me about—about—"

"Yes? About what?"

"About—Saul Romne. And then I heard a shot, and she—she fell dead at my feet."

"Where does Evelyn Anderson fit into the picture?"

"She lives in the next apartment. She heard the shot and came running in. She didn't believe me when I said I—I hadn't done the shooting. She said she'd help me make a get-away. She phoned the airport and made a reservation for me. Then she phoned

for a cab. Meanwhile I was packing my bag. Then we both went downstairs to wait for the cab—and you came along.”

I said: “Evelyn Anderson’s a good kid. And I’ll try to get you out of your jam.”

A vague helplessness came into her grey peepers. “There—there isn’t very much you can d-do, I’m afraid,” she quavered. “It’s written in my horoscope that I—I’m to be executed for . . . murder!”

I glued the stupefied focus on her. Of all the nutty things I’d ever heard, that crack was just about the goofiest. “Horoscope?” I said. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“It’s true!” she answered wearily. “Everything Professor Astrio ever forecast for me has come true. It’s written in the stars. He told me Saul Romne would—would become interested in me. He told me I would become a Wampas baby star. B-both those things happened. And then, this evening, I got a letter from Professor Astrio.”

“Let’s see it,” I said.

She opened her purse, handed me a folded slip of paper. I read it. It said: “*Dear Miss Banning: There is an ominous portent in the stars for you. I see a rope noose dangling about your head, and your life-line ends very suddenly. Please be careful. Astrio.*”

I shoved the note into my pocket. “Hell and damnation! You don’t believe that stuff, do you, sweetheart? Besides, they don’t hang you in California. You take gas.” And then, because she looked so wistful and fragile and forlorn, I put my arms around her.

She melted close to me like a frightened child. I could feel the firm mounds of her pretty-pretties pressing against my chest. Her body quivered with nerve-fatigue. I picked her up. She was as light as a feather. I took her into my bedroom and unfastened the catches of her dress. She made no effort to resist me when I stripped it off. Her whole

attitude seemed to be that nothing mattered anyhow.

I stared down at her on the bed. In her dress she had been gorgeous. Without it she was an absolute knock-out. All she had on was a brief pair of step-ins and a bandeau of fragile mesh. She looked so damned beautiful she didn’t seem real. Her body was a series of smooth, liling pink curves. But her glims were deep pools of fear.

I kissed her on the mouth. I got a kick out of that. Then I gave her another slug of Scotch and an amytal capsule. “This will put you to sleep for a while,” I told her.

She closed her eyes. I covered her with a blanket. Not that I wanted to. I’d rather have stayed there and stared. But there were things to be done. I left her.

I WENT downstairs and got into my buggy. I drove out Wilshire to the apartment where she lived—the building where I’d picked her up just a little while before. I looked at the directory, found out the number of her flat. Then I went up to it.

The door was open. Somebody was moving around inside. I stepped in.

A voice said: “For God’s sake! How in hell do you always manage to smell these things out, Sherlock?”

It was my friend Dave Donaldson of the homicide squad. There were two other central office men with him. Just beyond them I saw something huddled on the floor. It was a dead jane. She had a bullet in her think-tank.

I said: “Hello, Dave. Who got rubbed—and why?”

He gestured toward the corpse—a good-looking brunette, probably in her late twenties. Her clothes were torn, her black hair tumbled about her shoulders. Her frock had been ripped apart in front. There were finger-nail scratches across the white skin. The furniture of the room was knocked hell-

west and crooked, as if a terrific struggle had taken place before she'd been cooled.

Donaldson said: "We haven't identified her yet. But we know who did it."

"Who?"

"A doll named Diana Banning. This is her apartment. We found a gat with one exploded chamber. The serial number is on record. We've checked it by telephone. It belongs to this Banning frail."

"Where is she?" I asked innocently.

"She got away. But we'll find her. She won't go very far."

I said: "I hope not." Then I said: "Well, I guess there's no need of my hanging around." I started out.

Donaldson said "Just a minute, wise guy. How did you come to bust in here?"

At that very instant, the red-haired Evelyn Anderson appeared at the doorway of the apartment. She'd heard Donaldson's question. Now she shot a warning, pleading glance at me.

I winked at her. Then I turned to Donaldson and said: "I saw your car parked downstairs. I was just curious."

He swallowed it. So I went out into the corridor. Evelyn Anderson buttonholed me. "Did the kid get away?"

"No. But she's safe. I've got her in my dugout. I'll keep her under cover until I can get her clear of this mess."

Evelyn looked at me. "Get her clear? You think she's innocent?"

"I don't know. But I intend to find out." Then I went downstairs and got into my jalopy. I headed for Saul Romne's palatial hovel in Beverly.

I HAD a hell of a time getting to him. It was getting close to midnight, and Romne's butler insisted his master had retired for the night. So I penciled two words on one of my business cards. I wrote "Diana Banning." Then I handed the card to the

butler and said: "Take this to Mr. Romne—or would you prefer a belt on the bugle?"

Pretty soon Saul Romne came downstairs. He was dressed in pajamas and a dressing-gown. He was a good-looking devil. He took a swivel at me. "What is it you want?"

I waited until the butler was out of ear-shot. Then I said "Diana Banning's in a jam. A dame was bumped off in her apartment—with Diana's gun."

He paled. "Is—is she under arrest?"

"Not yet. The cops are looking for her. But I've got her hidden in my joint."

"Good God!" Romne licked his lips. "What's to be done? Did—did Diana really do it?"

"How should I know?" Then I said: "Is it worth five grand of your dough for me to take the case and try to get her clear?"

"Five thousand dollars?"

I nodded. After all, there wasn't any use passing up a chance to pick up some geetus. I'm not in business for my health.

He looked at me. "All right. I'll write you out a check."

He went away for about five minutes. While he was gone I had a look around. There was an escritoire in one corner of the living room. I saw a waste-basket alongside it. I always paw through waste-baskets whenever I get a chance. You learn a lot that way. In this particular basket I found I some scraps of torn paper. There was some typewriting on the pieces. I picked them all out and I slipped them in my pocket.

Then Romne came back and handed me his personal check for five G's. I took it. "By the way, Mr. Romne—you didn't happen to be in Diana's flat tonight at the time of the kill, did you?"

He flushed. "No!"

"Can you furnish the cops with an alibi in case they ask you?"

He looked sore. "Yes. If you I must know, I spent the evening at the apartment of a girl named Fifi Glendon."

I set fire to a gasper to cover my start of surprise. I knew Fifi Glendon. She was a good-time baby, always willing to oblige. I'd been out with her once or twice myself. I said: "Okay, Mr. Romne. Thanks a lot." Then I went out.

I drove over to the place where Fifi Glendon lived. She let me in herself: She was crooked to the scalp. I didn't mind that. Fifi was easier to get along with when she was high.

I looked her over as she opened the door. She was wearing cerise pajamas that clashed with her bleached-blonde hair. But after a second, I didn't pay much attention to the color of her pajamas. All I saw was that they were tissue-thin; and it didn't take x-ray peepers to get a generous gander at her she-male charms. I could see the contours of her firm young breasts, the lyric lilt of her hips. I could see plenty.

When she tabbed me she said: "Well! The heavy-lover himself! Come in, gumshoe. Make eyes at me. I like the way you do it."

I went in. I kissed her—just as a formality. But the way her red mouth opened and clung to mine got me side-tracked. I felt like a swimmer going down for the third time in an ocean of sensation. The first thing I knew, I had her in my arms . . .

After a long while I said: "Do you object to blackmail, Fifi?"

She looked up at me from the divan. "I dote on it. There are a couple of guys right now who are paying me plenty."

I grinned. "How about us getting together to nick Saul Romne the next time he comes here?"

"Saul Romne?" Fifi looked blank. "He's never been here in his life!" And at that instant her telephone rang.

She answered it. "Yes. This is Fifi Glendon. What? Oh. . . . I see. Five thousand dollars? Sure I will, Mr. Rom—er, Mr. Jones." She hung up.

I looked at her. "That was Saul Romne offering you five grand to say he was here with you tonight. He's a little late."

"So what?"

I kissed her. "So nothing, hon. But you'd better collect your lettuce in advance." Then I went out.

AS I DROVE away, I added up what I'd learned thus far. In the first place a dame had been rubbed out in Diana Banning's flat. I had Diana hidden in my drop. In the second place, Saul Romne had given me five grand to get her out of her jam. But likewise he had lied to me about his own alibi—and now he'd offered Fifi Glendon another five thousand bucks to back him up.

I thought of the scraps of paper I'd salvaged from his wastebasket. I stopped my coupe, fished the pieces out of my pocket. I pieced them together. The typed message said "Saul: Either you give up your other loves and take me back, or something is going to happen. E. A."

That was interesting! But what was the next step? Then I remembered that horoscope foolishness the Banning chick had spouted. I still had the letter she'd received from Professor Astrio, warning her that a noose dangled over her neck, according to the stars. Now, how in hell could this fake astrologer know a thing like that in advance of the actual happening?

I stopped in an all-night druggery, looked in the phone book. I got this Professor Astrio's address. He lived in a swanky apartment-house on Yucca Street. I got back in my bucket, jockeyed it into motion.

I drew up before Astrio's address. Another car pulled up behind me. I got out. I looked around. I said: "What the hell—!"

Dave Donaldson of the homicide squad was climbing out of the other machine!

When he saw me he said: "Well, Turner—here you are again! What are you up to this time?"

"Nothing much. I'm going up to see a star-gazer named Astrio. Run along and peddle your prunes."

"Damn you, snoop—you're messing in this murder case and I know it!"

"How do you know it?"

"Because you're going up to see Astrio—and it was Astrio's wife, Edna Astrio, whose dead body we found in Diana Banning's flat!"

That floored me. Astrio's wife—Edna Astrio—that was the name of the brunette who'd been bumped off. I suddenly thought of the torn letter I'd got out of Romne's waste-basket. It was initialed "E.A."—which might be Edna Astrio! I grabbed Donaldson's arm. "Let's go up and see this star-gazer right now!"

We went upstairs together. Professor Astrio answered our summons. He was a tall, lean, cadaverous bozo with coal-black hair, piercing peepers and a Mephistophelean air about him. I didn't like his looks.

"Well, gentlemen?" he said in a hollow voice.

Donaldson didn't mince words. "Your wife's dead, Astrio. She was murdered in the apartment of a movie-player named Diana Banning."

Astrio took a backward step. His blue-shaven jaw sagged. "M-my wife—murdered?"

"Yeah. Do you happen to know why she was in Miss Banning's flat? Do you know anything about Diana Banning herself?"

Abruptly Astrio's black eyes blazed. "I know plenty about her! She's Saul Romne's wench!"

I butted in. "How do you know that?"

He grinned sardonically. "I helped him get her!" he gritted. "Saul Romne is a dirty, lousy son of a—"

"Take it easy. Maybe you'd better do some explaining."

"All right!" he rasped. "I'll spill what I know. Romne paid me plenty to do his dirty work. He bribed me to give readings to Miss Banning. I worked up a fake horoscope for her. I told her she'd be a Wampas baby star—that she'd succeed in pictures. I forecast that her success would be predicated on her accepting Saul Romne's attentions. I told her it was so written in the stars—that it must come to pass. So when Romne made a play for her, she gave in to him; she thought she had to, because the stars had foretold it. I've been doing jobs like that for Romne all along."

"But what's that got to do with your wife?" Dave shot out.

Astrio laughed mirthlessly. "She left me tonight. She told me to my face that for the past year she'd had a lover—and that lover was Saul Romne! She said she was going to him—leaving me forever!" His black lamps blazed hell-fire. "I know what happened! Romne turned her down. He couldn't be bothered with her. He had a new love—Diana Banning. So my wife went to the Banning girl's apartment to have it out with her. And I'll stake my life that Romne followed her, shot her in that apartment to get rid of her!"

I LOOKED at Donaldson. Astrio's theory sounded all right on the surface. And it checked up with one fact I already knew: Diana Banning had told me herself that the black-haired dame had come to her apartment and started a row about Saul Romne!

Also, I knew that Romne was making a desperate effort to frame an alibi for himself concerning his movements that night. And

he'd had a threatening letter signed "E.A."—Edna Astrio?

But Donaldson didn't seem impressed with Astrio's story. "You may be right as to the cause of your wife visiting Diana Banning," he said to the star-gazer. "But as far as Romne doing the shooting is concerned—nuts! Diana did it herself." Then he said: "Don't leave town, Astrio. We'll be needing you as a witness when we find the Banning cookie."

Dave and I went out. I said: "Listen. Take my advice and put a tail on Astrio."

"What for?"

"I can't tell you now. But I've got a reason." I was thinking about that letter Diana had got from the horoscope guy, the one warning her about the rope around her neck. Astrio was a fake, by his own admission. He couldn't read the future. How, then, had he known Diana was going to be suspected of a bump-off that had not yet been committed?

But Donaldson merely grunted. "Diana Banning's the one I want. To hell with Astrio."

I walked up to his police-car with him, still arguing. I didn't dare tell him about Astrio's letter to Diana, because that would be admitting I knew something about her.

He climbed into his equipage, grinned at me. And then, abruptly, his police-radio outfit emitted a squawk; a voice came out of the loud-speaker. "Calling Detective-Lieutenant Donaldson! Detective Donaldson, Car 1325! We have just had an anonymous telephone tip that the missing Diana Banning is in hiding in the apartment of a man named Dan Turner—"

I gulped. Dave whirled on me—and he had his service .38 in his fist. "So!" he snarled. "Double-crossing me, eh? I didn't think you'd ever come to that!"

"Put away the fireworks and listen to me, Dave! I—"

"Get in here alongside me!" he rasped. "We're going to your place right now!"

He meant business. There was nothing I could do about it. I climbed aboard. He headed hellity-blip toward my stash.

Just as he pulled in to the curb in front of the entrance to my building, I saw two people pop from the front door; run for a parked sedan. My heart leaped. I recognized both of them! They were Saul Romne and Diana Banning!

I didn't dare let Donaldson notice them. So I made a grab for his .38. "Damn you!" he snarled. He raised his left fist, slugged me on the prow. He packed a sweet punch. I saw stars—lots of them. But I also saw Romne's sedan pull away. I quit struggling. "Okay, Dave. Now you're even for all the trouble I've caused you."

"Nuts. Come on—climb out of here. We're going up to your flat and put the irons on this Banning witch!"

I went with him willingly enough. I knew my joint would be empty.

Dave prowled every corner. Then he came back to me, looking puzzled. "She's not here!"

I grinned, rubbed my sore jaw. "Certainly she isn't. But she was. I had her hidden in here—I admit it."

"Maybe she's gone back to her own flat!" he gritted. "Come on—we'll go see!"

ONCE more in his car, I gave him the low-down. "Listen, pal. Diana didn't kill Astrio's wife."

"Then who did?"

I said, "Maybe I'll tell you—if you'll be a good boy."

He said, "If you know, you'd better spill. Or I'll—"

I just laughed at him.

Ten minutes later we walked into Diana Banning's apartment. The murdered broad had been removed by now. There was a

uniformed copper on guard at the door. Diana wasn't there, of course.

Dave looked at me. "Where is she? Come on—spill it!"

"Wait a minute. I want to get someone who'll back up my story." I went to the uniformed cop. "See if you can get hold of Miss Evelyn Anderson in the next apartment."

Pretty soon the cop returned with the red-haired Anderson girl in tow. She was wearing a chiffon nightie that didn't conceal very much. She was damned good to look at—nice hips, mature whatchallems, well-turned stems. She looked worried.

I said: "Okay, Dave. Now I'll tell what I know. I was driving past this place when Miss Anderson, here, hailed me. She asked me to take Diana Banning to the airport. I agreed. Instead, I took her to my apartment, hid her there. She told me there'd been a woman killed in her flat—but that she didn't do it. She also said that she was doomed to die on the gallows—because Professor Astrio had sent her a letter telling her so."

"Astrio? How in hell could he know—?"

I smiled. "That's my point exactly. How could Astrio know in advance that his wife was going to be murdered in this room? Unless—"

"Unless he planned to do it himself!" Donaldson yelled.

I nodded. "He'd have plenty of cause. He knew his wife was one of Saul Romne's many mistresses. That would be reason enough to burn her down—and to plant the crime on Diana."

"The dirty b—! Let's go get him now!" Donaldson started for the door.

I said: "Wait a minute. Maybe you could break him down by confronting him with the letter he sent Diana. I'll give it to you." I fumbled in my pockets. Then I said: "Hell! I've lost the thing! But look—I can remember how it I read. I'll type out a

duplicate of it. He won't know the difference."

I turned to the red-haired Anderson girl. "You've got a typewriter I can use, haven't you?"

She nodded. We all went next door to her apartment. She gave me a sheet of paper. I sat down at her typewriter. I hammered out a duplicate of Astrio's letter as I remembered it. "Dear Miss Banning: there is an ominous portent in the stars for you. I see a rope noose dangling about your head, and your life-line ends very suddenly. Please be careful. Astrio."

I GOT UP from the desk. I plunged a hand into my breast-pocket and brought out the original letter Diana had received, and which I hadn't lost at all. Also, I brought out those torn scraps I'd retrieved from Saul Romne's waste-basket. I placed Astrio's letter and the torn scraps on the desk alongside the sheet I'd just typed on Evelyn Anderson's typewriter. I said: "Okay, Dave. Look at these E's—and the D's! They're identical! All three of these letters were written on the same machine! Astrio never wrote that letter to Diana Banning. Evelyn Anderson wrote it! She also wrote this note to Saul Romne. Evelyn Anderson – 'E.A.' – was one of Saul Romne's cast-off loves. She shot Astrio's wife from the fire-escape outside Diana Banning's window and tried to plant the crime on the Banning girl—thus removing two of her rivals at once! – Look out! Grab her, Dave!"

Donaldson dived for the red-haired Evelyn Anderson. But he was too late. She had an automatic in her hand. She shoved its muzzle against her left breast. She pulled the trigger.

I caught her as she fell. Then I felt for her pulse. I looked up and said: "Deader than a fried egg."

"But—but how in hell did you guess?" he demanded.

I said: "That anonymous phone-call to the police was the tip-off. Somebody called headquarters and spilled the beans that Diana was hiding in my flat. There were only two people to whom I'd told that secret: Saul Romne and Evelyn Anderson. It had to be one of those two who phoned. And it couldn't have been Romne, because he didn't want Diana pinched. In fact, it was Romne who got her out of my joint just before we got there. I saw them leaving. That's why I grabbed your gat and let you slug me on the chin-whiskers."

"You mean—it was Evelyn Anderson who tipped off headquarters that the Banning dame was in your place?" Dave gasped. "But—but why would she do that? She had helped Diana Banning to escape in the first place!"

I said, "That was a stall to throw suspicion away from herself. She wanted to make it look as if she'd been trying to help the Banning girl. But as a matter of fact, she wanted Diana caught. She planned the whole thing in advance. She sent Diana a fake note, ostensibly from Astrio. She knew the

Banning cutie believed implicitly in the stars—and that, once nabbed for murder, wouldn't make much effort to escape her fate. Evelyn Anderson also sent a note to Saul Romne, demanding that he take her back. When he refused, she stole Diana's gun and killed the Astrio woman with it—when the Astrio woman came into Diana's apartment for a showdown about Saul Romne."

Donaldson said, "And you suspected—"

"I didn't suspect. I knew. I knew the instant headquarters got that anonymous tip. Evelyn Anderson was the only one who could have done it. She had to have a motive. What was it? Jealousy was the way I figured it. It linked up with the pieces of paper I stole from Romne's waste-basket. So I pulled that stunt of using Evelyn's typewriter. That cinched it. The Astrio note and the letter to Romne signed 'E.A.' were both from this machine. I made my accusation—and you see what happened."

Dave lowered the Anderson girl's lifeless body to the floor. "Yeah," he said. "I see."