

DEAD MAN'S SHAKEDOWN

By Robert Leslie Bellem



The hitler caught her in
he neck, coursed upward.

Whatever it was, it had happened thirteen years ago! Whatever it was, only a dead man was supposed to know anything about it! Yet now Sid Waldring was being blackmailed for it. Completely in the dark, Dan offers to help if he can.

I DISLIKE unpunctual punks. That's why I was sore at Sidney Waldring. He'd made a date with me and he was late for it.

Waldring was a runty, lard-faced bozo who owned and operated a minor independent neighborhood movie theater over near LaBrea. He'd phoned me to come see him that evening; said he was in some sort of jam. But when I ankled into his private office above the theater at seventy-three, he wasn't on deck.

Instead, a luscious young blonde cookie

gave me the jittery focus. "Are you Dan Turner, the private d-detective?"

"So my friends seem to think, babe," I said. I glued the admiring glimpse on her. She had a shape you dream about.

She said: "I—I'm Connie Bowen."

"Hi, Toots. Glad to know you."

"I'm Sid's secretary. He had to go downtown, but he's expecting you; wants you to wait." She took a gliding step toward me. "You *w-will* help him out of this b-blackmail mess, won't you? You wouldn't let anything . . . happen to him?"

For a mere employee she seemed mighty interested in Waldring's personal affairs; seemed to know a lot about them. But then she'd called him by his first name, which indicated a pretty thick association. That's not out of the ordinary, in Hollywood.

I said: "Sure I'll help the guy, if there's a big enough fee in it." I didn't show any surprise at the blackmail angle she mentioned; I'd suspected something like that when Waldring phoned me at my apartment stash. But I wondered what the blonde cutie had in mind when she said she was scared something might happen to him. If he was being blackmailed, then his life couldn't be in danger from that viewpoint. A shakedown artist never bumps the victim he's milking. That would be the same as punching your own mealticket full of counterfeit holes.

I DECIDED to kill time by going downstairs to the theater proper and watching a ghost fling woo. The ghost was Fernando del Cavallero, who's been deceased about twelve years. In his day he had been the biggest pulse-throb in silent pix—a handsome mugg with dreamy glims, flaring nostrils and a smile that made dames go off the deep end. He'd specialized in sheik, gaucho, and matador roles; and he'd been the pet peeve of every commonplace male in America.

This answer to a spinster's prayer had kicked the bucket while on a personal appearance tour of the east a dozen summers ago. He died suddenly and somewhat mysteriously in a jerkwater Alabama hamlet, and they'd shipped his beautiful remainders back to California in a bronze casket that cost ten grand—which was just about all the geetus left in his estate, although he'd coined millions during his career. Thirty-seven silly shemales got trampled in the crush at his funeral; and even now, veiled wrens put posies on his grave almost daily.

Sidney Waldring had recently gambled his slim wad on the negatives of del Cavallero's old pictures for revival showings. The best of the batch, "Desert Destiny," was now flickering across Waldring's silverscreen; so I went down to take a gander, for old times' sake.

It gave you an eerie sensation to watch a defunct guy going through his paces without benefit of sound track. Knowing that he was now a worm-eaten skeleton under six feet of Hollywood soil, there was something spooky about seeing him toss kisses at his leading lady, Myrla Montaine.

Evidently the public felt the same way, because there wasn't much of an audience. Of course, Waldring couldn't afford to buy a lot of newspaper publicity; so that might have accounted for the poor turn-out. Not many people knew the opus was being revived, and apparently nobody cared much. Such is fame. A star today, a maggot tomorrow.

I sat through four spools of the old fashioned junk and then barged out to the lobby for a gasper. When I got there, I had a surprise waiting for me.

Myrla Montaine herself was standing in the foyer, surrounded by five or six autograph fiends. She'd retired from the galloping tintypes shortly after Fernando del Cavallero's death, and she must have been nudging forty now; but she still had a lot on the ball. When I lamped her, it brought back my misspent youth.

Her hair was a tasteful shade of henna, her figure wasn't lumpy, and she still knew how to wear her threads. Evidently she'd come to cop a swivel at herself as of twelve years back; and there was a satisfied, reminiscent smirk on her kisser as the autograph hounds thrust their pads and pens at her. Maybe she was remembering the days when her fans could have been counted in millions instead of half dozens.

A bald, pudgy character was getting her signature as I ankled out. I also piped Sidney Waldring and his gorgeous blonde secretary coming down the carpeted stairs toward me. Sid gave me the high sign to tell me he was ready to talk business and I turned away hunting a place to douse my coffin nail. I found a crockery urn full of sand; thrust the butt into it. And then—

Ka-chow!

THE short, sharp splat of a roscoe whammed across the foyer, vicious, nasty. A shrill scream sounded. I said: “What the—?” and pivoted, made a lunge at Myrla Montaine. She was slowly folding like a wet dishcloth.

I caught her, steadied her. She went limp in my arms, and an ominous premonition seized me. I lowered the former star to the floor, hunted for heart-beats.

There weren't any. The Montaine doll was deader than freedom in Germany. A small caliber pill had coursed upward through her neck; lodged in her think-tank.

IYANKED my .32 automatic from the shoulder holster where I always carry it; covered the autograph hunters, the ticket taker, Sid Waldring, and the yellow-haired Connie Bowen quail. “Freeze, everybody,” I snapped.

Somebody asked: “Wh-wh-what happened?”

“This is a bump-off. And I'm a private snoop with a badge. Anybody care to question my authority?”

Nobody did.

I barked an order over my shoulder to the scared jessie in the ticket-selling booth. “Phone police headquarters, hon. Fast. Ask for Dave Donaldson of the homicide squad and tell him to flag himself out here in a hurry.”

“Y-yes, sir,” she started dialing.

While the call was being put through, I got busy. I herded everybody to one side; barred the doors so that none of the audience inside the theater auditorium could come out and gum things up. Then I started frisking my suspects for the murder gun.

I chose the blonde Bowen cupcake first, even though Sid Waldring didn't seem to like it much when I searched her. Apparently he thought he had exclusive privileges over this secretary chick.

I didn't locate any rod on her. Then I had a go at Waldring himself; and again I threw snake-eyes. He had no more cannon than the blonde had. In fact, the only thing I found on him was a severe case of the jitters.

Next I searched the autograph fiends, the ticket taker, and the jessie in the booth. No dice. They were all clean, unarmed and upset.

I picked up Myrla Montaine's fountain pen, stuck it in my pocket for a souvenir. The bald, pudgy customer breathed garlic in my kisser; said he wanted to go home to his wife and bambinos. A dame with a hatchet face asked me if she could use the powder room and I said no. A jerk in a zoot suit looked as if he might be going to break down and weep in his pimples.

Then Dave Donaldson arrived with his minions. “What simmers, Sherlock?” he yodeled at me.

“Croakery.” And I stepped aside so he could glom a hinge at the Montaine dame's remnants.

He choked: “Who bumped her?”

“That's for you to say, chum. It happened while my back was turned. But these are all the people who were on hand at the time the shot was triggered. No gat on any of them.”

“So the gat was ditched,” he growled. “So we'll make paraffin tests of everybody's mitts. I've got a portable outfit in my chariot.”

Oddly enough, though, the tests all

showed negative. And when he started demanding names, addresses, and personal histories, he didn't even get to first base. Nobody in the group had any apparent motive for liquidating Myrla Montaine; and the paraffin experiment indicated that nobody in the foyer could have fired the shot. It was screwy as hell, especially when you considered that the murder gun itself couldn't be found. How could it have vanished in thin air? And where had the slug come from?

Presently the former star's corpse was loaded into a meat basket, taken to the morgue. Donaldson gave all the witnesses his grudging permission to haul bunions—with a warning to stay where he could find them at any odd hour. The newspaper reporters lammed to make their deadlines and the party was just about over except for three or four dumb dicks still searching the lobby for the missing roscoe.

Which, incidentally, they didn't find.

I CLIMBED up to Sidney Waldring's private office for a slug of Vat 69 from his desk drawer. I needed that snort; the killing had been too weird to suit me.

Over my drink I remarked: "Tough on the Montaine skirt, pal. But a sweet break for you."

He winced as if I'd prodded him with a portable buzz-saw. "Wh-what the devil do you mean, a sweet break for me? I don't get it." And Connie Bowen, across from him, looked equally startled.

I said: "Every newspaper in the country will have this in big red headlines. Think of the publicity you'll get for free on 'Desert Destiny' and all the other Fernando del Cavallero stinkers that Myrla Montaine played in."

"Oh. Publicity."

"Sure. You can book your revivals from hell to Havana. Ticket buyers will stumble all over their own brogans to take a dose of

vicarious morbidity from those ancient flickers."

He mopped his lardy puss with a dime store handkerchief. "I—I guess I hadn't thought of it in that light, Hawkshaw. But you're right, of course."

I helped myself to another dollop of Scotch. "By the way, what did you want to see me about?"

"Nothing," he answered a bit too quickly. "I m-mean, it's all straightened up now. I was in a little trouble but I got it ironed out when I went downtown a while ago. Sorry if it disappoints you, Dan. I'd be glad to pay you for the time you've wasted coming here and waiting."

I shrugged. "No charge, chum. I base my fees on services rendered. There weren't any services so you don't owe me anything. Be seeing you." And I cast a pleasant leer at his golden-haired stenographer; screamed.

I didn't go home, though. I had a sneaking hunch that Waldring's blackmail jam had been connected in some way with Myrla Montaine; that her murder was what had eased his mind. By croaking her, somebody had cheated me out of a prospective retainer—which irked my adenoids. After all, I'm in this racket for the dough; and when some sharp apple snatches a potential stack of lettuce out from under my smeller, I resent it. Right now I craved revenge in copious quantities.

MY JALOPY was on a parking lot around the corner. I redeemed it, jockeyed it into a spot at the curb across the street from the theater and sat there waiting, watching. Presently the blonde Bowen doll came out, boarded a Yellow.

I tailed the cab.

The quail's ride ended at a second rate apartment wikiup on Rampart Street. She paid her fare, flipped into the igloo. I followed her without being noticed, tabbed the flat she entered; waited until she'd had

time to take off her coat and hat. Then I dusted the portal with my knuckles.

She opened up, put the squint on me. "Why, Mr. T-Turner!" she whispered; and all the color drained from her piquant pan.

I barged over the threshold. "Were you expecting somebody else, sweet stuff?" I grinned at her.

"N-no. Not at all." She narrowed her blue peepers. "Who would I be expecting?"

"Waldring, maybe. I figured he might be coming to give you some dictation."

"He doesn't dictate after business hours."

"What *does* he do after business hours?" I said.

"He minds his own affairs, which is more than I can say for some people."

I chuckled. "Don't mind me, babe. I'm a snoop by profession, so you mustn't hold it against me. Anyhow, I'm glad you aren't having any other callers tonight. It gives us a chance to fling some chin music without interruption."

"What kind of chin music?"

"I'll draw you a diagram," I said. "I want to know what was on your boss's mind when he phoned me to come see him."

"Afraid I c-can't tell you that, gumshoe."

"The nuts you gargle. You're Sid's sweetie, aren't you?"

Her kisser got sullen. "That's personal."

"Sure. That's what I'm driving at. It's so personal you're bound to be hep to the guy's private angles. You knew he was being blackmailed; you admitted that much when I first talked to you in his office."

"You must have been dreaming," she said.

"Yeah. The dream wouldn't be so pleasant, though, if I slapped Waldring in the bastille on a murder rap. Would you like that?"

"But—but you c-can't do a thing like that. He didn't kill that Montaine w-woman."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Because I was right alongside him, coming down the staircase to the theater lobby, when she was sh-shot. I'd have seen him fire, wouldn't I?"

"Unless you were blind," I agreed blandly.

"All right. He didn't do it."

"Do you really love Sid, hon?"

"Y-yes."

"Then you'd lie your pretty noggin off for him," I said. "Look. Here's how I figure it. Myrla Montaine had something on him. She was putting the bite on him for plenty of clams. He wanted to hire me to help him out of the jam. Then, when he saw Myrla in his foyer tonight, he got a better idea. He scalded her."

"It isn't t-true! Besides, she wasn't the one who was b-bleeding him. . . . Oh-h-h," she added, realizing what she'd spilled.

I grinned. "Okay. So Myrla wasn't the shakedown artist. Then who was?"

"I wouldn't know. If I did, I wouldn't tell you."

"Speak up before I forget myself and smack you!" I said.



I FASTENED my dukes on her shoulders; started shaking her. "Come on, hon. Speak up before I forget my chivalry and smack you."

She seemed to realize I was in earnest. “Let me g-go! I tell you I don’t know who the blackmailer is. You’ve g-got to believe me, Mr. Turner. . . . D-Dan. . . .” She came close to me, her peepers pleading.

Somehow I got the impression she was leveling. “Okay. You don’t know the blackmailer’s name. Does Sid?”

“N-no. The letters weren’t s-signed.”

“Then how can you be so sure it *wasn’t* Myrla Montaine?” I demanded.

“Because Sid took steps to find out. He did some investigating on his own account.”

“What was the shakedown based on?”

“Something he won’t tell me about,” she said ruefully. “Something that happened when he was an Altamount cameraman thirteen years ago—while he was on location with the ‘Desert Destiny’ unit. Wh-whatever it was, only a d-dead man was supposed to have known about it.”

I stared at her. “A dead man?”

“Yes. Fernando del Cavallero.”

This was news to me. It was the first time I’d known Sid Waldring had ground the crank on del Cavallero’s cameras; and evidently Sid had done something on location—something bad—which the former hambo had learned about.

I put my think-tank into high gear; clicked a series of montage memory pictures on my mental movie screen. Suddenly I snapped my fingers. “I’ve got it!”

“Got wh-what?” Connie Bowen asked me.

“There was an extra cutie who went to her reward while that troupe was on location down in the Imperial Valley,” I said. “She had been one of del Cavallero’s special playmates. The coroner diagnosed her as a hop-head; reported it as an accidental suicide from an overdose of nose candy.”

“Well?”

“It’s plain enough, baby. Maybe del Cavallero was fed up with this chick and

wanted to get rid of her. So suppose he hired Sid Waldring to do the actual dirty work?”

The blonde doll started trembling. “No! I don’t believe it. I know Sid too well to think he’d commit m-murder.”

I SAID: “But the story meshes, hon. Assume I’m right. Then del Cavallero croaked in Alabama on a personal appearance tour; and the secret was supposed to have died with him. But suppose Myrla Montaine got wise to the setup. Suppose she kept her yap zippered about it until recently, when she found herself with the financial shorts. Then she put the chew on Sid—and he rubbed her out tonight to keep her from blowing the whistle on him.”

Connie wrapped her arms around me. “I tell you Sid’s innocent. Miss Montaine wasn’t b-blackmailing him, so he had no reason to k-kill her. It was somebody else. You can’t arrest him. I won’t let you. You’ve got t-to clear him . . . for m-my sake!” She leaned forward and kissed me.

AFTER a while the golden-haired honey whispered: “You must protect Sid for me!”

“I’ll try to make sure you don’t get sucked into a bump-off mess,” I grunted. “If the guy’s innocent, I’ll try to keep him out of trouble. If he’s guilty, I’ll help fasten his frame in the smoke chamber. Goom-bye now.” And I powdered before she could give me an argument.

Then, as I ankled into the corridor, somebody bashed me on the scalp with a blunt instrument. I was unconscious before I knew what conked me; didn’t even feel the floor sailing up to smite me in the smeller.

I didn’t stay senseless very long, though. It wasn’t more than a couple of minutes later when I opened my foggy peepers and piped Sid Waldring leaning over me. He panted: “Turner—for God’s sake, what happened?”

I shook the clouds out of my grey matter, staggered upright, dragged out my roscoe and covered him. "You murderous louse!" I rasped. "Slug me, will you?"

He froze. "But—but I didn't! I was coming up to see Connie, and I f-found you lying here."

"You lie in your bridgework, bub."

"It's true. A man ran past me on the stairs as I came up. A bald guy, swarthy, smelled of garlic. The one who was in my foyer when Myrla was murdered. You remember—?"

"Don't feed me that stuff. You didn't see any bald bozo. You were here in the hallway, eavesdropping at the Bowen quail's door. You heard me making out a case against you, and you tried to chill me to keep me quiet. Now hold out your fins for the nippers."

He looked past me toward Connie's stash. "No, sweetheart, don't do it!" he yeped.

I said: "The gag's too elderly. I'm not buying any."

I was wrong, though. Connie Bowen had really opened her portal; and now she maced me with a brass book-end; bunted me on the same spot where I'd been slugged a moment ago. I went down again for another trip to dreamland, making twice in five minutes I'd been rendered useless. It was getting pretty monotonous but I felt too sleepy to care.

WHEN I got up, I had a lump on my scalp the size of the Union Station. It throbbed like a pump sucking water out of a deep well. Moreover, Sid Waldring and his yellow-haired secretary had lammed. The hall was dark and so was the apartment; they'd switched off the lights so their getaway wouldn't be tabbed by any of the nose neighbors.

I fumbled for my pencil flashlight; couldn't find it. My pen and pencil were gone, too. I struck a match, lamped my

roscoe on the floor where I'd dropped it when I got bludgeoned while covering the Waldring weasel. I scooped it up, catapulted to the phone in Connie's living room, dialed police headquarters and made contact with Dave Donaldson.

"Yeah?" he growled.

"Turner orating. Meet me at Myrla Montaine's wigwam this side of Beverly in a hurry," I said. Then I rang off; packed my poundage downstairs and out of the building. I piled into my bucket, aimed it away from the curb, gunned it.



Presently I was thumbing the front doorbell of the defunct Montaine skirt's costly shanty. A tearful red-haired doll let me in but didn't seem happy about it. She said: "I've told you newspaper reporters all I know. Why m-must you keep bothering me?"

"Who are you?" I snarled.

"Miss Montaine's secretary."

"That's nice. I'm Dan Turner and I'm a private eye, not a reporter. I want to see Myrla's bank books. Do you show them to

me now, or after I feed you a slap in the mush?”

“But—but—”

I put my hooks on her. “Let’s not argue. Sometimes I forget my own strength.”

She caved in, took me to a desk that had a framed photograph of Fernando del Cavallero on it. I took a long hinge at the picture while the redhead rummaged for a mess of deposit books. Then I studied the bank entries; and they told me plenty.

Myrla had close to a hundred grand to her credit at the time of her departure for the pearly gates! Which seemed to eliminate her from any suspicion of blackmailing Sid Waldring. A wren with that much geetus wouldn’t be bothered putting the shakedown chisel on a guy as poverty-stricken as Sid. Then why the hell had she been killed tonight in his theater lobby?

I blew a kiss to the carrot-thatched social secretary; barged outside. Dave Donaldson was just pulling up to the curb in his official chariot as I pelted off the porch. He tabbed me and yeped: “What goes on, Philo?”

I slid in beside him. “Nudge this heap, cousin. Make knots to Sid Waldring’s home grounds. I’ve got a hunch.”

“Yeah? Let me in on the secret.”

“Later. Pay attention to your driving.”

He mumbled something about my ancestors, but he did what I told him. And presently we reached the unpretentious igloo where Waldring hung forth: a bungalow on Yucca. I had Dave drift the last half block with his engine dead; whispered him quiet as we sneaked toward the cottage. There was a light at the window of a rear room, but the front part loomed as dark as the interior of a brunette crow.

THE door was locked but one of my master keys took care of the situation. I tiptoed over the threshold with Donaldson breathing down my neck. Then, suddenly, I stumbled over something soft and yielding.

“What the—!” I gasped.

Dave chanced a squirt of his flashlight for an instant. I saw Sid Waldring’s blonde stenographer, Connie Bowen, sprawled on the carpet with a nasty bruise on her jaw. She was breathing weakly.

“Kayoed!” I whispered. “Somebody laid a haymaker on her.”

“Yeah, but who?” Donaldson wanted to know.

Before I could give issue to a guess, voices sounded through the closed portal of that back room where the light showed. Two guys were jabbering. One of them was Waldring. “You—you wouldn’t dare!”

“I’d dare plenty, my friend. One word from me and the police will start sniffing, back-tracking you. They’ll find out you bought that morphine in El Centro on a fake prescription. The druggist is still in business down there—and you’ve got a face he’d remember. You haven’t changed much in thirteen years, and murder’s a crime that isn’t outlawed by the statute of limitations.”

“But my God, you were in on the deal!”

“Try and pin something on a dead man. Now get this. You’re going to kick through with every dime you make off those revived pix. Or else—”

I’d heard enough. I said: “Come on, Dave!” and made a thundering lunge at the door; bopped it with the full force of my hundred and ninety pounds. It smacked open as I unlimbered my rod.

I drew a bead on the pudgy, swarthy bald bozo who had been getting Myrla Montaine’s autograph tonight when she was browned. “*Put up your fins, Fernando del Cavallero!*” I snarled. “Consider yourself pinched for killery!”

His surprised gasp was rank with garlic. “Wh-what—”

I said: “You didn’t die in Alabama twelve years ago, you louse. It was all faked. You were probably fed up with the movie grind; you’d made your pile of scratch and

you didn't like being hated by every man you met. You were tired of dames tossing themselves at you."

He went grey around the fringes.

"Before you went on that last personal appearance tour, you must have turned all your securities and savings into cash," I said. "Which is why your estate was barely able to pay the cost of your gaudy funeral. The way I figure it, you bribed a small-town doc to report your demise; sugared an undertaker into putting an unknown cadaver in your coffin. The casket was sealed before it got shipped to Hollywood; nobody ever saw the body."

"Listen. Wait a minute. You—"

"Quiet!" I rumbled. "You bought some facial surgery; then you were free to start a new life, with plenty of dough to see you through. You could get fat, bald, and it wouldn't matter a bit. Plenty other guys have done the same thing: got fed up and dropped out of sight, started all over again under a new name."

"So what?" he narrowed his dark optics.

"So your cash didn't last as long as you expected. You spent it too fast; went broke. Then you decided to replenish your bankroll by blackmailing Sid Waldring, here. Sid had helped you bump an extra wren one time; you had the goods on him. He was hard up, though, and your threatening letters didn't get results. All his coin was invested in the prints of your old silent pix—which weren't drawing flies at the box-office."

"Then how could I shake him down?"

I said: "By pulling something that would splash headlines all over the nation. You chilled your former leading lady, Myrla Montaine! The publicity would make 'Desert Destiny' a gold mine; and all the rest of the old del Cavallero-Montaine flickers would also be worth fortunes. With Sid reaping a cash harvest out of them, you could bleed him for copious blue chips."

"I didn't shoot Myrla. I didn't have a

gun. They gave my hands the paraffin test. It was negative. Let's see you answer that one, mister."

"Okay," I said. "I'll answer it. Your scheme was practically foolproof—or anyhow it would have been except that you made just one wrong move. You conked me as I ankled out of Connie Bowen's apartment stash. And you swiped back the fountain pen Myrla Montaine had been using when she gave you her autograph; the pen I'd put in my own pocket as a souvenir."

"What's a fountain pen got to do with it?"

I SHOVED my map close to his. "Everything, pal. It was a honey of a bold stunt. You were brazen enough to brace Myrla for her signature, running the risk she might recognize you. She didn't, however—because she died too quickly to catch wise. She kicked the bucket with a slug through her throat. Your slug. Fired by your fountain pen."

Then I reached forth, lifted the deadly little gadget out of his breast pocket. It wasn't a pen at all. It was a single shot roscoe, camouflaged. Pressure on the pen point would discharge it from the upper end, sending a pill through anybody trying to write with it.

The guy looked sick. "How—how did you—?"

"I got my tip-off when I discovered the pen absent from my own pocket after I recovered from the bash you dealt me. I realized I'd had the actual murder weapon on me the whole time; there was no reason why anybody would bop me just to glom an ordinary fountain pen—but a gun was something else entirely. Then, later, I discovered Myrla Montaine had been too wealthy to do any blackmailing. Okay; who else had the goods on Sid Waldring? Just one guy—Fernando del Cavallero. A star who was supposed to be dead, but wasn't.

And now we've got you where we want you."

He said: "That's what you think!" and grabbed the camouflaged gat out of my grasp. I struggled to hang onto it, and somehow it discharged. The louse must have re-loaded it after taking it from my pocket a while ago.

Anyhow, it sneezed a pill across the room; and the bullet took Sid Waldring full in the heart before he knew what hit him. Then Donaldson pulled his .38 and triggered it. That was the end of Fernando del Cavallero. There was nothing phony about his death this time.

"Nice shooting, Dave," I said. "Aren't you glad I brought you here?"

"Yeah, but how did you know we'd find the rat with Waldring?"

"Sid saw him in Connie Bowen's apartment corridor, just after I got bashed. The guy had to come here and threaten Sid into keeping quiet. Connie was here, too, so she got poked on the jaw to prevent her overhearing the dialogue."

From the doorway, the blonde cupcake quavered: "But I heard enough, Dan. I've been conscious quite a while. Will you forgive me for hitting you with that book-end at my place?"

"Sure, babe. Forget it."

"And w-will you take me home? I—I want to forget I—ever knew Waldring. He was mixed up in a murder and he g-got what was c-coming to him just now."

So I took her home and helped her lose her memory.