

# An Air-tight Alibi

by **Stanley Shaw**

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IN spite of his present queer habit of seldom looking straight in front of him, but constantly swinging his head from side to side as he walked, "Slim" Harrigan gave passers-by the impression that he was a fine-looking chap. With his overcoat collar turned high about his neck over a tuxedo—the night was cold and drizzly—he moved west on Fourteenth Street.

Slim appeared to be in a great hurry, yet he seldom failed to stop and pass a word or two with anyone he knew. Though the hour was late, he met several; Slim had a wide acquaintance among theatrical people and New Yorkers who frequent the streets of that vicinity.

By profession Slim Harrigan was what is known as a "human fly;" lithe, and with muscles of steel, he could swarm up the side of a fifteen-story business building as easily as an ordinary mortal could navigate a twenty-per-cent macadamized grade on foot. In the summertime Slim traveled with tent shows; winters he usually spent in New York, with, at odd times, a job of steeplejacking or doing occasional work in his line for a film company, substituting for some movie idol who did not possess Slim's muscles or his skill in getting up and down the outside of buildings without the aid of ladder, rope, or stairs.

Turning down Broadway, Slim dropped into the thirst refectory of the

Dunbar Hotel, for this was in the days when there were plenty of thirst refectories in New York, and there was a Dunbar, though it was already falling upon shabby days, being conducted by a powerful but disreputable politician, and chiefly the resort of men of his kind—if not worse. Slim, though he seldom drank anything, lined up to the bar, nodding to several men there.

"Hey, Joe! A slug of brandy," he called to the bartender, and shivered. "I'm chilled to the bone. Been over at Wallabout Dance Hall; it was hotter than Africa in there, and it's colder than Greenland out on the street. Jack here? He left the hall early."

"Jack went up to his room about an hour ago," answered the bartender. "He had a headache."

Slim turned to his elbow neighbor. "Have something, Whitey? You're up late to-night; it's after one now, and a chap in your business has to pile out at three. Don't see how you stand it with so little sleep."

The man he had called Whitey turned with a laugh. "I'm piled out now," he said, picking up the bottle and filling a second glass that Joe slid dexterously toward him across the polished mahogany top from the other end of the bar.

"I was under the covers at eight, and five hours' sleep is enough for me."

“Oh!” Slim drained his glass, set it down, and added: “Guess I’ll go up and see Jack; see if I can’t cheer the boy up a bit.” He started toward the waiting elevator. “So long, Joe!”

For all his nonchalance, there was a strained attitude about everything Slim Harrigan did to-night that was wholly foreign to his usual easy actions; he seemed like a man tensely listening, yet who did not wish others to notice that he was listening.

As the elevator started upward Slim waved a good night to Whitey through the grated door—appeared even to go out of his way to do it, for he was not ordinarily cordial with men he knew so slightly as he did “Whitey” Bellamy.

Leaving the elevator at the fourth floor, he walked along the half-lighted corridor to room No. 406 and tried the door, under which there was a thin line of bright light. A muffled voice inside spoke.

“Who is it?”

“It’s me, Slim Harrigan,” he answered. “That you, Jack?”

After a moment the door was unlocked and opened by a man who had his head bound with a damp Turkish towel.

“Hello, Slim,” he said. “What brought you up? Gee, but I’ve got one devil of a headache!”

“Just come up to see how you were,” answered Slim, dropping into a seat, while Jack—Jack Shevlin was his name—who was dressed in silk pajamas, went back to bed. “Joe said you were about all in. What you doing for that headache?”

“Nothing,” answered Shevlin, with a groan. “‘Taint any use. I have ‘em about every so often, and they have to wear off. It’ll likely be gone by morning; but it’s fierce while it lasts.”

“There’s no need of your suffering that way,” said Slim earnestly. “Let me run around to the nearest drug store, Vance’s,

and get you a powder; it’ll stop your headache in ten minutes.”

“I never could take those things,” answered Shevlin.

“Try it in a little champagne,” suggested Slim. “My mother suffered like that until she found she could take headache powders in iced champagne.”

“Get me a powder, then,” moaned Shevlin. “I’ll try anything once.”

Slim returned to the ground floor in the elevator. Now, although Shevlin was suffering tremendously with his aching head, and might naturally be supposed to desire the remedy in a hurry, Slim stopped at the bar on his way out to say to Joe:

“I’m going to the corner after a headache powder for Jack.”

Ten minutes later Slim returned, got a pint of iced champagne at the bar, and carried it up to Shevlin’s room, talking to the elevator lad all the way up. Arriving at room No. 406, Slim poured out two glasses of the champagne, handing one of these and the powder to Shevlin.

“The drug clerk said to throw that powder on to your tongue and then wash it down with the cold champagne,” he said.

Shevlin did as directed, while Slim drank the second glass.

“There!” said Slim triumphantly, after a moment, as Shevlin lay back on the pillow with a sigh of relief. “Who said you couldn’t take ‘em?”

“Seems all right, so far,” said Shevlin.

Jack Shevlin, a thin, dark-featured young man, who might have been handsome but for a flat, broken nose, was the proprietor of Wallabout Hall, a Third Avenue dance resort, and he was also leader of the Jack Shevlin gang. The fact that his dance hall was an all-night place was the reason why he usually slept daytimes at the Dunbar—one reason; another was that here he was among friends. To-night he had left the dance

resort early because of his headache, leaving matters in charge of his manager, Dan Costello.

Slim Harrigan was no particular friend of Shevlin's; merely an acquaintance and, lately, a frequenter of his dance hall. Neither was Slim a member of the Jack Shevlin Gang. But for some months he had been paying court to Jack's sister, pretty Kitty Shevlin, and thus had he come in considerable touch with Kitty's brother. Shevlin would very likely have cut Slim off to-night with slight words had it not been for that raging headache from which he suffered; the pain made him hungry for company. He was not ordinarily an affable fellow, even among his gang, where he ruled by reason of courage, daring, and weight of fist rather than by any charm of personality. He lifted his head now and looked at Slim as he asked:

"Where you going to stop to-night?"

"I was intending to foot it up to Sixty-eighth Street," answered Slim. "It's a tough night out, too." He glanced rather meaningly at the sofa on which he was sitting.

Ordinarily Jack Shevlin would have met this statement roughly. He probably divined its purpose at once; his natural tendency would be to laugh and give some such coarse and derisive advice as that hard weather wouldn't injure Slim any, and he'd better pad his hoof, meaning be on his way. But Shevlin's headache was already beginning to abate, and he had a dim sense of gratitude toward the source of this relief.

"What's the use of wading halfway up to Harlem to pound your ear?" he said with a bovine attempt at cordiality. "Stretch out there on that sofa until morning. My head's feeling better already; guess that powder is going to do the business. I'll be asleep soon."

A look of intense relief that he failed to, or could not, wholly conceal overspread Slim Harrigan's features.

"I suppose I might as well, if you don't mind," he said. "Guess I'll take off my coat; it's pretty hot in here."

He doffed his overcoat, folding it carefully to serve as a pillow, then his tuxedo, took off his shoes, and stretched out on the sofa. Shevlin locked the door, turned out the light, and dropped the key into his pajama coat pocket. In half an hour both men were snoring.

Shevlin was the first to awaken in the morning. At about nine o'clock he opened his eyes and yawned to find the sun streaming into the room through the windows. His headache was gone, and he felt hungry. Without bothering to awaken Slim, who lay, still in his shirt sleeves, on the sofa, Shevlin dressed and went downstairs to the hotel grillroom, ordering a substantial breakfast. He had scarcely started to eat when he heard a commotion at the grillroom entrance and somebody asked:

"Jack in here?"

Shevlin threw up his head suddenly, stopped chewing on a bit of steak, slid one hand quickly toward his lower coat pocket where there came a bulge in appearance suspiciously like the poking end of an automatic; arose, and turned toward the grillroom entrance. A young man with staring eyes and white face entered and hurried toward Shevlin's table.

"Hello, Tom," said Shevlin, still keeping that one hand in his coat pocket, but swallowing the meat. "What's up? You look excited."

"Costello's been bumped off!" announced Tom. "Pipped through the right lung at four o'clock this morning. I would have got word to you earlier, but you left orders that you were not to be disturbed before nine."

“Who did it?” A brutal gleam came into Shevlin’s flinty-hard eyes and the hand in his pocket tightened as he snapped out the question. Dan Costello not only was Shevlin’s manager at the dance hall when affairs took Shevlin elsewhere, but he was also his trusted lieutenant in the affairs of the Shevlin gang.

“Costello had just reached the street after leaving the hall with your sister Kitty,” answered Tom Naharra, “and nobody saw the shot fired; but Dan had a scrap with Slim Harrigan soon after you left last night. You know Kitty has been kinder throwin’ Slim down lately for Costello, and Slim has been gettin’ ugly; you could see it in his eyes.” Tom spoke insinuatingly.

Shevlin shook his head in denial. “Not a chance, Tom,” he said. “Slim Harrigan spent the night here with me in my room; he’s got an air-tight alibi. Did the bulls get busy yet?”

“Sure,” answered Tom. “They’re huntin’ for Slim, and, if you ask ‘me, I still believe he did it. Slim is clever.”

At that moment Harrigan himself entered the grillroom. As his eyes picked out Naharra their lids gave a little jump, but settled again before the other two men saw him.

“Oh, here you are,” said Shevlin as Harrigan came up. Then he added in an undertone: “Slim, you’ve got to pad your hoof out of this burg quick. Dan Costello was pipped this morning, and the bulls are after you. They know you and he had a scrap at my place last night. Better jump for a rattler or a boat right away and lay low somewhere for a while.”

“But, Jack, I had nothing to do with this!” protested Harrigan earnestly, perhaps a little too earnestly. “I was with you all night.”

“I know you were, Slim,” said Shevlin, and again that steely glint stole into his

eyes and the hand in his pocket tightened. “Lucky for you that you were, too. But I don’t want to be mixed up in any court matter, and you’ll have to make your get-away. Got any money?”

“Not more than enough on me to pay for a breakfast,” answered Slim a little sulkily, plainly indicating that, with his clear alibi, he did not exactly fancy the idea of quitting New York. “But I suppose I could get plenty up at the house in Sixty-eighth Street,” he added.

“No chance; the bulls will be watching that spot,” answered Shevlin hurriedly, drawing a fat roll of bills from his pocket. “Here, pack this and get on your way, now.” He took Slim’s arm and started toward the exit. “And remember,” he added, “I don’t want to get mixed up in this. I’ll see that the bulls get word of your alibi, and you can come back after a week or two.”

Slim vanished, and the gang leader returned to his meal, Tom sitting opposite him. For half an hour they talked together in an undertone while Shevlin finished his breakfast.

Now it might have been gathered from Slim Harrigan’s elaborate maneuvers on the evening before that he had a premonition that something was to happen to Dan Costello, and had gone to all the trouble he did to guard against any punishment of the law falling on himself. Not so. Slim Harrigan had slight fear of the law, but what he did fear more than any man-made law yet placed upon the statute books was the vengeance of the Jack Shevlin gang.

The gang settled their differences and their grudges out of court—strictly. It was usually a simple matter: a barroom or a dance-hall fracas, a knife or a pistol, and a nicely proved plea of self-defense; or it might be a shot from the dark, as Dan Costello had been killed. Sometimes,

however, the Jack Shevlin Gang did not get their man completely before the police arrived on the scene, and he lived a few hours, maybe recovered. But, even then, the men in blue learned no more than when they found but a dead body, for those on whom the hand of any gang fell heavily were wise enough to keep close mouths and settle matters out of court in their own way.

As Slim hurried south, having decided to get early aboard one of the Boston boats, where a friend was purser, and keep dark until after it started, the mere thought of the vengeance of the Shevlin gang made him shudder. Slim Harrigan was no coward, yet he did not want to die in that way, without a chance, one against a dozen.

But Slim Harrigan did not take into account the fact that police and gangsters often reason from wholly different psychological angles, and therein lay the weakness of his elaborate plan.

Slim, sure of his defense, and knowing that it had satisfied Jack Shevlin, did not give a hang for the police. Had they been the only ones concerned he would not have even thought of leaving New York, for just now what Slim most wanted was a word or two with pretty Kitty Shevlin. In that quarter Slim was hard hit. He was deeply in love with Kitty, and, with Dan Costello out of the way, Slim believed the path to Kitty's heart to be wholly his. Their tiff had been only a passing affair, anyway, as Slim saw it now, and her flirting with Costello probably had been done more with the object of making the old lover jealous than for any other reason. Slim's anger having had time to cool, he was seeing things in a different light.

Yet, greatly as Slim would have appreciated a few words with the gang leader's sister, he knew better than to disobey Shevlin's command to get quickly

away from New York. Therefore he gained the pier from which the Boston boat left, found his friend, and got nicely placed so that he might stay aboard under cover until after it started, or until it reached Boston, for that matter. Once in Boston, Slim planned to get Kitty on the long-distance and talk matters over.

"I'll only be away a week or two at the most," he thought as he counted the money Shevlin had given him. "Jack will see that the police know about that alibi of mine in a hurry. No chance of his letting me keep away for long after giving me a roll of this size; there's more than a thousand bucks in it. Jack sure does go well heeled."

As a matter of fact, at almost that very moment Jack Shevlin was explaining to the police, or at least to one of their emissaries, regarding Slim Harrigan's alibi. Shevlin had finished his breakfast some time ago and was sitting at one of the front windows in the Dunbar Cafe, idly watching the stream of pedestrians, moving up and down Broadway, when some one dropped into a chair beside him and spoke.

"Lo, Jack; how's every little thing?"

Shevlin turned slowly. He was on excellent terms with the police; he made it a plan constantly to keep so; yet he had no love for them, and he had recognized that voice instantly. It belonged to Lieutenant "Red" Karrimore.

Karrimore—"Lieutenant Red," as he was familiarly called—and Jack Shevlin were old acquaintances. An East Sider himself, the whole East Side, broadly speaking, was Lieutenant Red's bailiwick, and none knew better than he how to manage that turbulent section. Those in authority, however, did not hesitate, upon occasion, to depute Karrimore for duty in other localities, for he was one of the cleverest men in the department.

Tall, with a smiling, good-natured countenance topped by light, mahogany-red hair, Lieutenant Karrimore was almost as broad in the shoulders as a steel hoist, and he was built in proportion; yet he was as easy in his movements as an athlete of college age. Smooth and soft-spoken was Lieutenant Red—to outward appearances—yet his cheery whistle and his pleasant, “Now, now! Just do as I say and there’ll be no trouble,” secured action where men of the bludgeoning, bellowing, battle-ax type might waste wind and energy for hours without accomplishing anything. And when Lieutenant Red’s face went suddenly sober and his eyes began to snap, few men cared to remain long within reach of his fists; if they did, most of their subsequent remarks were apt to be uttered from a recumbent position.

“Hello, Red,” said the dance-hall proprietor with a smile. “Great day out.”

“Sure is.” Karrimore nonchalantly flipped the ash from his cigar end as he added: “See they got your friend Costello this morning.”

Shevlin nodded. “Too bad. One fine boy, Dan,” he said. “I didn’t believe he had an enemy in the world.”

This was pure camouflage. Costello had plenty of enemies, as both men knew; the Three-finger Louie Gang had had it in for him for months. Karrimore looked up quickly. “You knew he and Slim Harrigan had some sort of a scrap at your dance hall last night after you left, didn’t you?” he said, watching Shevlin’s face intently.

Shevlin laughed. “Don’t insinuate, Red,” he said. “Slim Harrigan’s got an airtight alibi; he stopped the entire night with me in my room here at the hotel.”

“What!”

For once in his life Lieutenant Red Karrimore appeared to be jarred out of his customary cheerful aplomb; his barking exclamation showed it.

It was Shevlin’s turn now to do the watching; he sensed a hint in that outburst of something underneath the surface on Karrimore’s mind.

“Sure,” said Shevlin aloud. “Slim’s clean.” His face hardened as he added: “And lucky for him he is, too. Slim came to my room a little after one o’clock and didn’t leave until late this morning.”

“So.” Karrimore’s manner was all nonchalance again; yet a close observer might have detected a shrewd gleam in his eyes—had the observer been looking for it. “By the way, Jack, whereabouts in the hotel is your room?”

“Fourth floor, number four hundred and six,” answered Shevlin, adding, with a grin: “And I slept with the key in my pajama coat pocket, Red.”

“Any objection to taking me up and letting me see the diggings?” asked Karrimore offhandedly.

“Not a bit; come on,” answered Shevlin, arising and starting toward the elevator.

The two men entered room No. 406. The hotel chambermaid had not yet made up the bed, and everything was as it had been left after Shevlin and Slim had slept there; the champagne bottle, the two glasses, and the empty white paper slip in which the headache powder had been wrapped were on the stand beside the bed.

Karrimore’s keen glance instantly caught sight of the piece of paper with a few flakes of a glistening white substance still adhering to it.

“Jack, you’re not sniffing the snow, are you?” he asked, meaning to ask if the gang leader was taking cocaine.

“Not any,” answered Shevlin, with a laugh. “None of that boob stuff for me. I had a devil of a headache last night and Slim got me a powder. It fixed me up fine.”

Karrimore, after glancing out of the two front windows, already had started toward the connecting bathroom, the door of which stood open. He halted abruptly, walked back toward the stand, picked up the paper, and examined it, whistling softly to himself. He replaced the paper on the stand and started again toward the bathroom.

In there was a single narrow window, with the blank brick wall of the adjoining building less than twenty inches away. Karrimore, opening the narrow window carefully, looked up and down; he seemed interested enough to spend several moments there while Shevlin stood in the room outside smoking a cigarette and gazing down into the cross street.

Finally Lieutenant Red returned to the sleeping room and dropped onto the sofa, relighting his cigar that had gone out.

“Any objection to telling me how Slim Harrigan happened to spend the night with you, Jack?” he asked cheerfully.

Shevlin was becoming a little anxious. Of all things he dreaded an appearance in court on the witness stand. Men of Jack Shevlin’s stamp and profession were apt to be asked very embarrassing questions when some opposition lawyer with a cutting mind and political aspirations put them under cross-examination.

“Look here, Red, what have you got up your sleeve?” he asked, whirling toward the lieutenant, his under jaw outthrust.

“That’s a fair question,” said Karrimore, smiling, “and I don’t mind telling you. I talked with Whitey Bellamy early this morning. Whitey was here at the hotel last night, saw Slim Harrigan, and knew he went up to your room. Whitey, as perhaps you know, drives a milk-delivery team, and he was over in Third Avenue delivering milk at the hour of the shooting. He thinks he got a glimpse of the man who did it, that’s all.”

“What did the sneak look like?” asked Shevlin.

Karrimore pondered a moment, gazing thoughtfully at the glowing end of his cigar. “Afraid I can’t tell you that, Jack, much as I’d like to,” he said finally. “Whitey’s description was given in confidence, and he’ll probably have to repeat it on the witness stand. Now tell me how Slim happened to stay with you last night; it may save you from going on the stand yourself, Jack. If Slim really has this air-tight alibi you are so certain of, I’m not likely to waste time chasing after him.”

Well did Karrimore know Shevlin’s dread of the witness stand; that was why he had interjected the two words into the conversation. He also knew, or thought he knew, that if Slim Harrigan really had shot Dan Costello the Jack Shevlin Gang would try to see that he paid for the deed quickly and with his life. What Karrimore could not be so certain of was that Shevlin was not attempting to lead the police astray with this alibi story in order that the gang might settle matters in their own way, as they always preferred.

“Sure. I’ll tell you about that, Red,” said Shevlin affably, and he explained regarding his relief from the headache and the invitation to Slim to stop the night there instead of trotting up to Sixty-eighth Street in the drizzle.

Karrimore listened, watching Shevlin’s features closely. As the gang leader finished, he said:

“Look here, Jack, ain’t you a little too certain about this air-tight alibi business? Looks to me as if Slim went to considerable trouble in building it, too much trouble altogether. You know Slim Harrigan’s line, of course?”

Shevlin nodded. “Yes, steeplejack, and he’s traveled with a show doing freak climbing stunts.”

"Look here a minute, Jack." Karrimore led the way back toward the bathroom, opened the narrow window, and drew Shevlin's attention to where the dust had been rubbed away on the sill.

"Some one has been out through this window recently," he said. "And," he added, pointing to the opposite brick wall, "for Slim Harrigan to get down to or up from the street with his back braced against that wall would be as easy as walking up or downstairs for you and me."

Shevlin looked thoughtful, studying the window sill and the wall opposite. "It might have been a cleaner," he suggested. "This window was cleaned lately; I remember that. Three days ago I could hardly see out of it for the dirt."

"Might be," said Karrimore. "I wouldn't put much trust in the window if there were no other leads."

He stepped back into the main room again, picked up the bit of paper the headache powder had been wrapped in, and turned to Shevlin.

"Jack, let's you and me go out to the drug store," he said insinuatingly, "and find out what sort of a headache powder this was Slim Harrigan bought for you."

Shevlin was becoming puzzled. It seemed incredible under the circumstances, yet the idea had popped into his head that Karrimore might suspect him of having shot Costello. Lieutenant Red spoke so suggestively, was so particular that Shevlin should go to the drug store with him.

Going to the drug store was a bit of business the officer might have been expected to attend to alone, and with considerable secrecy, since, presumably, he was building a case to present in court. In matters of this sort a police representative usually takes great pains to keep everyone of his cards close to his chest, fearing that to disclose them may

warn the defense, and Jack Shevlin was wise enough in the ways of the department to be aware that no one could judge correctly what was actually passing in Lieutenant Red's mind by what he said. Karrimore might suspect Slim Harrigan, or he might suspect anyone of half a dozen other men, all enemies of Costello, and merely be trying to make sure that Slim had no hand in it.

Confronted with so many possibilities, and Karrimore's insinuating manner, Shevlin scarcely liked to refuse the officer's invitation to accompany him to the drug store.

"All right, Red," he said. "Come on. Vance's was where Slim said he was going after the powder."

They descended to the ground floor in the elevator and left the hotel. The clerk at Vance's drug store, however, could give them no information.

"You'll have to see the night man when he comes on this evening," he said a little sulkily in answer to Karrimore's query regarding the possibility of a man of Slim Harrigan's description having bought a headache powder there the night before.

"Where is the night man, and what is his name?" asked Karrimore, displaying his badge, for he was not in uniform.

The day clerk instantly became more affable. The night man, it seemed, was one Dave Russell, and he roomed at the Dunbar Hotel. Back they went to the hotel and woke up Russell. Yes, a man of Slim's description had bought a powder at Vance's the night before, but not a headache powder; it was a fifteen-grain sleeping powder—Verinol—he had called for.

"Would a fifteen-grain Verinol powder stop a headache?" asked Shevlin.

"Probably, if it was not too severe," answered Russell.



They left the drug clerk's room and went down to the cafe.

"Now what do you think of Harrigan's air-tight alibi?" asked Karrimore, with a laugh.

Shevlin's thin lips tightened, and the hard glint stole back into his eyes.

"If I thought Slim Harrigan had double crossed me with a sleeping powder and done for Dan Costello," he said vehemently; then recalled that he was talking to a police officer, caught himself, and added with assumed nonchalance: "But then you never can tell, Red. Slim's alibi still looks pretty straight to me."

"So?" said Karrimore. "Well, I must be on my way. S'long, Jack." He shook the other man's hand and quitted the hotel, whistling cheerfully, a sure sign that Lieutenant Red was pretty well satisfied with the world.

Jack Shevlin dropped again into a chair in one of the Broadway windows of the Dunbar and began to ponder matters. Apparently Lieutenant Red Karrimore had sown a mess of dragon's teeth in Jack Shevlin's mind, perhaps exactly what Lieutenant Red intended to do, or perhaps not; but, anyway, they were bearing fruit. The longer Shevlin pondered matters, the angrier he became.

The keynote of the whole affair, to Shevlin, seemed to be Whitey Bellamy. What was Whitey's description of the murderer? Did it fit Slim Harrigan, or whom did it fit? Shevlin finally called a taxicab and rode over to his dance hall, determined to send several of his men in search of Whitey.

Bellamy, however, proved to be not easily found; he seemed to have disappeared most mysteriously. Not even his employers knew where he was; he had sent them word that he would have to be off the job for a day or two, and that was

all they knew. At Bellamy's regular lodging place even less was known.

All day and that night Jack Shevlin kept two of his men combing the city for Whitey Bellamy, but without results, and Shevlin finally came to the conclusion that Lieutenant Red Karrimore had had the milk-team driver spirited away to hold him under cover as an important witness.

The next morning Shevlin went to Thirty-second Street to call on his sister Kitty. He found her sitting at the telephone desk.

"What do you think, Jack?" she said, placing the palm of one hand over the transmitter, "Slam Harrigan just called me on the long-distance from Boston and wants me to come up there. The nerve of him! After shooting Dan Costello!"

Every muscle in Jack Shevlin's body grew suddenly taugth. So Slim Harrigan was in Boston!

"But do you know it was Slim did it?" he asked quickly.

"I know enough," answered Kitty, her eyes blazing. "I didn't see him do it, but the last words he said to Dan were: 'I'll get you for this yet,' and in three hours Dan was dead. Isn't that enough?"

Shevlin planned quickly. "You tell Slim Harrigan," he said to his sister, his hard eyes glowing, "that you'll meet him to-night outside the South Station on the arrival of the twelve-ten from New York. Tell him to be standing near the monument in Dewey Square. Talk quick, now; he may leave the phone."

An instant Kitty studied her brother's stern face with more than an inkling of what was passing in his mind. She shivered slightly, held the phone to her lips, and began to talk.

"Slim says he'll be there," she said finally.

"Good," said Shevlin. Then he leaned forward, grasped his sister's arm, and

added with a frown: "See that you don't miss that train, Kit, and get Slim into a dark street as quick as you can. Start up Atlantic Avenue and drop down Congress Street toward the wharves. Keep Slim talking. I'll attend to the rest."

The Friday night twelve-ten from New York arrived at the Boston Union Station on time. Kitty Shevlin left her car and walked toward the Dewey Square exit. Once she turned and glanced behind her to notice a man dressed in cheap workingman's clothes, with a cap pulled low over his face, who followed not many steps behind, but who, after making a slight sign with one hand toward her, turned off to leave the station through the carriage entrance. Again a convulsive shiver went down the length of Kitty Shevlin's spine; she was beginning to regret the business and wish she never had come to Boston.

The man who quitted the station through the carriage entrance had ridden from New York in one of the day coaches, and few of those familiar with the usually dapper and smart appearance of Jack Shevlin, proprietor of Wallabout Dance Hall, would have recognized in this coal-heaver sort of person the well-known dance-hall owner.

Before leaving the station through the Dewey Square exit Kitty Shevlin paused a moment, produced her vanity case, and used her powder puff. There was need for it; tiny beads of perspiration were on her forehead, and pretty Kitty Shevlin's skin was paler to-night than it had been for many a day; there were no roses in her cheeks now, and as she gave several quick dabs at her forehead with the powder puff, her hand shook. Kitty had neither her brother's steel nerves nor his cold blood. Once she had been sure that she was in love with Slim Harrigan, but Slim had

done something to offend her, and Kitty was high-minded. Then Dan Costello had come along. Kitty was not certain now but that there remained in her heart considerable love for Slim, yet she feared her brother, and she deeply resented the shooting of Dan Costello, as much on Costello's account, perhaps, as for the insult, as she considered it, to her, who had been with him.

Kitty left the station and turned north on Atlantic Avenue. Very soon Slim Harrigan fell into step beside her. Out of the corner of her eye she had seen him standing in the slight shadow of the monument.

"It's a cure for sore eyes to see you, Kitty," said Slim, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid you wouldn't come."

She made no reply. She couldn't. She knew that did she open her mouth to speak now her teeth would begin to chatter like castanets, her nerves were jumping so, her heart was beating so rapidly. Even though several other people coming from the train were still around them, she almost fancied she could detect her brother's footsteps following.

Slim misunderstood her silence; he took it for anger.

"Look here, Kitty," he said earnestly. "You think I bumped off Dan Costello, don't you? Well, I didn't. I swear by the soul of my sainted mother, I didn't do it."

"Good Lord!" It was spoken scarce above a breath, and Kitty Shevlin's hand flew to her lips as she uttered it. It was so low it escaped even Slim Harrigan, and he went on:

"I won't say I didn't know there were others had it in for Costello, and that he might get his that night, for I did. Before I left the hall I heard Jake Petroni and another of Three-finger Louie's gang planning to shoot him up. They thought the time was ripe because we had just had

a row, and that, after that, Jack and his gang would lay the job to me; but I saw to it that I had a clean alibi. I stopped with your brother all night, and he can swear to it. Kitty, I've never cared for but one woman in the world, and that's you."

Kitty Shevlin began to think quickly. She knew how much Slim Harrigan thought of his mother, and she believed him; she was certain he would never have taken that oath unless he were speaking the truth. Already they had turned down Congress Street and were going toward the water front, were almost in the shadow of a building. Her brother might be waiting in any of the dark doorways ahead. What should she do? Her heart was turning toward Slim; he had spoken with conviction, and there was something in his earnest protestation of love that touched her deeply.

Whirling, she grasped his arm. "Slim, we've got to go back," she whispered hurriedly. "Get out into the middle of the street, and don't for your life stop a moment in darkness."

Kitty knew her brother's way. It wasn't to shoot. A slungshot was his favorite weapon, and a blow from behind; his instructions to her about getting Slim into a shadowed street clearly had forecasted that. But it was too late. They had scarcely turned when Jack Shevlin, in his rubber-soled shoes, bore down upon them, and he had come prepared both with slungshot and automatic this time.

Shevlin held the barrel of his gun pressed against Slim Harrigan's stomach as he whispered through half-shut teeth:

"No you don't, you rotten four-flusher, you skunk! Turn back and walk toward the wharves."

Slim Harrigan was no coward, but that bit of blue steel pressing hard against his diaphragm meant business. He knew it, and he knew that for him to turn meant, at

the least, a few minutes' respite, while not to turn meant instant death. He turned, and the automatic was shifted to a point between his shoulder blades as Shevlin fell into close step behind him and Kitty began to whimper.

"Jack, you've got me dead wrong," pleaded Slim earnestly. "I swear I didn't bump off Costello! It was—"

"Shut up," snapped Shevlin. "And turn into that dark doorway." Then he added to his sister: "Kitty, you go back; you don't want to be messed in this. I'll give you three minutes to get out of the way. Hurry now."

Shevlin and Slim moved grimly within the shadow of the doorway.

Weeping, dabbing a handkerchief to her eyes, scarcely knowing where she was or where she went, Kitty ran up Congress Street and north on Atlantic Avenue. There came the muffled bark of an automatic, as if it had been placed close to something when it was fired. Kitty Shevlin screamed once and crumpled up in a faint on the sidewalk.

When she came to herself she was being lifted into a taxicab by a man she knew—Lieutenant Red Karrimore, of the metropolitan police force—and another she did not know—a chauffeur.

"All right now, Kitty?" asked Karrimore cheerfully.

"All right," she managed to gasp, and then stared in wide-eyed amazement, for sitting inside the taxi were her brother Jack and Slim Harrigan, apparently on excellent terms with each other.

Slim smiled in answer to her glance of puzzled inquiry.

"It's all right, Kitty," he said cheerfully. "Red got there just in time to knock aside the automatic in Jack's hand when he fired. Red had been trailing you and Jack all the way from New York. Whitey Bellamy identified Jake Petroni of

Three-finger Louie's gang as the man who shot Costello, but Petroni tried to shove the crime on to me, as I told you he would. The lieutenant wanted both Jack and me as important witnesses; that's why he followed Jack to get me."

Pretty Kitty Shevlin leaned back in the taxi and slipped one hand comfortably inside Harrigan's. Her nerves had been sorely tried this night, and it was good to feel Slim's warm clasp.