

WANTED

By O. B. MYERS

*Jim and Julie
Ran and ran
But somewhere
They'd have to
Stop. . . .*



"Ferry, we'll suffocate!" Julie cried.

JIM TOOLE was down in the pit, under the Plymouth, when Julie came out looking for him. He had used some asbestos packing to tighten the tail-pipe clamps as best he could, but the car really needed a new muffler. Like all these heaps that had been on the road for six or seven years, it was about ready for the junkyard. But Jim knew that he couldn't get a new muffler in Dunkirk; it would have to be ordered from the manufacturer, might take a week to come, and this young fellow had said he wanted to get to Buffalo that evening. It looked hopeless.

He rapped lightly on the muffler shell with the end of the wrench. The metal dented too easily; it was almost burned through. He shook his head and turned as he noticed a moving shadow on the concrete wall of the pit.

"This won't last long—" he began, and then saw that it was Julie. She had crouched on her heels to peer at him under the edge of the running board. Her face was a little higher than his and hardly more than a foot away, and as soon as he looked at her, he knew that something was wrong. Her eyes

were big, even bigger than usual, and there was a white, drawn look along the edge of her jaw.

"Jim!" she said in a half whisper.

He knew something was wrong, and already he knew what it was, too. He could see it in her eyes and the way her lips trembled. But he had to ask her, anyway.

"What's the matter, Julie?" His voice was low, rough.

"Jim," she whispered again, and he could see her clench her teeth. "It's Ferry!"

He knew perfectly well whom she meant, had guessed what was coming. Just the same, it hit him with a shock.

"Ferry?" he repeated stupidly. "Ferry Diamond?"

"Yes." Her hands gripped the edge of the running board. "He came in a couple of minutes ago, sat down in one of the booths. "Oh, Jim, what'll we do?"

Jim Toole laid the wrench down with slow, unnecessary care and stared blankly at the flat, oil-spattered brickwork. It seemed that this decision

had been thrown at him repeatedly and relentlessly ever since he had married Julie Baker. Since before their marriage, in fact; ever since that afternoon when he had walked into Ferry Diamond's swanky office in the Consolidated Building to announce, "I'm quitting."

HE HAD been working for Ferry for almost three months then, and as far as pay went, it was certainly a good job. Almost too good. On the Liberty ship, coming home from Europe, Ferry had told him, "You're a smart man with a wrench, Jim. If you ever get to Brooklyn, look me up. I've got ideas. I'm going to make real money, not nickels and dimes. I can use you, Jim; don't forget."

Yet Jim had forgotten. It was by accident that he had bumped into Ferry in Columbus Circle, after he'd quit the service station in Charlott to come to New York looking for better prospects. Ferry, looking very prosperous, had been tickled to see him, and the very next morning he had started work in the shop in downtown Brooklyn.

The garage and repair shop was only one of the Diamond enterprises. Ferry had a finger, and a profitable finger, in a number of apparently unrelated ventures. A couple of his mechanics were specialists in the repair of pinball and slot machines, and Jim, in talking with them, found that they knew how to juggle the adjustments so that the "take" could be increased to a maximum. Another man, Waxy Symes, wasn't exactly a mechanic at all; he "sold" the machines and collected the take, in the course of which he used methods that smacked more of the bandit than of the engineer.

There were others on Ferry's payroll, who came into the shop only occasionally or who might be hanging around the office when Jim went up to get paid. Brother Berlin, a short dark fellow with extremely heavy eyebrows, who seemed to spend most of his time at the ballparks or in the sporting cafes; and Pete Zarneski, who knew more about how the horses were running at Belmont than how the cars were running on Flatbush Avenue.

It was a little too complicated for Jim, but he didn't try to figure it out; he just dug into his job in the auto shop and tried to earn his salary

Diamond's place was really more of a used car dealer's than a straight repair business. Jim seldom saw an owner. Ferry himself, or Kite Foley, the foreman, bought secondhand heaps and brought them in and then sold them again after a complete

overhaul.

A queer assortment they brought in, too. Some were wrecks that had to be trucked in on a flat-top trailer; others, nearly new, hardly needed the touch of a screwdriver. Yet each one, no matter what its condition, always got a wholesale overhaul under Kite's watchful eye.

After a time it began to dawn on Jim that he was overhauling motors that did not need overhauling, replacing parts that required no replacement, and repainting fenders and hoods that hardly had a scratch on them.

At first, he felt only curious and uneasy. But when those two Buick coupes came in the same day, his suspicions were intensified. Kite told him, "We'll switch bodies complete, from one to the other, numbers and all." Jim made no reply, except a nod, and went to work on the chassis bolts, but when he quit that afternoon, he headed for Ferry's office.

There were several big leather armchairs in the outer office, and tall floor lamps cast a soft light over the framed prints on the walls. Beyond a second door was another office, even more luxuriously furnished, as Jim knew; but the door stood open now, and he could see that the inner office was empty.

JULIE sat at her desk in the outer office, her hand on a telephone as if she had just put it down. She wore a light gray tailored suit and under it a red blouse with some kind of Egyptian figurines printed on it. Jim didn't know it then, but he would always remember that blouse. Her hair, burnished blond, gleamed golden under the lamp, and her eyes were clear and bright.

"Oh, hello, Jim," she greeted him.

"Where's Ferry?" he asked bluntly.

She shook her head. "He's not in." Then he added uncertainly, "He hasn't been in for—two days."

Jim gestured impatiently. "Well, I'm quitting. You can tell him when he comes in. I'm through, finished."

Before he ended the last sentence, she was on her feet, staring at him round-eyed. "You're quitting, Jim? Why?"

He smiled crookedly, without mirth. "You can just tell him the pay is too darn high. I don't want it."

Jim noticed now the fright that quivered behind

her eyes, and he was strangely stirred. He and Julie had seen each other quite often, evenings; had taken naturally to each other, perhaps because they both had come from small towns. They had never discussed Ferry Diamond's business, and Jim wondered how much she really knew about it.

"Is it because of the—the hockey scandal, Jim?" Julie asked hesitantly.

The papers for the last few days had been full of an attempt to fix hockey games by bribing two or three key players. Brother Berlin had been arrested and questioned by the D.A. He had insisted that he was acting only on his own, but nobody believed that. The police, and the sporting world as well, were sure that he was backed by a syndicate of big-time gamblers, and the D.A. was making strong efforts to link certain notorious names with the deal. Brother Berlin had always spent a lot of time here in Ferry's office.

Jim shook his head. "They're running stolen cars through that shop. I'm sure of it. And I don't want any part of it." He eyed Julie sharply. "Was Ferry in that hockey fix?" he demanded.

Her lips trembled. "I don't know. I don't know, Jim."

"Brother Berlin was supposed to be released on bail this morning. Has he been in here?"

Now her cheeks were ashen. "No. He—he's been killed."

"What!"

"It was on the radio, half an hour ago. He was shot, over in New York, just after noon. They don't know who—"

Jim nodded slowly, his face set. "His backers—to keep him from talking. But Ferry—you don't know where Ferry is?"

"The newspapers said he was in the district attorney's office day before yesterday," Julie told him. "He's phoned here several times. He called just before you came in."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing about business. Just for me to meet him at Penn Station at seven o'clock without going home." She dropped her eyes. "He wants me to go away with him for a little while."

"Are you going?" Jim's voice was as hard as granite.

Julie raised her head and looked him full in the eye. "No," she said quietly but firmly. "Ferry's a good boss and he's taken me out to nightclubs and given me little presents, too. But he never meant

that to me, Jim."

Jim read her eyes and he believed her.

"I guess I've been dumb," she went on, her fears rising again. "I never knew he was a—that he was mixed up in rackets like this. Now I don't know—Oh, Jim, what'll I do?"

SHE SWAYED a little, and he put out his hand to steady her. Then suddenly she was in his arms, and he was holding her tight. His lips were close to her ear, whispering.

"Julie! It's all right, Julie darling. Don't worry. You've got to get out of here. You never belonged here in the beginning. We'll both get out of here—clear out. Come on!"

"But, Jim, what'll we do?"

"We'll go to Hartford, Boston—any place where you don't get a train from Penn Station. We'll get married tomorrow or the next day. I've got money enough and I can always get a job. We'll forget all this dirty business."

"Yes," she murmured, and her arms tightened about his neck.

When Jim kissed her, he knew that everything was going to be all right. He held her for a moment, then let her go. Julie picked up her coat.

"Jim, what about Ferry?" she asked fearfully.

"Forget him, too," he told her. "He'll never find us. You can mail his presents back to him."

She stripped off a tiny gold wristwatch and unpinned a brooch from the neck of her blouse. Then, stepping into the inner office, she put them on Diamond's desk.

"There! That's all," Julie said as she came out. Suddenly she stopped in her tracks. "Oh! This suit I'm wearing! He sent it up only yesterday and particularly asked me to wear it today."

"Well, you can't walk out without a suit on," growled Jim. "Keep it. It will cover this last week's pay."

Then they walked out. Out of the office—but not out of Ferry Diamond's reach.

Jim Toole and Julie Baker were married in Providence three days later, and Jim got a job with the Studebaker distributor. He had been there almost three months when, about to descend from a bus one morning, he looked out and saw a familiar face in the crowd that was waiting on the corner. He didn't get off but rode a few blocks farther and then took a bus in the opposite direction and hurried back to their rooming house.

“Come on, Julie. Get your things together, quick!”

“What it is, Jim?”

“I saw Waxy Symes. He didn’t see me.”

“But, Jim, what’ll we do?”

“We’ll get out of this town in a hurry. Where’s that bag . . .?”

They were in Wheeling almost a month when Jim stopped in a cigar store for some smokes. As he stepped out, two figures closed in, one at either elbow, and something prodded his ribs.

“Into that sedan, bimbo,” growled a low voice.

Jim looked quietly from Waxy Symes to Pete Zarneski. “Wait a minute!” he cried. “What do you want with—”

“Do you want it right here? Get in there!”

Pete took the wheel. Waxy followed Jim into the rear and showed him the automatic before slipping it into his outer pocket.

“Where’s the dame?” asked Peter over his shoulder, letting in the clutch with a jerk. Waxy held the gun on him.

Jim thought fast. They could do what they wanted with him, but they’d never lay hands on Julie.

“I don’t know,” he lied. “I haven’t seen her.”

Waxy made an uncomplimentary sound with pursed lips. “Tell that to the boss,” he snarled. “Step on it, Pete.”

Pete stepped on it—and fate intervened for Jim. As the sedan hummed through a narrow, curving street, a huge truck backed out of a side alley. Because the driver’s view was cut off, it kept on backing after their horn squawked. Pete was already going too fast to stop. He went up on the curb and tried to make the shrinking gap, but the lamp post foiled him. There was a slamming crash, followed by the shriek and grind of crumpling metal.

Waxy’s head hit solid roof, and he was temporarily out. Pete was draped over the wheel, gasping. Jim was sprawled over the back of the front seat, his breath knocked out, but before the others could move, he managed to open a door and stagger out. In the crowd that instantly assembled it was easy enough to walk away.

NEXT, he and Julie tried a small town in central Ohio, a whistle-stop outside Bucyrus. But no sooner did Jim find a job than he saw a man climb into a taxicab at the railroad station. It might

have been Kite Foley and it might not. But Jim was in no position to rush up and slap him on the back. They moved on again.

By the time they got to Dunkirk their capital was running low, and Julie took a job as counter girl in the diner next to the service station where Jim worked. Old man Foster owned both places, as well as the big, old-fashioned house that stood back among the trees. He took a liking to them, especially Julie, and let them occupy a couple of rooms on the ground floor at a truly nominal rent.

As the weeks stretched into months, they gradually relaxed, came close to actually enjoying life. The work, for both of them, was hard but satisfying. Their pay envelopes, added together, made a respectable sum, and their expenses were few. They got a deep, real enjoyment out of each other’s society, and in addition, began to make a few friends in the town. They were beginning to get the feel of being settled, could almost forget the strings that tied them to the past. They were happy. . . .

“Oh, Jim, what’ll we do?” Julie said again as she looked anxiously at her husband down in the pit.

Jim squirmed up the steel-runged ladder. His face was set, his eyes cloudy.

“We can’t keep running away forever,” he muttered.

“Jim, I’m frightened.” Julie seized his sleeve. “Why can’t he leave us alone! What do you suppose he wants?”

Jim looked at her steadily. “He wants, *you*,” he said bluntly. Then he put his arm around her waist. “But he won’t get you. Come on inside. I’m going to stop this.”

“Jim! What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to call the police.”

“But you can’t do that!” She stayed at his side, telling him all the logical reasons why he couldn’t.

“I know, Julie,” he said grimly. “But anything is better than this. We can’t always be hiding and trying to live our lives at the same time. We’ve got to face it. What if they do give me a year or two? We can start over again when I get out.”

At the police station the sergeant lifted his phone.

“Who did you say? Jim Toole? . . . Oh, yes. Go ahead.”

He listened for more than a minute. Then he consulted an indexed folder on his desk.

“We’ve got no ‘Wanted’ on Ferry Diamond

now,” he said. “Sure, I remember the case. I tell you what. I’ll send a man down there to keep an eye on him. Meanwhile, I’ll put in a call to New York, see if they want to talk to him again. If they do, we’ll pick him up.”

He cradled the instrument. “O’Hara!” he shouted. To the broad-shouldered young cop who entered from the next room he explained the circumstances. “Don’t make a pinch until I give you the word. Call me back in about fifteen minutes, and I’ll let you know.”

“Sure enough,” grinned O’Hara. “ ‘Tis not a bad stint for a cold night. That taffy-hair behind the counter has the neatest ankles and makes the tastiest hamburgers this side of Chicago.”

“Long distance,” said the sergeant into the phone, and to the man in uniform he added sternly, “Keep your mind on the hamburgers, O’Hara! She is already the young man’s wife.”

O’Hara grinned and vanished through the door.

TWENTY minutes later he was calling from the telephone booth in the service station. He listened briefly, nodded, and hung up. Then he stepped out to face Julie and Jim, both gray-faced and tense.

“New York doesn’t want him,” O’Hara told them. “They say they asked him all the questions once, and unless he’s ready to sing about the big names behind that deal, they’re not interested. His racket is busted up, and they’ve got nothing on him.”

Julie was astonished. “Do you mean—you can’t do anything to him?”

“No.” O’Hara shook his head. “Not unless he starts something.” He eyed her curiously. “What makes you think he’s trailing you around?”

“Well, you see—” said Jim, looking at Julie.

“Well—” began Julie, looking at Jim.

“I see,” said O’Hara with a faint smile. “Look, now. I’ll sit down in the diner for a bit, long enough to eat a hamburger or two. Then if he gets fresh, I’ll be right there. Okay?”

Jim was unable to think of any alternative. He nodded silently, and the policeman went out, unhurriedly crossed the gravel by the gas pumps and entered the diner by the door at the end. When he had disappeared inside, Jim turned to Julie.

“You go in the back way, the way you came out. And stay in the kitchen until you see me out front.”

“What—what are you going to do, Jim?”

Jim’s jaw stiffened. “I’m going to talk to Ferry. I’m going to tell him to get the hell out of Dunkirk and leave us alone.”

Julie paled. “But, Jim—what if he—”

Jim knew her fears without asking, but he couldn’t let her see his own. “What if he what?” he repeated with careful scorn. “He can’t do anything in the diner, except give me a bang in the jaw maybe. And I’ve got a bang ready to give right back to him.”

They both knew that it meant a great deal more than that, but Julie was momentarily reassured by the carefully simulated confidence in Jim’s voice. She stepped out bravely, Jim following on her heels.

Mr. Foster’s eatery was a super-diner, almost a restaurant. The counter and fittings were of black plastic edged with stainless steel, the booths and tables of imitation walnut paneling. Besides the overhead lights, each table had its own little individual lamp with a parchment shade, and the shoulder-high partitions encouraged a pleasant air of privacy.

Half the stools at the counter were occupied and several of the booths. The dinner crowd was beginning to flow in from the radiator foundry and the locomotive works. Jim saw O’Hara on the end stool and in the next to the last booth caught a glimpse of a sleek dark head. His hands clenched, his nails bit into his palms.

AS HE approached, Ferry’s head came up. His eyes met Jim’s momentarily, dropped to his plate, and then jerked up again—the sort of double take that registers complete surprise. Then Ferry was on his feet, a warm smile on his handsome face, and his hand extended so spontaneously that Jim involuntarily took it.

“Jim! Jim Toole! Well, I’ll be damned.”

“Yes, it’s me,” said Jim stiffly. “You looking for me, Ferry?”

“You’re the last man in the world I expected to see walk in that door,” avowed Ferry. “But there’s not one I’d rather see—and that’s the truth. Sit down, Jim. You going to eat something? Sit down, anyway. Tell me, how’s everything? How is Julie?”

“Julie’s all right. She told me you were in here.” Puzzled but on guard, Jim moved to take a seat on the opposite bench. As he did so, he glanced over his shoulder, saw Julie framed in the door leading

from the kitchen, watching him with an anxious, rigid stare. He added, "She's right over there now."

Ferry turned his head, then smiled and waved his hand in greeting. "You mean she works here? Heck, no wonder the food tastes so good! So she can cook, too—you're a lucky man, Jim!"

Jim nodded but forced the conversation onto a different tack. "What are you doing here, Ferry?"

"Me? Oh. I'm just working my way out toward Toledo. I've got a friend there who might give me a job." He chuckled without embarrassment. "It's not the old days anymore, Jim, when the money burned holes in my pockets. There isn't enough now to scratch a match on, and I treat it with respect."

"You're not in Brooklyn anymore?" Jim said cautiously.

"Haven't been there in months," replied Ferry. "That gang's all busted up—and a good thing for me, too, I guess. I didn't realize what I was getting into there, Jim. They were pulling a lot of stuff behind my back that I knew nothing about, and I nearly got into serious trouble. You stepped out at the right time, Jim, and you sure grabbed the right girl when you took Julie with you."

Jim could not help feeling his suspicions and fears being lulled by Ferry's genial and open manner. But he noticed one corroborative detail: the other's clothes. In his heyday Ferry's suits had always looked as if he were wearing them for the first time. His hand-painted silk ties were trimly knotted, his linen immaculate, his shoes highly polished.

Now his suit, although originally of good material, was rumpled and frayed, his tie was spotted, and his gray shirt had obviously been worn a lot longer than one day. But if it were true that Ferry was having a hard struggle to make an honest living, his troubles did not seem to have depressed him.

When Julie came to the booth, he took both her hands in his, told her she was as lovely as ever, and admonished her laughingly to be sure to look him up if ever Jim started beating her. At six-thirty, when her trick ended, she took her dinner and Jim's over to the gas station, and they both ate while Ferry talked.

FERRY had always been a smooth and entertaining talker. Now their unexpected company seemed to spur him on to make the evening lively and gay. He brought up incidents of

their army life together that made Jim chuckle reminiscently. He spoke of the days in Brooklyn with a rueful nostalgia; the days when he thought he had the world by the tail. And always he admired and flattered Julie, telling her she ought some day to be in pictures, envying Jim for being lucky enough to have married her.

"Man, but I wish I were in your shoes!" he told Jim fervently. "A job in a small town full of decent people, a home, a wife like Julie—why, you've got everything!"

Jim could not recall afterward who first mentioned the gray suit. He thought it was Julie, but it might have been that Ferry adroitly led the talk up to that topic.

"I would have given it back with the other things when we left," explained Julie, "only I couldn't walk out without a suit on, and Jim said to keep it for the salary that was due me."

Ferry made a broad gesture with his arm. "Of course, Julie. You should have kept them all. I sold those baubles long ago for lunch money—but I'll wager you've still got the suit."

"Sure she has," said Jim. "She wears it Sundays. It's too good for every day. What's more, Ferry, I've always wanted to pay you for that suit. I'm sure it cost more than the half week's pay that Julie had coming. What did you pay for it, Ferry?"

Ferry protested, suggesting that they call it a wedding present, but Jim was stubborn. Seeing that it was rather a point of pride with him, Ferry finally admitted he had paid a hundred and twenty dollars. Jim gave a low whistle.

"I'll say it's a good suit! Look. My spare cash is tucked away, back in the rooms. I'll go get it."

"The rooms?" said Ferry inquiringly.

Jim was explaining about their little apartment in the big old house behind the service station when he noticed a faint shadow cross Julie's face. In spite of Ferry's demonstrations of charming personality, it was apparent that the thought of being left alone with him had raised in her a slight qualm of misgiving.

"Let's all go together," suggested Jim, chuckling. "We'll show you our suite at the Ritz."

A few moments later the three of them took the path back to the house. It had started to rain, and they walked rapidly. In a moment the house loomed before them, a huge pile of masonry and sprawling verandas. A single light glowed over the front door, but all the windows were dark.

“Old man Foster is a mighty good egg,” Jim told Ferry. “He lives here himself, but we hardly ever see him—except payday. He stays upstairs most of the time; his bedroom is in the back.”

“Sounds like a swell arrangement,” commented Ferry.

Jim led the way to a side door and produced a key.

“This used to be the dining room and a library next to it, I think,” he explained. “Not a bad setup for us.”

He snapped a switch, and a lamp flooded the room with a soft radiance. The round center table and the heavy, old-fashioned chairs were no better than you would expect to find in furnished rooms, but Julie had given it a homey touch with bright curtains and pretty colored prints on the walls.

“I’m insisting on one thing,” Ferry was saying with his quick smile. “Since I seem to be selling the suit to you, it’s only fair to let me look at it once more. I might be overcharging you.”

“Why, of course, Ferry.” Julie smiled and went into the next room.

Jim unlocked a drawer of the cupboard, came up with a brown envelope, and drew out the meager handful of bills that constituted their financial reserve. He counted off six twenties and turned, suddenly aware that the room seemed very silent.

FERRY was standing motionless in the center of the room, fingers interlaced behind his back, head thrown back slightly, his eyes bright and fixed. For some reason he made Jim think of a pointer that scents game. His features were frozen in a half-smile, and he looked almost as if he were holding his breath in anticipation. Jim, sensing the sudden tension in the quiet room, opened his mouth to say something, but before he had time to speak, Julie came back from the bedroom.

“The skirt is at the cleaners, Ferry,” she was saying, “but here’s the coat. How does it look? The same as you—” She stopped when she saw Ferry’s face.

It was as if a mask had been jerked off and thrown aside. Ferry had been playing a part, the part of an urbane, indulgent friend making light conversation. Now with his goal in sight, he threw aside his role and reverted to type. With his gaze riveted to the object in Julie’s hand, his smile had vanished, and the lines about his mouth hardened. The once amused gleam in his eyes had become a

steely glitter.

No one spoke. Ferry reached out and seized the coat. With quick, nervous movements he reversed it, felt up under the inside of the shoulder. To give the suit that modern, squared-off silhouette demanded by fashion, thick, triangular shoulder pads had been sewed in place. He ripped one of them out now and crammed it into his side pocket. Twisting the other shoulder toward him, he fumbled for the second pad, his hands trembling with eagerness.

Jim was dumfounded. He had sensed the abrupt change in Ferry but could not understand it. If the other man had suddenly slapped Julie’s face, Jim would have reacted instantly and violently; but this he couldn’t figure out for the life of him.

“Ferry,” he began, “for heaven’s sake, what—”

Ferry’s reply was a savage, impatient curse. In jerking out the second shoulder pad, he had ripped open its seams. Several dry, greenish wads cascaded to the floor, where they broke apart on the threadbare carpet. Jim saw that they were bills, and they looked as though they had once been soaked in water so that the maximum number could be stuffed into the pads. Five-hundred-dollar bills—hundreds of them!

Jim took a step forward. “I don’t know what this is all—”

“Stay where you are!” Ferry interrupted. He hurled the coat aside, and his right hand slid under his own lapel. It came out holding a blued-metal automatic. Even in that tense moment, Jim recognized the P-38 that Ferry had picked up in Germany.

“What’s that door behind you?” Ferry’s tone was a rasping growl. Beads of sweat stood out on his pale forehead.

“It’s a closet,” Jim muttered.

“Open it,” commanded Ferry. He held the gun steady as he motioned them toward the closet with the gun barrel.

Jim turned the key and swung the closet door open.

“Leave the key where it is,” directed the other man. “Now get in there, both of you. Hurry up; this isn’t slow motion!”

At this point Julie recovered her voice. “Ferry, we’ll suffocate! You don’t have to go through—”

“Keep still, you little tramp!” snarled Ferry. “If you’d stuck with me, instead of this mug, you’d be sharing this pile. As it is, you can take what’s

coming to you—and like it! Get in there!”

Jim felt his blood boil, but the muzzle of the automatic was a menacing round hole staring him in the face.

“Take it easy, Julie,” he murmured, and guided her into the closet. Stepping to the threshold himself, he turned, preparatory to backing in after her when the quiet of the room was rent by the tinkle of shattering glass.

“Stand right where you are!” barked a strange voice.

JIM facing the big window that opened onto the veranda, saw that the center pane had been knocked in. A hand darted through the opening to flick the old-fashioned lock; almost at once the lower sash was thrown up. In the blank square he saw the bulky form of O’Hara, service pistol in hand.

The action quickened in tempo. Ferry, twisting his head, saw the same thing. Moving lightly on the balls of his feet, he took one long step. This put him directly in line between the window and the closet and set up his defense neatly. The officer in the window could not fire without the almost certain risk of hitting either Jim or Julie. O’Hara’s quick expression of futile rage showed that he understood this, too. Nevertheless he barked another order.

“Drop that gun!”

Ferry grated something incoherent. Having taken care of his defenses, he turned to the offense. With hunched shoulders, right arm stiff as he took aim, he prepared to shoot down O’Hara in cold blood.

Jim’s muscles leaped into action then. His arm snaked under Ferry’s chin and jerked back savagely. The P-38 blasted once, hitting the lamp, and the scene was instantly plunged into darkness.

As they struggled blindly on the floor, Jim was not worried about the final outcome. Ferry was the bigger man, but he was soft from too little work. Crawling under and over automobiles had toughened Jim, made his muscles limber and hard.

O’Hara, charging in through the window, was taking no chances. In the blackness he could not tell one antagonist from the other. His method was to feel around for a head and then slam it with the flat of his pistol. Jim saw a blinding flash, and then everything spun black.

When he came to, he was sprawled in a chair,

and Julie was mopping his head with a wet cloth. He opened his eyes, but the glare of the ceiling lights made him close them again.

“I’m sorry I had to do that, Jim,” said O’Hara.

“It’s okay,” Jim muttered and opened his eyes again, shifting his position so that he wouldn’t see the glare. Ferry sat on the floor, his back against the wall and his wrists in steel bracelets. His shirt collar was torn, and blood still dripped from a cut on his head. The money was stacked in a heap on the table.

“A pretty pile,” commented the police officer. “Looks to me like fifteen, twenty thousand dollars there.”

“Twenty-four thousand, five hundred, to be exact,” growled Ferry sullenly. “And it was in *her* possession!”

“Not when I saw it, it wasn’t!” snapped O’Hara. “She never knew it was in that coat. Maybe you can doublecross your smart playmates in Brooklyn, making off with the dough they gave you to bet, but you can’t doublecross a little lady like this!”

“How can you prove that dough came from Brooklyn?” sneered Ferry.

“Well,” drawled O’Hara, picking up a crumpled piece of paper that had been with the bills, “this seems to be a list of names with figures after them. It wouldn’t surprise me if they were the names the D.A. in New York is so anxious to learn. Nor would I be surprised if the same D.A. were glad to pay a reward to the parties instrumental in recovering this information for him.”

He looked pointedly toward Jim, but the young mechanic shook his head negatively.

“I’m not interested in claiming any reward,” he said emphatically. “I never want to go near the city again. All I’d like is to stay right here in Dunkirk and be left alone.” He looked toward Julie. “As Ferry said this evening, I’m a lucky man; I’ve got everything. He didn’t mean it when he said it, but I see now it’s true.”

O’Hara rose, his eyes on Ferry. “This is one galoot that’ll be letting you alone a lot from now on—especially if those fancy laboratories in New York find that the bullets that killed Brother Berlin came out of his German shootin’ iron, here.” He turned to Jim. “And if you do stay in Dunkirk, there’ll always be a fella named O’Hara who’s walkin’ the street without holes in him because of what you did tonight. The O’Haras don’t forget.”