

The Devil's Confession

By D. B. McCANDLESS



In a few minutes he will go through the green door. But before he goes . . . before that slow, steady march into the unknown begins, the Devil has something to say.

I AM the Devil. That's the name my mob gave me years ago. If you're curious about my real moniker, you can find it in the prison records. The light's on in my cell. They've given me a

stack of paper. I'm going to write a story—a true story. I'm going to finish it before...before morning. Here goes.

THE "Devil" leaned back under the wheel of his bullet proof car, and waited. His eyes were dark slits under the black peaked brows which met over his long nose. His mouth was a thin streak of blood in the dead white of his intent face. The Devil waited—and watched.

He watched a certain, silent house, one of a row of squat old buildings in New York's Village. There was one square of light in the dark front of the house. Suddenly, that light went out.

The Devil leaned forward and swiftly lowered the window at his right hand. The white door of the house was flung open and a figure staggered out. The Devil's hand came up, the long, white fingers rigid over the butt of a sawed-off gun.

The figure was down the low stoop and crossing the sidewalk. The Devil's trigger finger flexed and tightened. The dim light of a street lamp played over the figure poised on the curb. The Devil dropped his hand to the cushions beside him and settled back indifferently under the wheel again, his narrowed eyes fixed once more on the white doorway through which the figure had come.

The brief sound of running feet, and a head appeared at the lowered window of the Devil's car. The door was wrenched open. The figure from the house materialized and slid into the seat beside the Devil.

"Drive like hell out o' here," gasped the intruder, in a strained voice. "I've got you covered."

"I've had you covered for some time," drawled the Devil, his eyes still fixed on the dark house across the street, "What's your hurry?"

"Drive like hell, I said," repeated the strained voice, "I just got one man, and I ain't goin' to let another stand in my way."

The Devil's left hand caressed the polished surface of the wheel. His right appeared between himself and the figure next to him. His long fingers still gripped the sawed-off gun.

"Who'd you kill in there?" asked the Devil.

"Joe Corelli."

The long, slumping body of the Devil abruptly straightened. His arms moved swiftly. The gat disappeared. The car roared into action, leapt away from the curb and tore down the crooked street.

"You can stow your rod," said the Devil, as the motor settled down to a throbbing hum of flashing speed. "Why didn't you say it was Corelli in the first place?"

"Drive like hell to the railroad station," muttered the voice at his side.

"Like hell? Yes," said the Devil, "but not to a railroad station."

"Damn you, take me to a station," the voice was almost sobbing now. "I gotta get out o' this, I tell you. Damn you, I got you covered. I'll slug you too, if you don't do what I tell you."

"Oh, no you won't," drawled the Devil, and swerved the speeding car east. "You used up all your courage slugging Corelli, my boy."

There was no answer, but the nose of the gat relaxed its pressure on the Devil's side.

"Take that rod away," said the Devil, "It annoys me. Use your brain. I'm going to help you."

TEN minutes later, the Devil stepped into the black tiled hallway of a house very much like the one in which Corelli lay dead. He turned to face the guest he had brought with him. For a long moment, he scrutinized the slender, shrinking figure before him, the twisting hands, the furtive eyes.

"You're even younger than I thought," drawled the Devil. "You're nothing but a boy. What's your name?"

"Spots. Spots Winston. And I ain't a boy. I'm a man."

"How old?"

"Nineteen. I'm a man." For a moment, the slouching figure straightened and the blue eyes met the Devil's full. "I'm a man. I just killed a guy. For a good reason."

"All right, my man," said the Devil calmly. "Come upstairs. I've got to telephone. And then I'll talk to you."

"Telephone?" questioned Spots Winston suspiciously.

"Yes. We may have Corelli's gang here any minute."

"Corelli's gang?" Spots made a movement toward the door. "Say, who are you? What are you tryin' to pull? By—"

"You're quite safe with me, Spots," said the Devil quietly. "If Corelli's gang shows up, they'll

be after me. Not you. Come on."

In a sumptuously furnished room above, the Devil did some rapid telephoning, while Spots Winston crouched in a deep chair, listening. The Devil hung up after the third call and the third curt volley of instructions, and surveyed his guest.

"Now," he said casually, "why did you kill Joe Corelli?"

"My sister—" began Spots Winston.

"Enough," the Devil cut in. "I know Corelli!"

For a moment, he was silent, studying the tense figure of the youth.

"Spots," he said, finally, "there's going to be a fight. If not tonight, then tomorrow, or the next night. You guessed that much from what I said over the telephone? Good. And the reason that fight is bound to come is this—Joe Corelli is dead, and Joe Corelli's gang will be sure the Devil killed him. I am the Devil."

Spots' blue eyes were wide with amazement.

"You? The Devil? I've heard—Crimini!"

The Devil removed the soft black hat he still wore.

"See the resemblance?" he said, sardonically.

Spots took in the dark eyes, the slanting brows, the red gash of lips in the saturnine face, and the two hornlike triangles of white sprouting from the temple line of the jet black hair. Spots nodded.

"I assure you, I'm quite human," said the Devil, "but my name is well earned."

"Yeah," breathed Spots, "I've heard—"

A door below slammed, and feet thumped up the stairs. The Devil sat quietly.

"That's some of my men I 'phoned," he said.

"The question is, Spots, where do you want to hide when this fight comes off?"

"Hide?" exclaimed Spots. "If Corelli's mob is comin' here, and there's a chance to plug any of 'em, I'm in on this fight!"

The Devil smiled.

"Ever been in a gang fight?" he asked, "You may be killed."

"Can I telephone?" was Spots answer.

The Devil shoved the instrument across the mahogany desk. Spots unhooked the receiver with fingers that trembled slightly, and gave a number.

"Sis," he breathed in the 'phone, "this is Spots. Listen. I'm mixed up in somethin'. I may not see you for a while. You know where that coin

is in case I—what's it matter where I am? Oh, hell, I'm at the Devil's place, if you gotta know. Yeah, the Devil. Take care o' yourself, sis. Bye."

The Devil turned on Spots as he hung up.

"Why did you have to tell her that? I don't want any women—"

There was a signal at the door.

"Come," said the Devil, and relaxed into his chair. Five men walked into the room, hats off, faces grim, and lined up before the Devil.

"Boss," said the first man, a redheaded, raw boned hulk, "Corelli's mob is stirrin' already. I sent Oily over there to play the rat, as soon as you 'phoned. He came through with a call a few minutes ago that he'd steered Corelli's mob to the warehouse. The rest of our boys is on the way there now."

"So. They think I'm at the warehouse," drawled the Devil. "Well, let's not disappoint them," and he uncoiled his long length, seized the soft black hat, and made for the door.

"Boss!" exclaimed the red-headed individual, who had not budged, "you ain't goin'! Give our boys a chance to wipe Corelli's bunch out and let it go at that!"

"Listen, Brick," said the Devil, with his hands on the knob. "I'm going. I've been cheated once tonight, because somebody got there first—oh, by the way, meet Mr. Spots Winston, boys. Come on, Spots, we have to rush."

THE warehouse was a huge square of ramshackle wooden walls near the waterfront. It was rumored that in that box of wooden walls the Devil stored the stuff that ebbed out nights like a mysterious tide—a tide that flowed back again to the Devil carrying good hard cash on its dark waves. It was rumored that those creaking floors were stained with blood, the blood of the Devil's enemies. It was rumored that the dope squad and the booze squad had raided the old place time after time and found nothing but rats—four legged rats.

The Devil edged the big, bulletproof car into the curb a block back of that warehouse, and entered a dreary tenement house with Spots at his elbow and five men behind him. Through a dark hallway, a darker cellar, and a pitch black alley, they followed him, silently. In a square of concrete yard, they paused, and listened.

"Do you think they've made it yet?" whispered Brick. "I don't hear nothin'."

"We can only find out," said the Devil in a low tone, and fumbled along the blank wooden wall which they leaned against. A door slid up, revealing a box-like space, with grilled iron gates at the back, through which a grayish light penetrated.

"Can you run an elevator, Spots?" asked the Devil.

"I'd rather shoot," whispered Spots, excitedly.

"Step in the car, boys," said the Devil, "I'll run you up."

Presently, there was a slight grating sound. The Devil was sliding back the grilled gate. They stepped into the empty hallway which smelled of dust. Not a sound.

"Bad management," drawled the Devil, not bothering to lower his voice, "Nobody left to guard the front way. Brick, you and—"

He was cut short by the ghastly rattle of a machine gun, unwinding its deadly load somewhere in the darkness behind them.

"They're trying the side entrance," snapped the Devil. "Brick, you and Spots stay here, in case—come on, the rest of you," and he was gone, leaving Spots and Brick in the musty hall with gats drawn and leveled at the wide front door.

Hell was flaming at the side of the old frame warehouse, and the Devil was in the midst of it—peering over the shoulders of men stationed at the windows with meat choppers blistering their hands, calling curt orders over the bang and the rattle of guns.

Abruptly, there was silence—silence that echoed on the ear drums of the men behind the dark windows with the pulse of spent shots.

"That's over," said the Devil casually. "None of them got in, did they?"

"Not as we saw, Boss," said a gruff voice. "Some ran, though. Most of 'em is on the sidewalk."

"Some ran? Get going, The front! Bring the choppers!"

The Devil was at the door to the hallway when the crackle and blaze of shots burst out at the front. The hall was streaked with the lights of screeching bullets.

"Bring those guns up, quick," barked the

Devil, raising his voice for the first time. "Brick! Spots! Back here. We're going to let loose the choppers."

An answering shout from the hallway and a huge figure appeared, dragging a slight form over the floor and through the doorway in which the Devil stood, just as the machine guns of the Devil's gang got into murderous play again.

The rest was a brief screaming interlude of shattering, tattering fire, answered by a few blazing retorts from Corelli's men at the front. Then silence again.

"Is the boy dead, Brick?" asked the Devil quietly.

"Ain't sure, Boss," said Brick gruffly. "He put up a damn good fight. If it hadn't been for him, damn it, they'd have been in on you."

"Bring him along," said the Devil.

Once again, the silent elevator slid down. The Devil and Brick carried the still form of Spots to the waiting car.

"Don't you want that some of the boys should stay at your place tonight, Boss?" asked Brick, as they laid Spots on the cushions. "Corelli's mob wasn't all on that job tonight, not by a damn sight."

"I'll take a chance," said the Devil, "it will be tomorrow before they digest the lead we fed them tonight, anyway."

TOMORROW came. Spots lay, with his wounded shoulder expertly bandaged, on a couch in the Devil's luxurious bedroom on the ground floor of the quiet house. The Devil calmly read the newspaper accounts of the death of Corelli, "Gang leader and Bootlegger deluxe."

A loud thumping from the hall. The Devil glanced at the white face of the sleeping youth on the couch, and softly stepped out into the hall, locking the bedroom door behind him. The thumping came from the front. The Devil thrust his hand into his pocket, walked to the entrance, and peered through a slit in the heavy folds of silk which covered the glass of the door. Suddenly, he flung it wide. A harness bull and a dick made an undignified entrance. The Devil politely steadied the cop's arm.

"Why didn't you ring the bell?" he inquired suavely. "After all, there is one, you know."

"You the guy they call the Devil?"

interrupted the plain-clothes man.

The Devil bowed.

"We want to talk to you, see? About Corelli's murder."

"Come upstairs to my office," said the Devil.

"You first," said the dick, "and don't try any funny business. I got you covered."

The three mounted, single file, to the room above. The Devil placed chairs for the two men and passed them cigars. The dick took a fistful with his left hand. His right was occupied with the .38 covering the Devil.

The Devil lighted a long Russian cigarette for himself and leaned back in the chair behind his desk.

"Now, this little matter of Corelli. What can I do for you?" he inquired.

"Just this," said the dick, exhaling a huge puff of excellent tobacco smoke, "what do you know about it? Come across, now. Corelli's mob has wised up you croaked him."

"I assure you I did not," responded the Devil.

"Your car was seen in the neighborhood."

"Cars have a way of traveling."

"Cut the wise cracks. All right. You say you didn't do the job. That ain't news to us. We know you didn't, though we ain't told that to Corelli's mob yet; we know you didn't do the job because we know who did, see?" What I want from you is this—" and the dick rose and leaned far over the Devil's desk. "Where's the guy that done it?"

"I don't understand you," said the Devil calmly, "who is the guy that done it?"

"You know as well as we do," said the dick.

"Which isn't very well, I fear," retorted the Devil. "If you knew anything definite, you wouldn't be here, trying a mild degree on me while you smoke my cigars."

"We got the guy's fingerprints, see," said the dick. "This was a house murder, and the guy left his trade mark."

"I see," said the Devil. "You have the fingerprints, but unfortunately, you have no record of them, and you're coming to me on the chance you can scare me into accusing somebody else of killing Corelli, because it's well known I was out to get him myself."

"You got nerve," said the dick. "Well, what do you say? We can get you on circumstantial evidence, if you don't come across. You're hidin'

somehin', see, and maybe you're hidin' somebody. We're gonna search this place—"

A bell rang shrilly below. The Devil sprang out of his chair and rounded the desk with one lithe movement. There was a rod in each of his long white hands as he backed toward the door.

"Stay where you are," he said quietly. "I'm going to answer that bell."

THE dick, with the cop a reluctant second, charged, but the door slammed in their faces and they heard the key turn in the lock.

Again, the Devil peered through the slit in the curtains downstairs. He opened the door with his fingers to his lips. The slender figure of a girl stepped in. Her blue eyes were blazing, her full red-lips trembling with emotion.

"Are you the man they call the Devil?" she began. "Where's my brother? I want him!" her voice rose dangerously.

The Devil clamped a muscular hand over the red lips and circled her with a long arm, holding her immovable.

"Your brother is here, but he's in danger. If you want to save him, keep your mouth shut," he whispered.

The blows on the door above had ceased. The men locked in the room were listening.

"Danger?" she whispered back.

The Devil nodded his head, and began urging her toward the back of the hall.

She attempted to wrench herself out of his grip.

"How do I know you're not lying?" she gasped. "Where are you taking me. Where's my brother? What's he done?"

The Devil halted and held her slender body clamped close to his, so that his dark eyes were very near her face. For a moment, he held her gaze, then whispered one word: "Corelli". She slumped in his arms, and he half carried her toward the bedroom door.

WOOD was splintering above, as the Devil's long legs took the stairs on the run.

"Hold it," he called over the noise, "I'll be with you in a second, gentlemen."

He unlocked the door and flung it open. He was met by the muzzles of two .38's. He turned unconcernedly, and examined the battered wood

work of the door.

"Too bad you couldn't wait quietly," he said, shaking his head. "That was one of my gang...."

"Sounded like a dame," said the cop.

"One of my gang," repeated the Devil. "The Corelli mob is on the way here to get me. I've decided to go with you two. I'll have something interesting to say, at headquarters. But I won't say it here."

"The hell you say...." began the cop.

"Let him have his way," said the dick, "if he's got somethin' interesting to tell. We'll take his car."

"Just let me 'phone first," said the Devil. "I may not be able to 'phone much—after I've told what I intend to tell—at headquarters," and he gave the dick a meaning glance.

He smiled when he saw the cop furtively noting the number he called.

"That you, Brick?" he said into the 'phone. "This is the Devil. I'm taking a little trip to the 49th Street police headquarters. Hold it! Let me talk. It's regarding Corelli's—er—sudden demise." He held the receiver glued to his ear for a minute. "Yes," he went on, "if you need the car you can have it. The two gentlemen who are escorting me to headquarters won't mind a taxi, I know, if I pay for it. All right, see you later. Yes. I'm leaving immediately. You'll find the car at the front door when you want to use it. Goodbye."

"Say," said the dick, as the Devil whistled for a taxi at the curb. "What's all this business about your car? If you're tryin' any funny business...."

"Why should I try any funny business, as you call it?" inquired the Devil. "I'm taking this trip of my own free will, remember."

"I won't forget it," said the dick.

The cop and the dick pulled down the extra seats facing the Devil. The Devil lolled back in comfort on the leather cushions and smoked. As the taxi rounded the corner of Ninth Avenue, in the forties, he plunged his hand into his coat. Two .38's rose simultaneously to cover him.

The Devil's thin lips twisted in an ironic smile.

"Only cigars, gentlemen," he said, drawing out two fat black ones. "Have one?"

A silent black car crawled up to the left of the taxi as the Devil extended his hand. It squeezed in between the taxi and the "L" pillars. The eyes of

the dick and the cop were on the extended cigars. The .38's were lowered for a second.

In that second, the Devil's right arm darted out, wrenched the door open, and with one spring, he catapulted from the opened door of the taxi into the invitingly opened door of the big black car, which was running wheel to wheel now with the taxi.

The door of the black car slammed. A rain of shots from the taxi pinged against its bullet proof glass as it dodged around a post and fled up the trolley tracks in a terrific burst of speed.

The Devil settled back on the cushions.

"Good work, Brick," he said to the red-headed hulk bent over the wheel. "Shake them, and get me back to my place, quick."

"What the hell?" yelled Brick above the steadily increasing roar of his motor. "Ain't you gonna make a getaway while the gettin's good?"

"Brick," said the Devil, lighting another cigarette with difficulty as the car took a corner on two wheels, "sometimes you show a surprising amount of brains, as just now, for instance, when you got my meaning over the 'phone. And sometimes, you're damn dumb. My own place is the last the police will look for me in."

Brick was silent, but the car lunged ahead under the furious pressure of his foot.

The Devil looked back.

"You've lost them, Brick," he said, "Better slow down. Plenty of time now."

THE DEVIL ascended his front steps and let himself in. Brick waited, muttering to himself, in the car, with the motor purring. The Devil quietly climbed to the room above, removed a thick wad of papers from a wall safe, and in a few moments, was knocking at the back bedroom door.

"It's the Devil," he called. The door opened. The girl stood before him. Her eyes were red and wild with weeping. Spots sat hunched over the edge of the bed, his head buried in his hands.

"Pull yourself together, Spots," said the Devil, but his eyes were on the piteous lips of the girl. "You're coming out of this all right. The two of you are to walk out of this house quietly. Brick's in my car outside, Spots. He'll take you home. Lie low for a while. They haven't a thing on you."

He tore a sheet out of a notebook and rapidly scribbled a number on it.

"You can get in touch with me at this number, Mass Winston," he said rapidly, "but be careful. Don't call me unless it's necessary. It won't do for you and Spots to be associated with me right now."

He helped Spots to his feet. The eyes of the boy were wide with terror.

"I can't go, Devil," he muttered. "I don't dare go out o' here. They'll get me."

"They'll get you if you stay," said the Devil. "Hurry."

At the door, the Devil motioned them back, and stepped alone to the stoop. The street was clear, except for the black car at the curb.

"Tell Brick to meet me at the roof. He'll know," said the Devil, as he stepped back. The girl's eyes met his in a wide gaze of gratitude, and she and Spots passed swiftly down and into the car.

THE Devil's penthouse apartment was dark, but the Devil, lounging in a deep chair at the window, could see the twinkling lights on the river, and the dim square of gray that was the old wooden warehouse. Brick was late, but Brick would come.

The Devil rose abruptly and made for the door. Heavy feet were on the ladder. The Devil stood rigid in the darkness. Three hearty thumps on the door. Then a hoarse voice—"Brick". Brick had come.

The Devil switched on dazzling lights and quickly pulled curtains over the wide window that faced the river.

"I had a helluva time gettin' here," gasped Brick, slumping into a chair. "The cops...."

"The cops! Don't tell me you let them trail you in that car with the girl and Spots!"

"Nope. I'd dished the car long before. One picked me up outside the regular hangout. I just lost him. Led him a chase to the warehouse, and then just walked through. He's waitin' outside there still, I guess, for me to come out."

"Don't disappoint him, Brick. Go out the same way, when you're through here. No hurry. Let him shiver. The river breeze is chilly tonight.

"What in hell's it all about, Boss? What're you gettin' mixed up with the cops for at this late

date? Crimini! The mob's all het up about it. If you didn't plug Corelli and you can prove it, why in hell didn't you go through with it today and be done with it? If you did plug him, why in hell don't you make a getaway or shoot it out, or something?"

"Get this straight, Brick. I didn't plug Corelli, but I meant to. Somebody else did, and that complicates matters. I haven't decided yet...."

A 'phone on the table shrilled a summons. The Devil answered. He leaned forward tensely, his black peaked brows drawn tight together over his long nose, as he listened. Brick was out of his chair, pacing excitedly. As far as Brick knew, no one in the whole burg knew the number of that 'phone, except the Devil and himself.

"How many did you say were watching your place?" said the Devil suddenly into the 'phone. "Somebody's been damned stupid somewhere," and he cast a malevolent look at the pacing Brick. "Where are you calling from? Good. Don't leave the house till morning. You'll be safe by then. So will Spots. No, better not come here...." Brick paused in his stride.... "No, it wouldn't be safe—for you. Stay where you are. Remember, in the morning, everything will be all right. I'd like to have seen you again.... Goodbye."

THE Devil hung up the 'phone and faced Brick's red faced glare.

"Would you mind looking up the 49th Street Police Station number for me, Brick?" he asked quietly, and picked up a pen and a sheet of paper.

"The hell you say!" shouted Brick.

"The hell I say is right," drawled the Devil, writing rapidly. "Do as I tell you, Brick," he commanded, and the command held a note of sinister warning.

The Devil finished his writing, signed his name, covered the paper with a book, and thrust it out to Brick.

"Witness here, Brick, below my name," he said.

"I'll be damned if I will. What in hell is all this...."

The Devil made a quick move.

"Right here," he said, pointing with the muzzle of a saw-off that had suddenly appeared in his long hand. Brick signed.

The Devil transferred his gat to his left hand,

creased the paper down with his right, and addressed it. Brick's eyes goggled from his head as he read the address—"The Police".

"Now," said the Devil, quietly, and reached for the 'phone, "what's that number, Brick?"

Brick mumbled it sullenly, with his eyes on the steady gat in the Devil's hand.

"You're making a damn lot of fuss, Brick," remarked the Devil, casually, as he waited for his number, "over a chance to take over the leadership of the Devil's gang."

Brick's mouth fell open.

"Police headquarters?" snapped the Devil into the 'phone, keeping his narrowed black eyes on Brick. "I want to talk to somebody about the Devil. No, it's not a joke, give me somebody that hasn't a sense of humor. Right This is a tip-off regarding the Devil," he continued confidentially into the 'phone. "Yes, the Devil. The man that killed Corelli."

Brick made a stealthy move forward. The Devil raised the gat a trifle higher, and went on talking.

"He's hanging out in a penthouse. Yes, a house on the roof of a tenement directly back of his warehouse."

He got to his feet as he slammed up the 'phone.

"For Cripes' sake, Devil," exploded Brick. "Are you crazy? Have you got religion or somethin'?"

"No, I wouldn't call it religion exactly," drawled the Devil.

"There'll be cops here any minute," shouted Brick.

"Plenty of time," said the Devil. "You go out by the warehouse, will you? I'll use the front exit."

"What in hell's in that paper?" screamed Brick, and made a sudden dive for it.

The Devil's gat shot one streak of fire, and smoked. Brick's hand hovered over the paper marked "Police", and Brick's blood dripped down on the folded sheet.

"Sorry, old man," said the Devil, "But I mean business. That paper's a confession to Corelli's murder. I'd stay and make it personally, but I don't like the idea of the hot seat. I've lived like a gangman—and I prefer to die like one."

Brick's face was white now, and writhing

with mingled pain and rage.

"Saints in hell," he said, "what have you got to die for, you damn fool? You got a gang behind you. You got me!"

The Devil transferred the gat still warm from the lead that was buried in Brick's wrist, and held out his right hand to Brick.

Brick gripped it with his good fist and held it. For a long moment there was a battle of eyes between the two men. Brick's huge body was tensed for a spring. The Devil's cold gaze held him rigid.

"No use, Brick," said the Devil. "I appreciate it, but you can't save me even by violence. If there was any other way out, I wouldn't let you and the gang down this way, but there isn't. That confession's no good unless I'm definitely dead. Get going, Brick," and he brought up the gat and pressed it into Brick's side.

Silently, they descended the ladder. The door behind them was locked, the key in the Devil's pocket. The Devil was taking no chances on Brick's returning to destroy the confession which lay, stained with blood, under the blazing lights.

On the ground floor of the tenement, they paused under the flickering light of a gas jet.

"Goodbye, Brick," said the Devil, "you're a damn good fellow."

Brick gasped out something that was half curse, half sob, and turned. Halfway down the dim hallway, Brick whirled back. The Devil still stood with one hand on the front door, the other still on his upraised gat.

"If you're goin' to Corelli's to let 'em help you commit suicide," gasped Brick, "the mob'll be there before you," and he disappeared down the cellar steps.

THERE was an amused twist on the Devil's thin lips as he got into a cruising taxi.

"Brick shows flashes of intelligence sometimes!" he thought and leaned forward to urge the driver to greater speed.

The Devil was right. Brick at that moment was showing a whole conflagration of intelligence. He was back at the old warehouse, with four of the Devil's gang. In the stress of the Devil's crazy behavior, Brick had neglected to mention that he had left four of the boys in the warehouse, and Brick was damn glad now that he

had neglected to mention it. Oily, who knew Corelli's mob well, who belonged to it, in fact, in his spare moments was very busy, at a telephone which usually reposed under a careless heap of packing cases. Brick himself was burning up the wire of another 'phone masked by an innocent electric fuse box. The three other men were gathering together a collection of sub-machines.

Brick wound up his conversation with a string of lurid curses, and turned to Oily. Oily was rubbing his skinny hands together and his yellow teeth were bared in a grin of satisfaction. On the outside, Oily was the personification of "rat". Inside, he belonged heart and soul to the Devil and the Devil's men.

"They're on the way, Brick," said Oily. "I couldn't find out how many of 'em is comin' without givin' myself away. "But I guess we can handle 'em."

"I know damn well we can handle 'em," said Brick, as the two made for the back exit after the three men who were loaded down with a heavy arsenal. "It's just a question of which gets there first—the cops or the Corelli's."

"What about the other end—the Devil?" whispered Oily. The five men were on their way up the dark stairs of the tenement now, bound for the Devil's penthouse.

"The mob's all set," said Brick.

At the foot of the steep ladder, Brick halted his small army for a moment, in the narrow hallway.

"No use breaking down that door up there, boys," he said in a hoarse undertone. "It 'ud look queer if the cops get here first. There's another ladder somewhere, to the roof. We can smash in a window. Come on."

A few moments later, five dark figures were outlined against the sky, five figures creeping perilously along the narrow ledge which surrounded the house on top of a house. Presently, there came the splintering of glass.

Brick stepped into the brilliantly lighted room with two sawed-offs in front of him. It was empty. The confession still lay on the center of the desk. The lights still blazed.

Four men followed Brick, and the last, Oily, carefully drew the heavy curtains over the broken window.

Brick stepped to the door, and turned back

the lock.

"I'd like to leave a 'Welcome' mat ready for 'em but there ain't none," he said, with a grim chuckle. "You boys get set now where you're gonna hide. I'll see how it looks from here."

He stood at the door and the men disposed themselves behind chairs. When they had finished, not a sign of humanity was visible in the room, except Brick. The door where Brick stood was covered from four points, by gats of the hidden men.

"Right," grunted Brick. "I'm goin' to slide into this here closet back of the door. Don't any of you guys move a hair till the party starts."

"But Brick," came Oily's voice from behind the huge davenport which faced the fireplace, "ain't you gonna get that damn fool confession of the Devil's?"

Brick started toward the table, and retreated suddenly toward the closet. There were feet coming up the ladder, feet that strove to make their heavy pressure soundless.

WITHIN the brilliantly lighted room, there was not a breath. Brick waited rigid in his dark closet, his fist on the knob, his body ready to spring. Outside, there was silence, too. Men were gathering back of the door, listening, waiting.

Suddenly, the door was thrown open and a blast of fire and lead belched into the room. The smoke swirled, cleared away, and still, not a sound, not a movement, in return.

Six men took three strides into the deathlike quiet.

Chaos descended upon them—the burning, biting, blazing chaos of submachine guns aimed from five different points of the room. Two heavy bodies thudded flat and lay still. The other four dropped, and began edging toward the spots from which the flames of death were blazing. Lead sprayed the floor around them and dug burning gashes into the carpet they crawled on. Two more lay still. The room was an inferno of smoke and the screeching of lead. Still, two men inched slowly along, one toward the massive davenport which shielded Oily and his blistering sub-machine, the other toward the closet door from which Brick sent a hail of bullets.

Brick crouched on the narrow floor of the closet and aimed his gun along the floor. One

blast and the slightly raised head of the approaching Corelli dropped, the tattered face mercifully hidden on the bloody carpet.

Brick sprang out from his hiding place and trained his gun on the lone remnant of the six men. Just then, that man collapsed under the back of the davenport.

"First round," said Brick. "We gotta move fast. The cops is due any minute. I don't see why they ain't here now. Somethin' queer...."

Oily's head appeared over the back of the davenport.

"Get that confession, Brick," said Oily—and those were the last words Oily spoke. The last man to fall rose suddenly again, and his gun blazed full in Oily's face.

Simultaneously, Brick's gat screeched, and the man fell again, this time for good, his broad back perforated to the chest.

Brick sprang for the davenport.

"Cover them other stiffs!" he yelled. "Maybe some more of 'em is comin' to life!"

Brick wasted valuable time lifting Oily's skinny, twisted body to the davenport and feeling Oily's thin wrist. Oily was dead.

"Oily's croaked," said Brick. "Is them stiffs good and dead?"

"Tom's dead," said someone.

"He'll have to stay here," said Brick hoarsely. "We gotta get out o' here. There's somethin' doin' below. Cops, maybe. Can you make it down the fire escapes, boys? The stairs is no good now."

The two men started for the window. Brick strode to the table.

"I gotta get that confession," he muttered, then burst into a scalding torrent of oaths. The bloody paper addressed to the police was gone!

The two men darted back from the window.

"Search those Corelli stiffs, boys," said Brick. "The damn confession's gone. I'll start down with Oily here." And Brick stooped and lifted the slight form of Oily.

"Make it snappy, boys," he said, "and get that paper. Meet you in the warehouse."

Brick disappeared out of the window, and edged his huge bulk out along the narrow edge of the roof and down the back fire escapes, with the dead weight of Oily still in his arms.

A HALF hour later, three men rose suddenly from the empty packing cases on which they had been sitting in a dank sub-cellar of the old warehouse. A fourth remained immovable—Oily, on an improvised bier.

"That's the elevator," said Brick "The mob is here!"

The grating sound of an iron gate slid open, and a small straggling group of men walked into the cellar. In front, two gangsters supported a tall, thin figure that staggered a little as it approached.

"Devil!" cried Brick. "They didn't get you?"

"Certainly not, Brick," drawled the Devil, as they eased him down on a box, with his back against the wall. "Just a few gashes. But our boys got there just in time. If Oily hadn't told them about that back entrance to Corelli's speakeasy....Who's that behind you, Brick?"

"That's Oily," said Brick, bitterly. "Corelli's men got him in the pent house. They got Tom too. He's up there now."

The Devil was silent for a moment. The dim light of the single swinging bulb lit up his face in flashes. It was not a good face to see.

"That makes ten men," said the Devil, half to himself. "Eight at Corelli's place, and two in the pent house. Somebody get that fellow Spots and his sister here!" he yelled. Brick dashed for the 'phone upstairs.

For a half hour, the mob occupied itself rehashing battles, while the Devil sat silent. Brick returned and heard in snatches how the Devil's gang had rushed Corelli's mob from the roar just as the Devil himself had sauntered into their place from the front, with a gat in each hand. And Brick told the story of the battle on the roof.

When Brick had finished, he turned to the Devil.

"Here's that confession of yours, Devil," he said. "It was in one of the Corelli's pockets. Ain't much left of it now. Burn it up," and he handed the Devil a crumpled, blood stained paper.

The Devil did not answer for a moment. Then he got to his long legs, holding on to the plaster of the rough cellar wall with one hand.

"Boys," he said, "I let you down when I wrote this paper. Brick said I was crazy when I did it. Maybe I was."

His voice grew stronger.

"But I'm not crazy now. Ten dead men have

brought me to my senses. We're going to destroy this paper and...."

Again, the sound of an iron gate sliding open and footsteps across the concrete floor. A white faced girl and a trembling, furtive eyed youth stood before the Devil.

The Devil thrust a hand to his side. It came out with a roll of bills as thick as a cannon. He thrust them toward the girl.

"Take this," he said. "Get as far away as it will carry you. Take your brother with you. Stay, there." His glittering black eyes fastened themselves on the livid face of the youth. "You, Spots, I was crazy enough to want to take the blame for Corelli's murder, because I might have done it myself, and because you're a kid, after all, and because...because I was crazy. But I'm sane now. You and your damn weak sister—against ten of my good men! You're not worth it. Get out. And stay out. I was fool enough to sign a confession to the job you did on Corelli. I've got it here." The Devil's long fingers twitched on the bloody paper. "It won't last long, this paper, so you'd better beat it and beat it quick."

The girl and the youth turned toward the elevator, silently. At the moment, the iron door slid open once more with a swift clang of metal on metal, and a horde of cops volleyed into the cellar.

The swinging light bulb played over the ominous glint of upraised gats leveled at the small

group of the Devil's men. The girl sank fainting to the floor. At the same moment, the single light went black. In an instant, the dark cellar was illumined again, this time by the flames of swift lead. Death flamed from the cops' rods into the trapped men surrounding the Devil. Answering shots echoed against the dank walls. A voice rose over the pounding of bullets....

"The Devil! He croaked Corelli! He's got the confession. Get him!" It was the voice of Spots!

Heavy feet pounded over the floor. The Devil's men hadn't a chance. They were caught like rats in their cellar. They fought like rats in their bloody corner, but they hadn't a chance.

When the smoke cleared away and light again filled the place, Spots lay dead on the floor, with a bullet through his back—the last bullet that Brick ever shot. The girl had disappeared. And the Devil—the Devil stood between two burly bulls, the torn confession still gripped in his blood-stained hand.

MY STORY is done. Somewhere outside, it's morning, but I see only the bright glare of the death house. I hear only the slow footsteps coming to take me to the hot seat.

I am the Devil. If you're curious about my real name, you can find it in tomorrow's papers—in the death notices.