

# CRIME AXIS



*The man under him rolled viciously and struck with his fist*

## ***Ex-G-Man Dunning Finds Death and Intrigue Weaving a Dangerous Web in the Nation's Capitol!***

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**D**EAK DUNNING'S unofficial position in Washington governmental circles was not only unusual; it was without precedent. A private detective to whom numerous high officials appealed for aid when, for reason, they desired to deal with one man rather than with a department. The scope of Dunning's services ranged from garden variety shadowing to laying murder and

international intrigue by the heels.

Tall, athletic, and educated, Dunning was well qualified for tea-table espionage or a running gun-fight with the best of them. Six years in Army Intelligence, plus another four as a crack member of the F.B.I. had afforded Dunning a world of training and experience to draw upon after resigning from the service and setting up his own private office. Be it said to his

credit, he had yet to fall down on a case.

On the second anniversary of his "going on his own" he was in his small office on the twelfth floor of the Mason Building, engaged in the routine task of bringing his case files up to date when the telephone bell blasted the silence. The Secretary of State was on the other end of the wire.

"I want to talk with you on an urgent matter," the Cabinet member said. "How soon can you get over?"

"In twenty minutes, sir," Dunning promised.

Exactly fifteen minutes later, Dunning presented himself before the first of the lesser lights one must pass before gaining entrance to the Secretary's private office.

"Tell the Secretary I'm here, Parks," Dunning nodded to the big, squint-eyed man in the outer office.

"You'll have to wait, Dunning," was the curt comment. "He's busy right now."

THE former F.B.I. man leaned over the desk, looked straight into the hostile, squint eyes.

"He phoned me to come on the jump, Parks," he said evenly, and jabbed a finger at a closed door to the left of Parks' desk. "Trot in and tell Hargraves to tell the Secretary I'm here."

The squint-eyed one hesitated, then shrugged.

"Mr. Hargraves can't be disturbed just now," he said. "I'll tell the Secretary myself."

He rose from his desk, passed into the foyer, and from there out into the main hallway. Dunning frowned after him, then switched his gaze back to the door that led to the office of Hargraves, the Secretary of State's personal secretary. The usual custom was for all visitors to pass Hargraves' desk before they saw the Cabinet official. As Dunning mulled over

the change the outer door opened and a tall man in his early thirties entered Parks' office. His smooth-shaven face, and neatly parted, jet-black hair looked fresh from the barber's chair.

Dunning recognized him as Chandler, a member of the diplomatic corps, who was climbing fast due to his taking instant advantage of the mistakes of his immediate superiors. He had recently been recalled from the American Embassy at Rome, and it was rumored that he was slated for an even better post in London. Dunning knew him slightly, and liked him less.

As far as Chandler was concerned the feeling was mutual. When he saw the former F.B.I. man he stopped short, arched an eyebrow.

"You are waiting to see the Secretary, too?" he murmured.

"I am," Dunning said bluntly.

The other shrugged, turned back toward the door.

"Then I'll return later," he said with a touch of sarcasm in his tone. "The great Dunning cannot be put off, of course."

The door closed on Dunning's snort. It opened almost instantly, however, and Parks stepped inside. His squint eyes seemed to peer more intently at Dunning.

"You can go in," he said shortly.

The Secretary of State greeted Dunning cordially, waited until he had seated himself, then leaned forward intently.

"I need your help again, Dunning," he said bluntly. "As you know, Dido Volta, Prime Minister of Transvania, came to this country a few weeks ago to have an eye operation performed at Johns Hopkins. That was but a part of the reason for his visit. He also came to discuss with the President, and myself, details concerning a trade pact on Transvania's exports of oil and copper. We hope to complete

arrangements whereby the United States can, upon official notice, have complete access to Transvania's entire output, less supplies for domestic consumption, of course."

"Another war measure?" Dunning murmured as the other paused.

"Not in the way you think. Rather, it's an anti-war measure. Another step in the President's plan to prevent war in Europe, if possible. Next to us, Transvania produces more oil and copper than any other nation. Both are essential war materials. If, in the event of war, we can stop the sale to warring nations of Transvania's supplies, as well as our own, by buying Transvania's surplus, it would do much toward making any such war of short duration at least. Incidentally, our pact would permit us to regulate the present exports of Transvania copper and oil. A precaution, of course, against foreign nations stocking up supplies."

"For such privileges," Dunning nodded, "we will grant tempting trade concessions to Transvania."

"Exactly. Naturally, other nations are endeavoring to do the same thing and if sufficient information of our agreement with Transvania were to reach foreign ears before the pact is signed, the whole thing might be dragged out into the open to become a skyrocket bidding contest. That would ruin everything for us, as well as embarrass the White House. After all, there is a limit to which we can go to help preserve peace in Europe."

**D**UNNING nodded agreement.

"The danger of publicity appears to be imminent," the Secretary went on glumly. "To date, the President, Volta, and I have held three secret conferences on the pact details. The only other person present was Hargraves, who took down everything that was said. After each conference he

transcribed his notes in triplicate. My copy I keep in that safe, there. The other two I deliver to the President, and Volta in person. As an extra precaution, I personally burn Hargraves' notes when he is finished."

The Secretary paused again, clasped his hands tightly in front of him. When he resumed his voice was several tones lower.

"Yet, with all that," he said, "I have learned through our counter espionage department that the details of the first two conferences are known to a foreign embassy here in Washington. Fortunately, nothing of major importance was discussed at the first two conferences. The point is, though, the information is leaking out somehow. As it reflects upon me, personally, I have called you in rather than direct the matter through the usual routine."

"Only four persons were present at the conferences," Dunning reflected. "The President, and you, can be eliminated, of course. What about Dido Volta? He naturally wants to make the best—"

"No," the Secretary of State cut in sharply. "I happen to know that it would be to his advantage, and that of his party in power, to complete the pact with the United States. Neither is he that type of man. You can rest assured that no one has seen his copies of the notes, nor has he spoken to anyone."

Dunning shrugged. "Hargraves?" he murmured.

"Absolutely, no!" was the instant reply. "Hargraves has been my personal secretary for twenty years. I would as quickly admit the guilt, myself."

Dunning made no comment. He could have said that he'd seen more than one high-ranking foreigner politely sent back to his native land, and more than one trusted public official led quietly away to a little room that had metal bars in the door

and windows. But he didn't.

"Your last conference was when, sir?" he asked instead.

"This morning." The Cabinet member replied, and moved his head toward a door to his right. "Hargraves is transcribing his notes, now. I wish I had more facts for you to work on, Dunning. However, I have only the proof that there is a leak somewhere. I'm counting on you to find the leak and plug it up once and for all. Of course, I need not remind you that it is a delicate and dangerous situation."

"Yes, sir, of course," Dunning said quietly, and stood up. "I'll get to work at once, and report to you what progress I make, if any. Good afternoon, sir."

Leaving the Secretary, Dunning turned on his heel and passed out through the private entrance into the main corridor. He walked along it to Parks' office, entered and went straight to the door of Hargraves' office and started to turn the knob. It resisted his efforts, for the door was locked. By that time Parks was out from behind his desk, fire in his eye.

"I told you Mr. Hargraves was busy!" he snapped. "And I have no idea for how long. I'll announce you later, if you have business with him."

Dunning regarded the man for a moment, slowly turned from the locked door, and shook his head.

"Never mind," he said. "Just a personal call. It can keep."

As he passed out into the main hall he was conscious of Parks' squint eyes following him intently. Had there been just the shadow of worry in the look, or had it been his imagination? He couldn't decide as he stepped into the elevator. Chandler, and two minor secretaries, were in the car. The under-secretaries smiled and nodded. Chandler, however, seemed not to see him. He went right on finishing a conversation with the pair.

ONCE out on the street, Dunning crossed over to the other side, glanced at his watch. It lacked just thirty minutes to the usual closing time of Government offices. He hesitated, made a decision, and took up a position behind a taxi stand. As he smoked a cigarette he reflected on the case. No possible chance of a leak, yet there was one. Four men completely above suspicion, yet a foreign embassy had gained the information. Hargraves, or Volta? It seemed a point in Hargraves' favor that his door had been locked. He had at least taken the precaution against anyone barging in.

Hargraves, or Volta? Dunning had decided to check Hargraves first. The third conference had been held that morning. Hargraves' movements after hours required looking into.

At five minutes of four the Secretary of State emerged, entered his limousine, and was driven off. At four-ten a short, stocky man, of middle age and wearing glasses, came down the stone steps. It was Hargraves. He hailed a cab, and climbed in as it pulled into the curb. Dunning gave him half a block lead, and climbed into another taxi.

"Follow that car ahead," he directed the driver.

Hargraves drove down Pennsylvania Avenue to a famous oyster bar, dismissed the cab and went inside. Parked across the street, Dunning could see him through the wide front window having half a dozen on the half shell. No one came within ten feet of Hargraves during the fifteen minutes he was inside.

When the man came out he started to hail another cab, but stopped the movement as a long, low sedan of foreign make suddenly swerved over to him from the middle of the avenue. A swarthy-skinned man in the tonneau beckoned Hargraves to the car window. Dunning

recognized the dark-skinned man instantly. It was Dido Volta, Prime Minister of Transvania. The pair talked for five minutes. Then Hargraves bowed politely, and the sedan was driven off.

From here Dunning trailed Hargraves out 19th Street, N.W., to his apartment building. The former F.B.I. man followed him inside two minutes later, and took up a secluded position in the huge lobby where he had a clear view of the switchboard. Not a light flashed on Hargraves' number while Dunning cooled his heels for almost two hours.

Darkness had gathered when Hargraves finally emerged from the elevator in evening dress. To Dunning's slight surprise, the trail led straight back to the State Department Building. Once more Hargraves dismissed his taxi and went heavily up the steep grey stone steps.

For perhaps a couple of minutes Dunning waited across the street in his own cab. Then on sudden impulsive decision, he paid the fare, got out and went into the building himself. The night porter at the door knew him and grinned a greeting as he admitted the detective.

Hargraves had obviously gone up in an elevator. Dunning chose the stairs, and was puffing a bit when he finally reached the floor of the Secretary's offices. He started slowly along the dimly lighted hallway. In front of the foyer door of Parks' office, he paused, stared thoughtfully at the darkness beyond the glazed glass. Had he made a bum guess? Had Hargraves gone elsewhere in the building?

On impulse he tried the knob, found that the door was unlocked, and started to push it open. As though his movements were some sort of a hidden signal there was suddenly the muffled sound of a scream, followed almost instantly by the thudding bump of something falling

heavily to the floor beyond the door leading to Hargraves' private office where there was a light.

In a surging charge Dunning barged into the room, leaped across it and flung open the private office door. Just as he did so, the light flicked out. He had only the chance to glimpse a blurred figure moving swiftly toward the door leading into the Secretary of State's office.

**J**ERKING his gun out, Dunning leaped blindly forward. His right shin cracked against something hard, and pain stabbed up to his knee. He tried to jump over it, succeeded, and started forward again. But he took only two steps, stumbled wildly over something soft and yielding, and went sprawling headlong. As he shoved up on his feet he was conscious of something wet and sticky on his right hand, but he didn't pause to investigate.

He charged for the Secretary's office. Memory told him where the light switch was. He flipped it on, stepping quickly to the side as he did so. An empty office, and the half-opened door leading out into the hallway mocked him.

In a dozen racing strides he was out in the corridor. For perhaps fifteen seconds he stood there snapping his head this way and that toward the rows of darkened and closed doors, his ears straining for the faintest sound of running feet. He heard nothing, and with a muttered curse he retreated to Hargraves' office and snapped on the light.

Hargraves was flat on his back, his legs stuck under his own desk. His eyes were slightly open and there was the glint of horror, as well as the glaze of death in their glassy depths. Purplish smudge marks were on one cheek and the point of his jaw. The right side of his neck was red with blood that still oozed sluggishly from a gaping wound just under the jaw,

seeping down to form a tiny pool on the rug. .

The room bore the marks of a furious struggle. A file cabinet was tilted over against the desk, its drawers still shut. A typewriter table was on its side on the floor, and the typewriter itself was upside down some two or three feet away. Dunning saw that it was the machine which had tripped him. Two full letter baskets and some miscellaneous papers on the dead man's desk appeared not to have been molested.

Turning slowly around, checking everything in detail as he did so, Dunning presently moved over to the desk, picked up the phone and put through a call. It was almost half an hour before he was able to locate the Secretary of State and get him on the wire. He reported and requested the Secretary's presence at once.

Shoving the phone away, Dunning stared intently at the dead man for several minutes, then slowly stood up. Going into the Secretary's office, he searched the rug, let out a grunt as he spotted a tiny drop of blood on the rug. He found a second one by the door. .

Going out into the hall, he hesitated a moment, switched on his flashlight and searched the floor carefully in both directions. There was no more blood. The trail of drops had obviously ended inside the Secretary's door.

Brows furrowed in thought, thumbs hooked in the pockets of his jacket, he walked past an office door some five doors away from the Secretary's office, suddenly braked to a halt and started to whirl. From the corner of his eye he had seen the darkened door whip open. But he was a split second too late in turning. A hard, blunt something crashed down on the top of his head. His felt hat could have been made of tissue paper for all the force of the impact it absorbed.

Instinctively he realized that he was falling, and flung out both hands for support. He clutched nothing but thin air and crashed heavily to the floor. Everything a spinning blur before his eyes he struggled up on his knees, groped for his holstered gun. Before his fingers could touch the butt a terrific blow hit him between the eyes. Every muscle in his body went limp.

Fighting back the cloud of oblivion that threatened to engulf him, he lay still, panting for breath. At that moment he was grabbed roughly by the arms and dragged into the office. Through the roaring in his ears he heard a door slam shut.

There came a faint rasping sound, and in the next instant cold air blew against his face. A moment later pain stabbed again as the clutching hands let go, and the upper half of his body fell back against the edge of a window sill. Slowly strength returned, and his head began to clear.

Bitterly he understood. Hargraves' murderer had of course lain in wait, fearing that Dunning had recognized him in that split second before the lights were snapped off. The unknown killer had slugged him and was now endeavoring to shove his body out the window to crash to the flagstone court five stories below.

Even as realization came to Dunning, his head and shoulders were shoved out over the lip of the outside sill. Instinct caused him to throw both arms wide. The fingers of one hand grasped the sash groove, somehow managed to cling. The exertion sapped what little renewed strength was his. It was all he could do to twist his body over. His eyes smarted as though on fire, and nausea rose within him. Steel fingers grappled with his twisting body, tried furiously to heave it upward and outward. A stunning blow caught Dunning in back of his left ear.

At any other time that blow would

have knocked him limp. But now it only increased the number of colored balls of light that bounced about his brain. He was fighting for his life, and fully realized it. Lunging backward with one foot, he felt his heel dig deep in a human stomach. His blind aim was confirmed by a choked gasp of pain. The clawing fingers relaxed their grip on his body. Taking advantage of that respite, he wriggled hack across the sill, and half-fell, half-slid to the floor.

**C**OMPLETELY blinded by his own blood he had no idea as to where his attacker might be in the darkness. He groped again for his gun, dragged it from its holster, stuck it out and blindly pulled the trigger three times. The roar of the gun reverberated like crashing thunder about the room. As the echoes died Dunning heard the slam of a door, the pounding away of hurried footsteps.

With an effort the detective got to his knees. Tough as he was, the three blows had not been love taps. They at last took their toll. For a moment he swayed dizzily, striving to get to his feet. Then he fell forward, hit the floor heavily, and passed out cold.

When Dunning again opened his eyes, it was to see the Secretary of State bending anxiously over him. He was on the leather couch in the Secretary's office, and there was a square of bandage and surgeon's plaster on his forehead. He closed his eyes for a moment and tried to will away the throbbing ache in his head and neck. It did little good, so he opened his eyes again and recognized Chandler, the night porter, and a couple of filing bureau clerks watching him from the foot of the couch. To their left a Department doctor was stuffing first-aid equipment back into a leather case. Dunning turned his eyes back to the Secretary's, grinned and sat up. The floor tried to rise up and slap him in the

face, but he forced it back.

"You'd better take it easy, Dunning," the Secretary cautioned. "You've got a nasty gash. Chandler, and the others, heard the shots. They found you in one of the offices down the hall. What happened to you?"

Dunning grimaced.

"Somebody thought I saw him," he said through clenched teeth. "He slugged me and tried to dump me out a window. I recovered enough to shoot. I suppose no one saw anyone racing through the halls?"

He looked at Chandler as he spoke.

"Sorry, I can't say I did," the attaché said. "I was on the floor below, and came up the stairs. I saw no one. But for the fact that the glass in the door had been cracked, we might still be looking for you."

"Glad he shut it so hard, then," Dunning grunted, and pushed up on his feet. "You've been in Hargraves' office, sir?" he asked the Secretary.

"Yes," the other nodded, his face suddenly softening in sadness. "Poor Hargraves. I've notified the Metropolitan Police, of course. They'll be here shortly."

"I'd like to speak to you alone before they arrive," Dunning requested bluntly.

The secretary had only to turn to the others. They left the office immediately. Dunning led the Secretary into Hargraves' office.

"Why Hargraves came back here tonight," he said, staring down at the corpse, "I don't know. He either met someone by appointment and was killed in a fight, or he surprised someone in here who didn't belong. Tell me, is there anything of importance Hargraves kept in this office that would drive a man to murder, if he were caught stealing it?"

"Nothing," the Secretary answered promptly. "All official papers are kept in the vaults downstairs. And all private papers I keep in my own safe. These files

contain simply routine matters. I wonder why he came back? Forgot something, perhaps.”

“Perhaps,” Dunning shrugged. “By the way, he met Volta in front of Dinty’s Oyster Bar this afternoon. They talked for a few minutes. There’s two things I’d like you to do, sir. First, install me in Hargraves’ place for awhile. Second, I want you to get Volta into your office, and bring up the subject of his meeting Hargraves today.”

“The first is granted,” the Secretary said. “But why the second request? Surely, you don’t think that—”

“Hargraves was murdered, sir!” Dunning said pointedly. “Everyone associated with him, save yourself, is now under suspicion until cleared. I simply want to see Volta’s face and hear what he says when you talk to him. Leaving this door open a crack will be sufficient. You can bring up the subject easily enough. Call it routine, if you like.”

**T**HE Secretary frowned for a moment, then nodded.

“Very well,” he said. “About eleven in the morning, then?”

“Thank you, sir,” Dunning said. Then, with a sudden tightening about his eyes. “Perhaps you’d better meet the police when they arrive. Keep them in your office until I come in. I’m not finished here, yet.”

The cabinet officer hesitated, agreed, and passed back into his own office. Forgetting his pounding head, Dunning went over to the corpse, knelt down and stared hard at the purplish smudges on the cheek and jaw. Reaching for the typewriter he turned it right side up, grunted. There was no sheet of paper stuck under the roller, and the ribbon was not new enough to make that smudge. He poked at the

platen idly. It gave beneath his finger like sponge rubber.

Five minutes later he went into the Secretary’s office to meet the police and relate his part in an experience that included no mention of why he had shadowed Hargraves, or the secret conference leak. After that he went home to bed, leaving the police to worry with the problem.

Of all the employees in the State Department Building, Parks was perhaps the most surprised to learn of Dunning’s temporary appointment. Not only was he dumfounded the following morning to see Dunning behind Hargraves’ desk, but his eyes tightened with the unmistakable glint of fear and worry. He looked as though he had had little sleep.

“What—what are you doing here?” he managed to get out. “Where’s Mr. Hargraves?”

**D**UNNING looked at the man’s ham-sized right hand for a moment. The middle and fourth fingers were bandaged and taped.

“You didn’t read the morning paper, Parks?” he asked softly. “Hargraves was killed last night. I’m filling his place for the present. Hurt your hand?”

Parks looked thunder-struck. He backed against the door.

“Killed? Good God! Who did it?”

“I don’t know,” Dunning said. “How’d you hurt your hand?”

“Eh? Oh, that? I caught it in the door of my car. The pain kept me up most of the night. But Hargraves was murdered? I can’t believe it.”

“It’s true,” Dunning grunted. “For the present, you’ll take your orders from me. Here’s the first one. From ten-thirty to twelve I’m not to be disturbed in any way.”

Parks collected himself somewhat, but there was a peculiar look in his eye.

“Yes, sir,” he said, starting to turn away, but turning back. “You probably won’t tell me,” he said gruffly, “but was my name mentioned when you spoke to the Secretary yesterday?”

“Why should it have been mentioned?” Dunning countered.

The other hesitated, seemed to narrow his squint-eyes all the more.

“Over some papers given to me for filing,” he said. “They disappeared. I believe they were stolen, though they weren’t of much importance. I’ve felt that Mr. Hargraves believed I stole them. I was wondering if that’s why you were—”

“It wasn’t,” Dunning cut him off, and gave his attention to the morning mail on Hargraves’ desk.

He raised his head and stared thoughtfully at the closed door after Parks had passed through. He grunted softly, and returned to the mail again.

At five minutes to eleven Dunning had his eye at the hair-line opening of the door leading into the Secretary’s office. He heard Parks usher the foreign visitor in and withdraw. The Secretary and Volta greeted each other cordially. They chatted casually for a few moments. Then presently the Secretary leaned forward.

“By the way, my dear Volta,” he said, “did Hargraves get in touch with you late yesterday afternoon? I had tickets for the Navy Ball Saturday. I asked him to find out if you’d care to use them.”

The swarthy-skinned man frowned, plucked at a thick upper lip.

“Tickets?” he murmured. “No. I did see him, yes. I was driving by the oyster bar and saw him on the sidewalk. I had not received my copy of the notes yet. He explained that you would probably bring them to me today. The poor fellow! I am sick with grief.”

The Secretary softly snapped his fingers.

“Perhaps that’s what he came back for, to get them,” he said aloud. “Yes, it must have—”

Dunning didn’t hear the rest. He softly closed the door, returned to his desk, and stared fixedly at the opposite wall. Presently he grunted, went over to the typewriter, stuck a sheet of paper in the machine, and began to write rapidly.

Four days later, Friday noon of that week to be exact, Dunning passed up his lunch hour and drove out to an apartment house at 25078 18th Street, N.W. Entering the lobby, he took the elevator to the twelfth floor, and let himself into Apartment 12D. Two solid hours he spent in the apartment. When he returned to the State Department he went straight into the Secretary’s office.

“Have you any important engagement tonight, sir?” he asked bluntly.

“None too important,” was the reply. “Why?”

“I want you to break it then, sir,” Dunning said, and held out a slip of paper. “I want you to go to this apartment on Eighteenth Street. Arrive there at nine o’clock, go to the smoking lounge on the second floor, and wait there for me.”

The Secretary’s eyes were wide as he took the slip of paper.

“It has to do with Hargraves’ death, hasn’t it?” he asked hopefully.

“It has,” Dunning nodded. “I can tell you this much. I know how the conference information leaked out. Tonight, I *hope* to be able to catch Hargraves’ murderer.”

“Then I’ll do as you ask, by all means,” the Secretary said firmly.

The west side of the apartment building flanked a section of scrubby, undeveloped ground. Huddled down in the darkness some fifty yards from the building, Deak Dunning took his eyes

from the lighted entrance of the building and glanced at his wrist watch. The radium hands showed exactly two minutes to nine o'clock. He grunted softly, moved an inch or so to relieve body stiffness from a three-hour vigil, and returned his gaze to the building entrance.

A cab drove up. The familiar figure of the Secretary of State stepped out, paid off his driver, and then walked into the building. Dunning's pulse quickened and he strained his eyes at the shrub-covered ground between him and the side of the building. Five minutes later a second car drove up. Dido Volta stepped out, also entering the building.

As the foreign statesman disappeared inside, Dunning slowly pushed up one knee, then on all fours he began creeping stealthily toward the building. Some thirty yards from it he stopped short, stiffened. From his left the figure of a man glided forward. He ran to the side of the building, paused for a moment or so, then ducked quickly back into the flanking shrubs.

Careful lest he make a single sound, Dunning resumed his creeping progress until he was a scant ten yards from the figure crouching in the bushes. Then he paused a second, coiled his muscles and hurled himself forward. A startled oath cut the darkness as Dunning piled down and knocked the man flat. But the crouching figure had the agility of a snake.

In that instant of surprise the man under him rolled viciously and struck with his fist, throwing the detective off balance. As he fought to regain his balance the former F.B.I. man kicked out one foot. The man was in the act of lunging away. He tripped over Dunning's foot and went sprawling. He was up in a flash, and racing across the shrub-covered ground. But Dunning's gun was in his hand before the man had traveled fifteen yards.

"Halt, or I'll shoot!"

THE man kept running. Dunning took quick aim from a sitting position, pulled the trigger. Invisible hands seemed to lift the running man clear of the ground and then slam him down on his face. As the former F.B.I. man bent over him, people came running out of the apartment building. The Secretary of State's voice cracked excitedly.

"What's happened, Dunning? I—Good Lord, *Chandler!*"

Dunning stepped back so that the light of a nearby street lamp shed its glow on the dead, twisted features of the tall, black-haired diplomat slated for the London office.

"Yes, Chandler," he said bluntly. "He's your leak, and he's the one who killed Hargraves when your secretary caught him tapping the leak. I had to let him have it as he was escaping."

Ten minutes later Dunning, the Secretary of State, and Dido Volta drove back toward the center of the city in the latter's car. The former F.B.I. man had turned a deaf ear to all questions when there were others around, and the Secretary was fuming openly.

He leaned across Volta, seated in the middle, and fixed Dunning with commanding eyes.

"You can talk, now!" he snapped. "How did it all happen?"

"Hargraves' typewriter, sir," Dunning replied tersely. "The roller isn't a regular platen. It is a soft rubber shell, carbonized on the inner surface. Inside the roller there are two spindles that also extend the length of the roller. As the carriage lever revolves the roller so do the two spindles revolve. One is the axis of the roller, but the other is pressed firmly by springs against the quarter-inch strip where the type bars strike and held constant there.

"A tightly wound roll of thin paper is

on the outer spindle. Its loose end is fastened to the center spindle. Thus every key struck makes its imprint on the roll of paper inside. And when the roller is turned for a new line, the line already printed inside the roller is automatically moved toward the center spindle.

“Frankly, it was the purple smudge marks on Hargraves’ face that led me to the discovery. I knew they were made from ribbon or carbon ink, yet the ribbon wasn’t new. It was obvious that someone had been doing something to the typewriter. It was Chandler, of course. He was removing the unsuspected transcription of Hargraves’ notes by changing platens when Hargraves surprised him. In the fight, Chandler killed him. Perhaps by accident, but I doubt it.”

“HOW do you know it was Chandler?” the Secretary demanded.

“I didn’t.” Dunning shrugged. “In fact, I was at such a loss as to who the murderer was, I was forced to devise a plan to make him drop into our laps. So I wrote a note to the President, as coming from you, in which I informed the President that in view of what had happened that you had decided to have the final conference with Mr. Volta in an apartment you had engaged in the building we just left. I explained that no notes would be taken, and that you would report, what you and Mr. Volta had discussed, to the President by word of mouth. I also gave him the address and apartment number in case he desired to get you on the phone. Of course, I said that the meeting would be held at nine tonight.”

The Secretary’s face was white.

“Good Lord, what will the President think when—”

“Nothing, sir,” Dunning said. “I simply wrote the note on Hargraves’ typewriter. I didn’t send it. It was bait, sir. This noon I found that our mysterious unknown had risen to the bait. I found a dictaphone cleverly concealed in the apartment. The wire ran out the window and down the side of the building. To anyone else it represented a radio antenna. Then I asked you to come here, and sent a note in your name asking Mr. Volta to arrive shortly after nine.

“You see, I wanted to play it all the way through. Realizing that the spy would undoubtedly watch the building, I had to make it look real by having him see you two enter. He did, and sneaked over to attach his earphone wires to the wire dropping down from the room. I closed in on him, and—well, you gentlemen know the rest.”

“That roller!” Volta exclaimed. “It was an ingenious idea. I would like to see it, yes!”

“And I,” the Secretary said grimly, “would like to know who gave it to him, or was it his own confounded invention?”

Dunning stared out the window, shrugged.

“That, sir,” he said quietly, “is something we shall probably never know. But you had better confiscate all of Chandler’s belongings at once and get back that fake roller that I had to let him steal in order to trap him. It has Hargraves’ transcription of the notes of the third secret conference.”