

Why were the victim's arms folded neatly across his chest after he was shot?

# MURDER WITH FOLDED ARMS

by Thomas Thursday



I AM IN the chief's private office when Det. Capt. Louis Allen, head of the Missing Persons Bureau, gives Howard the info on the Mallory matter.

"If this missing man is in Miami and vicinity," says the cane-carrying captain, "he must be under the Miami River or in Biscayne Bay. Or got bored with matrimony and skipped to Tahiti."

"Any booze or women in his life?" asks the chief.

"If there was, Mrs. Kate Mallory didn't know anything about it."

"Which means nothing," I say. "A wife is always the last to sniff another dame in her man's life."

"Quiet, Brilliant," says Howard. "You are too cynical. Life is half thorn, half roses; the trick is to smell more roses and duck the thorns and shady things."

"I'm putting it in your lap," goes on the captain. "Looks like it fell out of mine." He gives his cane a few twirls and goes out.

The Mallorys are an old Miami family. Quite social and all that sort of thing. The old homestead, a three-decker, made of hard pine, is near the end of Brickell Avenue, one of the town's swank residential areas. John and Kate Mallory have two married children, both out of the state. No record against any of the family, except John, Jr., now living in California with his third wife. He is the leech of the family and a sheep in Technicolor. Likes booze, women, gambling; hates honest labor. Records of CBI—that is the Criminal Bureau of Investigation—show he has been asking for police attention for assault and battery, twice; driving while pickled, once; and one count for threatening his father because Papa wouldn't give the bum

more money.

9 P.M. We reach the gate to the Mallory house and park outside the Ojus-rock wall that surrounds the five-acre estate.

"Does Mrs. Mallory live in this big joint alone?" I ask Howard.

"How do I know? Let's go to the house for a little chit-chat. For all I know, the missing Mallory is now at home, having just explained to his wife about his sudden case of amnesia."

"Which same is usually blonde, brunette or redhead."

"Is that what you tell your wife?" asks the chief.

"That's a giggle. All she wants me to tell her is which pocket my paycheck is in."

The house is at least two hundred yards from the front gate. The path is dark, narrow and gives me the leaping creepers. Me, I like to work under bright lights, so I can see what hits me.

Ten wooden steps lead to the porch. They creak in the moonlight, and no doubt creak in the sunshine; but a creak in the moonlight is more mysterious than in sunshine. There is an old-fashioned iron knocker in the center of the door. Howard gives it a gentle bang. No answer, so he gives it two ungentle bangs. Soon footsteps are heard from within. The door opens cautiously, and a woman's head shows in the hall light. She is between fifty and maybe the menopause judging from her nervous demeanor. She is slightly over five-feet, tinge of gray in her hair, while her eyes seem furtive and frightened.

"Good evening," says the chief. "My name's Howard, Miami Police Department—"

"Has something happened to Mr. Mallory? Tell me, please, has anything happened to my dear husband?"

**H**ER TONE suggests that she is neither happy or sorry. I put her down as Suspect No. 1, which is a lousy way for a dick to operate. However, I am new in the homicide division, having been given a tryout by Howard at my own request. Previous to this I have been a traffic cop on the corner for five years, and you can have them. For each citation ticket you pass to an enraged citizen, you make an enemy.

"I don't know what happened to Mr. Mallory," says the chief. "That is the purpose of my visit. May we come in, madame?"

"You may." Her tone is getting a bit icy.

Howard flops in a wicker chair and begins to toss his nail file in the air. Mrs. Mallory watches the file go up and down and frowns.

"Well?" she says, still standing.

"Well," says Howard. "You reported your husband missing nearly a week ago. The Missing Persons Bureau turned the matter over to me for further attention. And I'd like to ask a few questions."

"Well?" The ice is getting thicker.

"Have you any idea what may have happened to Mr. Mallory?"

"Certainly not. He left here last Tuesday evening, about 8 P.M., and said he was going for a walk. He liked to take long walks. That's all I know."

I begin to like this babe like the boys in Alabama like Republicans. Howard begins to flip his fingernail file in the air and look at the ceiling.

"You appear to be bored," says Madame Mallory. "Perhaps you better leave. I know an intelligent private detective. And now I begin to understand what they mean by dumb cops."

"Listen lady," I say, "for every dumb cop you can show me, I can show you a hundred dumb taxpayers. Wanna play?"

The chief gives me a look, meaning shut up, stupid. "Mrs. Mallory, I can assure you that police officers *are* usually bored. It's a tedious, boring profession except in fiction, where the private eye works hand in neck with some glamour girl. Incidentally, have you ever seen an enthusiastic plumber, bus driver or bricklayer? Then why expect police to be so charmed with the world? However, I am here to aid you, if I can. You help to pay my salary; that is, the three cents a year you contribute with the others of the citizenry. Which entitles you to service."

"I think you are perfectly rude," sniffs Madame Mallory. Howard lets that one slip by.

"And now, I must ask you to answer a few necessary questions," he continues.

"Well?" Her eyebrows go up an inch, with one word.

"Were you and Mr. Mallory happily married?"

That upsets the feminine appletart. She leaves the chair, bounces over to Howard, and snorts, "How dare you ask such a vulgar question?"

"The question was merely standard. I lack the time to tell you the many cases, right here in Miami, about the wives who disappeared because they did not fancy their husbands, and vice versa."

"Married life being what it is—if it is," I help out.

"Often the wife is found dead and likewise a husband. Very often it looks like murder and very often it is."

"I consider your presence insulting!" she flares. "I must ask you to leave. I intend to employ a private detective!"

"I cannot prevent you from calling a complete set of private detectives," says Howard, rising from the chair. "But I must warn you. If this turns out to be a criminal case, I want you to warn your private detective to keep out of my path. I remind you that in real police procedure, no private detective is ever permitted to muddle in police affairs—without official permission, that is."

"I bid you good night!" she snaps.

"And a good night to you," I say. "You may now go back to your radio and TV dicks and you will please pardon me for laughing."

**T**HE OLD wooden steps creak like they have neuritis, as we walk down them.

"Quite a glamour babe," I say to the chief. "That blonde hair must have set her back a pile of moola. Well, what do you make of it?"

"I have the feeling that she has something on her mind, something that she failed to get off."

"Some little thing like murder?"

At that moment a small, wiry little man pops across our path. He is between sixty and hard work all his life. "Evenin', folks," he says, and his voice is gravelly. His skin is parched from the Florida sun, and you can have my share.

"You belong around here, sir?" asks Howard.

"Yep; gardener. Name's Hiram Krimm."

"Have you seen Mr. Mallory lately?" asks the

chief.

"I reckon about six days ago. 8 o'clock. Evenin', folks." He starts to shuffle away.

"Wait a moment, please," says Howard. "Did you know that Mr. Mallory has been reported missing to the police by his wife?"

"That's whut I hear; that's whut I hear."

"And that's all you hear?" I ask.

"Yep; that's all I hear."

"Do you live around here?" continues the chief. "On these grounds, for instance?"

"Over in that little old cottage. All alone; nobuddy else but me myself." He walks away. We let him go.

"Star witness, hey?" I say.

"Who knows? When you have been in this racket as long as I have, you are not surprised or disappointed in anything or anybody."

We tour the spacious grounds, mostly covered with woods. Coral rock sticks up here and there, with scrub palms acting as dusty sentinels. Occasionally a lizard darts out from the palms, sticks out its nervous tongue, and scampers to another hideout. The sky is packed with fleecy-type clouds, playing peek-a-boo with the bright moon.

Even in the moonshine the whole joint gives me the creepers with a lot of jeepers. It is hard to believe that the place is less than twenty-five minutes ride from Miami's main stem, Flagler Street.

About four hundred yards from the back of the house we come to a sunken garden. It is in sad neglect, and we wonder what the gardener thinks about it. The concrete floor is cracked all over and weeds spring from the crevices, eeling through to greet the sky.

**A**T THE south end of the concrete we both spot something yellow-whitish, like a tree limb or the like. Howard beats me to it. It is a human arm. We both walk around until we get a complete view of it. Around the head are pools of blood, coagulated.

"The late Mr. Mallory, I presume," I guess.

Howard examines the adjacent terrain. No empty shells, no gun, no anything that might serve as a possible clue.

"The guy who killed him was rather neat," says the chief.

"Meaning what?"

"You will note how neatly the arms are folded

over the chest. That rubs out any suicide theory. Suicides are apt to be messy, unless they take poison. And I never heard of one folding his arms across his chest."

Very carefully Howard raises the head of Mallory. It is a rather large head, tinged with abundant grey-white hair. His high forehead indicates that he might have had something in it besides cornmeal mush. His weight is about 190 and he is approximately six feet tall. Perhaps older than his wife by five or six years. The chief lets the head go back gently into place.

"The slug is still in his head," says Howard. "It didn't plow right through. That helps, biddy-buddy. You have no idea how straight-through bullets ball up a murder case. You've got to find the bullet and then match it with the gun."

Mallory had only \$5.00 in his purse and not a single love note.

"We'll call Joe Musial from the ID and let him take a gander," says Howard. Joe is the star in the Bureau of Criminal Identification.

We go back to the Mallory house. Mrs. Mallory and a man are sitting in the two rockers on the porch. The guy is about six feet, slim and has a nose that looks as if Jack Dempsey had practiced on it. His clothes are apparently made to order and look foppish. The suit is a natty and nobby dark blue. A diamond, that looks reasonably real, is on his third finger, and flashes in the bright moonlight. All he needs is a monocle in his eye to make him be at home in the House of Commons.

Madame Mallory gives us a frigid zone stare and fails to greet us.

"We've located your husband," says Howard, softly. That is the understatement of the chief's career. "It is my sad duty to inform you that he is dead."

The mouth and eyes pop open at the same time. Then her left hand flashes to her head and she falls off the chair onto the floor. If it is an act, and I don't personally think it is, it is truly professional. I have seen much worse on TV and in the movies.

Her friend, Lord Helpus, leaps from his chair and kneels beside her. He begins patting her cheeks. Then he works her arms, Lesson 4 in the Life Savers Manual. Suddenly, he looks up at us and shakes his fist.

"You damned halfwit!" he roars. "Why break the terrible news like that? You dumb cops!"

Howard sets his nail file to work on his right

thumb and remains silent.

"Knock it off, chum," I say. "Would you prefer a telegram or an airmail letter?"

The face of the chief remains as blank as a rainy Sunday in Siberia. He sits in the rocker and begins to do some rocking.

A full minute of silence passes. Then Howard rises slowly from the chair and asks, "May I have your name, sir?"

"It's none of your business, but I don't mind telling you it's J. Addington Banning. I have been a longtime friend of both Mr. and Mrs. Mallory. In fact, I have known both for years, and I used to go hunting with Mr. Mallory."

"Hunting?" I ask. "Well, maybe that's what happened to Mallory. Some dumb shot must have taken him for an alligator although there is no resemblance."

"Do you have to be so stupid?" cracks Brother Banning. "Normal people are equipped with brains. May I inquire what police use for a possible substitute?"

I am about to bust bright boy in the beak, but promptly recall the stringent police rule that one must never molest a citizen. If the citizen shoots first, and you still live, you have the right to shoot back. Howard grins and holds up his hand for peace and quietness.

By this time, Mrs. Mallory is back in her chair, looking like the last six roses of summer.

"Before leaving, Mrs. Mallory, I want you to understand that your husband's body is now in the hands of the police. It will be released to any funeral home you designate after proper investigation. Meantime it will be removed for an autopsy. That is all. Good evening, and I'm sorry if I have shocked you."

**W**E RETURN to Headquarters at 11:30 P.M.

"Well, who's winning?" I ask. "What's the score?"

"Looks like a tie," he grins. "I am sure suicide is out. No gun found."

"Maybe the gun is in the bushes."

"Listen, biddy-buddy, when you have been around this ghostly business as long as I have, you will soon learn that persons do not kill themselves and then conceal the gun. Especially when a bullet slams through the brains."

"What about that old gardener, Hiram Krimm? He looks goofy enough to kill anybody."

"Could be, but I doubt it. And just because a man does not blabber all the time, it does not necessarily indicate that he's nuts."

With that crack he gives me a coy look.

Joe Musial gives us his report the next afternoon. A .32 bullet was located in the right temple. Howard tosses his nail file into the air and grins.

"Now it's all too simple. Our job is to find the gun that matches the slug who owns it; and if and when they fired it. And also a few assorted motives."

The phone zizzes. The phone in our office never rings; it goes, zizz, buzz, zazz, or burp. Howard grins and hangs up. "Chief Headley just informed me that he received a call from the Mallory house. Some bird named Oliver Trodd who confessed that he is a private operative, has solved the crime."

"You mean without radio or movies or even TV?"

"Yes, indeed. That's what the man told the chief. So, once again a private dick has made a bum out of official detectives. You should have studied to be a private eye. You can become one via correspondence and get rich. Only thing you got to worry about is that none of the lessons get lost in the mails."

"I'd get a break if they all got lost. Er, who in hell did the private smart smick tie the murder on?"

"Hiram Krimm, the gardener."

**N**EXT DAY. 11:00 A.M. We return to the Mallory home. Mrs. Mallory, private eye Oliver Trodd and Mr. J. Addington Banning are on the porch, in what appears to be a heavy conference. Trodd is squat, squint and squamby, meaning he is short, fat and frothy.

In the middle of the trio is Hiram Krimm, the gardener. He seems to be getting more attention than he ever got before in his life.

"Now Hiram," Mrs. Mallory is saying as we come up, "now Hiram, you better tell the truth. You *know* it was your gun that killed Mr. Mallory!"

"And only one shot is missing from the cylinder!" adds Trodd.

Howard scratches his ear and examines his nail file like it is the last will and testament of his rich uncle which he ain't got. I blow my nose, there being nothing else to blow. Banning remains stern and silent. Real, non-Hollywood tears well in the eyes of Mrs. Mallory.

"I'd like to see the gun," says Howard, quietly. He's a Florida-born boy and his low voice drives people nuts.

With a smirk that I want to wipe off with two fists, Trodd hands the chief the alleged murder weapon. Howard examines it. One shot only has been fired. You don't need to be a private eye to discover that. Any other idiot could have discovered it.

Howard turns to Hiram Krimm. "Is this your gun, Hiram?"

"Yep; sure is."

"You are accused of killing Mr. Mallory. Not by me, understand; by this gentleman here. Did you have any motive for killing him?"

"Nope; ain't never had no what yuh call motive."

"If you didn't fire this missing bullet, do you know who did?" I ask.

Mr. Oliver Trodd turns to Mrs. Mallory and Brother Banning and says behind his hand, "What did I tell you? Dumb cops!"

"I just asked you, Hiram, if you did not fire the missing bullet do you happen to know who did?"

"Dunno." He is a man of few words, but you will notice they always say something.

"Well," I put in, "where did you get the gun, Hiram?"

"Boughten it 'bout five years ago. Never fired it once. Kept it in muh closet alla time. Right on top shelf. Besides whut for should I kill poor Mr. Mallory? He was allus very kind tuh me."

"I'll soon find out why you killed him!" snaps Trodd. "Right now I know you did kill him!"

Speaking of odd-shaped heads, you should see Oliver Trodd's. I can't describe it in words, but I wish Old Man Shakespeare had seen him.

Chief Howard stops toying with his nail file and turns toward the private eye-wash.

"Very well, Mr. Trodd. If you will kindly remove your cuffs from the prisoner, I'll take him back to Headquarters. Thanks for your cooperation. You have been very helpful."

If the sarcasm had been water, Trodd would have been drowned.

"Oh, glad to be of service," says the dick. "Do you want me to help you take him down? Never can tell about them quiet mugs; they are the most dangerous. Why I remember once, out in San Fran—"

"I believe we can handle him," says Howard.

"My assistant here is a dead shot. He once hit the County Court House at ten paces."

**E**N ROUTE to Headquarters, we have a little conference with Hiram Krimm. He is a simple soul, plowing through life and perhaps wondering what the hell it was all about.

"Listen carefully, Hiram," says Howard, "are you absolutely sure that your gun never has been taken out of your house, even by you? Or did you allow someone to borrow it?"

"Yep."

After five minutes of quizzing, Hiram suddenly recalls that, about two weeks ago, Mrs. Mallory had called him and asked him to bring his gun, saying there was a fair-sized alligator sneaking around the back porch. But when he got there the 'gator had evidently slithered back into the nearby Miami canal.

"You never fired it?" I ask.

"Nope."

"And you are positive that it was fully loaded?" from Howard.

"Yep."

1:10 P.M. We arrive at Headquarters.

"Suppose you take Hiram out to one of those good restaurants and give him the best on the house," says the chief.

"You mean the house is the City of Miami swindle sheet?"

"Why not? Cops are also taxpayers."

"What about mugging and printing him?"

"Hell, no. I'm just a dumb cop."

So I take Hiram into a swinky-swankey food trap, where the waiters bow east, west, north and south, trusting each bow will enlarge the tip. He manages to mangle over four bucks worth of choice food, and for a man with only six teeth, he does okay.

When we return to Howard's office, he says, "It's the right bullet and matches the gun, according to Joe Musial."

"Which puts the tag on Hiram. Or where does he stand?"

"Well, I don't think Hiram will be too happy in the city clink. He likes to play around with flowers and horticulture in general. So how about taking him out to that two-bit farm of yours in the country and let him graze with the milkless cow you have? Just keep him out of sight for a few days. I doubt if he will kill your wife and two kids. Thanks, bub."

I have licked the landlord situation by buying a shack over the county line, and am raising weeds, some vegetables and also some hell. However, my missus can raise it higher, since sometimes she will not see me for days at a time, while working on a case—and all of which is not beer. So I take Hiram Krimm home and introduced him to the missus. “Honey,” I say, “there is nothing to fear but fear itself. He’s only accused of murder, that’s all.”

“That’s all? So long as he don’t pick pockets, it’s okay. Though if he picked pockets, on what you give me he would starve to death. I hope the kids don’t kill him first.”

Hiram is given the spare room at the end of the hall. He gets up two hours ahead of us—just at dawn—and we find him fixing up our lousy garden. The wife starts to milk the cow who has been known to give all of a pint of milk on occasions—and Hiram yelps, “Whoa, lady—wait a minute; that ain’t the right way tuh get any milk.”

So Hiram gets under Bossie and chisels three quarts of milk, which comes under the heading of a major miracle. As to my two wild brats, one 3 and the other 5, they take to Hiram like he is a Shetland pony.

**D**URING this time Chief Howard calls Captain Anderson, in charge of the city jail, and tells him if a guy named Oliver Trodd calls about one Hiram Krimm, desperate killer, to tell the half-ape that Hiram’s ensconced safely in the escape-proof cell block. As I leave for Headquarters, I say to Hiram, “Look, fellow; I’m leaving you all alone with my most precious possessions, my wife and kids. Do me a favor and don’t shoot them.”

“Yep,” says Hiram, and goes on with his gardening.

I meet Howard just as he is about to leave his private office.

“Going over to the West Coast, St. Pete and Tampa, for a trip and should be back shortly,” he says. “You stick around the office and see that Oliver Trodd doesn’t get into anybody’s jam closet, especially Hiram Krimm’s.”

“Good luck,” I say.

“I’ll need some,” he grins and goes down the stairs.

Less than an hour after Howard left, Oliver Trodd phones and asks for him.

“Gone fishing,” I tell him. “The mackerel started to run today and the chief loves mackerel.”

“Fishing!” whoops Trodd. “What the hell kind of a cop is he?”

“Confidentially, and just between us girls, he stinks. Why don’t a smart guy like you give him a few tips?”

“How many tips does he want? I gave him a killer, didn’t I?”

“Righto, pal, righto. I’ll see that J. Edgar Hoover strikes off a medal in your honor.”

“If you are so smart, why ain’t you in the private operator business for yourself?”

“No brains, pal; no brains. How about dropping around some time and show us some of your best detectival tricks?”

The hang-up on the phone is a dead beat.

Soon I get bored with my feet on the desk and I call the missus.

“Nice to hear you’re still kicking,” I say. “Did Hiram kill the kids yet?”

“He hasn’t had any time. He’s too busy repairing all things *you* should have done. For a homicidal maniac he’s pretty dull. Up to now he’s just uttered five words and four of them were ‘Yep!’ And say, it you’re coming home for dinner, bring it with you. The iceman was drunk again and no ice, meaning that horse meat steak you brought three days ago is now moldy.”

“I think I have the wrong number. Excuse it, please.”

“That makes us even; I got the wrong husband.”

I get a phone buzz from Dick Howden, a guy on the Tampa force at 6:00 P.M.

“Chief Howard asked me to tell you that he may not get back until late tomorrow morning.”

“Did he scare up anything besides a crap game?”

“Right now he seems to have two rackets. One is posing as an insurance adjuster and the other is taking a poll to see who is the choice of the people for the next president.”

“Tell’m my choice is Thomas Paine. And I trust he is doing a little detective work on the side, for which same the taxpayers should be grateful—which also I doubt.”

“Could be,” says Howden. “My last report indicated he’s now visiting all the undertaking parlors.”

“Tell’m I can get all the coffins he needs, wholesale.”

**A**T 9:00 A.M. Howard bounces in the office, fresh off a plane.

"We're going to pay another visit to the Mallory place," he says. "I like the way Hiram Krimm keeps the flower beds. By the way, how's the old coot doing out at your place?"

"Doing all the work. He hasn't killed anyone so far, except a few mosquitoes, which we can sell wholesale at a very low price."

When we arrive at the Mallory joint, land crabs are side-wheeling all over the grounds. When they sniff us they flurry into their holes.

Howard gives three raps on the heavy front door. No answer. More raps, harder, and soon a soft tread is heard within. The door opens slowly, cautiously. Soon the head of J. Addington Banning pops out, complete with heavy bags under his eyes.

"What's the meaning of this outrage?"

"We called to talk to Mrs. Mallory," says Howard.

"At this time of day she's naturally asleep. You will have to come around later."

"Nevertheless, I want to see her, and that goes for you, bub. Get her out here and I *do* mean now."

Howard can get tough when he thinks he is being pushed around. Besides, we have a notion that J. Addington Banning is not showing the proper respect for two of Miami's finest.

"My name is not 'Bub,'" snaps Banning. "To you and your like, it is Mister Banning."

I whisper to Howard, "How many demerits do I win if I poke him in the puss?"

"I am asking you to call Mrs. Mallory in a polite manner," says Howard and I can see that he is bored with fooling around.

"What do you want to see Mrs. Mallory about?" he demanded.

"About matters concerning her late husband."

"May I assume that you have new evidence in reference to the murder of Mr. Mallory by the gardener?"

"You may not," says Howard.

"Aw, tell the ape that you hit the jackpot," I whisper.

9:45 A.M. We're heading back to Headquarters. Mrs. Mallory and J. Addington Banning are sitting in the back seat.

"May I assume that you are taking us to your stupid Headquarters to ask more insane questions?" asks Banning. No fooling, this guy is

asking for it. If it wasn't for civil rights and all that crap this monkey would have been on the floor, looking up and acting real nice. But nowadays the law and the courts, including the Ladies Save-A-Soul Association, are all on the side of the criminals. It's getting safer to go wrong than to go right.

"I'm afraid I don't understand all this," says Mrs. Mallory. "I was under the impression that the matter was all settled. Didn't that awful gardener confess that he killed poor Mr. Mallory?"

"He's the real killer-diller type," I say. "Me, I wouldn't let him come within six countries of my family."

"Shut up," says Howard, meaning me, of all people.

"I'm still puzzled about his motive," says Banning.

"Could be for money or passion," I say, seeing that I don't shut up easy. "Or maybe he wanted to marry Mrs. Mallory."

"Why, the idea!" snips Madame Mallory. "How utterly fantastic!"

**I**LEAD the way up the old wooden stairs to Howard's private quiz depot. As we approach the door, the chief whispers to me, "Take Mrs. Mallory to Chief Headley's office, and see that she is comfortable. I'll talk to her later."

I introduce her to Lt. Charles Price, the police chief's very private secretary, and return to Howard's office. As I enter, he is asking Banning, "Just where were you when Mrs. Mallory called Hiram Krimm to come and shoot the alligator?"

"Do you expect me to recall such nonsense?"

"I do, and I now ask you if you knew Hiram Krimm had that gun?"

"How stupid can you get? Do I look like a man who would consort with common gardeners?"

The chief takes out his nail file and begins to flip it in the air. He has a "case closed" expression on his face.

"You are aware that Mallory was killed with Hiram Krimm's gun," continues Howard. "As you know, Hiram has confessed that the gun was his. But he does not confess to the murder. What's more, I just happen to believe he is telling the truth."

"You don't say!" sneers Banning. "I beg you to tell me more."

"Krimm kept his gun on the top shelf of his

closet in the small cottage where he lived; except for that one time Mrs. Mallory called for him to shoot the alligator, he never touched the gun. Not for the entire five years he had it. He merely bought it for self-protection in his home against intruders."

"This is getting *very* interesting. *Please* continue." He seems bored as an elephant eating cast-iron peanuts.

"I am certain that Hiram Krimm has told me the truth. Besides, he has no criminal record. Not even a traffic ticket against his name."

The lean mug of Banning begins to puff up and he got up from his chair in a threatening manner.

"But you, sir, have a criminal record." The bomb hits the target.

"You're a damned liar and stupid cop!" snarls Banning. "You can't find the name of J. Addington Banning on any criminal record in the whole world!"

"You are quite right," says Howard. "I admit I can't. *But*—the names on the records are John James McClaren and Clarence Joseph Clarke. And your birth name is the latter, Mr. Clarke. You forgot that, although you may change your names, you can't change your fingerprints."

"The hell you say. You never got my fingerprints!"

"You are quite right again," admits Howard. "I did not get them, but a man in our ID Bureau, named Musial, did. You left plenty on the car we brought you down in."

"But that does not connect me with the murder of Mallory. You did not find the prints on that gun, remember!"

"True again; but guns are usually greasy and it is hard to take prints."

"Then what are you picking on me for?"

"Because I also got a set of your prints in the Adamo Funeral Home, in Tampa, where you worked as an embalmer, up to two weeks ago."

"What's wrong with that?"

"It's a legitimate and honorable profession, except when you commit murder. However, that profession causes one to form some strong habits. So strong that they eventually become almost automatic."

"What are you trying to prove?"

"Well, I noticed that the arms of Mr. Mallory were folded neatly across his breast, very unusual for a dead man to perform of his own volition. The very neatness would indicate that a professional

mortician attended to the matter."

"You haven't got a thing you can prove on me! If you dare arrest me I will sue the city. I want a lawyer!"

"You may have fifty lawyers," I say. "I even know some who can read and write."

**H**OWARD gives his nail file an extra high flip toward the ceiling and aims a finger at Banning's head.

"And I can tell you this: You were either on the front porch or at one end of the windows when Mrs. Mallory called to Hiram Krimm for the gun. It was the first time, I imagine, that you knew Hiram Krimm had a gun. Two days later, when Hiram went to town on an errand for Mrs. Mallory, you went into his cottage and located the gun. And that same night you trailed Mallory and shot him to death. You then sneaked the gun back onto the shelf, hoping and believing that Hiram Krimm would be held for the murder."

The large window in back of Howard, always open, has a tendency to attract criminals who like to think they are high jumpers. To date, nine wantout boys, all guilty as a rat caught in a cheese factory, have tried to make it to the sidewalk, one floor below. J. Addington Banning, who realizes that the electric chair is very uncomfortable, fails to pass the window-test.

His first mistake is to attack Howard en route to the open window, with what he considers a right to the chief's jaw. You have no idea how the chief resents such uncouth and vulgar tactics. Having a right of his own, Howard catches Banning, etc., in the dead center of the button; our little playmate descends to the floor and takes a tour of the stars.

"That," grins Howard, "helps a lot. An escape attempt usually indicates guilt."

The chief opens the door and calls in Sgt. Tom Lipe.

"Bring in a large bucket of ice water, please. Deliver it to the face of the gentleman on the floor. Then deliver him to the detention room."

I follow him out the door.

"Don't forget Madame Mallory. She's still in Chief Headley's office."

"Oh, yes; I wish you would drive the dear girl home. She can read all about her boyfriend in the papers."

"What's this deal—boyfriend? You mean she and Banning were all popsy-wopsy, and mush like

that?"

"That's what they told me over in Tampa. It seems she has a sister living over there and once a week she went over to visit her dear sis."

"What gives?"

"You know, my little biddy-buddy, I feel a little sorry for old gals like Mrs. Mallory. The country is just crawling with her type. They are incurably romantic, and they think that youth is passing them by—which it certainly is—and so they sniff around for some assurance that they still have something on the glamour ball. So they usually fall into the hands of punks like Banning, who will assure them how bewitching they are, and in the end get paid for their kind attention."

"Are you sure she and Banning were lovey-dovey?"

"Certain. Mallory was not only years older than his wife, but a quiet and intellectual fellow. She liked the bright lights, cards and dancing, and one

highball after the other. So they drifted apart, although they lived together. He had the money."

"And that's why they lived together," I add.

"As to her story about visiting her sister once a week, that was strictly for the old lad's ears. Her sister told me that, although she came to Tampa once a week, she did not call on her more than once a month. She was too busy playing around with her joy boy."

"Do you think she was working with Banning to bang out her husband?"

"I do not." She was just a poor old quarter-wit trying to get a little love and romance on the side. Banning, of course, had more important and profitable ideas. He knew, if anything happened to Mallory, his wife would get the estate, and he would get the old gal."

The chief tosses the nail file into the air, and catches it with his left hand, instead of the right. A sure indication that the case is positively closed.