

Anyone who knew him laughed at the thought of Jonathan Rumley being killed by a hit-and-run driver while he was fixing a tire. The idea of Rumley stooping to manual labor, under any circumstances!



Nobody
answered our
knock, so we
forced the lock.

DEAD MEN DON'T MOVE

Chief Howard Story

By THOMAS THURSDAY

THAT'S THE time the call came into Headquarters, 8:15 A.M.; it was Signal 17, meaning accident, and was radioed by Officers Suggs and Stanton, Car 22. They informed Lieut. Rice that a dead man was under a new Caddie coupe, with the right wheel jacked up.

The signal should have been 27; that means homicide, murder.

The scene: Less than five feet this side of the county-city line, on the Tamiami Trail. If it had been five-feet one inch over the line it would have been a job for John Tyler, of the sheriff's CBI. John did not complain about the matter; the cases in the county drove him nuts.

I was at the wheel of the car that drove Chief Howard, along with Frank Mullady, of

Identification Bureau. The chief lets me drive because he says I should be good for something. I used to be on street traffic, but I took a course in fingerprinting and general criminalistics, then asked to be assigned to Homicide. Howard still wonders why.

The chief took a quick glance at the scene, then looked down at the still male form lying under the rear of the car. The locale was lonely, except for a few early motorists heading West toward Tampa and St. Pete.

The back of the dark brown hair was matted with blood. The right rear wheel was jacked up. The observation of any novice would be to the effect that some careless or drunk driver had hit the Caddie while the guy was changing his flat tire. Which, of course, was the surface evidence. But the homicide officer who goes by surface evidence alone will soon learn that he should have remained behind some hamburger counter.

Just then Dick Rundell, of the *Herald*, and Sandy Schnier, of the *News* drove up as if they were practicing for the Indianapolis Speedway. Both guys covered Headquarters, and a few other things, for their papers. Dick was driving and Sandy said a prayer of thanks when he got out in one piece.

"What's going on here?" asked Rundell, smacking his chops over a possible headline item.

"We have been casting for catfish in the canal," I said. "The chief loves to eat catfish. You guys care for catfish?"

"Nuts," says Sandy. "That ain't no catfish lying under the back of the car."

The chief paid less attention to the reporters than if they were absent. He examined the road, sand-gravel. A single set of footprints were noticeable. I observed that the clothing of the corpse was hardly wrinkled. If this was really a hit-and-run job, it was about the neatest in all accident history.

The jack under the car was not only strange, but out of place in such a car's equipment. It was of the heavy, old-fashioned type, and the top cog was missing.

The chief frisked the pockets and came out with a billfold. When he read the name of the deceased his eyebrows went up an inch and a half.

"So who is he?" demanded Dick Rundell.

"It's neither Eisenhower nor Napoleon," I said.

"This looks tough," said the chief. "I think I'll

let you news gents solve it for us, or don't you see those TV and mystery movies? In those plays the police are just in the way, getting in the hair of the reporters, who have all the brains."

"I love them things," says Sandy. "The official cops always wind up looking stupid; it's either the star reporter or the great private eye-wash who solves the murder."

"Yeah," I says, "me and the chief got tossed out of the Tivoli theatre last week for enjoying one of those fairy tales in technicolor. The gem of gizzum was called *The Corpse Can't Speak English*. We started to giggle in the first reel and the usher asked us to please shut up, claiming that the picture was not starring Jackie Gleason or George Gobel. The guy who wrote the screenplay must have got his notions of official police procedure by spending his time in the Young Women's Christian Association."

"What I enjoyed about the story," said the chief, "was when the star reporter kept insulting the chief; aided by the private detective."

"Who informed the chief he was being insulted?" demanded Rundell, with a cherubic grin.

"The guy who wrote the screenplay, I guess," said Sandy.

"Me," I says, "I got a kick out of the part where the private eye-wash picked up the murder weapon. It's a .38 and he picks it up with his handkerchief, to preserve—he thinks—fingerprints."

"Doesn't that smudge them?" asked Sandy.

"It should," I says, "according to Lesson 29 in my Correspondence course. It says—"

Rundell leaned over and looked at the body under the car. "Face looks like someone I know."

"No doubt," said Sandy. "*Herald* reporters know all the dead ones."

Frank Mullady began to pack his ID kit.

"Okay," said Frank to the chief. "that does it."

"Who is he?" asked Sandy.

"Jonathan Rumley," said Howard. "*The* Jonathan Rumley, of the Rumley & Racine Department Store."

"That name should be good for a streamer headline," I said. "If he was a flophouse wino, he would have his passing printed near the classified ad sections, account of the flophouse wino not placing two full-page ads in your sheet every day, with six on Sunday."

"You flatfeet don't understand the art of journalism," said Rundell.

“And a lot of you flatheads don’t understand the art of fair play. When one cop gets out of line, you give the public the notion—with slanting—that all members of the force are lice. Anything to sell your papers.”

I thought I was doing okay in the debate, when Howard said, “Oh, both of you shut up. Life can be beautiful.”

“Where?” demanded Sandy, who was about to get married.

WE WENT back to Headquarters, first releasing the body to Jackson Memorial hospital, with a request for an autopsy.

In the upstairs office, where Rundell and Schnier followed us—without invitation—the chief sat down, took out his nail file, then pointed it at the reporters, and said, “You might state for publication that Jonathan Rumley was killed by a hit-and-run driver while trying to change a flat tire.”

Sandy Schnier whistled and Dick Rundell curled a mean lip.

“Now I’ll tell one about *Snow White and the Seven Cops*,” snorted Dick.

“You know, Cap,” said Sandy, “Rumley might have been murdered.” Sandy was a bit naive, and had not been around Headquarters as long as the blasé Rundell.

“Gentlemen,” said Howard, “if I may insult that fine word by addressing you as such; gentlemen, when will you members of the press understand that your papers must cooperate with the police? Let us assume that Mr. Rumley was murdered—just assume, mind you, because I’m not saying he actually was—but suppose he has been. You print it in your papers that I said he was killed. What happens when the murderer reads about it?”

“That’s no riddle,” said Dick. “The bum just hires a criminal lawyer, who puts in a claim for temporary insanity—with his dear old mother telling the judge and the jury that Benny was always such a good boy—after which he gets two or three mistrials, and winds up writing his life story in *Bloody Detective Cases Magazine*.”

“Well,” grinned Howard, “you got something there. A detective will risk his life apprehending a killer, and some attorney will get the sweet boy off on six pounds of legal technicalities. But speaking of Mr. Rumley, if the papers publish that Rumley was killed by a hit-and-run driver that will put the

possible murderer off guard. In turn, that will give us a chance to do some quiet investigating.”

“Look,” said Rundell, “you admit that Rumley was banged off, don’t you?”

“Nope,” said the chief. “I admit nothing because I don’t know anything positively. You must remember that this is a real life case, not the kind you see in the movies or hear on the radio. By the way, Dick, where were you at the time this happened? Even you can be a suspect.”

“Well,” said Sandy, “goodnight. See you tomorrow, same time, same police station. And when I tune in, I hope the show is more informative.”

“If you get any information out of him,” sniffed Rundell, “let me know. I’ll dial in, myself.”

AFTER WE ducked the news-eagles, Howard and me went to the police garage, next door, and drove out to the semi-mansion of Jonathan Rumley, down on Brickell Avenue, near the famous Deering Estate.

A cross between a butler and a twin to Bob Hope opened the door. Howard flashed his badge, and said, “I’d like to see Mrs. Rumley for a moment.” From the rear came a high contralto female voice, “You may show the gentleman in, Horatio.”

Come to think of it, this bird looked as if he *should* be named Horatio. Had it been Mike, I’d have fallen flat on my pan.

The voice of Mrs. Rumley was quiet, cultured and it would sound swell on Marilyn Monroe. Her first name was Alice, and she appeared to be in her fading forties—though she must have been a pip up to, say, thirty-five. She smiled graciously and waved her right hand for us to be seated.

“May I presume that you came to talk about my husband?” she said. “Well, frankly, whatever you have to tell me will not surprise me too much.”

“May I ask when you talked to him last?” asked Howard.

“First,” she replied, “won’t you tell me what happened?”

I forgot her cultured voice when I looked into her eyes. They were below zero, calculating and altogether hard. But the dame was a lady, far from the common herd of dolls.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Rumley, but I would appreciate it if you answer a few questions,” said the chief.

“I’d rather not parry with you,” she said. “I am

perfectly aware that you have come to report the death of my husband. Death by murder.”

I gave this babe a quick look-see. How come she knew her old man was banged out?

“Madame,” said Howard, “I have not even suggested that Mr. Rumley was killed. Why did you?”

“Well, *wasn't* he?” she replied, adding more ice cubes to her eyes. “And would it interest you to know, Chief Howard, that I am not too much surprised?”

“Yes, ma'am; I'm afraid it would.” Howard flipped his nail file a few times, then added, “May I ask *why* you are not surprised?”

“I believe you will find that out for yourself, and very soon. And now, do you mind telling me where, and how, he was murdered?”

“Up to this time, I have no positive evidence that Mr. Rumley was killed. Not even circumstantial. I can just tell you that his body was found in the rear of his jacked-up car on the Tamiami Trail, just this side of the city-county line. He could have been trying to fix a blowout or perhaps changing a tire.”

Madame Rumley smiled like a cat swallowing its third canary. “That,” she said, “is absurd. I can't imagine Jonathan Rumley fixing anything that would require manual labor. Another thing, he disliked getting his hands dirty; if something happened to his tires I know he would phone for a garage to repair it.”

“You can't phone when the nearest phone was more than two miles away. Therefore it is reasonable, under the conditions, that he would attempt to fix the tire himself.”

“Possible, but highly improbable: No; if Mr. Rumley was found dead, I feel assured that he was murdered.”

“I assume you have your reasons for believing he was killed. Would you mind telling me what they are?”

“I'd rather not comment, but I am sure it will all come out in the wash, as they say. And the linen will be very, very dirty. Good evening, gentlemen. The butler will show you to the door.”

THE RUMLEY and Racine Department Store was the largest in the city, founded by the deceased Rumley's grandpop, Jonathan Rumley the First. It was kind and considerate to its employees, meaning when you worked there twenty-five

years—without croaking—they gave you a nice letter, along with a watch, bought wholesale for at least fifteen bucks. More, the employees were given a special discount of ten percent when they shopped in the joint. The fact that the same stuff could be bought around the corner for nearly half-price rarely occurred to the employees.

B. Algernon Racine, partner, was three years younger than the late Rumley, and some of the older employees said the 'B' stood for 'Bum.' Mr. Racine liked women, horses and crap games in that order, but he never permitted the last two to interfere with the first.

The chief and I got in through the employees entrance one-half hour before the store opened the next morning. Most of them had read the morning *Herald's* account of the passing of their beloved employer, and even the chief was astounded to hear that none of them believed it.

A tall, anemic-looking assistant department manager, named Joe Stanton, said, behind his hand, “Well, he sure asked for it; it's a mystery to me that they didn't kill him long before this.”

“Why?” asked Howard.

“Why!” echoed Stanton. “Women, women, women, that's why. That guy was cracked about dames. I think he was either over-sexed or over-stupid. And I can tell you something else, *Mister* Racine is almost as bad. I heard they had some rough parties on the penthouse roof, atop of the store. I just happen to know about that little love nest. Why, both Rumley and Racine used to take some of the pretty store employees up there for tea. Tea—hell!”

An old gal, working in the ladies lingerie—second floor, rear—with the name of Abigail Gamper—turned up her beak at a 45-degree angle, and informed us, “Now, if you really want to know what I think—”

“Just the facts, ma'am,” I said. “You can't get a conviction on thinks.”

“I think both Mr. Rumley and Mr. Racine were too sporty for their own good,” went on the decayed Marilyn Monroe. “Did you notice that all the prettiest women are working in the business office, where Mr. Rumley and Mr. Racine can see them, right near their private office? And don't think for a moment that Mrs. Rumley is not wise to it. You know what? I have seen her, with my own two eyes, snooping around once in a while. I would not be surprised if they find that she—well, maybe

I am saying too much. So just forget what I said, please.”

“You mean you think that Mrs. Rumley murdered her own husband?” asked Chief Howard.

“If she did, she did it the hard way,” I said. “Why in hell should she go way out there on a lonely road to get him, when she has him home every day? I know 57 ways to bump off a husband at home and I hope my old lady don’t know any.”

Abigail Gamper left us to wait on a customer who was trying to tune in on the conversation.

We went out to the loading platform, back of the store. The place was crawling with delivery trucks. As we walked slowly down the platform we overheard three drivers holding a platform post mortem on their late boss.

“I should cry about that guy!” said a big, red-headed driver. “Did he treat his employees square? I’m asking you, did he, the big louse? On Christmas, he and the other louse mails each one of us a form letter, wishing us a very you-know-what, and thanking us suckers, for being so nice to Rumley and Racine. Did any one ever get a check in the letter, for as much as a dime?”

“You said it, pal,” agreed another driver. “To hell with him!”

At that moment a tall, muscular-looking blond lad walked up silently, tuned into the conversation, and said, “That’s a fine way to talk about a dead man. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!”

Later, we learned that the newcomer was Joe Hatfield, supervisor of delivery. He spat on the platform and walked away. The men made no reply.

WE FOLLOWED Hatfield to the end of the platform, to a small office, which was his headquarters.

“I’m glad to hear someone say a kind word for Jonathan Rumley,” said Howard, showing his official credentials. “In fact, it’s the first kind word I have heard.”

“He must have treated you better than the rest,” I added.

“I admit that he was rather hardboiled,” said Hatfield, “but he just expected his help to work for their pay. You never seen such a bunch of loafers in your life. Half the drivers used to stop off for drinks while on their routes.”

“Why does everybody think he was murdered?” asked the chief.

“I guess it was because of the women he played around with. If he was really killed, you can bet it was some woman.”

“Why a woman?” asked Howard.

“Such a question!” I shove in. “Ever look at a month’s police reports? Take away booze and dames and half the cops would be out of a job!”

Howard gives me a stare that says, in neon, “Shut up!”

“Well,” said Hatfield, “what I mean is, you take a few women who want the same man, and one of them is liable to get jealous. If the man tells her he likes the other, she is liable to get sore and blot him out.”

“Do you happen to know any of Mr. Rumley’s lady friends?” asked Howard.

“There is one named Nina Shirley—a pretty girl, if ever I saw one.”

“Married or single?”

“Completely married,” replied Hatfield. “And her husband is nuts about her. I wouldn’t be surprised if he didn’t get wise that she was visiting him up in the penthouse now and then for a cup of tea—or something. But there’s another angle to that story.”

“What?”

“Racine is also sweet on her. Two weeks ago, I was working late one night, and I heard Rumley and Racine fighting about her. Racine wanted Rumley to fire her and Rumley told him to go to hell. Racine is a big man and Rumley is rather small in comparison.”

“Did you chance to see Rumley when he left the store last night?” quizzed the chief.

“Yeah; I sure did. It was nearly 7:00 P.M., and everybody but the porters had gone home. I was making out my daily report on deliveries when he came down from the penthouse. He got in his car and drove away. He didn’t even say goodnight to me, as he always does. I guess he had something on his mind.”

“Can you tell me something more about this Nina Shirley’s husband?” asked Howard. “Did he work here in the store?”

“No, sir. I heard he was a professional gambler. Anyway, every time I go into a bookie joint I see him tossing the dice at the green table. But maybe he does work some place; I’m not sure. I know he used to call for her after work several times a week. Then sometimes he would go for a whole week without calling and picking her up once.”

"Have you seen him lately?" pursued Howard.

"Yes; last night. He drove up just a few minutes before Rumley came down from the penthouse. He asked me if I knew where his wife was, and I said, 'How the hell would I know?'"

"Then he said, 'I'm going up to the penthouse and have a showdown with that s.o.b.' I didn't know he knew anything about the penthouse. I told him he could not go up, and he got sore and finally drove away."

"YOU SAID Rumley came down while you were here last night. Was he alone or was Mrs. Rumley with him?" asked Howard.

"You must think Rumley is a dope," said Hatfield. "I don't think Mrs. Rumley was ever up there. Anyway, he came down first and, about ten minutes later, Nina Shirley came down. I made out I was working and didn't see her. It was none of my business."

"You're not sure that Mr. Shirley works any place?"

"As far as I know, he's just a broke-and-flush-again gambler."

"Did it ever occur to you that he and his wife were blackmailing Rumley?" I asked. Howard gave me another look, this time in fireworks.

"Well," said Hatfield, "maybe so; I wouldn't know about that. Sounds reasonable, though. He could be the type, when broke, to go in for the old shakedown stuff."

"Can you recall just how many delivery trucks were here when Rumley came down?"

"Just one. Why?"

"Never mind: I was just thinking. Er, did Rumley return while you were still here?"

"No, sir; but he may have returned after I left. I understand that he used to come back some nights and hold wild parties in the penthouse. So did Racine, only at different times, of course. They should have had two penthouses. They seemed to like the one upstairs very much."

"Let me ask your opinion of something, Mr. Hatfield," said the chief. "From what you read in the papers, would you assume that Mr. Rumley had been murdered, or would you assume it was done by a hit-and-run driver?"

"I can't really tell," he replied, pushing his brown fedora to the back of his head. "At the same time, I just can't believe that he was killed by any hit-and-run driver. More, I also can't imagine a

little guy like him, who was also neat-and prissy, fixing his own flat tire."

"Why?"

"I don't think he would know how to operate a jack, especially one with a cog missing, like I read in the papers."

"Thanks, Hatfield, for your cooperation. I may call on you again."

"Any time, sir. Do anything I can to help. Goodnight."

NINA SHIRLEY was a snappy looking chickadee. Anyone trying to describe her in print would be a sucker—or Shakespeare, which same I ain't. As to her husband, he was of the dime-a-dozen type, the kind you see at a ballpark, rooting for the home team, with a beer in one hand and a hotdog in the other.

A check-out on Shirley showed he worked a few months a year, usually at a pari-mutuel window at one of the Miami horse tracks. For the most part he touted and gambled and was usually broke. His wife, Nina, was an expert stenographer. She was now 26 and had been employed as Rumley's private secretary for nearly two years.

Dick Rundell and Sandy Schnier were waiting for Howard when we got back to Headquarters.

"Just in time to make the Home Edition," said Sandy. "So?"

"So," echoed the chief, "I just saw another one of those detective movies, entitled *The Happy Homicide*. I rather enjoyed this one; they killed a wisecracking reporter in the first ten minutes of the show."

"Yeah," I said, "he died with his scoop on."

"By the way," went on Howard, "did you boys want anything about the Rumley hit-and-run case?"

"Come on, chief," said Rundell; "give! Haven't you always been treated fair by me?"

"Come to think of it, I have. I can recall when you actually spelled my name right on one occasion. It was only three years ago."

"Leave us cut out the Martin and Lewis stuff," said Sandy. "Jackie Gleason has taken their place—for a while, at least. Besides, vaudeville is dead."

"Like the *News*," grinned Rundell.

Howard toyed with his nail file and looked toward the high ceiling. "Well, boys," he said, "you may inform your panting readers that the Rumley death may not be a hit-and-run case after all. Remember, I said may not."

"I trust we can quote you on that," said Sandy, "and not have you deny it before the next edition?"

"Well, now," said the chief, "you wouldn't want me to give you a fairy tale, would you?"

"Hell, no," I butted in. "They got enough fairy tales in the *Herald* as it is."

"You're trying to starve us to death," complained Rundell.

"Look, boys," said Howard. "I am indeed sorry to inform you that I have no magic wand which I can wave over a case and solve it just so you can get a front page sensation. All the magic wands appear to be owned and operated by Hollywood producers, and the guys who write the whodunits, after studying the technique of Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. But, you might state, and with considerable accuracy—and I understand your papers are sometimes concerned with accuracy—it is now my quite humble judgment that Jonathan Rumley was not killed by a hit-and-run driver."

"Don't tell me an alligator crawled out of the Everglades and did the job," said Sandy.

"I have reason to believe that he was killed by a person or persons unknown to date. Just to whet the mental appetites of your readers, you may also state that it is fairly evident that Rumley was not killed in the place in which his body was found."

"Swell," said Rundell. "Now would you mind naming the murder suspect or suspects, or do I have to write forty stories for forty days?"

Howard left the chair, put on his broad-brim Stetson, flipped his nail file and headed for the door.

"May we hope that you will feel like talking some more sometime?" asked Dick Rundell.

"Unless I am transferred back to the uniform division," grinned Howard, "I should have some news for you and myself by noon." As he opened the door, he added, "I hope."

"Which makes three of us," said Sandy.

"Well," said Rundell, "I guess I'll go back to the office and bang out some copy."

"Me, too," said Sandy, and both had the same idea, viz., speed out to the Rumley home and get a spot interview with the Widow Rumley.

BUT THE chief and me had the same notion, and beat them out there by at least three minutes. Rundell got there a few seconds ahead of Sandy.

"Nice day," said Sandy to Dick.

"Beautiful," replied Rundell.

The chief walked out from in back of the house, and said two words: "Beat it."

After the news-eagles left, Howard and me drove about five miles west. We stopped two blocks from a small frame house, in need of paint. It was rather lonesome; the nearest neighbor was a full block away. Nobody answered our knock, so we forced the lock. We went inside and came out with a bundle.

After which we drove to the banks of the Tamiami Canal and sat on the bank. I kept my mouth shut, knowing Howard was trying to do some heavy thinking. We remained there, in silence, for at least half an hour, then back to Headquarters.

Comes midnight of the same day. We drove to the loading platform of Rumley and Racine, showed the night watchman our official credentials, and he hoisted us up to the penthouse. We had a search warrant, in case there might be some legal kickback later.

The joint was fitted out for love and romance. The best stuff in the store had no doubt been put there. The two bedrooms were fit for a complete family of kings, only one judged from the silk lingerie around that some queens had also found it pleasant.

"See anything?" asked the chief.

"Nope," I said.

As we stepped out the door, the chief spotted something shining on the floor. Without a word he slipped it into a pocket. Then he aimed his flashlight on the floor.

The strong beams showed dark stains. It looked like blood, and what's more, it was.

Just before the store opened next morning we made a call on Racine, in his very private office. The guy was big, muscular and looked like Gene Tunney right after the second Dempsey fight. The type of gent who said "No!" and could back it up with two good fists.

After the usual courtesies, which Racine merely grunted in a bored manner, Howard got down to business. "Do you recognize this lodge button, Mr. Racine?" asked the chief, showing him the object he had found on the floor.

Racine examined the button hastily. "It certainly isn't mine."

"Perhaps it belonged to Mr. Rumley."

"No; I am sure it wasn't Rumley's. And I don't know who it belongs to. Now, if you will excuse—"

The chief came closer to the desk, looked Racine straight in the eyes. "Mr. Racine," he said, "I must ask you a blunt question."

"Ask it."

"Do you know who murdered Jonathan Rumley?"

The question evidently hit Racine in the solar plexus. He rose from the chair, all six feet of him, and shook a finger in the chief's face. "I consider that question an insult," he snapped. "Besides, I thought it was common knowledge that Rumley was killed by a hit-and-run driver while he was changing a tire. Isn't that the truth?"

"It isn't; the man was murdered, unquestionably."

"That is a serious thing to say," replied Racine. "Are you positive he was murdered?"

"I am fully aware that it is a serious statement, just as murder is a serious matter. Unfortunately, murderers do their thinking after the crime. Incidentally, can you tell me something about one Nina Shirley?"

"Well—eh—why, all I know is that she was Rumley's private secretary. I sincerely trust you don't suspect *her* of killing Rumley?"

"At the moment, I am apt to suspect anybody, including you."

"Including *me*?"

"I said *anybody*, Mr. Racine. Good morning, sir."

ABOUT FIFTEEN minutes later we drove up in front of a four-unit apartment house in the Northwest section. We looked at the names on the mail boxes and under Apt. 3 was *John Shirley*.

He opened the door at the fifth knock, the last two bangs were hard and loud. He was still in bed and still looked half-drunk.

"What the hell d'yer want?" he asked, and his throat was gravel, paved with booze.

"We're police officers," said Howard. "We'd like to ask you a few questions."

"I understand that you were seen at the delivery platform of the Rumley and Racine store the night Mr. Rumley was murdered. Is that correct?"

He clenched his fists and made with the temper. I shoved him back on the bed, and said, "Be nice, chum, be nice. We're just trying to make a living."

"What if I was? Ain't a man got a right to call

for his own wife, when she works there?"

"Where's your car?" asked the chief.

"Front of the house. That dark red coupe. What about the car?"

The three of us went out to the car. The chief made a search and came up with nothing of official interest.

"In case you may be planning on taking a little trip," said Howard. "I advise you not to. Thanks for your cooperation. Go back to bed."

Late that night we went to the delivery platform and searched the trucks. Evidently the night watchman was not watching—probably taking his customary sleep, the normal work of department store watchmen.

Under the front seat of the fourth truck, Howard yanked out a monkey wrench, wrapped in old burlap. On the burlap was dry blood. Same on the wrench.

He went to the phone and called Frank Mullady, in the CBI.

"Frank," said Howard, "go out and get Joe Hatfield. If he's asleep, wake him up. He's turning out to be my star witness. Take him to my office and tell him I will be right there. If those two news-snoopers, Rundell and Schnier, show up and ask any questions, just tell 'em that I said that the track is muddy at Hialeah and little things like that. If they can figure that out, good luck to them."

We were back in the chief's private office half an hour later. With Frank Mullady was Rundell and Schnier, nostrils extended for a break in the case. Between the two news-eagles sat Joe Hatfield, wondering what it is all about.

IT WAS NOW 1:35 A.M. Howard locked the door behind him. "Sorry to disturb you at this hour," said Howard to Hatfield, "but murder is a serious business. Now, I would like to ask you a few more questions. First, are you positively certain that Shirley did not go up to the penthouse that night? I mean the night Rumley was found dead on the highway?"

"Of course it is possible," said Hatfield. "But I don't see how he could get there without me seeing him. He could have sneaked up while I was writing my reports."

Howard leaned over and scooped up something from the floor, right next to Hatfield.

"Did you drop this, Hatfield?" asked Howard. "It must have fallen out of your lapel when you

came in here.”

It was the lodge button, found in the penthouse.

Hatfield looked at the button, then at his coat lapel, and said, “Gosh, now how did that come loose? Thanks, I’m real proud of that button.”

Howard left his chair and walked around Hatfield, Rundell and Schnier several times, all the time flipping his nail file. Suddenly he halted in front of Hatfield.

“Hatfield,” he said, “I’m certain who killed Rumley but I am uncertain of the motive.” He paused and walked around the trio once again. “Hatfield,” he went on, “what possible motive did you have to murder Rumley?”



As far as Hatfield was concerned, that question was an H-bomb dropped right in his lap. For a long moment he sat statue-like. Then his facial muscles began to twitch. “Are you *kidding*?” he finally asked. “I never killed anybody! Why, I liked Mr. Rumley very much. He was a good friend of mine. Why should *I* kill him?”

“You told me that you have never been up to the penthouse,” said Howard. “Is that correct?”

“That’s correct. Why?”

“Then how do you figure that the lodge button I just handed you was up there? I didn’t notice any wings on it.”

“Why, why,” sputtered Hatfield. “You just found it here on the floor; didn’t you?”

“On the contrary, I found it outside the penthouse door. I also found some dry blood on the floor. The laboratory test proves it to be that of Mr. Rumley.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” exploded Hatfield. “You must be crazy. You can’t make *me* the goat, just because you can’t solve the case!”

“Listen, buster,” I said, “you made yourself the

goat. Get the notion out of your head that there can be any such thing as a perfect crime. When a homicide goes unsolved, it merely means that the men working on the case couldn’t find a clue. *But there’s always some clue, some place.*”

Howard looked at me, and asked, “Are you through with the lecture, professor?” Rundell and Schnier thought this was good for a laugh, but Hatfield didn’t.

“Yes, indeed, Hatfield, if there is any goat, you are tagged,” said Howard. “Here’s how I reconstruct your actions on that night: You waited outside the penthouse door for Rumley to come out. You slugged him over the head with the large monkey wrench. Then you dragged him back to the penthouse and closed the door. Next, you waited for all the delivery men to leave the platform, then you carried the body of Rumley downstairs to his own car and drove to the spot where you planted him.”

“That’s not true!” exploded Hatfield. “You are trying to frame me!”

“If you are being framed,” I said, “it is with your own picture in the middle.”

HOWARD raised his hand for me to shut up. He never lets me get into the act.

“Another thing,” went on Howard to Hatfield, “when you jacked up the car you must have had a hell of a time, because the top cog on the jack was broken. More, it would take a strong man like you to work it. Rumley didn’t have the strength to operate it, not with his makeup. And still more, you evidently got nervous and pulled another boner. You jacked up the *right* wheel, *after* you had punctured the *left* wheel.”

That did it. The wrap-up was complete. Hatfield was silent.

“Okay,” said Hatfield. “So I did kill Rumley!”

“And your motive? I admit I would like to know *that*.”

“My wife. She is the cashier in the restaurant where Rumley has his lunch. I got a tip that she was dating him, and went up to the penthouse while I was off duty. So one night, when she thought I was home painting the kitchen, she got off from the restaurant, and went to the penthouse. I know, because I was there and I saw her with my own eyes. I loved that woman and didn’t want to lose her.”

“Listen, buddy,” I butted in, “didn’t anyone tell

you that *no* dame is worth taking a seat in the chair for? And listen, why kill the guy in the affair? In nine such cases out of ten, the woman is the lead-on. Did Rumley *force* her to go to the penthouse with him? Did he assault her and carry her up to the penthouse? Or did she go of her own free will? Besides, since you were dumb enough to commit murder, why not knock off both? You will get only one sit-down in the chair for one or twenty murders.”

“Don’t mind junior,” said Howard. “He thinks he’s a sage.”

Howard turned to Hatfield, and went on, “When you found that your wife was going with Rumley, didn’t you remonstrate with her about it?”

“Yes; I did. But she said she was tired of going with a cheap guy like me and what was I going to do about it? She even asked for a divorce.”

Hatfield paused a moment, then mused, “I guess a fellow is a sucker to kill over a woman like that.”

Howard called in Detectives Papy and McNeill and had them take Hatfield to the can, charged with murder in the first degree.

“Hey,” said Rundell, “what about the shirt and pants? Where did you get them?”

“Believe it or not, I actually did some story-book detective work on that deal,” grinned Howard. “One of the things that puzzled me was how the killer got back to town after the crime, after he took Rumley out there on the Trail. So I searched the neighborhood and found a house a mile from the scene. I also learned that the little frame house had been bought recently by Hatfield. Get the idea, boys? He didn’t *have* to go back to town.”

“I’m asking what about the shirt and pants.” demanded Rundell.

“Where did you think I found them, in the *Herald* building? I found them in Hatfield’s house, of course. A test showed the blood on both was the same as the blood type of Rumley.”

“Swell!” said Sandy Schnier. “Just like a movie!”

“Movie—hell!” snapped the chief. “This was the real stuff.” He tossed his nail file into the air and walked out.