

# Satan's Saleslady



*It was a strange pact the millionaire was forced into—the purchase of a picture in exchange for his son's life. But before the mystery sale was rung up, a corpse was thrown in as down payment.*

**By John Gunderson**

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I'D HAD a call from a Mrs. Leyden on Park Avenue, and I was waiting in her penthouse apartment when this girl came in.

"Mr. Faraday? I am Mrs. Marjorie Leyden," she said briskly. She was in her twenties, small, attractive and sure of herself. And I'd expected a doddering dowager!

She looked pale. Off in another room I could hear men's voices.

I began: "Over the phone, Mrs. Leyden, you didn't make it clear what you wanted—"

"No, no, there wasn't time," she cut in. "I—I just want to engage you. What is your fee?"

"Well, that depends entirely on what—"

"We'll settle that later." She thrust a crumpled piece of paper into my hand. "Will this do as a retainer? I need your help—desperately—to persuade them."

I looked at what she had given me. It was her check for—of all crazy amounts—\$173.80.

A door swung open and a voice called: "Come in, Mr. Faraday."

Through the open door I could see

three men, one of them a city dick.

"They'll explain," she whispered. "Go in there and fight!"

Her hand brushed my arm, and the fingers were not putty, but slim and strong. What was I supposed to fight about, I wondered. But something told me Marjorie Leyden was O.K. I went in.

"Close the door, Faraday," said a paunchy man behind a desk. He had a shock of gray hair growing from the front of an otherwise bald head. He was Benjamin Leyden, the multimillionaire railroad magnate. I'd seen his picture on the financial page.

"This is Lieutenant Tredwell of the Missing Persons Bureau." Leyden jerked a pudgy thumb toward the city dick. "And this is Mr. Pelham, a private detective whom I have engaged."

Pelham said: "Hello, Faraday." Tredwell looked mad and didn't say anything. I'd run into him before. He was surly and officious and I didn't like him.

"An important decision must be made at once," Leyden said, "and my daughter-in-law wishes you to represent her in the matter. She seems to have a great deal of faith in you, Faraday."

I wondered why Marjorie Leyden of Park Avenue should have faith in a detective who'd only been in business a couple of years and still had quite a time paying his rent.

Lieutenant Tredwell squirmed in his chair and said: "Mr. Leyden, why waste time? Faraday may have certain underworld contacts, but he's no hot shot on missing persons. Why not give the police your O.K. to go ahead in the regular way?"

**L**EYDEN ignored him and went on: "Faraday, a month ago my son, Tait Leyden, married against my wishes and brought his wife here. My son has

inherited a strong tendency toward alcoholism as well as a poor heart. He has often remained away from home intoxicated for days at a time. At eighteen, he married a striptease artist, but I got him out of that. I've got him out of one scrape after another. His current marriage I do not approve of, but I have permitted it.

"A week ago my son left his club for this apartment one afternoon and never arrived. The next morning a card from him came in the mail."

Leyden fished a government postcard out of his pocket and handed it to me. It read:

*DAD: Met some friends and will be away for a while. Tell Margie don't worry. I'll get back under my own steam.*

TAIT

It was penciled in an uncertain hand and postmarked a week ago from New York. A piece was torn from the lower left hand corner of the card.

"In other words," I said, "he's off on a drunk."

"That would be the assumption," Leyden said, "since he's done this same thing before. While still sober enough he would get word to me some way so Pelham and I wouldn't turn the city upside down looking for him. Eventually he always turned up."

Pelham said: "But this torn postcard is a new wrinkle."

Leyden went on: "Yes, about the postcard. Last night about eight an art dealer who said his name was Shafter insisted on seeing me. He had a very bad picture with him and he wanted one hundred thousand dollars for it. Naturally I refused and laughed in his face."

Leyden hesitated, then spoke slowly. "He started to light a cigarette. Then with his other hand he took a triangular bit of

cardboard from his pocket, gave me an instant to gaze at it. Then he touched the match to the cardboard and ground the ash into a black smudge on his fingers. He said, 'I'll be back tomorrow night at eight o'clock about the picture, in case you change your mind,' and went out. I am positive that that bit of paper was the corner torn from my son's card!"

I let that sink in a minute before I said: "It looks like kidnaping."

"That," Leyden said, "is what my daughter-in-law thinks, also Mr. Pelham, who has done work for me before. The police, however, suggest that no money be paid.

"At least not right away," Tredwell growled. "Look, Mr. Leyden, there's two possible angles. Either your son is just off on another drunk and that art guy is a crazy crank—or else you're up against a bunch of amateur snatchers who think they've got a clever dodge to beat the kidnap law. Well, it ain't so clever. This art guy has got to make contact, see?"

"Let me put a tail on him when he shows up and I'll find your son and save you the money. How can the police keep down kidnaping if you guys give 'em dough before you even get a ransom note? How do you know you'll get your son back if you buy this picture?"

Leyden nodded briefly. He said: "All right, Faraday. What do you think?"

"I'll tell you what I think," I said. "If you want to keep down crime, go ahead and do what this copper tells you. But if you want to get your son back alive, get out a hundred grand worth of small bills and buy that picture."

Tredwell snorted. "That's why we've got kidnaping. The public pays taxes for a modern efficient police force, then throws away its money on half-baked private dicks to gum up the works."

I was getting tired of being pushed

around. I said: "Look here, Leyden. Tredwell wants to catch crooks. Your daughter-in-law wants to get her husband back. Which do you want?"

"Both," Leyden said.

"All right, you want both," I said. "But if you've got to choose, you want your son back and to hell with the crooks. Well, these guys haven't got a clever dodge, they've got a *foolproof* dodge. They're amateurs, my grandmother. Sure the art guy has to make contact. He can make contact standing on the steps of the city hall. If he blows his nose, your son comes home safe and sound. If he wiggles his ears, you'll find your son frozen to death in a gutter.

"This art guy can divvy up the hundred grand any time within the next ten years. When you buy the picture, it's *his money*. Even if you find these drinking pals that have your son, that postcard is *proof* that your son went with them of his own free will. These guys have a sure thing and they know it. Where's the kidnaping? Leyden, if you want to see your son alive, you'll pay the dough. Then when you get your son back, go after the crooks."

Tredwell's face was like a ripe beet.

Leyden reached in a drawer and said: "All right, Faraday. You win. I'll leave everything in your hands."

He pulled out a package wrapped in brown paper and tossed it on the desk toward me.

Pelham, the private dick, looked surprised. He stood up and said: "Excuse me, Mr. Leyden, but am I fired? I thought if you paid the ransom I was to make the contact."

"You're not fired, Pelham," Leyden said. "You've done good work for me before. Stay around and help Faraday."

Pelham was a little guy, prematurely bald, and I didn't think he'd get mad, but he did. "Leyden, I've been in business

with a reputable agency for twenty years and I know the angles," he said. "I should kowtow to this blow-hard Faraday—"

"You do what you damned please, Pelham," Leyden cut in.

**P**ELHAM went out. Tredwell was on his feet to go too. He said: "If this means we're to lay off, we'll lay off, Mr. Leyden. But I think you're throwing away a hundred grand."

"Not a hundred thousand." Leyden smiled slowly, picked up the package and handed it to me. "Faraday, I hadn't finished when Pelham interrupted. I've kept records on my son and I've spent nearly half a million getting him out of one jam after another. I'm a business man. Your job is to make a deal with these kidnapers, and you can do it. Sure, they'd like a hundred thousand, but damn it, I can't afford it. If they see fifty hard cash, you mark my word, they'll snap it up."

"Look, you're in no position to bargain with them," I said. "They've got your son. Can't you get that through your head?"

He said: "I'm playing it my way and that's final. I'll see that you get a good fee."

I was getting mad. I said: "So your son is worth fifty grand to you but no more. All right, I'm telling you you can't buy him for that. You'll be buying him a fifty grand funeral. You can call back your stooge Pelham and let him handle that. I'm fed up and the hell with your fee."

The cigarette dropped from Leyden's mouth. As I started out he called: "Wait, Faraday—"

But I went through the door of the apartment and punched the elevator button.

Then I heard footsteps behind me. I turned, and it was Marjorie Leyden.

"Did you make him give you the money?" she said.

During the argument I'd forgotten all about her. "I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do for you," I said. "If fifty grand will get your husband back, then Pelham can do it as well as I can." I handed back the check.

"Oh." The friendliness melted from her eyes. "I—I was mistaken in you, wasn't I?"

She spun around on her heel and started away. The elevator door slid open and the boy said: "Going down, sir?"

I waved him on. "Wait a minute," I called to her.

She turned.

"That retainer," I said. "Why was it for \$173.80?"

She drew herself up. "I should think that would be obvious. It's all the money I've got."

I gaped at her. The dress she was wearing must have cost that. I got to wondering again how she'd come to call me instead of some better-known dick. I had a hunch I was sticking my neck out, but I said:

"What were you going to do right now, Mrs. Leyden. Nothing? All right, come downstairs and let's talk it over."

She got her coat and purse from a closet near the elevator. On the way down I got part of her story. Her name had been Marjorie McGinnis and she'd been called to the Leyden home as a nurse two months ago when Tait Leyden had got back from his worst bender. He'd gone crazy about her and asked her to marry him.

"And—and so I did marry him," she finished as we sat at a table in the cocktail lounge downstairs.

"Do you love him?" I said.

"No," she answered faintly. "But it isn't as simple as that. He loves me. And he was so alone—so helpless. That alcoholic weakness—his father gave him no sympathy and he couldn't fight it by

himself. He promised me never to go off that way and drink again. That's why I'm so sure he's been kidnaped. It wasn't his money I was after. You've got to believe that. I haven't even asked him for money since we were married."

"Yeah, I believe you," I said. I was trying to think.

"But you've got to *do* something," she burst out.

I frowned and said: "Can you raise a hundred grand any way?"

"No!" she cried. "I've just been telling you—"

"All right," I said, "but I still think fifty grand isn't enough and besides Pelham's got that now."

"Pelham!" Her eyes flashed sparks. "He—he's nothing but a cheap keyhole peeper! Leyden hired him to check up on me before Tait married me. He'd previously used him to get Tait out of his marriage with Doris Delisanti, the strip-tease artist. She was rotten.

"She got him to make a will in her favor and then tried to make him drink himself to death. He came to despise her. Well, Pelham got Tait a divorce by catching her with another man. Which would have been all right except that he framed her; she'd been smart and stayed away from men."

The name Delisanti sounded awfully familiar to me—and then I remembered where I'd heard it.

I said: "Well, the right way is to pay the dough. But at least I've got a lead. Maybe I can do something." I picked up my hat. "I'll be back in a little while."

"I'm coming with you," she said determinedly.

"Suit yourself," I said.

I took her in a taxi down to Thirty-eighth Street and looked along the row of buildings on Broadway until I saw a particular bar.

"Wait here in the cab," I told Marjorie Leyden.

I went in, started for the back room.

"Hey, wise guy, you can't go in there," called the bartender.

I WENT on through. There were drinks on the tables and four or five card games. I went to the table in the far corner. A thin-faced black-haired guy with round shoulders and cautious, dissipated eyes looked up and said: "Hello, Faraday. Deal me out this one, boys." It was Eddie Delisanti.

He got up and nodded toward an empty table. "Long time no see, Faraday. Name your drink."

"I'll go along with you," I said.

"Two Scotches and water, White Lion," he told the waiter. "What's on your mind, Faraday?"

He looked prosperous. "How are the ponies treating you, Eddie?" I said.

He shrugged. "Could be worse."

I said: "Have you got a sideline now, Eddie—besides the horses?"

He looked at me sharply. "No."

"Do you know anybody that's got a picture for sale?"

He said: "I don't know anything about that picture."

"Well, I'll put it another way," I said. "Your sister got a pretty raw deal from this Leyden guy, didn't she?"

He looked cautious. "I dunno. I ain't sure she didn't get what was comin' to her. She was tryin' to shake him down. I ain't seen her much lately."

I went on: "If she got a good chance to get even with Leyden and could get a couple of guys to help her, I'll bet she'd take it."

Delisanti's neck was getting red. "Listen, Faraday, I thought you come to me because maybe you wanted a tip on a horse. What sis does is her business, and I

don't know nothin' about it—and if I did, d'ya think I'd stool on her?"

"Where's she working now?" I asked.

He began: "None of your damn—" He broke off. "O.K., you could find that out. I got a card from her yesterday from Baltimore. She's at the Casino Theater there."

I said: "When I asked you a little while ago, why'd you say you didn't know anything about *that* picture. *What* picture?"

Delisanti said: "Faraday, these guys in here are friends of mine and they don't like private dicks. For two cents I'd—"

"Skip it, Eddie, I'm getting out anyhow," I said. "So long."

I went out. Marjorie Leyden, waiting for me in the cab, said anxiously: "Was he in there?"

"Who?" I said.

"Why—my husband. They'd probably be holding him in a bar. I thought—"

"Listen, I'm a detective, not a magician," I said. "I told you I didn't think I could do anything. I still don't. But I'm trying. Let's go back to your place. That guy was supposed to show up pretty soon."

The taxi dropped us off in front of the Park Avenue building, and she started in the main entrance.

I took her by the arm and said: "Let's go through this way."

We went into the cocktail lounge and I found the waiter we'd had before and described Delisanti to him. "He might have ordered White Lion and water," I added.

He went into a huddle with the barmen, and when he came back he said: "He was in here yesterday, sir, and several times before. The boys at the bar remember him."

I said to a barman: "What time yesterday?"

"Around eight in the evening," he said. "He had a couple of quick ones and then went out."

"Do you think he was the man with the picture?" Marjorie said.

I said I didn't know.

I went into a phone booth and called Tredwell at Missing Persons, and got the information that he was still at Leyden's apartment. I phoned upstairs.

"Faraday? I thought you walked out on this case," he said. "All right, stay out! The police can handle it without your help."

"I thought Pelham was going to try to make a deal when the guy shows up at eight," I said.

"That's right, but the police are putting a tail on him too."

"Uh-huh," I said. "Well, I just called to say if you want to be smart you'll put a tail on Eddie Delisanti." I gave him a quick picture of the evidence I had, which wasn't much. "I'd tail him myself, except that Mrs. Leyden and I have other things to do."

"Such as what?" he said sarcastically.

I said: "Such as to come up there and see that you dumb cops don't get her husband bumped off with your horsing around."

He started to splutter as I slammed down the receiver.

Marjorie Leyden and I went up in the elevator. When we stepped into the reception hall, Marjorie opened the closet door to put away her coat. She let out a hoarse gasp and jumped back.

**I**T WAS like in the movie thrillers. The body of a blonde-haired girl with red lips and mascaraed eyes fell out of the closet darn near on top of her. Dark red blood from a bullet hole in her chest had messed up her white coat, and there was a dribble of blood from her mouth. She was

dead.

I'd begun punching the elevator button again. I'd seen two things about the body, neither of which I liked the looks of.

I grabbed Marjorie and clapped a hand over her mouth to see that she didn't scream.

"We're getting out," I snapped. "The apartment must be soundproofed against elevator noise so the shot wasn't noticed inside. Is that right?"

"I think so," she said.

As the door slid open, I stood between the operator and the body and he didn't see it. I bolstered Marjorie as she swayed in the open door. One thing I'd noticed was the dead girl's handbag with the initials D.D., which had to mean Doris Delisanti. The other thing I'd noticed was a little pearl-handled gun by the body.

Marjorie was deathly pale as we got into another cab. I gave the driver the address of my office in the Flatiron Building.

I said: "Now come clean with me, Marjorie. Was that Doris Delisanti?"

She gave me a frightened nod. "I've seen pictures of her."

"Do you know whose gun it is?"

She nodded. "Mine. I—I've had it quite a while. It was in the drawer of my dresser."

"Who knew it was there?"

She hesitated. "I didn't think anyone knew. But I suppose someone might have discovered it. The drawer wasn't locked."

The taxi stopped and we went up to my office. In the corridor outside I said: "My guess about the murder is that it wasn't planned in advance. She showed up—and something had to be done about her in a hurry. From that blood at her mouth, I'd say she was knocked out. Somebody socked her, then shoved her in the closet, got your gun and finished her. The idea was to blame it on you, at least

for the time being."

She looked confused. "But what does all this have to do with my husband? Do you mean this man with the picture found her in the lobby and—"

"I don't know," I said, "but if the police get their hands on you, they'll say it was your weapon and you had the opportunity, and they'll try to cook up a jealousy motive and you'll be held. You're better off up here for a while."

I unlocked my office door and snapped on the light.

I stepped into the office—and stopped short.

There was somebody sitting behind my desk as if he owned the place—a sleek, polished-looking gent I'd never seen before. My body went tense. On my desk was a package wrapped in gray paper.

He said: "You're Faraday, aren't you? My name is Shafter. I'm an art dealer." His voice was polite, brittle. He kept watching my hands.

"Go on," I said.

He said: "I understand you're a friend of Mr. Leyden's. You handle certain of his financial matters."

"Get to the point," I said. "You've got a picture to sell and Leyden said he'd think it over. Well, the answer is yes. He wants to buy it."

Shafter's eyelids did not flicker. He said: "I brought the picture with me. It is by a young artist who shows great promise. I recommended the picture to Mr. Leyden as an investment. It may soon be worth many times my price."

"Let me see the picture," I said.

He unwrapped it for me. I don't know anything about painting, but it was a futuristic affair with fields and buildings and cows all put in at cockeyed angles.

"A hundred grand is a lot of money," I said. "Mr. Leyden would like a bill of sale."

“Very well.” He reached in his pocket and brought out a bill form all made out. At the head was his name, *William L. Shatter, Art Dealer*, with an address on Madison Avenue.

I frowned at the paper, put it on the desk.

“There’s just one other thing, Mr. Shafter,” I said. “In case Mr. Leyden doesn’t like the picture so well later, could he get in touch with you at this address?”

“Of course,” Shafter said. “It is my place of business.”

“All right,” I said, “but if he felt he’d been cheated, Mr. Leyden might not take legal action. He might send some friends around to straighten things out another way.”

Shafter said easily: “I’m quite sure he’ll be satisfied.”

“All right,” I said. “Mrs. Leyden has the money in her handbag. You sign the bill of sale.”

I nodded toward Marjorie. She didn’t quite get the idea, but she opened her handbag and began to paw around inside.

SHAFTER took his eyes off me for the first time, bent down over the bill with a pen. I stepped close to him, got a good aim and swung low. My bunched knuckles caught him smack on the point of the chin, sent him crashing back over my swivel chair, and landed him in a heap on the floor. He started to get up and I sailed after him, pounded him until he lay quite still.

He was out all right, and the job looked good to hold him for some time. But just to be sure, I dug up a couple pairs of handcuffs, put one around his wrists and the other around his ankles.

Marjorie looked scared. “But he’s working with the men who have my husband. If he doesn’t return, aren’t you afraid that—”

“Not if we work fast,” I said. “I’d say we had two or three hours before they get worried—and that should give me time to get your husband back. In the meantime, you be a sport and stay here. Even if he does come to, he’ll be harmless.”

“But I thought you said there was no way to find out where they were holding my husband,” she said.

“That,” I said, “was before we met Mr. Shafter.”

I left my office and headed back to the Leyden apartment building. There were three police cars in front of the place.

I showed my badge at the desk and went over to the switchboard operator. She had a nice shape and a helpful look. I put a twenty-dollar bill in front of her and said:

“How’d you like to be a hero?”

She picked up the twenty and smiled. “I’ve always wanted to. What do I do?”

“Within the next ten minutes some calls are going to come through from the Leyden apartment, where the murder was. Well, jot down the numbers and check back on the addresses, but don’t connect them. Instead, have the operator connect the party with the public library.”

“But the library’s closed this time of night,” she said. “There wouldn’t be a soul there.”

“I know,” I said “No matter how many times he calls, keep connecting him with the library.”

I went up. As the elevator door opened, I could see the corpse still there, with a copper guarding it. I stepped out between two more cops.

“It’s Faraday,” one of them said.

They grabbed me by the arms, and I let them walk me inside the apartment, which was swarming with detectives. Tredwell was still there, and so was the private dick, Pelham. Lieutenant Ives of Homicide, who was in charge, was talking with Leyden.

Ives, who is a friend of mine, looked hopping mad. He growled: "Faraday! It's about time you showed up. Where's Mrs. Leyden."

"You've got me," I said. "Isn't she here?"

"You can skip that kind of talk," he snapped. "The elevator boy says you went out of here together an hour ago. A girl's been murdered and she's a suspect. What did you do with her?"

"She got into a cab," I said. "I think she went uptown. But she's no murderer, and I don't know anything about that. There was no body when we were here. I came to tell Leyden I know where his son is being held—if he still wants him."

Leyden's face lighted up. "Faraday, are you serious? Of course I want my son! I'll pay the hundred thousand. Where is he now?"

"I don't need the hundred grand any more," I said. "Did your art man show up here?"

"No, no!" Leyden said. "That is, unless he came and killed the Delisanti girl and then escaped. But the elevator man doesn't remember him. What's this all about? Why did the girl come here and who killed her? And what is happening to my son? Can't you see I'm a desperate man?"

He looked it, all right.

Pelham said: "Well, use your own judgment, Mr. Leyden. Faraday's got connections and maybe he's contacted this art dealer. But I don't think he knows where your son is. If these kidnapers are smart—and they are—he's hidden so well nothing short of a police dragnet would turn them up."

"You're right, the kidnapers *are* smart," I said to Pelham. "But their contact man wasn't. He came to my office. He was a plenty cool customer at first—but hell, I just kept at him till I broke him down. I've got ways. He'll talk and

implicate the others if he can get leniency."

Tredwell said: "If he's a murderer he can't expect leniency. Ives, Faraday's yarn sounds fishy to me. He's trying to pull a gag of some kind."

Ives looked from Tredwell to me. He said to me: "Where is this art man, Faraday?"

"I've got him downstairs in a cab," I said. "My idea is for you to come with me, Ives, and get his story. Let him tell you where young Leyden is being held and who's holding him so you won't think I'm handing you a line. Then you can send some boys over to pick him up. The rest of you stay here and wait."

Ives nodded brusquely. He said: "O.K., Faraday, we'll do it your way. But this had better be on the level."

AT THE door I turned and said: "Pelham, if you want to be helpful, you could phone Broadway 9-4026, ask for Eddie Delisanti, break the news to him about his sister, and tell him he'd better come up here."

We went down in the elevator and out onto the street.

Ives said: "Well, where's the cab you left Shafter in?"

"It's over on Park Avenue," I said. "I was afraid the police cars would scare him."

Ives gave me a sharp look, but fell in with my step. He growled: "Faraday, I've got a lot of respect for your abilities, but I don't know what makes you so damn sure he hasn't just wandered away by himself. What did you do, hypnotize him?"

"Shafter is handcuffed hand and foot," I said.

When we got to Park Avenue, I started walking him uptown, and he began to get impatient again.

At last I said: "That must be the cab—

by that street light.”

Ives said: “It’d better be.”

We went up to it. It was vacant, as I’d known it would be. I looked into two more taxis, and I said these weren’t the right ones either. Then I started to act nervous.

“Hell, he couldn’t have gone anywhere handcuffed hand and foot.”

Ives’ hand closed around my wrist, and it was a plenty strong hand. He headed for the nearest cab and gave the Leyden address.

“Faraday, I don’t know what your game is,” he said, “but if you’ve been trying to make a monkey out of me to protect that Leyden girl somehow, I’ll break you wide open. You never had Shafter in a taxi.”

“Didn’t I?” I grinned at him, which seemed the only thing left to do. “All right, maybe I didn’t. But I promised you an address, and I intend to deliver.”

We were entering the lobby of the apartment building again.

“Oh no, I’m the one that’s doing the delivering,” Ives said. “I’m delivering you to two of my boys.”

“Just a minute,” I said as we passed the switchboard girl. I asked her: “What luck?”

She handed me a slip of paper. On it were written two addresses. The first one was Eddie Delisanti’s hangout. The second was a number on First Avenue.

Ives stopped trying to get me to the elevator and said: “What’s that?”

“The address where young Leyden is being held,” I said. Then I looked at him straight. “All right, I pulled a gag on you. I did it because I had to. But the way *not* to have me make a monkey out of you is for you to phone headquarters and get a riot squad down there on the double quick. Arrest whoever you find with him. I don’t know who it’ll be—probably just a couple of mugs. After that we’ll round up the

brains. But get Tait Leyden while he’s still alive.”

Ives glared at me for a minute. He growled: “I hope you’re on the level—for your sake.”

He picked up the phone on the operator’s desk and called headquarters.

At the apartment later, a radio car, acting on Ives’ orders, brought in Marjorie Leyden, along with Shafter. Then Delisanti, whom I’d phoned, showed up. Then a call came that Tait Leyden had been picked up in a hall bedroom at the First Avenue address, along with two small-time thugs named Lanio and Reitzman. Young Leyden had been taken to a hospital in a drunken stupor, but there was no question about his pulling through.

**I**VES was pacing the floor of the apartment impatiently. His print men and specialists were still going over the place. He swung on me and said: “All this is fine—but if the call came from this apartment, it means an inside job—somebody here was in with the kidnapers. Also, I’ve still got an unsolved murder on my hands.”

“The man who was in with the kidnapers would be the murderer, and he’s right here now,” I said. “It’s the only man it could possibly be—Pelham.”

I’d kept my eye on Pelham, and he’d been edging toward the door. He spun around with a gun in his hand.

But the gun wasn’t in his hand very long, because my .32 was out before he got around. There was nobody in the way, and my first shot made a mess of his gun wrist.

“Pelham,” Ives echoed blankly. “Why, he’s been a private detective for twenty years. What made you suspect him?”

I said: “I didn’t just suspect him; I *knew* he was the brains behind the job as soon as I saw Shafter. The trick was to

break down that clever little scheme of his. The only way I could think of was to make him believe Shafter had ratted. Well, Ives, I thought if I could convince you of it in front of him, maybe that would, convince him—and it did.

“I took you out of the apartment on that wild goose chase and asked him to make the call to Delisanti just to give him a chance to get to a phone without police interference. I knew he’d try to call his pals to make a getaway because Shafter had squealed—and then I had the address checked back from the phone call he made.

“In the beginning I knew Pelham was the man I was after because who else would have sent Shafter to my office with the picture? Pelham went out of here thinking *I’d* been hired to pay the hundred grand, and didn’t realize his mistake until Leyden called him back. It was too late then for him to do anything about it.”

Ives still wanted to know: “But what was the Delisanti girl doing up here, and why did Pelham kill her?”

Eddie Delisanti said: “I can tell you that, chief. Sis held a grudge against Pelham for the way he framed her on that divorce, and she couldn’t get over wantin’ to get even with him. While she was on tour, she paid me good dough to hang around and try to get something on him.

“Well, while Pelham was here doin’ some investigatin’ of the second wife, I spotted him talkin’ to this Shafter in the cocktail lounge—I got close enough so I could hear the part about the picture. I wired sis and she hurried up here. She didn’t want hush money—she wanted to expose Pelham, send him to the pen under the kidnap law—only it didn’t work out so good for her.”

A little later on, Marjorie Leyden came up to me with sparkling eyes. She put her arms around me and kissed me. Which wouldn’t have been a bad fee for the job in itself—but she kept pushing this \$173.80 check at me. I finally took it and said thanks.

But instead of going out, I slipped in to see Leyden. I showed him the check. I said: “It’s every cent she had. You ought to give a swell kid like her a break.”

“She’ll get the breaks from me,” he said; “beginning today.”

I tore up the check and started out.

He called me back. He said: “I told you, Faraday, that I was willing to pay fifty thousand to get my son back and you wouldn’t listen to me. Will you listen now?”

He tossed the brown paper package over to me.

I grinned and picked up the package. “Fifty thousand,” I said. “You win.”