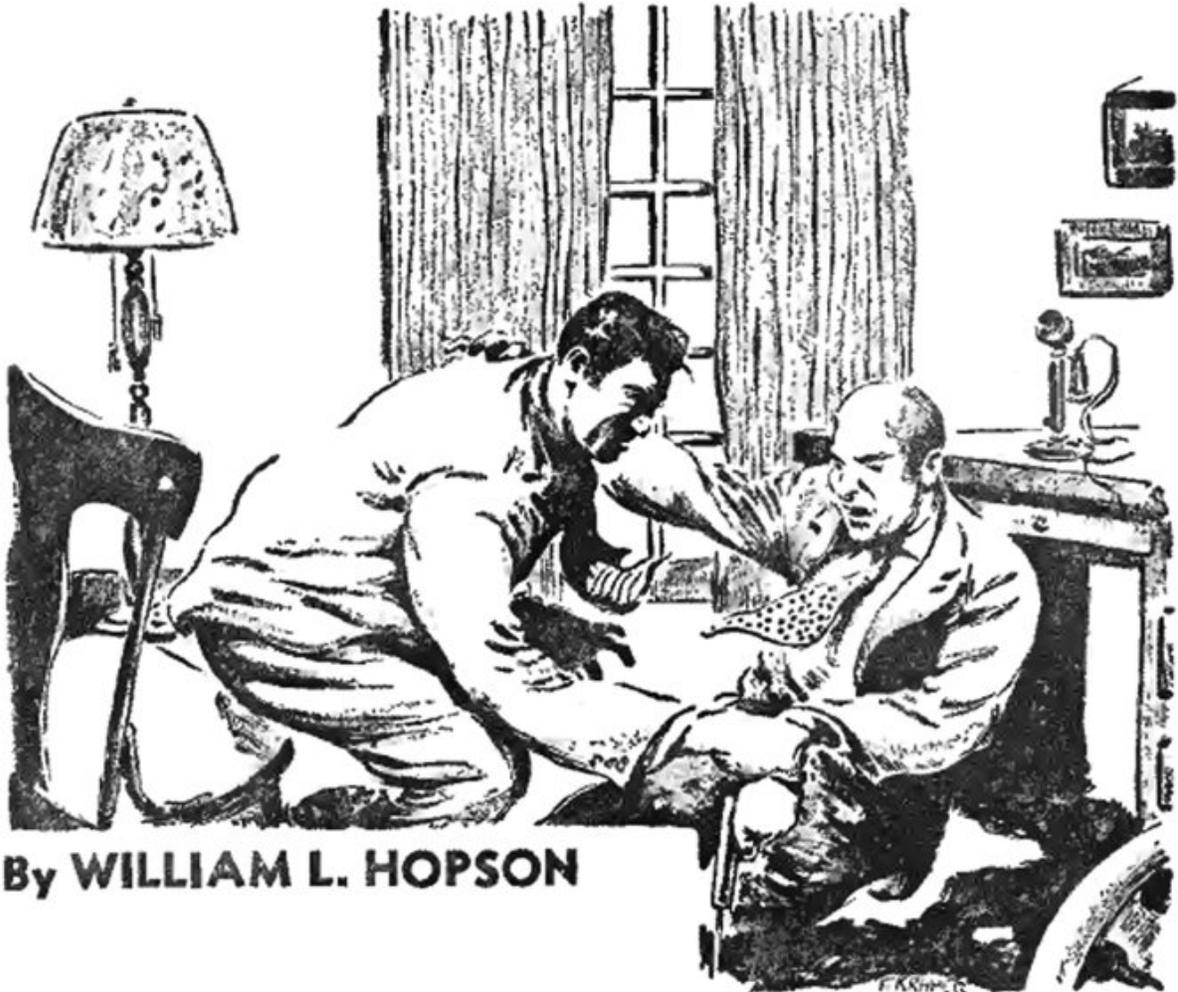


# EYES OF THE MAGNATE



By WILLIAM L. HOPSON

I forced the gun out of his hand

**T**HE traffic light turned to red. With an exclamation of impatience I halted and fumbled for a cigarette. Over my cupped hands I noticed the green eyes of the girl dressed in yellow. She was staring at something to my left. I looked in that direction, but saw no reason for the fear

mirrored in her eyes. Just the usual noon-day scene of any busy street corner.

At the policeman's whistle I stepped from the curb. The girl lurched against me. I got a whiff of orange blossoms and a quavering, "Pardon, please."

I turned to her, smiling. But she had

wheeled about and was fighting her way back to the sidewalk. I shrugged indifferently, inhaled deeply, and shoved my hand into the pocket of my light topcoat. My fingers closed around an object that had not been there thirty seconds before. My steps lengthened then, a usual after dinner stroll became almost a run.

As the door of my office clicked behind me, I drew from my pocket a handkerchief through which I could feel the two soft globular items wrapped in it. I unfolded the red stained linen. In the palm of my hand I held—*two glassy human eyes!*

For a moment I was frozen into immobility. With a shudder I placed the handkerchief on the desk and sank into a chair. Shaking, I drew a bottle of Scotch from the top drawer. I didn't bother with a glass. The bottle gurgled and some of the chill left me.

With a trembling finger I touched my grisly presents. They were human eyes all right—dull black, bloodshot. Icy fingers seemed to flutter up my spine. I tilted the bottle to my lips again. There was no doubt in my mind that those spare parts had been shoved into my pocket when the girl in yellow had jostled me at the corner. But why?

I was lighting a cigarette when the door was thrown open. I looked up and into the maw of a .45 Colt held steadily in the fist of a huge pockmarked individual.

"All right, chump," he growled. "Where's them glims? Ah, here—"

He stepped forward, scooped up the handkerchief with the eyes and thrust the gruesome objects into his pocket. Keeping the gun leveled at my head he backed to the door.

"You ain't seen nothin', see?" he said, as he fumbled for the doorknob behind him with his left hand. "No callin' the Law."

"I've been asleep all day, Pal," I assured him.

He grinned. The door closed behind him as he went out. I reached for the phone,

dialled 6226, Police Headquarters. Before my ring was answered I had an idea. The receiver fell back on the hook. It was on a spot. I couldn't call the police!

The Law would be certain this was a publicity gag. That phony jewel theft of my client, Colla Colano, the actress, while giving us plenty of newsprint space had left me in that state approaching "bad standing" with the local finest. What was it the detective-sergeant had said?"

"So help me, one more phony caper from you, and as sure as your name's Jerry Jerome I'll put you away."

I TRIED hard to get this situation out of my mind. But why would a keen-looking girl present a stranger with two human eyes? I shivered a bit and tried to lose myself in the work piled on my desk.

When I left the office it was dark enough for the work of two characters who were loafing near the street door. One on each side of me they closed in, shoved their guns into my ribs. The one on my left was the chap who had snatched the peepers from my desk.

"Walk straight out to that car, Buddy," he ordered.

At the car my pock-marked escort got into the back seat with me. The other lug, a little round-shouldered hood, slid under the wheel. Pock-mark jammed a cigarette into the corner of his mouth, shoved the pack to me. Keeping to the quieter streets we traveled at a moderate speed out of town.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Guess?" cracked Pock-Mark.

The driver laughed

"Wait," I pleaded. "Am I being taken—Is this a ride?"

"Take it easy, Buddy," said Pock-Mark. "It ain't gonna hurt you. But you know too much for the Chief. It'll soon be over."

"Now, look—" I began.

"Shut up!" barked the hood

Shrugging, I settled back on the cushions, and with the back of a trembling hand smeared away the cold sweat on my forehead. Pock-Mark now drew his hand from his pocket, grasping a .45. The car slowed, turned off the main road into a narrow tree-lined lane. Pock-Mark lurched against me; then put both hands on the seat to straighten himself. I decided it was time to act. I acted.

My left fist crashed against Pock-Mark's jaw. He reeled away, bringing up his gun hand. I knocked aside the gun, smashed my right into his mouth. The gun roared, sending up a geyser of flame. The car swerved suddenly. We crashed. Glass splintered and showered over us. I was thrown heavily into Pock-Mark. Whirling darkness, star-shot, closed around me. . . .

When I opened my eyes it was very quiet. Except for the lonely croaking of a frog far off on the right there was no sound.

Stiffly, I palled myself erect. In the moonlight I saw Pock-Mark sprawled on the floor. The little driver was slumped over the wheel. My head ached and I tenderly felt the large lump over my right eye. Pock-mark groaned weakly.

I grasped the handle of the door nearest me and shoved. It was jammed I wheeled about and began to crawl over Pock-Mark to the other door. As my hand touched his chest I felt something hard. A gun! I reached into his pocket and found, not a gun, but a bottle. A wide mouthed cylindrical bottle. I started to drop it, hesitated, drew the cork, sniffed. An antiseptic. I put the bottle into my pocket and crawled out of the car.

The few drivers abroad that night were not picking up hitch-hikers. My shoes were new and tight. Before I walked to the end of the car line my feet were as sore as my throbbing head.

The street car I was riding didn't pass Police Headquarters, and my feet were too stiff and painful to walk the three blocks from

my hotel where I left the car. In my room I put through a call to Headquarters and asked for Sergeant Cahill.

"This is Jerry Jerome, Mike," I said pleasantly. "If you're not too busy you might run out to the first lane beyond the city limits on Route Twenty-five. You'll find a wrecked car, two men in it. Then come to me for details."

"Is this another one of your phonies, Jerome?" Cahill barked. "So help me if it is I'll see that—"

"Listen, Flattie," I interrupted. "As a taxpayer I don't want any back wash from the public servants. I'm reporting an auto wreck, the aftermath of more serious crimes such as kidnaping, attempted murder, et cetera. Now, get busy."

I HOPE Nellie, the switchboard girl, wasn't listening in. No nice girl should ever hear the sulphurous blast that Cahill stormed at me before he slammed the receiver. I laughed as I walked away from the phone. I removed my coat, dabbed some iodine on my head, and was soaking my aching feet when the phone rang. It was Nellie.

"Mr. Jerome," she whispered, "a City detective and our own little sun ray are on their way up to see you. I never saw a man as mad as the city dick."

"Thanks, Nellie. Thanks a million." I hung up. Outside a bellow sounded like a bull elephant in pain. It was Cahill. I locked the door, got my socks and shoes, sat on the bed while I hustled into them. The door actually bulged when it was struck.

"Open this door!" roared Cahill. "You're in there. Open up!"

"Wait a minute, Mouthy," I called, as I struggled into my coat.

"I'll teach you," Cahill was telling the world. "A wreck, eh? A little glass sprinkled about. A scraped tree, and some tire marks. Another of your tricks for some publicity-

seekin' so-and-so. Open this door!"

I hesitated only a moment longer. I leaped to the window. From the fire escape I glanced back into the room as the door was whipped open. The house dick had used his pass-key. Cahill, his honest square face a red-purple picture of rage, stormed into the room. I sprinted to the street. Cahill's threats followed me, blistering the night air.

At the Luray Hotel, over on the South Side, I registered as Joseph Sanders and was assigned to a two-by-four cell on the third floor. Alone in my room I began to undress. As I hung my coat over the back of a chair I felt the bottle of antiseptic I'd taken from Pock-Mark. Curious, I got a tumbler and pulled the bottle from my pocket. The bottle tipped up and a fluid gushed into the glass. *Plop! Plop!* Two tiny splashes.

I leaned closer. The eyes! When I straightened up, the face that stared back at me from the cracked mirror of the dresser was dress-shirt white, except for a touch of green about the mouth. I returned the eyes to the bottle, placed the bottle in my pocket and started for the door. Cahill would have to believe this. But would he? What would the peepers prove? Absolutely nothing. Any good press agent could score for a pair if he needed them badly enough.

I turned out the light, crawled into bed. But I didn't sleep. Mentally I cursed myself for trying to work this thing out alone. But right along with the horror and fear that kept me wide-eyed and sleepless I felt a thrill of danger, quite new and strangely, quite pleasant

When I left the hotel the next day it was nearly noon. After a quick light lunch I went to the office of the Tribune. Lin Rish, police reporter and old friend of mine, was busy at the moment.

I sat down to wait. I picked up an early edition of the paper. The front pages were devoted to the latest lack of news about the

disappearance of Bart Benton. The reward offered for his return by George Morse, Benton's partner, was a honey—ten grand.

But the story that held my interest was a short bit about Tim Locke, brother of "Happy" Locke, our leading underworld character. Tim had been freed largely because he had gone blind in prison, and was to be sent by his brother to a specialist in New York. There was a little filler that I read twice. It told of a New York doctor's theory relative to transplanting human eyes.

Lin Rish was glad to see me, but he could give me no information about the two hoods who had tangled with me. My descriptions fitted no local hot shots known to him.

"You'll be the death of me, Jerry," said Rish, laughing, as he ushered me out. "Someday you're going to be in a real jam and—Well, remember the chap who shouted 'Wolf.' Take those eyes back to the medical school where you bought them."

THOUGH angry, I didn't answer. If Rish wouldn't take me seriously what chance was there of me convincing the Law that I was in a tight spot and needed help? I walked dejectedly to the street. A sudden whiff of orange blossoms snapped me back to reality. The girl-in-yellow had just passed! Only now she was dressed in blue. I followed as she hurried down the thoroughfare.

At the corner she entered a tan roadster that moved off as the door shut behind her. A passing taxi gained a fare as I swung aboard.

"Keep that fancy heap in sight," I ordered the driver.

"Okay," he grunted.

As we left the heavy downtown traffic for the quieter suburban streets, my driver dropped farther behind. Near the city line, the car ahead suddenly pulled into the curb before a large brick house, set in the middle of a large, well-kept lawn. An iron spike fence

enclosed the property. The girl entered the high gates as we cruised slowly past. At the corner I left the cab. The tan car roared by as I was paying the driver. Seated at the wheel was— Pock-Mark.

I sprang back into the cab. “Get after that car!” I shouted.

Pock-Mark was losing no time. We breathed his dust for five or ten miles out of town. Then he turned off the highway at the Dollar Sign, a high class roadhouse known as the headquarters of the gambling and spending brotherhood. But we continued on. At the next curve of the road I had the cab headed back to town. Slowly we drove past the Dollar Sign. The tan car was parked at the rear of the joint.

A half mile from the roadhouse I left the cab. I wrapped the bottle of antiseptic in some rags from the tool chest, wrote a short note to Sergeant Cahill.

“Get along, little cabbie,” I said to the driver, grinning. “If I don’t contact you by morning see that Cahill gets this note and package.”

“Okay, Chief,” he agreed, pocketing the double-sawbuck I gave him.

Then I cut into the woods and headed back to the roadhouse. I had a hunch that the answer of the enigma of the pickled eyes was hidden somewhere within the sinister confines of that dive.

For several hours I lay concealed in elder bushes on a slight rise in the rear of the Dollar Sign. Just before dark Pock-Mark and another character came out of the back door and entered a small out-building. In a little while I saw them lugging several odd shaped boxes to the car. There was something vaguely familiar about the shape of those boxes. I had seen boxes like them before. As the car drove off I got the mental flash. Those boxes, with the tent-shaped cones were the crates in which large bottles of acid were shipped.

Acid? I felt cold all over as the

unpleasant answer formed in my mind.

The sun slid down behind the hill on which I lay. Lights, green, blue and yellow, from the roadhouse fought against the approaching darkness with indifferent success. Huge neon signs in red and blue spent themselves recklessly upon the night from all sides of the Dollar Sign. Cars began to pull up at the front of the joint. Night life was getting under way. So was I.

I cautiously made my way to the shed, found the door locked. With a fist-sized stone I smashed the padlock. The door closed behind me with a moan of protest from the rusted hinges. A foul acrid odor assailed my nose.

The flame from my cigarette lighter threw weird leaping shadows around the almost empty shed. It was empty except for several sheets of copper, stacked neatly in one corner. I had expected to find copper, but not like this. I advanced to examine the stacked sheets. As I bent over something shone dully from the dirt floor. I scraped aside the dirt and exposed a diamond stickpin. I dropped it into my pocket, and, hearing the squeak of the hinges, whirled around. A beam of light stabbed me in the face.

“Get ’em up!”

I knew that voice—Pock-Mark. My hands went slowly overhead. Pock-Mark let the ray of light play about the shed. Then he crossed to me.

“Welcome home, Pal.” He laughed. “We’ve been worried about you.”

HE patted me down in a quick frisk, then herded me ahead of him into the roadhouse. At a closed door at the end of the hall Pock-Mark knocked lightly.

“Come in,” a voice invited.

I opened the door and stepped into a brightly lighted office. A man sat on each side of the wide desk. Behind the desk sat a ruddy-faced fellow about middle age. It was Happy

Locke. Spread open before him was a newspaper. He raised his brows, but said nothing.

“This was messin’ around in the shed, Chief. He’s the lug that got the glims,” drawled Pock-Mark.

Happy Locke smiled, revealing a set of even white teeth.

“What were you doing in the shed?” he asked. His voice was soft, pleasant.

“Looking for the body of the man from whom you’ve taken the eyes you mean to have grafted into the head of your convict brother,” I snapped.

Happy Locke threw back his head and laughed. His laughter roared out and smothered the sneering chuckles of the others. He continued to laugh, and the amused grins of the others were turned on me. I felt my face flame as red as that of a school kid giving the wrong answer on Parent-Teacher Day.

“I suppose that copper in the shed isn’t a dismantled tank?” I shouted. “I suppose I didn’t smell muriatic? I suppose a body wesn’t recently destroyed there?”

There was no laughter now.

“Did he have them on him?” Locke asked Pock-Mark.

“No.”

“What did you do with the eyes?” Locke asked me.

“They’re in a safe place.” I grinned.

Happy Locke leaned back in his chair. He nodded slightly, and his teeth flashed in a smile.

“All right, Pock,” he said. “Take him out and make him talk.”

As Pock-Mark marched me out Locke ordered another of the hoods to tag along. The backdoor opened outward. I turned the knob, opened the door, leaped through and slammed the door in Pock-Mark’s face. A bullet smashed through the door. As I raced toward the wood, a gun roared once—twice, and again. A slug sang through the night at the

level of my ear.

I bent lower and added the last ounce of speed. I plunged into a tangle of elders and Spanish bayonet. Glancing back, I saw two men stumbling up the slope after me. Heedless of the sting of briars and nettles I tore deeper into the wood. I made a wide half circle and struck the highway a mile from the Dollar Sign.

It would be dangerous thumbing a ride, since Locke’s playmates would be patrolling the roads looking for me. But I decided to risk it. Two cars sped past ignoring my frantic waving. The third picked me up.

I parted from my Good Samaritan downtown. At a drugstore I bought a flashlight, and got an address from the phone book. Then I was set.

For the second time that night I was guilty of illegal entry. I flashed my light around the offices of Benten and Morse. A picture of Benten, much better than the newspaper prints, stood on the desk. I peered at it closely before putting it into my shirt.

When I had drawn the shades on all the windows, hung a rug over the frosted glass on the door, and stuffed paper into the crack under it I snapped on the lights. Then I went to work on the books of the firm. I’m not a C. P. A., but once sure of my ground I checked it all the way.

With a grip of satisfaction I climbed out through the window I had broken to get in, and crept noiselessly down the fire escape. I hunted up a cab and gave terse orders to be driven to Headquarters. Then I changed my mind. Man! If I could clean this up myself wouldn’t Cahill look foolish when I called him in at the kill?

“To your office,” I instructed the cabbie.

AT the Red Cab Company offices I found the driver to whom I had entrusted the eyes. I got the package and the note to Cahill from him;

put the bottle in my pocket and tore up the note. I might have a lot of driving to do, so I inquired for the nearest Drive-It-Yourself.

While walking the few blocks to the garage I tried to fit together the pieces of the puzzle I now held. Part of it was clear. The eyes were those of Bart Benten. George Morse, his partner, had been dipping deeply into the firm's till. It followed that Morse must be in some manner responsible for Benten's death. Why? To prevent discovery of the thefts, or more likely, to forestall arrest if Benton had learned of the leak in the cash box.

But why destroy the body? There was only one reason. If Benton were killed and his body found, his heirs would demand an accounting of his estate. But if he disappeared it would be seven years before the courts declared him legally dead. Morse would have a free hand, if that were the case.

Why had the eyes been removed from the body? How did Happy Locke fit in? Why had the eyes been given to me? Who was the girl-in-yellow?

I decided to answer the last question first. I drove rapidly to the neighborhood of the house I'd seen the girl enter that afternoon. At a gasoline station a few blocks from the house I bought some oil and gas. To the overalled youngster who served me I put a question.

"That big house is Bert Benten's," he answered, "the missing millionaire."

"That green-eyed girl I saw going in the house. Who is she?" I asked

"That's Sheila Kerby, Benten's secretary," he replied. "Boy! She's got what it takes, eh? She comes in here for gas."

I shoved him a bill and didn't bother with the change. The green-eyed charmer Benten's secretary? Why, that didn't make sense. Or did it? I mopped the sweat from my forehead. Of course. Benten's secretary was George Morse's flame and she was in cahoots

with the thieving partner.

Suppose I was right; was figuring it right all along the line? I could prove Morse a thief, yes. So what? I couldn't—the hell I couldn't! Like a gleaming light in the dark the answer to my grief cut through the fog of questions. I threw back my head and laughed. I had them cold now.

I pulled into the curb, dashed into a small store. After I looked up George Morse's address and phone number. I twisted the dial. At a shrilled, "G. Morse," I muttered, "Wrong number," and hung up. He was home; and I needed to know that for my next move. I dialed headquarters, asked for Sergeant Cahill.

"This is Jerry Jerome," I began. Cahill began to whoop it up. "Shut up, you peanut-brained yokel!" I snapped. I'm levelling—all the way. This is big stuff. Get Happy Locke and his pals under the key. Pick up Sheila Kerby, Benten's secretary, then—"

"Wait a minute," Cahill roared. "If you're levellin'—and the Fates help you if you ain't—I can get the Locke pack. They're subject to a pinch any time. But the Kirby dame—Nothin' doin'. I don't go out on that limb on your screwy say-so."

"Okay," I rapped, "don't. But when you've got Happy and his mob safe bring Locke to George Morse's apartments in the Cunningham on Market Street. Tell Locke you're holding him for the Benten killing, and then button up. Get it?"

"No, I don't," Cahill barked. "Benten ain't dead—or is he?"

"Do as I say, Mike, and come next Promotion Day your wife will be Mrs. *Lieutenant* Cahill."

I heard the deep breath he inhaled then. He began to outline the dire consequences to follow if I were wild-goose-chasing him again. I hung up, sighing.

HURRYING I lost no time in getting to the Cunningham. George Morse had the whole

second floor. The clerk called his apartment, then turned from the phone.

“Mr. Morse will see no one this evening,” he apologized. “I’m sorry.”

“So Morse thinks,” I snapped, taking a card from my case. On the back of it I scrawled:

“The AYES have it,” says Benten.

“Have this delivered to Mr. Morse,” I said, handing the hotel clerk the card. He shrugged and motioned over a uniformed boy who put the card on a tray and disappeared into the elevator.

In two minutes Morse phoned that he’d see me. I didn’t wait for the elevator. I raced up the stairs, knuckled sharply on the door. Morse, a bald head, red face, and barrel belly stuffed into a gray suit, opened the door.

“Come in,” he invited, his voice high and tinny. He glanced at my card in his fat stubby fingers. “Please explain this.”

I glanced around the well-furnished room, crossed to a wide chair, flopped down and grinned up at Morse who stood before me.

“What’ll you pay for a pair of slightly used eyes?” I asked.

“Are you mad?” he squeaked. “Who are you? What do you want?”

I held up three fingers, crossed my legs. “Number one,” I drawled, turning down a finger. “I’m very sane. Number two, none of your damn’ business. Number three, I want to get rid of a pair of eyes—Benten’s.”

Morse’s retreated farther into the folds of fat around them. He smiled crookedly, then shrugged.

“Please leave,” he shrilled.

I sprang up, grabbed him by the shoulders, swung him around and slammed him into the chair. I clamped my left hand on his flabby throat and leaned over him.

“Listen, Morse—” I began, when from the side of my eye I caught a glimpse of

motion. I looked up—into a mirror. Covering me with a small automatic in a trembling hand, Sheila Kerby stood in a doorway. I released Morse, straightened up and faced the girl.

“This is he, George,” she said, walking toward us. “He is the man in whose pocket I put the eyes when—”

“Shut up, you fool!” screamed Morse.

Careful to keep out of the line of fire, Morse moved to the side of Sheila Kerby. He transferred the gun from her trembling hand to the quivering fat of his own paw.

“Now, you meddling idiot,” he shrieked at me. “You’ll never repeat what you just heard. I’ll call it self-defense.” The dimples at his knuckles widened as he tensed for the shot. He hesitated, took a step back. “Where are they?” he shrilled.

I had been close to death before. It took a moment for me to get control of my parched vocal machinery.

“Morse, the Law will be here any minute,” I warned. “Happy Locke is under arrest. Don’t make it worse for yourself by—”

An authoritative knock on the door interrupted me. Morse’s eyes widened. He turned to Sheila Kerby, who sat tense and white-faced in a chair at his right. As I sprang forward, swinging from the hip, Morse turned to me. My fist buried itself in the fatness that was his jaw. He spun back and I grasped his hand and forced the gun to fly out of it. I hit him again to quiet him. With a groan he fell, heavily.

I wheeled around in time to stamp my foot on the gun, bruising the clutching fingers of Sheila Kerby as I did so. I picked her up, shoved her into a chair and pocketed the rod. Then I opened the door.

Happy Locke, handcuffed and scowling, was hustled in. Mike Cahill lumbered in after him. He looked at the weeping Sheila, then at the unconscious Morse. His lips tightened into a narrow line.

He cocked one scarred eyebrow, opened his mouth, then noisily clamped it shut.

“Make yourselves at home, gentlemen,” I invited, grinning.

WHILE Cahill prodded Locke to a chair and settled himself on the table, I gathered up Morse, who was coming around, and dumped him into a chair close to Happy Locke. Then I sat down beside Sergeant Mike Cahill.

There they were: Sheila Kerby, nervously twisting a handkerchief; Happy Locke, sullen and alert; George Morse, moaning a little and dabbing at the thin trickle of blood that oozed over his chins. If Cahill had any doubts about backing my play he didn't show them.

Rapidly I sketched the picture while four pairs of wondering eyes centered on me. I painted it all in black. I told them about Morse's plundering of the company funds, and how I could prove it by the records; Sheila Kerby's part in giving me the eyes, her acknowledgment of it; Locke's demountable copper tub for acid baths; the acid soaked floor of the shed; the diamond pin that I knew to be Benten's.

When I finished I pointed to Sheila.

“I can promise nothing,” I said quietly. “But to talk now might be the detour into the Big House from the road to the chair.”

She sprang to her feet, her eyes feral with fear—or hate—or both. Her hands balled into tiny fists.

Morse gulped, ran a fat finger around his wilted collar. “Suppose I talk? Will you promise—” Morse began.

“Quiet, damn you!” roared Locke. “Stand pat. They can't prove a thing. It won't hold up in court.”

Cahill's heavy hand smashed into Locke's mouth. Locke slumped back, his dazzling smile permanently damaged.

“Talk,” Cahill hissed, clamping Morse by the shoulders.

Morse nodded in my direction. “He's right. I did use the company's money. I used it to pay the huge debts I ran up at Locke's gambling tables. When Benten learned about it he gave me twenty-four hours to make good. This was all Locke's scheme. I was to pay him twenty thousand over a period of two years. He had Benten kidnapped and—ah—disposed of the body.”

“The eyes,” I snapped. “Why were they kept?”

“I insisted that I be given proof of Benten's death and proof that the body would not turn up. Locke promised proof. The eyes were his idea of proof. Proof and also an effective warning for me to play fair—I suppose.”

Morse's head fell forward. He shuddered.

“Why did Shelia give them to me?” I demanded.

“Don't say any more, Georgie,” Sheila cried. “Don't!”

Locke called me,” Morse went on, ignoring the girl, “and told me the proof was ready. I sent Sheila. On the way back to my office, Sheila became panic-stricken when a traffic officer walked toward her. She put the eyes in the pocket of a man near her—you. Locke had a man of his trail her. He saw the foolish thing she had done and followed you. And you know the rest.”

Morse closed his eyes and leaned back in the chair. His face was no longer red; it was a streaked purple.

“So that's it,” I snapped at Locke. “You sent Pock-Mark back for me; and after I was taken care of properly he would have made delivery of the eyes, eh?”

“Yeah?” Locke sneered. “Prove it. These yaps sang, but I won't. Suppose I was sucker enough to admit bumping Benten? Ever hear of a corpus delicti, Smart Boy?” He snorted contemptuously.

Mike Cahill, a puzzled frown pulling

his heavy brows together, looked at me. Bunching his fists he started for Locke.

“Wait, Mike,” I said.

I produced the picture of Bert Benten, stood it on the table. The bottle containing the eyes I placed beside the picture. I tossed the pin up and caught it in my hand, fingering it while I carried on. Touching the picture I laid a finger on the eyes.

“Here’s the pay-off, Locke,” I warned. “Courtroom pay dirt, too. J. Edgar’s bright boys have recently proved that there is as marked a difference between the markings of the human eye as on the fingers. It has been said that photographing eyes will take the place of fingerprinting. In time it will. Okay! Here’s a fine picture of Benten. Enlarged photos will bring out the eyes in microscopic detail. Here,” I touched the bottle, “are eyes for comparison. Get it? The establishment of a corpus delicti-which after all means nothing more than the establishment of a crime.”

I paused. Locke was not sneering now. He leaned forward, breathing heavily. I leaned closer to him; held out the pin. It flashed fire. I

touched the picture, my finger on the stickpin in Benten’s tie.

“The only way,” I continued, “to identify a diamond is by micro-photos. I found the pin at your joint. It will be compared with the one in the picture. All this with Morse’s confession, your record and reputation, any tidbits your pals may produce under the light hands of the boys at Headquarters builds up the State’s case. You’ll beat it? You’ll fry, rat!”

After Cahill subdued the raging Locke with a neat right hook I phoned the order for the Hurry Buggy. As I turned from the phone I grinned at the doubting sergeant.

“Now you can apologize, you big ape, for those earlier harsh words.”

Cahill smiled crookedly, and drew a folded paper from his pocket. Handing it to me he observed drily:

“I won’t be needin’ this now.”

I laughed as I took the warrant charging one Gerald J. Jerome, press agent, of Obstructing Justice and Disorderly Conduct, and tore it up.