



Snarling, the man with the glove on his hand came on—to look into the muzzle of the pistol in King's grip

# MEMENTOS OF MURDER

By JOHN L. BENTON

*Detective Matt King turns up a bizarre collection of death weapons—which lead him to an amazing killer!*

**H**E WAS fifty-five years old, looked sixty-five against the hospital pillow, and he seemed to be more frightened than a five-year-old boy in a dark room. His name was Cyrus Pembroke, he was worth several million dollars, and he should have known better.

Cyrus Pembroke looked up at his doctor who sat beside the bed.

“Dr. Bradford,” he asked quaveringly,

“you are quite certain that nobody knows just what happened to me? I’d hate the publicity that would result.”

“Relax,” Dr. Bradford snorted. “You asked me to keep the nature of your wounds secret, and I did. Oh, an intern saw them, of course, while he took you to the hospital, but as Assistant Chief of Staff in this institution, I gave him to understand he would progress nicely if he kept his mouth

shut.”

Cyrus Pembroke started to nod, and stopped. His bandaged neck was much too sore for such a movement.

“What worried me most,” he said, “was that detective—Sergeant King, I think his name was—who questioned me about an hour ago. I tell you he is suspicious. He believes there was more to it than merely the attack of some thug.”

Dr. Bradford arose. “Cyrus, I think you are being very foolish. You realize in your heart that someone tried to kill you, failed, and will probably try again. After all, the police are on your side. What are you afraid of?”

Pembroke shuddered. “I pay you to keep me well, not to ask a lot of questions, Bradford. Now wait, if I sound irascible, I have reason to be. I don’t mean anything by it. Just make certain no publicity leaks out. I—I’d be in trouble if it did.”

Bradford shrugged. “I’ve got a feeling this has to do with that macabre collection of yours. Has it?”

“None of your business,” Pembroke snapped. “Get out of here.”

Dr. Bradford chuckled, knew he had hit a sore spot, and walked out of the room. Pembroke growled hoarsely, settled back and closed his eyes. They remained shut about two seconds, then snapped open again as if controlled by powerful springs, and centered on a door which he knew led into an adjoining room. The door was open a crack.

“Who is listening?” Pembroke shouted. “Who is it?”

**T**HE DOOR opened wider and Detective-sergeant Matt King walked into the room. He was young, keen-eyed, and somber-faced at this moment. Pembroke glared at him, then turned slightly pale. King pulled a chair over beside the bed and sat down.

“I’m sorry I had to do that,” he explained. “But you weren’t in any talking mood when you saw me. Mr. Pembroke, even though you make no formal complaint about the attack you suffered, still a crime was committed, and my job is to bring to justice the man who was responsible. Don’t blame the intern, or your physician. A patrolman was at the scene and noticed your wounds. How about telling me the truth?”

“How much did you hear, snooping through that door?” Pembroke demanded.

“Everything you mentioned,” King said. “It’s true, isn’t it, that you were attacked with some sort of a weird weapon that left deep lacerations all around your throat? Don’t lie—the cuts were seen. In fact, the patrolman described them as looking like somebody had neatly carved about twenty gashes all around your neck.”

“I’m not talking,” Pembroke snapped. “It’s no one’s business what happened. Perhaps I was cut. I did not see the man who attacked me. He came up from behind. I don’t know why I was attacked. It makes me ill even to think about the whole thing. I demand peace and quiet. I’m not getting it here, so I shall go home.”

“All right, sir,” King said. “I’m reporting just what you have told me. Because I think the man who attacked you was a murderer, and failed for some reason or other. He must have had a strong reason for trying to kill you. And since you are alive, he still has that reason and he will try again. If you are killed, I want it fully known that you refused help from the police. Good night, sir.”

King walked out, feeling more like ringing the wealthy fool’s neck rather than giving in to him.

King left the hospital and went to where his car was parked. He drove slowly to the suburban home of Cyrus Pembroke. He ran through a couple of red lights and

never even realized it. His mind was too intent on this problem of a man who had almost been murdered and wouldn't cooperate in any efforts to find the individual who had nearly killed him.

It had happened on a quiet street not far from Pembroke's offices. He had been set upon by someone who had both choked him and cut his throat badly. Enough so that a multitude of stitches had to be taken and transfusions given. No footpad had done that. A robber would have clouted Pembroke once, looted his pockets and fled. This had not been an attack of that type.

Pembroke's home was not the biggest in the world. Buckingham Palace had a few more rooms. The Pembroke home was set well back from the road, hemmed in by carefully tended landscaping and trees, and was rather isolated because Pembroke had bought all the surrounding property for at least a mile.

A butler opened the door. King hadn't seen a uniformed butler in ages. The man wore a wing collar, a frock coat and striped trousers. But his nose wasn't tilted into the air. He was quite human, and he stared at the badge in King's palm.

"Ah," he said, "a gentleman from the police."

"Thanks," King grunted. "Most people don't call us gentlemen. I want a little talk with you. A confidential talk. About some collection or other that Mr. Pembroke has accumulated."

"Mr. Pembroke will be home shortly," the butler said smoothly. "He phoned from the hospital. I shall show you into the study and you may wait for him."

"I've already seen him," King said. "He won't talk. He won't even admit what year it is. That's why I need your help. And it will be to your benefit to assist me."

"I fail to see how, sir."

"Easy. You've worked for him a long

time. If he is murdered, your job will end pronto. So you have an interest in keeping him alive."

"Sometimes," the butler said softly, "I wonder. But I cannot show you his collection. It is for show only to favored friends and guests. It occupies a room which has been turned into a museum, and it is just off the study, sir. That is where you will have to wait. In the study. And of course I know that you will not use a skeleton key—which all detectives probably carry—on the museum door. Certainly not."

**K**ING GRINNED and followed the man across a reception hall that would have made a cozy skating rink. The study was only as big as an average five-room house, so it was small in comparison to the rest of the place. The butler walked to the door, turned, and bowed slightly.

"Mr. Pembroke is due in thirty minutes, sir. I must prepare his room. I won't disturb you."

"Thanks," King said. "You're okay."

He heard the butler ascend the staircase and King didn't wait any longer. He went to the door which the servant had indicated with a dry smile and a nod of his head. The door was closed and King fished in his pocket for a bunch of skeleton keys. They were good ones—the best keys an assorted number of sneak thieves had been able to fashion.

He tried the knob, just as an experiment, and was surprised when he found the door unlocked. He opened it and looked into a long, fairly narrow room. There were four chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. Along each wall were glass cases, exactly like those used in museums. The center chandelier was dimly illuminated. King didn't turn on any more lights.

He stepped up to the nearest show-case.

Inside, nestled against crimson velvet, was a short, wide-bladed dagger. There were stains on the blade and King knew they had been made by blood. A small card was propped up at the rear of the case. It read:

THE HALLIDAY STABBING!

The next case contained a baseball bat, nicked, and also stained. The card here indicated this weapon had been used by someone named Jerome. Or on someone named Jerome. King wasn't certain which.

Other cases contained guns, more knives, bottles of poison, a meat cleaver, a strangler's garrote. Each weapon was identified and from the names King grasped the significance of all this. Cyrus Pembroke was a collector of weapons which had actually been used in killing someone.

Mementos of murder!

King progressed to the end of the room. There, on what seemed to be a sort of pedestal, was a large box in the shape of a casket. Made of metal, by the feel of it, and securely locked. King tried to lift it and couldn't. He took out his keys to experiment, crouched slightly, and prepared to attack the lock.

That was when the lone chandelier winked out and there was a rush of feet in his direction. King had no time to straighten or move. Someone was upon him.

Suddenly his throat felt as if it were being subjected to the bites of a score of vampires. He could feel blood running down his neck. Something that felt much like steel gripped him by the throat. He lashed out with a fist, encountered a human frame and someone grunted in pain.

King reached for his gun.

He felt the encircling thing let go, pulling flesh with it. Then a pile-driver hit him squarely on top of the head. He didn't

gradually sink to the floor. He just crashed, without the barest knowledge of the fact. . .

When things began to clear up for him, he was aware of voices. Pembroke's strident speech, and the monotones of at least three other men.

"My butler told me that inquisitive detective was here," Pembroke said, "and that he left him in the study to wait for me. Did you see him, Elwood?"

"Not me," somebody called Elwood answered. "After you phoned you were on your way home, I drove over and sat on your porch to wait. About fifteen minutes later, just before you arrived, Herb here joined me."

"I walked over," the man called Herb explained. "What the devil do you want us for anyway, Cyrus? To hear you tell about the footpad who nearly killed you?"

"No," Pembroke said. "I asked you three men to meet me here for a specific reason. You three people, and you alone, have seen the contents of my special box in my Museum of Horrors. I believe the attack upon me was inspired by one of you, or—wait now—someone you carelessly told about my little prize."

"You're crazy, Cyrus!" a new voice growled. "In fact, the proof of your insanity lies in that Museum of Horrors, as you call it. Collecting murder weapons as a hobby!"

"I want you three to listen," Pembroke said. "What I have to say is most important and I have to say it before that fool detective returns. He must be prowling. I expected to find him in the museum, but it was locked, so of course he wasn't there. Will you listen to me, please?"

**T**HE VOICE which King identified as belonging to the man called Herb, spoke clearly.

"Go ahead, Cyrus."

"You three men saw my little gem. Perhaps one of you had seen it before. You

know the circumstances under which I obtained possession of it. So one of you may have tried to kill me because you are afraid I know too much. I assure you that is not so. I don't even know who was killed. I was too scared to look. I solemnly swear that none shall ever see that token again and that I shall never, never relate its history to another soul. Now, if anyone of you did try to kill me, your motive is gone. That's all, gentlemen."

"Wait a minute, Cyrus," Herb said. "You have just called one of us a murderer and a would-be murderer. I don't like it. For myself, I told no one. But I intend to talk about it. To the police. And right away."

Pembroke spoke sharply. "If you do, Herb, I'll see that you are sold out. I own enough of your business to close it up if I like. That goes for the rest of you too. I saw my mistake after I exhibited my prize. I managed to arrange things so that I can ruin anyone of you, or all three of you. I shall, if a word of this gets out."

The man called Elwood spoke. "Cyrus, you've finally unfurled your true flag, eh? I hope the next attempt to murder you is successful. Very successful. Good night!"

There were heavy footsteps, a door slammed, and silence descended over the house. King, lying beneath one of the large show-cases, stared up at the bottom of it and wondered if he had blundered into the home of a maniac. The things he had heard didn't make complete sense, but they gave him a good idea as to what this was all about.

He crawled from beneath the showcase and stood up gradually. His head ached, his throat was stiff from blood that smeared it, and a wholesome rage was burning in his heart. Pembroke was going to talk now. He was going to open that strange metal casket and produce whatever sordid exhibit it contained.

The voices came again. The man called Herb was speaking.

"Roger and Williams don't know when they are licked, Cyrus. I do. Anyway, what happens in connection with your hobby is none of my business. I swear that I told no one about the contents of that box, and what it contains means nothing to me. But I'm wondering."

"Wonder out loud," Pembroke said.

"Well, one of us must be responsible for the attack made on you. Or knows who made it. Remember that Roger Elwood claimed he was sitting on your porch waiting? He wasn't. When I drew near the house, I saw him coming from around the back. He acted strangely, so I didn't show myself."

"And what of that?" Pembroke snapped.

"He had just slipped out of the rear museum door after returning that certain object which he had borrowed to use on you."

"I never thought of that!" Pembroke exhaled sharply. "Let's go into the museum and see if it's there. It was intact yesterday. I looked at it."

Before King could find a hiding place, the lights were turned on. Pembroke saw him first and gave a shout. The man named Herb let out a carefully chosen expletive.

"So the police have turned eavesdropper to get their evidence! You are no better than the crooks you go after, Sergeant."

"Sergeant," Pembroke said, "I intend to have your badge for this—and don't think I can't get it. Breaking into my museum is burglary, whether it's done by a thief or a detective, one who has no search warrant or hasn't served one."

King walked slowly toward the pair.

"Take a good look at my throat, Pembroke," he said grimly. "I was attacked by the same man who tried to kill you. And

he wielded the same weapon. This has become personal with me now. I don't care whether you like it or not. I intend to find out what this is all about."

"You heard what was said just a little while ago?" Herb asked.

"Almost every word. I'd like to know who you are."

"Meet Mr. Hall," Pembroke said. "He's a broker. Now, Sergeant, you brought that attack upon yourself. It was altogether your fault. However, I shall pay you handsomely to forget it."

"I'll forget when the man who did it has my handcuffs on his wrists," King said tartly. "Even if the wrists happen to be yours, Pembroke. Now get over there and open that metal casket. Open it, or I'll smash the thing."

"No!" Pembroke yelled.

**K**ING TURNED, walked back to where the casket was placed and drew his gun. He put the muzzle against the lock. Pembroke squealed in alarm and ran toward him.

"Cyrus," Herb Hall said, "I think he means it! And, frankly, I think you ought to show him what's inside. Furthermore, it might also be wise to tell him the whole story."

"But I'll be implicated!" Pembroke protested shrilly.

"That's better than being dead," Herb said softly. "Be reasonable, Cyrus. Acknowledge that this has gotten out of your hands. You were attacked with murderous intent. It will happen again—until you're dead. Take my advice and tell this policeman your story. In that way you will no longer be the only man who knows it and therefore not a target for the murderer."

Pembroke leaned weakly against the metal casket, which he now guarded with both his arms. He looked dispiritedly at

Sergeant King.

"Suppose I do show you what is inside. Suppose I relate the whole story. Will you promise not to arrest me? To listen to all I have to say?"

"I'll listen, but I'll make no promises. In fact, Pembroke, arresting you would be delightful. Now open it or I'll blast the thing."

"Better do it," Herb said softly. "He means business. Besides, he can help you."

Pembroke sighed, took keys from his pocket and thrust one into the strange lock. He raised the lid and King looked inside. He saw what seemed to be a metal gauntlet reposing on a piece of white velvet. At least the velvet had been white. Now it was tinged, in spots, with streaks of crimson.

"That," King said, "is the weapon which was used to nearly kill you and almost slit my throat to ribbons. What the heck is it?"

Pembroke waxed enthusiastic, like a museum guide who has become bored, and has suddenly encountered an interesting group.

"It's an ancient torturer's gauntlet. Look—see the sharp little prongs on the inner side of each finger? Yes, it was used to nearly kill me. And you too, Sergeant."

"Where'd you get it?" King snapped.

Pembroke waved a hand at all the show-cases.

"You have seen what my hobby is. Collecting murder weapons. They come from all over the world. Believe me, they were not easy to get."

"I don't care about the others," King said. "I'm interested only in this gauntlet. Whom did that kill?"

"I don't know," Pembroke confessed. "I—I found it near the corpse. It was a man who lay dead near the north limits of my estate. I happened to be taking a little walk. I always do, every night. I heard someone groan. I went over. This man—he was so

covered with blood that I couldn't see who he was—lay behind a bush. The gauntlet was beside him. He died as I bent over him. Remember it was two in the morning, and dark.”

“All right—keep talking,” King commanded.

“I realized that here I had a murder weapon to top my whole collection. Taken right from the scene of the crime by me. A weapon, strange in itself, and wielded by a murderer who would never be caught. I couldn't help myself. I wanted that gauntlet and, to get it, I had to move fast, before the murderer attacked me.”

“When did it happen?” King demanded.

“Three weeks ago tonight. I . . . Where are you going, Sergeant?”

“To phone. I want to find out who the dead man was. We can start from there.”

“Wait a minute,” Pembroke pleaded. “You won't find out. There never was a report of any killing that night. I checked carefully. The murderer must have returned, removed the corpse of his victim and successfully concealed it. Now will you talk business with me? I'll pay well.”

“I ought to heave you in the clink right now!” King thundered. “Don't you realize you're an accessory to murder? And a potential victim of the same man? Now listen to me. You showed this gauntlet to three people. The three who were here tonight. Perhaps they did tell someone about it, and word reached the killer. Until then, he probably didn't even know who you were, but he does now. He has to kill you to keep the truth from coming out. He must believe in the possibility that you saw him. The gauntlet can be traced.”

“Sergeant,” Herb Hall broke in, “I don't blame you for getting sore, but you must be wrong. If the gauntlet can be traced, why did the murderer bring it back after attacking Pembroke with it?”

King bit his lip. “You've got a brain,

Mr. Hall. We'll go into that. First, though, I'd like to clean up my throat. Can't tell what sort of an infection I'll get if I don't.”

**B**OOTH MEN convoyed him to an upstairs bathroom. The stony-faced butler provided antiseptic and bandages and hovered about, being as helpful as he could, and promptly disappeared when Pembroke growled at him.

The three men went to a second floor study. The butler brought drinks. King sipped his. It hurt him to swallow.

Pembroke looked worried. “I'd have given a lot not to have any of this come out,” he said. “It makes me look like a fool. I couldn't help myself, I tell you. After spending years making that collection of murder weapons, I couldn't resist owning one which represented an unsolved case. There are no such mementos of murder. In unsolved cases, the weapons are always retained by the police.”

“All right,” King said. “Let's get started. You had three men, all of whom knew about the gauntlet, here tonight. Hall, Elwood, and who was the third man?”

“Creighton Williams,” Hall said.

“I heard you, Mr. Hall, say that Elwood was a liar when he claimed to have been sitting on the porch waiting for Mr. Pembroke. You say he came from around the back of the house as you approached. Which means one of you is lying and neither of you has an alibi. Mr. Pembroke, where did you meet Creighton Williams?”

Pembroke looked agitated. “Well, I phoned him from the hospital. He lives up the road about two miles and he told me his car was being repaired and asked me to pick him up. I did, though he kept me waiting long enough.”

King nodded. “Then Williams may have come here and managed to get back in time to meet you, although a little late. Or you, Mr. Pembroke, might have reached

the house, tried to kill me and put the gauntlet back.”

“But why would I do such a thing?” Pembroke exclaimed frantically.

King grinned. “If I had an answer to that, I’d lock you up. Now one more thing. Did you ever get a hint you might be blackmailed?”

“Blackmailed?” Pembroke shouted. “For what? What did I do?”

“You concealed a crime and appropriated important evidence. Reason enough. How about it?”

“No,” Pembroke said sullenly. “I received no information as to blackmail.”

King carefully wrapped the gauntlet in a piece of cloth. Soon afterward, he was in town. Ten minutes’ checking told him that the gauntlet had originally been the possession of the city-owned Medieval Museum.

He went to the home of the curator and the gauntlet was promptly identified.

“We believed we had mislaid it,” the curator explained. “Those things do happen.”

King wrote the names of Pembroke, Herb Hall, Elwood and Creighton Williams on a bit of paper. He handed this to the curator.

“Are any of these names familiar?” he asked.

“Only one. This Mr. Elwood is the business partner of a man named Thornton who is a director of the museum.”

King made a note of the new name. He asked about Thornton and made some phone calls from the curator’s home. By this means he discovered that Thornton had left for a vacation a month before and had not been heard from since. As he had given orders no mail was to be forwarded, his silence was not astonishing.

King made a long distance call to the resort hotel where Thornton was supposed to be. They had not heard from him,

although he had made a reservation.

King worked fast now. Tracing Thornton was simple. With Roger Elwood, he ran a manufacturing business which was reputed to have been doing well. Further, the two men had a large insurance policy providing benefits for the survivor. And Roger Elwood had been in constant need of money for two or three years!

It was morning before King could follow up this new trail. From bankers he learned that Thornton had always maintained a large bank account, but it had been depleted to the tune of forty-odd-thousand dollars shortly before his disappearance. There was no trace as to where this cash had gone.

For the next few hours, King visited the homes of each suspect. They were all at their respective city offices, so he had a free hand. On the surface of things, Elwood was to be suspected the most, since he would profit by Thornton’s death. But why had he concealed the corpse if he had murdered to cash in on the insurance policy? It wouldn’t be paid for years if the corpse was not found and death legally established.

**T**HERE WAS a gardener on Elwood’s miniature estate. An old man who talked almost too much, but vaguely mixed with his flow of words were some which interested King. Thornton had vanished a month before, short of two days. At that same time, Elwood had been having a garden dug at the rear of his home. King surveyed the garden. It was well sprouted by now, but at the time of Thornton’s disappearance it had been only dug.

King called for help. A score of sweating patrolmen went to work, ruining the garden completely while the gardener protested, without getting much sympathy. They found the corpse, buried five feet underground, in almost the exact center of



the garden.

King looked at it while the medical examiner made his examination. The throat was torn to shreds. With Thornton, the gauntlet had accomplished its lethal work.

Half an hour later, Elwood was under arrest and in King's office. Elwood stoutly denied knowing anything about the crime.

"It is true," he said, "that I will profit from Thornton's death and that I need the money. We shared in the profits of the business, but Thornton was always lucky. Both of us plunged in the market. I lost continually, as Herb Hall will prove. He handled my business and Thornton's. Thornton, on the other hand, had a knack for picking stocks that would soar when everyone thought they'd flop."

"And you don't remember where you were or what you did on the night of the crime," King said thoughtfully. "That isn't against you. A killer would make it a point to remember. Of course if he was awfully smart, he might realize no alibi is better than an iron-clad one in a case of this kind."

"I think I'm being framed," Elwood declared. "By whom, I have no idea. What I can't get through my head is why the murderer killed Thornton on Pembroke's estate and permitted Pembroke to find the corpse and the gauntlet."

"I have the answer to that one," King said, "but no evidence to back it up. You'll have to stay here at Headquarters, Mr. Elwood. I'm sorry, but there is enough evidence right now for an indictment."

"Do you believe I did it?" Elwood gulped.

"I'd bet ten to one you did not," King said slowly, "but proving who did won't be easy."

"Thanks." Elwood sighed. "I feel better anyway." King had Elwood taken to a cell. Then he opened a desk drawer and took out the gauntlet. He sat there studying the thing

intently. Then he made three phone calls through which he assembled Herb Hall, Creighton Williams and Pembroke, at the latter's home.

King drove there. It was after dark when he arrived. He called Pembroke into the museum, just off the study where the others were seated. He opened the metal casket and gently deposited the gauntlet inside. Then he faced Pembroke.

"That's the way you kept it. Now, when you exhibited this thing to the three men who knew about the gauntlet, did any of them try it on?"

"Good heavens, I wouldn't even have permitted them to touch it!"

"Fine. Now the murderer wore this glove three times. I've done some research and I've found that cotton gloves were usually worn beneath metal gauntlets. But in the days when such apparel was used, men were not built as big as they are today. That goes for height and size of feet and hands. Which means this gauntlet would be a tight fit for anyone today except a man with unusually small hands. Elwood is locked up, but he didn't kill Thornton. Elwood couldn't even get this gauntlet on."

"What are you driving at?" Pembroke demanded.

"That Elwood was neatly framed. But mainly, that the man who did wear this gauntlet, did not wear gloves beneath it. The fit would be impossible. So his bare hands were in close contact with the inside of the glove. Now it isn't lined, the mesh is closely woven, and I think there will be fingerprints inside."

Pembroke gasped. "I never thought of that. What are you going to do?"

"Telephone for fingerprint experts to come here, examine the glove and then print everyone suspected."

Pembroke gulped. "I tried the glove on after I found it. The fit was tight, but—my prints must be in it."

“All right,” King said. “If they are the only prints, we’ll concentrate on you. It’s possible you ripped your own throat open with the spurs on the glove. I’ve always wondered why you weren’t killed with the thing. Let’s get it over with.”

**W**ILLIAMS and Herb Hall were flustered when King entered the study again. They had heard every word he said. King had planned it that way. He proceeded to the phone, but it rang before he could get to the instrument.

Pembroke answered it. He called to Hall. “For you. Sounds like your aunt.”

Herb answered and hung up a moment later. “There’s been a little trouble, Sergeant,” he said. “My uncle just had a shock. My aunt is frantic. I hardly recognized her voice. I wonder if I might be excused.”

“Go ahead,” King said. “Or wait, just one moment. Find me an ink pad and some paper, Pembroke. I want to take Mr. Hall’s prints.”

Hall didn’t object. King impressed the broker’s fingertips on a piece of paper, then let him go. He was calling Headquarters about the fingerprint men when Hall hurried to the front door.

King finished his call, waited three or four minutes and then, without a word, he went out of the house. He wasn’t gone for long. On returning, he sat down facing Pembroke and Creighton Williams.

“I think I can explain this business quite well,” King said. “First of all, Elwood did not kill his partner. Another man, whom Thornton trusted and allowed to handle much of his business, did. This man received a large sum of money from Thornton. On pure theory we’ll say that Thornton wanted it used to buy up a big interest in something that looked so much like a failure, that his agent decided to keep the cash, say he had invested it and lost it

when the crash came. But it didn’t come.

“When the murderer had disposed of the money, he was horrified to learn the stuff he was supposed to have bought with it, had gone up. That left him holding a nice large empty sack. So Thornton had to die. Fortunately he was going away on a vacation. The killer knew it. Did you know it, Mr. Williams?”

Williams gulped, nodded, but didn’t trust himself to utter a word.

“I guess everyone connected with the case knew about the intended vacation,” King said. “At any rate, the murderer got the gauntlet. For a special reason, mind you. He killed Thornton with it and made certain Pembroke, on his nightly stroll around the estate, would stumble on it. The murderer knew that Pembroke would hardly be able to resist stealing the gauntlet, even if it meant he might get into a serious jam by doing that. A man who has engaged in collecting murder weapons over many years, would lose part of his normal sanity upon finding something like that. Pembroke reacted just as the murderer knew he must.”

“But who?” Pembroke cried. “Who, Sergeant? Will the fingerprints show?”

“Fingerprints on metal mesh?” King laughed. “Hardly. You wouldn’t even get a smear on a surface like that. I merely wanted to frighten the killer into trying to eliminate the possibility of such a clue.” Williams and Pembroke just sat there, blinking. King raised his voice. “Herb Hall!” he called. “You’re in the museum, and you can’t get out. I locked the door which leads to the back of this house. There is no other exit from that room except through this study. You told the truth when you said you scarcely recognized your aunt’s voice over the phone. Because it happened to be a policewoman calling. The call was a heaven-sent opportunity for you. To leave

us with a perfectly logical excuse, but before hurrying to your sick uncle, you could take three minutes to circle the house, enter the museum and remove any prints inside the glove.”

Herb Hall came out of the museum. The glove was on his right hand and he was snarling. King sat stone still, until Hall advanced to within leaping distance. Then King’s right hand moved like the strike of an asp. Herb Hall looked at the service pistol in King’s grip. He staggered over to a chair and sat down.

King kept the gun trained on him as he talked.

“Herb’s personal bank account,” he explained to the others, “was fattened just after Thornton’s was depleted. Which gave me an idea. But there were other reasons why I suspected him. First of all, Thornton was killed in a weird manner and Pembroke was allowed to find the glove. Why? Obviously for blackmail purposes, which fell through when I came on the case. Frankly though, I guessed the murderer’s identity before I even met any of the suspects except Pembroke.

“Remember, I had been attacked in the museum. But not murdered, which could have been done. The killer merely wanted to replace the gauntlet. When the blackmail scheme fell through, Herb Hall wanted no suspicions to develop that Pembroke had been allowed to find the thing purposely. But Herb gave himself away neatly. First of all, he knew I was in the museum because he had attacked me there. He let

me live because he wanted me to hear him start the frame-up against Elwood.

“And Herb told Pembroke the gauntlet was in the metal casket. How did he know? Because he put it there, knowing it could be traced and suspicion of Elwood furthered. Herb recognized me at once. He had seen me just before he put out the lights. Granted that Pembroke told him I was prowling, but when they found me in the lab, I hadn’t looked much like a detective.

“Then things began to shape up. Elwood had a motive, but he is an intelligent man and wouldn’t go about collecting on an insurance policy in such a clumsy manner. Williams had no motive. Herb was Thornton’s broker, and an investigation of his financial transactions and the comparison of the amounts with those Thornton had withdrawn clinched it.”

Pembroke mopped his forehead. “He—he planned to blackmail me. That was why he used such a unique weapon. He knew very well I couldn’t possibly have passed up the chance to steal it. I’m going to get rid of all those grisly things. Everyone of them. Thank heaven, it’s all over.”

Sergeant King put handcuffs on Herb Hall, pulled him to his feet and took away the gauntlet. He dragged Hall over to Pembroke.

“Your hand, Mr. Pembroke. I’m going to cuff you to Herb. Millionaire or pauper, you can’t get away with swiping murder evidence.”