

Fire Marshal Joe Drake Got His Fill of Danger When He Bucked Mobsters Who Pulled Two Simultaneous Crimes!



“The two men who had jumped to the running board of Hogan’s car went down under a hail of bullets.”

WHITE HEAT

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

THE moment somebody pulled the fire-alarm box near Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street, Joe Drake, fire marshal, piled into his car and roared toward the scene. Outwardly the coupe looked like a Ford. But under the hood purred an engine which could hurl the vehicle along the pavement at better than eighty miles an hour.

Now as Drake weaved in and out of traffic at reckless speed, the old feeling of danger hummed along his nerves, and his dark eyes grew more brilliant.

Drake’s job was to find out how fires

started in order to fix the blame and criminal liability, if any. It was an excellent school in which to learn detective work, and Drake had gathered knowledge and wisdom with uncanny rapidity.

He was clever even though he was only twenty-five. It took a lot of careful planning on the part of any firebug to set a blaze and not get caught and sent up the river for doing it.

Fires like last week’s tenement blaze on Eighth Avenue, in which a dozen people went to the hospital and three to the

morgue, were sordid and ghastly. But that had been cut and dried, having been caused by an overturned kerosene stove.

It was the other conflagrations—those of mysterious and suspicious origin and started with criminal intent—that interested Joe Drake and filled him with the rich wine of adventure.

Careening around a corner on two wheels, Drake heard the wail of sirens. Fire engines: and police radio cars were on the way. But swift as they were, they failed to beat Joe Drake to the scene.

Tires screeched their loud protest as the young investigator skidded to a halt and leaped out of his car. He ran across the street as two radio cars pulled up. A curious crowd had gathered, and the police moved in swiftly to keep the people back.

The building, a narrow, three-storied structure squeezed in between two taller buildings on Sixth Avenue, was already a roaring furnace.

Ruddy flames leaped into the sky, the heat of them washing across the street in a torrid wave.

A HUGE hand was pressed against Drake's burly chest as he worked his way to the edge of the crowd.

"Get back, feller! Do you want to have your eyebrows burned off?"

The fire marshal grinned at the copper.

"Hello, Barnes. Is this a private show, or can I sit in on it?"

Officer Barnes answered the grin with one of his own.

"Excuse me, Mr. Drake. The shine of the fire on your face kept me from recognizing you right off. Go ahead."

Any further words were utterly drowned out by the noise of the onrushing fire trucks as they jammed into position to put out the blaze with their usual clocklike regularity.

Drake looked at his watch. Between the pulling of the alarm and the arrival of the engines less than two minutes had elapsed. When a New York engine company was ordered to roll, it *rolled*.

Officers nodded to Drake. He was a six-footer, looking more the college athlete than the criminologist, and his red hair made him stand out as though he himself had been on fire.

"How did it happen?" yelled someone.

But Drake hadn't started to find out. One couldn't get into that seething inferno, so any information pointing to foul play had to wait until the fire had been extinguished, which meant that all clues might easily be erased by the flames.

Firemen gripped the hose lines, and with heads down, dashed to the door of the building which was red from pavement to roof. Water surged through the huge hose, making it hard as iron under the tremendous pressure.

Drake turned his back on the scene and his eyes played over the faces of the crowd. There was a woman who gloated over fires. She might easily be a firebug, Drake decided, but it required more than a suspicion to make an arrest.

Besides, he wasn't ready to make an arrest. There were a dozen faces in a row, each expressing a certain grim eagerness.

"Every last one of 'em is hoping that lives have been lost in the fire and that they'll see the corpses dragged out!" thought Joe.

But it wasn't these faces—whose counterparts pressed against the life lines at every fire—that Drake was seeking. He was looking for faces which expressed real concern and shock.

Finally, he found one. It was that of a man in late middle age, with gray at his temples, wearing worn working clothes. Since it was nine o'clock, Saturday night,

the man had obviously been working late somewhere.

Even as Drake looked at the man, he saw the despair engraved on his face and heard him mutter:

“There goes my job up in smoke!”

Drake walked over to him.

“Who owns this place?” he asked.

The old man gave a nervous start.

“I don’t know.”

“Well, who pays you then? I heard you say something about your job going up in smoke, so you must work in the building. Do you know how the fire started, or if it was accidental or not?”

THE old man’s face blanched, and his eyes dilated. “I work for an estate,” he said, lowering his voice as Drake led him away from the noise and commotion of the fire. “My check comes to my house regularly through the mail. I haven’t even bothered to ask who supplies the funds, so long as the check is good.

“I must give satisfaction, or they wouldn’t pay me twenty-five a week to act as building watchman, would they? Now this fire ruins everything—and me goin’ on for old age.”

“Was the building occupied?” persisted the fire marshal.

“No. That is, not yet. It’s been vacant a long time, but a couple of weeks ago it looked as if the place had been leased and some business were preparing to move in.

“Boxes were carted to the curb and packed into the storerooms on all three floors. I’m not curious and didn’t ask what was in any of the boxes.

“It couldn’t have been much, though, for I’ve bumped against some of the boxes, cleanin’ up, and they moved as easily as if they were empty.”

Drake was listening with growing interest, already guessing as to how it had been done—knowing even now that the

fire had been deliberately started. But why? That would come later.

“I didn’t see the renter,” went on the caretaker of the doomed house, “but everything seemed to be in order, including the trucks backin’ up to the curb. Knowin’ how badly the place needed to be rented, I didn’t ask questions for fear of scarin’ the people off.”

“What sort of business do you think these people were starting?” demanded Drake, oblivious of the excited clamor all around him.

“I couldn’t even guess, but somethin’ wholesale, I’m sure, for there weren’t any counters or desks. Aside from a small table and chair, there was nothin’ but those light boxes.”

“Did you hear anybody say when the place would be opened for business?”

The old man hesitated for a moment.

“Well, I did hear somebody say that it would be opened sometime tonight.”

“Did they say what hour the place would be opened?”

“No.”

“Weren’t you curious?” queried Drake, a firm tenacity in his voice.

The caretaker shuffled his feet in embarrassment, reddened a little.

“Well, yes, I was curious,” he said, “and so—”

“You came back, sort of quietly and carefully so the people wouldn’t ask embarrassing questions, to see what was going to happen here,” Drake concluded.

The old man looked up, now plainly frightened.

“Say, are you a detective? I didn’t start the fire, if that’s why you’re askin’ me so many questions.”

“I don’t suspect you of anything,” replied Drake with a reassuring smile, “but tell me something. Do you have Saturday afternoons off?”

“Yes, because I work half a day on

Sundays.”

“Where were you when the fire started?”

LIFTING his chin courageously, the old man met Drake’s stiff, speculative gaze.

“Maybe it looks bad for me,” he said, “but I was at the door of the place when the fire started. I was goin’ in.”

“What made you decide to do that, when you were doubtful about coming back?”

“The place was dark, when I’d expected it to be light. So I intended goin’ in to see what had been done durin’ Saturday afternoon. I was tryin’ to unlock the door—the lock is old and has to be pampered—when I heard somethin’ that sort of startled me.”

“Yes?” Drake lifted his chin, his eyes eager. He was like a war-horse scenting a battle. “What was it?”

“The ringin’ of a telephone inside the store.”

“What was there about that to scare you?”

“There hadn’t been a telephone in the place since the last tenant moved out, and there hadn’t been one when I had left the place at noon. Of course, it had been put in Saturday afternoon, but I wasn’t expectin’ it so I stopped a few seconds with my foolin’ with the lock. Then I couldn’t go in.”

“Why not?”

“Because the inside of the building practically exploded into flames.”

Drake’s face became thoughtful. The caretaker studied him anxiously, obviously expecting to suffer dire consequences for something he had done or failed to do.

His was the abject fear of the old man who is afraid of losing his livelihood. Drake looked at his watch. Only five

minutes had passed since he had started talking with the old man.

And now something else was happening.

From up Twenty-third Street, toward Fifth Avenue, came the sound of police sirens. The spectators at the fire craned their necks, scenting a new thrill.

Drake peered grimly at the blazing building and decided he would be unable to enter and conduct an examination for at least twenty minutes.

Leaving the old man, he hurried to Twenty-third Street. He was just in time to see a police car slide to a stop in front of a jewelry store, midway of the long block.

Drake, always interested in police work, had time to spare, and since he had police powers he would be allowed to see what was going on.

A tall, slender man, his pale cheeks streaked with blood dripping from a cut on his scalp, met Drake and the police inside the establishment.

“I’ve been robbed, gentlemen!” gasped the jeweler. “Roughly, I’ve lost over a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of gems!”

The coppers—and plainclothes men who had followed them in—stared at one another. Drake’s heart jumped, then settled down to a rapid, excited beating.

“How could that happen when the store must have been filled with a Saturday night crowd?” demanded a police lieutenant.

“It *was* filled, but when the engines began to arrive on the scene of the fire down at the corner, my place was emptied like magic. You know how people are about fires. Well, a couple of minutes passed, maybe. Then a car stopped at my door and three men came in. I was putting away my trays of stones. I had a tray of uncut diamonds in my hands.”

THE jeweler broke off a moment and dabbed at the cut on his head with a handkerchief.

“The three men smiled at me. They looked like money, though I’d never seen any of them before. They suddenly pointed weapons at me. I dropped the tray.

“One of them picked it up, emptied the contents into a sack. One fellow held me covered while the others grabbed everything in sight.”

“Describe the three men.”

“I was so scared I didn’t notice much,” murmured the jeweler. “One thief stayed behind until the other two reached their car. One of the two running men I bumped into someone on the sidewalk and I’m sure some of the stones were jostled out of his hands.

“The pedestrian started to run when the robber said something to him. The two got into their car. Then the fellow who had been covering me hit me with the muzzle of his weapon. As soon as I came to, I telephoned the police.”

Drake waited for no more. He dashed out to the sidewalk and began to search the gutter for stones, clues, anything which might show him the way to the solution of this robbery.

It wasn’t in his line, but he still had a few minutes before he could get into the burning building on the corner.

“Darned funny it should all happen together like that,” mused Drake.

A copper grasped him roughly by the shoulder.

“Looking for something?” he enquired belligerently.

Drake glanced up, noticing that the police had acted swiftly. The crowd which passed the scene of the robbery was not allowed to pause. Anyone attempting to loiter in the vicinity was instantly chased away while a cop would carefully study

the area at which the pedestrian had paused to stare.

It was quite obvious that an effort was being made to find the stones the jeweler believed had been dropped in the hurry of the robbers’ flight.

Drake didn’t argue with the policeman whom he didn’t know. If he explained himself the copper might naturally ask him what business it was of a fireman that a jeweler had been robbed, and Drake wasn’t ready to tell him.

Instead, his mind racing at top speed, he hurried back to the scene of the fire. At the corner nearest to it he happened to look back.

The policeman who had challenged him in front of the jeweler’s was following him. Did the fellow suspect him of something? Why did he follow? And if he did suspect, why didn’t he close in and make the collar?

Shrugging his broad shoulders, Drake mingled with the crowd, most of whom had remained at the fire and didn’t yet know about the robbery. If the jeweler had been murdered, the crowd would have been in front of his place.

Crowds sensed tragedy as vultures sensed carrion. Drake knew that and shivered despite the fact that he was so close to the waning flames. What tragedy would be disclosed when it was possible to enter the building?

A hand touched Drake on the shoulder. He turned and looked into a pair of cold black eyes—those of the copper who had challenged him.

The man’s uniform fitted him snugly. He was soldierly in bearing. He looked the part of an efficient officer. But his eyes were as cold as ice and there was a bleak deadliness to his craggy profile.

“I’m wondering about you, fellow,” said the policeman. “If you don’t mind I’ll

stick around a bit. Don't try to duck away from me."

DRAKE grinned. Then his eyes caught those of the old caretaker, who nodded at him uncertainly. The old man's eyes strayed to the copper, and he whitened. Drake thought he knew why.

The old man expected to be arrested. Drake had questioned him. Now he had brought a policeman. The old man strode boldly up to Drake.

"I knew you were police," he said, "but I've already told you all I know. I didn't do it, I tell you!"

Drake darted a glance at the policeman whose eyes narrowed ominously.

"So," said the officer, "you're interested in fires as well as robberies! How come?"

Drake, enjoying himself, vouchsafed no information to either man. Both stuck with the crowd until the fire had been quenched. Then Drake went into the blackened hulk of a building with the firemen.

The place had been thoroughly gutted. Wooden stairways had been burned entirely away, only the rectangles in the two upper floors showing where they had been.

Pieces of metal covered the floor, ankle deep in charred bits of wood, blackened metal, debris. Drake scuffed around the first floor, shaking his head, sometimes even exclaiming to himself.

If the policeman wondered why the firemen offered no objection to Drake's activities, he said nothing.

Drake heard the officer tell someone that he was the cop on the beat here, and a warm feeling of wild excitement stormed through his blood. He looked at the policeman and his jaw hardened imperceptibly.

He had himself boosted to the second floor, which he went over as well as he could, considering that most of it was burned through. He didn't bother the third floor, and the policeman, whose name he now gave as Hogan, asked him why.

"Anything that would interest me would have fallen through to the ground floor," replied Drake.

At this moment there came an exclamation from a fireman who had been working in the rear end of the first floor with an axe, obviously searching for any last stray spark that might start the fire going again.

"Come here!" yelled the fireman, his voice thick from smoke.

And so the crowd which had waited patiently outside got its thrill—the thrill its sixth sense had told it must surely come. For, out of the black debris, as black as the coals which had hidden it, they dragged the body of a man.

It would probably never be possible to identify it. The crowd surged into the place. Policemen drove them back.

Something glittered in the ashes, and Drake stooped and picked it up. Peering at it a brief instant, his blood began to race. Quickly he thrust the object into his pocket; then glanced at the charred body.

Drake raised his penetrating eyes to Hogan. The officer's face was pale. He licked dry lips with a dry tongue and beckoned to the investigator.

"So you're a marshal, eh? I might have known it. You won't get me into trouble, will you?"

"How could I get you into trouble?"

"This man obviously sneaked into the building while I was on beat. That's how he got caught in the fire. You see, I may have forgotten to try the door when I passed this building just before the fire. Headquarters is sure to demand an

explanation. Tell me what you discovered.”

FOR a long moment Drake stared into the deep black eyes, and came to a decision. Officer Hogan wasn't as frightened of his superiors as his words seemed to indicate.

“I didn't discover much of anything besides the burned remains of a telephone,” Drake responded idly. “Whatever those boxes contained which the tenants piled in here, there weren't enough metal parts to wad a shotgun, or I'd have found 'em in the ashes.

“The boxes might all have been filled with excelsior, for all the trace their contents left. Yes, it must have been something of the kind, for the caretaker says that the house practically exploded into flames.”

Officer Hogan mopped his forehead with a dirty handkerchief, though he wasn't perspiring in the least.

Drake wondered why he went to the trouble of acting worried. The caretaker was now inside the building, staring at the debris with a forlorn expression. In those black ashes was the job he had enjoyed, and men his age didn't easily find others.

After the dead man was taken away Hogan started back up the street toward the ravished jewelry store. Once he looked back. Drake elaborately failed to see him do so, and Hogan walked on.

Hurrying to his car, Drake jumped in and drove into Twenty-third Street. The chances that Hogan would know his car were slight. Another vehicle was crawling slowly along ahead of him. Noting it, Drake nodded with satisfaction.

He had expected it. Two and two, as he put them together, were promising to make four again. But this time there should be plenty of excitement. It started

almost at once, as far as Drake was concerned.

Officer Hogan stepped to the curb, then to the running board of the crawling car. It picked up speed. Drake slowed down to see which way it turned on Fifth Avenue. It turned downtown.

Fifth Avenue's red lights might halt it at Twenty-second Street. Drake turned right into a parking space which went clear through the block, from Twenty-third to Twenty-second Street. He had to rely on luck that the lights would favor him.

Swinging into Twenty-second Street, he sped to Fifth Avenue, keeping to the right so that he could turn into the Avenue, to the right, regardless of whether the lights were red or green.

He dragged to a stop at the intersection. The lights were just changing. They had been red on Fifth Avenue and had now turned green. He spotted the car which Officer Hogan had commandeered.

The policeman was in it—in the act of doffing his uniform cap and substituting a dark slouch hat. Then Drake noticed that the chauffeur of the car was in uniform and the car was a rich one.

HOGAN didn't even look toward Drake. The long black car with its stiff-necked chauffeur started downtown. Drake followed, keeping half a block behind to allay any possible suspicion.

He wasn't much afraid of detection, for the effrontery of “Hogan” had already shown his colossal nerve. He had dared to claim to be a copper on beat, depending on the excitement of the robbery and the fire to keep himself from being too closely questioned.

And he had got away with it, with everybody except Joe Drake, who could add two and two with sometimes astonishing results.

At Sixteenth Street a bundle flew from the speeding car ahead of Drake, plumping into the gutter. Hogan had watched his chance thus to discard his uniform.

Now there remained nothing to connect him in any way with a beat on Twenty-third Street except Joe Drake, in a deceptive Ford half a block in the rear.

Then the break came which one must always be prepared for in following another car. The Hogan car beat the lights at Fourteenth Street, but the red ones caught Drake.

Grimly he bolted through them. As he did so a traffic policeman jumped on his running board.

"Listen, buddy, where's the fire?"

Drake answered him literally.

"Back at Twenty-third and Sixth Avenue," he said tersely. "I'm tailing that car ahead. It's a case of robbery. Phone in to your desk and say Joe Drake is tailing that car.

"Get the number. Tell your desk to notify all radio cars, but that big sedan is not to be molested until it stops to let Hogan out. Then the coppers are to follow me just in case I get into trouble."

The officer grinned, nodded, jumped off.

Unfortunately Hogan had taken that moment to look back. He had seen the copper jump to Drake's running board.

Yet, Drake hadn't stopped and the policeman, after being carried almost a block from his post, dropped off without making a pinch.

Therefore, the man in the Ford stood in with the coppers! His explanation had satisfied a hard-boiled traffic officer.

Immediately the long black car ahead of Drake leaped forward under increased speed, and careened into the curving road through Washington Square Park.

Drake, realizing he had been discovered, gritted his teeth and stepped

on the gas. He knew that by this time police cars from several directions must be racing to his assistance, their sirens silent. Hogan would probably be aware of that, too.

The chase was on. Other cars made way for the two speeding ones. Hogan's chauffeur swung left and roared toward Lafayette. Drake drew up behind the car.

His Ford was traveling now at sixty miles an hour, breakneck speed in New York traffic. But he wasn't afraid of accidents. He knew his car and his own capabilities.

As he sped downtown on Lafayette he saw a police car in the middle of the street. The blue-coated driver was leaning far out of his window, studying the number of Hogan's sedan.

Simultaneously both policemen in the radio car discovered Drake and permitted him to flash by and lead the way. Hogan's sedan raced down Lafayette with the motor almost full out. It went through lights with ease. Traffic cops at intersections, hearing the speeding car, gave them right of way with uplifted hands. Close behind pressed Drake in his powerful coupe.

ROARING into Canal Street, the big black sedan headed toward the Bowery. After several blocks it turned right again, moving into Chinatown. The car plunged through a narrow street filled with children, who somehow miraculously escaped destruction.

Grimly Drake kept on the trail, eyes as his agile mind raced over what he knew and guessed, still putting two and two together to arrive at a startling conclusion.

Everything had its place. The robbery . . . the fire . . . the telephone heard by the watchman . . . the dead man in the fire . . . Hogan impersonating an officer on beat.

Near a Bowery Mission, Hogan's

sedan drew up before a door for a split-second Drake was half a block behind.

Hogan's siren, oddly like a police siren, yet enough unlike it not to be mistaken, had been going since quitting Canal Street.

Drake knew it was a signal, and when the long car slowed down and two men leaped for the running board, one on either side, he was sure of it.

For, each of the two men began firing at him with automatics. The long car leaped ahead. Then, all at once, it swerved. Coming out of the Bowery was a police car, and it completely blocked further advance of the fleeing thieves.

Hogan jumped out. So did his chauffeur. The long sedan went on, crashing into the police car.

But the police were already out, their revolvers ready. Drake braked his Ford, leaped to the pavement, hugged the wall to his right to keep from stopping police lead.

The four fugitives opened with everything they had, and the police responded. Policemen came into the fight from behind Drake, yelling.

The two men who had jumped to the running board of Hogan's car went down under a hail of bullets. The chauffeur suddenly dropped his automatic, doubling up in agony.

Hogan elevated his hands, just as Drake, darting in low, caught him about the knees and knocked him off his feet. His face hit the pavement, stunning him with the force of his fall.

When he regained complete control of his faculties, he found himself handcuffed to a copper. . . .

THE police lieutenant, who had been handling the jewel robbery, swung his steely glance toward Joe Drake.

"All right, my friend, explain it all, and it had better be good. Remember three

men are dead."

"I know," said the young fire marshal, "but it saved the law a lot of trouble, for they'd have burned. They committed a robbery which ended in murder. That always does, or should, mean the chair. Only Hogan, alias 'Jewel' Benson—I've looked this fellow up—remains alive to take the hot squat."

From his chair, surrounded by police officers, Benson glared at Drake.

"Prove it!" he snapped.

Drake grinned, his eyes steady and brilliant.

"I can prove most of it, Benson," he murmured. "Of course, it would simplify things if you confessed. First, you started that fire so close to the jewelry store in order to get everybody out when the alarm was sent in.

"When the store was empty, you and your mugs went in and carted off the stuff that was found on the three the coppers shot down. I'm not forgetting the two rings found on you!

"Jackson, the jeweler, will probably identify them as part of the loot of his store. You made one mistake, Benson. You were too careful. The job was planned to the last detail—the fire, the robbery and your impersonation of an officer to check your back trail to determine if anyone suspected a tie-up between the fire and the robbery.

"You should simply have started the fire, pulled the job, and got away. Then we probably never would have got you. But no, you had considered all the angles and wanted to see for yourself whether anyone picked up any clues that might lead to you.

"So you slugged the regular cop on the beat, took his uniform, and stayed on the scene, while your mugs made a getaway. You watched for anybody who showed interest in both the robbery and the fire. I qualified so you kept an eye on me."

Benson growled in rage as Drake paused, then resumed in a quiet, yet insistent tone.

"I don't know where you tucked the cop after you knocked him out, and it doesn't matter," said Drake. "Anyway, I figure that he must have regained consciousness just long enough to stagger in the darkness to the first door he could open so he could recuperate.

"He found the door of the building that burned, which you had left open to make a draft that would cause a real fire. Stumbling in among the boxes on the first floor, he must have lost consciousness again.

"Evidently he closed the door when he entered, for the caretaker found it locked. The cop probably never heard the telephone ring. And the ringing of that telephone was his requiem!"

The policemen leaned forward. Jewel Benson went pale. Drake, watching the effect of his deductions, saw from Benson's expression that he was on the right track. He went on.

"You installed that telephone Saturday afternoon. You had it rigged, or did it yourself, with a piece of sandpaper fastened on the tongue of the bell. The rough side of the sandpaper was directly against a match head.

"In turn, the match head was fastened to the end of a piece of fuse—ordinary fuse such as is used in blasting. When the bell rang the sandpaper ran back and forth across the match head in the end of the fuse and it ignited.

"The fire ran down the fuse, whose other end opened into either a toy-balloon or a pig-bladder, filled with gasoline, kerosene, naphtha or some such preparation which had been placed in the middle of one of those boxes, most of which were packed with inflammable

material, probably excelsior. I know, because there were no metal parts left."

AGAIN Drake paused, his eyes stern and challenging as they bored into Benson.

"When the fire entered the gasoline, naphtha or kerosene, the stuff exploded and scattered flames through the whole building.

"The policeman probably didn't even have time to feel the heat before it killed him. So arson and robbery, with which you might have been charged if caught, had something more sinister tacked onto it: *Murder!*"

Benson jumped to his feet, his manacled hands raised high as though he would crash them down on Drake's head.

"It's a lie," he fumed. "I wasn't near that building within an hour of the fire!"

"I know it," replied Drake grimly. "But you or one of your men went into a pay station somewhere and called the number of the telephone you had installed that afternoon.

"The call went through. The bell rang. The sandpaper did its stuff. So did the fuse, and the inflammable stuff. The crowd gathered, leaving the jewelry store deserted and an easy prey for your gang.

"If only you had run, we probably wouldn't have caught you at all. You see, I know most of the cops by sight who have beats near Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street. I don't know them by name, but you didn't look at all familiar to me and I was suspicious of the way you kept following me even after you realized I had a right to be at the fire.

"You adopted the name Hogan so maybe that's the name of the policeman you killed. A check with the precinct will verify that, especially since I picked up a police shield in the ruins near his charred

body. Finding that shield just about convinced me you were a fake.”

Drake reached into his pocket, brought out a fire-blackened police shield and passed it to the lieutenant.

“Now, let’s have Jackson and the old watchman in here. Jackson will identify this man as one of the three who robbed him, and the two dead ones as the other two. The chauffeur doesn’t matter. He was their chauffeur, which is enough.

“The caretaker, now that Benson isn’t in uniform, will probably recognize him as

one of the men who had a hand in stocking the burned building with all those boxes.

“You know, Benson, if you squealed on anybody else who had a hand in this business, it *might* weigh in your favor.”

But Benson didn’t squeal, even when identified by Jackson and the caretaker. His insolent bravado lasted to the very end.

It stuck with him even when he walked to the electric chair and the electrodes were being adjusted. He was a tough guy, and a smart crook who proved too smart for his own good.