

BY THOMAS THURSDAY

Movie stuff

Police Captain Jim Barker went to the movies because he loved mystery thrillers, not realizing that he had one right on the books that was a humdinger!

THE case was a honey. Only the one who planned it stopped figuring just short of perfection. It might have been a perfect crime, as perfect crimes go, but they don't. Every cop worth a badge knows that all perfect crimes are imperfect. The killer escapes *not* because the crime was perfect but simply because the detection was *imperfect*.

Captain Jim Barker, supervisor of Ami City's bureau of criminal identification, gazed at the slim, male form lying on the side of the lonely road. It lay directly behind a new, black sedan. Blood matted the back of the head.

The left rear wheel of the car was jacked up.

"The poor guy must have been trying to fix a puncture when he was hit," said a kibitzer. "The way some people drive is something fierce. Whoever hit him must have been a louse; never even stopped to help him!"

Pete Logan, Barker's aide, began taking flash shots from all angles. Next came the usual test for fingerprints. Pete wore an artist's smock in his work and always put on a good show for the bystanders. He was known as the John Barrymore of the department.

"Methinks," whispered Pete to Nixon Smiley, headquarters reporter for the *Herald*, "that this is the old phonus-balonus. This bird was not rubbed out by accident but by design. Notice the captain isn't saying a word?"

"You know what I think?" said Smiley. "I think—"

"*Herald* men are not supposed to think," sniffed Charlie Kreuger, of the *News*. "Slow, in my opinion—"

"Never mind the electrical transcription," hooted Smiley. "Your opinions remind me of Niagara Falls, all damp."

The boys were friendly rivals. They would always share stories, if the stories broke in full view of both. Otherwise, a scoop was a scoop. If one should awake some morning minus an ear, arm or leg, he would immediately suspect the other.

Captain Barker examined the road. It was sand-gravel. Only one set of footprints could be found. If they turned out to be the dead man's prints, it would mean something potent. If not—

Barker scanned the road for car tracks near the body. The weather had been dry and no other tracks appeared near the black sedan. More, the clothing of the corpse was hardly wrinkled. If this were really a traffic accident, it was the neatest in history. An examination of the jack under the car showed it was of the old-fashioned type, with the top cog missing. And it did not belong to the new car.

The captain next examined a billfold which he had taken from the dead man's right hip pocket. When he noted the name, his eyebrows rose.

"Give," said Kreuger. "Our readers do not enjoy hearing about secret corpses."

"I think I'll let you news-beagles solve this one," said Barker. "I know you can do it, or don't you see all those mystery movies?"

"What's wrong with mystery movies?" demanded Kreuger. "Me, I think they are swell. The great detective always winds up behind the big hee-haw. If a reporter doesn't solve it, the private detective does."

"That's the very thing that almost got me tossed out of the Capitol theater last night," said the captain. "The usher called the manager and the manager asked me to please refrain from loud laughter or leave. The movie was called *The Corpse Refused to Talk*, or something. The actor who played chief of homicide must have learned

his business while employed in an iron foundry. He was too dumb, what I mean.”

“Dumb?” echoed Kreuger. “How come he isn’t working for the Ami City police department?”

“Another thing about the movie,” went on Barker, ignoring Charlie’s observation, “is that a reporter kept insulting the chief, aided by the so-called private eye.”

“Someone must have told the chief he was being insulted,” said Kreuger.

“But when the chief picked up the murder weapon,” continued the captain, “I stuffed a handkerchief in my mouth. He picked it up with his bare hand, and to hell with possible fingerprints. Finally, the thing settled down in the library, where they questioned ten suspects. They always settle down for quiz contests in the library.”

“What’s wrong with that?” demanded Kreuger. “Libraries are usually nice and cozy.”

“Now *that*,” snorted Smiley, “is very funny. I got a chipmunk at home who can do better.”

“Really?” said Kreuger. “Don’t tell the *Herald*, they’ll give him a job as a police reporter.”

Kreuger walked around the body and took a few good squints. “The face is kinda familiar. Who is he, cap?”

“John Crane Amherst,” said Barker, “of Amherst & Anderson’s department store.”

“Woof!” exclaimed Kreuger. “I just bought a suit in his joint last week, but I didn’t kill him.”

“Why should you?” asked Smiley. “You bought the suit on credit.”

Pete Logan had his identification kit packed. “That does it, cap,” said Pete. “I got everybody’s prints but Al Capone’s, and they are all smudged up stinky.”

They rode back to Barker’s office. En route, the captain kept talking about the movie he had seen.

“What are you,” asked Kreuger, “a movie reviewer or a detective captain of homicide? Let’s have some information for the press.”

“Let’s go upstairs and have a little press conference,” said Nixon Smiley.

“Press conference!” snorted Kreuger.

In the small office, decorated with the mementos of the many cases the captain had cracked, Barker said, “You may state officially for publication that John Crane Amherst was evidently killed by a hit-and-run driver while he was fixing a flat tire.”

Charlie Kreuger whistled and looked wide-eyed

at Smiley.

“If true,” said Kreuger, “then there is no need for a police force in this country. Come on, cap, give!”

“Boys,” grinned Barker, “how many times must I tell you that the press must cooperate with the police? Suppose Amherst was killed—just suppose, mind you—because I’m not saying he was. Well, the murderer reads in the papers that I know he was killed. What happens?”

“He just hires a good criminal lawyer,” said Kreuger, “gets three mistrials and then probably winds up in a swanky penthouse or else writes his life story for a newspaper syndicate, even though he can’t read nor write.”

“I will admit that some criminal lawyers,” said Barker, “are a pain in any cop’s neck. We spend days, weeks, even months solving a murder, and then when the trial comes up, some attorney gets Mayhem Murphy free for a cash consideration. But to get back to Amherst: If the papers publish that Amherst was killed by a hit-and-run motorist that will put the possible killer off guard. And that is where I come in for some quiet investigating.”

“But you admit the guy was bumped, don’t you?” demanded Kreuger.

“Certainly not,” said the captain. “Frankly, I can’t prove a thing. For all I know you or Nixon Smiley killed Amherst. By the way, Charlie, where were you on the night of—”

“Out with Sherlock Holmes,” replied Kreuger, “shooting craps with Watson and Conan Doyle.”

“And the dice you brought in the game,” said Smiley, “were no doubt phonies.”

“Good night, gentlemen,” said Barker. “I’ll see you tomorrow, same time, same police station.”

“We’ll tune in,” said Kreuger. “And hope we get more than static.”

Ten minutes later Captain Jim Barker was in his personal police car driving to the mansion-like home of John Crane Amherst. It was in the swank and restricted section known as Bayshore Drive. A male servant opened the door.

“I’d like to see Mrs. Alice Amherst,” said the captain. A female voice came from the rear, “Show the gentleman in.” The voice was quiet, cultured, slightly English-accented.

Alice Amherst was in her fading forties, but she was far from faded. Her auburn hair was tinged with gray, the gray matching her eyes in a fine harmony.

“You have come about my husband,” she said, simply. “Please sit down.”

“When did you hear from him last?” asked Barker.

“Suppose you tell me what happened,” she suggested. It was then Barker noticed that her eyes were cold, calculating and highly intelligent.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Amherst, but I would esteem it a favor if you could answer my questions. Now, when did you hear—”

“Let us not parry,” she said, in even tones. “You have come to tell me that my husband has been murdered.”

“I did not even suggest that he was murdered,” corrected Barker. “What makes you say he was murdered?”

“Wasn’t he?” The cold, gray eyes never flickered. “And I am not too surprised.”

“Why?” from Barker.

“I imagine you will find out,” she said. “Now, please tell me how and where he was murdered.”

“At the moment, I have no positive evidence that Mr. Amherst was murdered. His body was found in back of his jacked-up car on the Tami Trail, five miles east of town. It could have been the work of a hit-and-run driver. He could have been jacking up his car to fix a punctured tire.”

“That,” said Mrs. Amherst, “is absurd. John wouldn’t know how to fix a flat tire. I have been with him often, and when something happened to a tire, he would phone a garage for service.”

“But in this instance,” went on the captain, “there was no phone in the vicinity and, as far as I know, no houses. Isn’t it reasonable to assume that he, under the circumstances, attempted to fix the tire himself?”

“Possible, but highly improbable. For one thing, he was a very clean and dainty kind of man, almost foppish. He abhorred dirty hands and a spot on his clothes would worry him sick. No, captain, if my husband was found dead, I am certain he was murdered.”

“If so, your reasons would be a great aid to justice. Why, in your opinion, was he murdered?”

“I’m sorry, Captain Barker, but I’m afraid it will all come out in the wash, as they say. And the linen, I’m terribly afraid, will be very, very dirty. Good evening, captain. Johnson will show you to the door.”

The Amherst & Anderson department store was

the largest in Ami City, taking up a full block. The business had been founded by Amherst fifteen years previously and Craig Anderson had become a partner almost ten years later. Amherst was forty-eight, while Anderson was three years his junior. Anderson was a bachelor and liked nightclub life. He also liked to gamble in the big Ami Beach hot spots.

Both were tough bosses and the store’s employees had no love for either.

Barker was among the first to enter the store the next morning. He came in with the regular customers. His investigations were highly discreet. He quizzed several employees and was amazed when none believed the newspaper account of the passing of Amherst.

Said an aisleman named Thurman, “It’s a mystery to me he didn’t get it before.”

“Why?” asked Barker.

“Women. Too many women. He was nuts about the dames. And Anderson is about the same, only he’s a bachelor. I bet they have some rough parties upstairs in the penthouse on the roof of the store. I just happened to hear about that little love nest. Very few in the store know about it. Both Amherst and Anderson used to take some of the gals up there for afternoon tea.”

An assistant buyer for the lingerie department, named Abigail Tanner, now married to her third husband, did considerable sniffing about the two partners.

“If you really want to know what I think,” began Mrs. Tanner, “I think Mr. Amherst and Mr. Anderson were entirely too sporty. You will notice that all the prettiest women are working in the business offices, right next to Amherst and Anderson. And don’t think that Mrs. Amherst doesn’t suspect what’s going on. I’ve seen her come snooping around on more than one occasion, I have. It wouldn’t surprise me if they find that she—well, never mind. Just forget what I said, please.”

“You mean you think that Mrs. Amherst might have murdered her husband?” asked Captain Barker.

“I have nothing more to say. I really haven’t.” With which, Mrs. Abigail Tanner terminated the interview with walk-away abruptness.

The captain went out to the loading platform. Many delivery wagons were parked, awaiting delivery merchandise. Barker overheard a group of

three drivers discussing the passing of their former boss.

“Who’s crying?” said a red-topped fellow. “Did he treat us square? I’m asking you, did he, the big bum? Didn’t he howl like hell because we asked for overtime?”

“Yeah,” said a second driver.

“You tell ‘em,” added a third. Just then a tall, muscular-looking blonde, slightly bald in the front, came up to the group.

“That’s a helluva way to talk about a dead guy,” he said. He was Gerald Graydon, supervisor of deliveries. “Amherst never hurt you muggs. Can’t you even respect the dead?”

Graydon spat on the concrete platform and walked away. The men made no reply. Barker followed Graydon to the other end of the platform, where there was a small checking office. This was Graydon’s.

“I’m glad to hear someone say a kind word for Mr. Amherst,” said Barker. “Did you see him much?”

“Quite a little,” Graydon replied. “I admit he was hardboiled, but he expected his help to work for their dough, not loaf. You never seen such a bunch of bums in your life. Send ‘em out on a delivery that should take a half-hour, and they take all afternoon. I think they must go fishing on the store’s time.”

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

“I guess it was the women that he played around with,” said Graydon. “If he was really killed, you can look for a lady.”

“Why look for a lady?”

“Well, maybe they got jealous of each other. You know how dames are. But he had a favorite. She works right with him. She’s his private secretary. Her name’s Jonathan; a sweet-looking babe, if I ever saw one.”

“Is she married?”

“Plenty married. Her old man is nuts about her. He must be getting wise that his wife and Amherst have been going up to the penthouse now and then for a little afternoon social chat, with maybe tea or even cocktails. Anderson is sweet on her, likewise. I was working late one night two weeks ago and I heard Anderson and Amherst fighting over her. Anderson wanted him to can her and Amherst told him to go to hell. Anderson is a big man and Amherst is small. Don’t weigh more’n hundred-

thirty-five pounds, I guess.”

“Did you happen to see Amherst before he left the store last night?” asked Barker.

“Yeah, I did. It was nearly seven o’clock and everybody but the porters had gone home. I was making out my daily report on deliveries. I was in the office when he came down from the penthouse. He got in his car and drove away. He didn’t even say ‘good night’ to me. He usually does. Must of had something on his mind.”

“What about this Jonathan woman’s husband? Does he also work in the store?”

“No. I think he’s a professional gambler. I know every time I go into a bookie joint he’s tossing dice at the crap table. But maybe he works some place. I don’t know. He used to call for her when she was through work several times a week. Sometimes he would go a week without calling to drive her home.”

“Seen him lately?” pursued Barker.

“Yeah, last night. He came up just a few minutes before Amherst came down from the penthouse. He asked me where his wife was and I said, ‘How the hell should I know?’ And then he said he was going up to the penthouse and see what’s what. I never knew he ever heard about that penthouse. I told him he could not go up and he got mad and drove away.”

“You said Amherst came down while you were here last night. Was he alone or was Mrs. Jonathan with him?”

“You must think Amherst was a stupe,” said Graydon. “He came down first and she came down about ten minutes after. She didn’t say a word as she passed me and I made out I didn’t see her. It was none of my business.”

“You’re not sure that her husband works any place?”

“No, far as I can see he’s a broke-and-flush gambler.”

“Do you think it likely that he and his wife were blackmailing Amherst?”

“Could be. I wouldn’t know. Sounds reasonable, though. The old shakedown stuff.”

“How many delivery trucks were here when Amherst left?”

“Just one, I think. Why?”

“Well, never mind; I was just thinking. Er, did Amherst return while you were still here?”

“No. He may have returned after I left. I don’t know. I understand that he would come back some

nights and hold parties in the penthouse. So would Anderson. There should have been two penthouses. Both seemed to like that one very much.”

“From what you read in the paper, would you say that Amherst was killed by a hit-and-run driver or murdered?”

“I wouldn’t know,” said Graydon, tipping his brown hat to the back of his head. “But I can’t believe that he was killed by any car. And I can’t imagine a little guy like him fixing a flat tire. Hell, he wouldn’t know how to operate a jack, especially with a cog missing. They are hell to operate.”

“Thanks,” said Captain Barker. “You’ve been a good source of information. I may call on you again.”

“Glad to be of service. Good night, sir.”

Marie Jonathan was, indeed, a beautiful woman. Anyone attempting to describe her in cold type was a sucker. Even still photography could not do her full justice. Ralph Jonathan, her husband, was just as ordinary-looking as she was appetizing.

Ralph, when he worked, was a clerk at pari-mutuel windows at race tracks. He rarely worked more than five months a year. For the balance, he touted and gambled, and was usually broke. Marie was an expert stenographer. She was now twenty-seven and had married Ralph ten years previously to her employment as Amherst’s secretary.

Nixon Smiley and Charlie Kreuger were waiting for Barker when he returned to his office.

“Just in time to make the first edition,” said Kreuger. “Tell us all about it.”

“Well, I just saw another one of those mystery movies,” grinned Barker. “This one was called *The Happy Homicide*. I rather liked that one, they killed a newspaperman and two private detectives. Very interesting, and likewise novel, to say the least.” He turned to Smiley and Kreuger and smiled. “Did you boys want anything in the form of hot copy?”

“Look, chum, give! Haven’t I always played fair with you?” asked Charlie.

“Come to think about it, you have. I recall that you got my name spelled right on two occasions.”

“What about this Amherst case?” interrupted Smiley. “Leave us cut out the vaudeville. Vaudeville is supposed to be dead.”

“He means it is gone with the *Herald*,” sniffed Charlie. Barker lit his proverbial pipe and said, “Well, boys, you can now state officially that the Amherst case may not be a hit-and-run accident.”

“Not really!” hooted Kreuger. “I trust we can

quote you on that, and get canned when we do?”

“You wouldn’t want me to make up a fairy tale, now, would you?” demanded the captain.

“So far you are doing O.K. I bet the Grimm brothers kicked the headstone off their tomb when they read about your first statement. Personally, I’d rather believe in Cinderella,” said Kreuger. “Aw, cap, come on, give!”

“I regret to inform you gentlemen,” said Barker, “that I have no magic wand which I can wave over a murder mystery and come out with the name of the killer. All the magic wands appear to be bought up by Hollywood for their conception of how homicides are solved. But”—here the captain waved his pipe—“you might state with accuracy—and I trust that your papers are sometimes interested in accuracy—that it is my humble, very humble opinion that John Crane Amherst was not killed by a passing motorist, but murdered by persons or a person unknown to date. More, you might add a little zest to the story by also stating that it is likely that Amherst was murdered in another place beside where his body was found.”

“You will now please name the suspected murderer,” said Kreuger. “and stop all this dilly-dally.”

“Suspect?” echoed Barker. “You more than likely mean suspects. Why, at this minute I have enough to start a whole harem, including a few sultans. Have patience, Sherlock Holmes wasn’t built in a day.”

“I suppose we will see you again, cap?” asked Kreuger. “That is, before 1949?”

“Tomorrow at noon, I think, should show some results. If not, I better turn my badge in and let the Boy Scouts take over. See you then.”

“Well, guess I’ll go to the office and bat out some copy,” said Kreuger.

“Me ditto,” said Smiley. Ten minutes later, two cars pulled up in front of the Amherst residence. Charlie Kreuger, of the *News*, got out of one and Nixon Smiley, of the *Herald*, emerged from the other.

“Good afternoon,” said Charlie. “Haven’t I seen you some place before, perhaps Alcatraz?”

“Good afternoon,” grinned Smiley. “Your mug is kind of familiar.”

Arm in arm, they went to the door and rang the bell. A very dainty maid answered.

“Inform Mrs. Amherst that the press is here,” said Kreuger.

"Tell her a reporter from the *Herald*," corrected Smiley. Turning to Charlie, he whispered, "I understand she reads the *Herald* exclusively."

"I am sorry, sirs," said the maid, "but madame is indisposed. She wishes to see no one." She closed the door firmly but smilingly.

"Nice little interview with madame," said Charlie. "I . . . ah . . . wonder if one could get a private interview with madame's maid, on her night off?"

"A very tasty and appetizing little dish," agreed Smiley. "Shall we have some ice cream?"

So they killed an hour over some ice cream. Only movie reporters can afford cocktails and get drunk in reel 3.

After leaving the office, Captain Barker got in his car and drove about five miles east. He stopped two blocks from a small, frame house, which was newly built and rather isolated. No one answered his knock and he had no trouble forcing the simple door lock. He remained inside about five minutes and finally came out with a bundle, wrapped in brown paper, under his arm. He placed the bundle in the car, then drove a mile to the Ami Canal and sat on the banks. He went thinking, not fishing.

At midnight the same day he drove to the loading platform of Amherst & Anderson's department store. He rang the night watchman's bell and showed his official credentials. Then he went up to the penthouse on the roof. It was a cozy two-room affair, elaborately furnished. He searched the rooms and found nothing he was after. Stepping out the door, he spotted something shining on the floor. He picked it up and placed it in his pocket. It was then he noticed the dark stains on the floor.

Next morning he was in the private office of Anderson, Amherst's partner. Anderson was a big man, gray-templed, muscular, who might have been an amateur boxer or football player when young. His face was leathery and he looked like a man who said "No" and meant precisely that.

"Do you recognize this lodge button?" asked Barker, showing him the object he had found outside the penthouse.

Anderson examined the button. "It isn't mine," he said.

"Then it was Amherst's?"

"It wasn't Amherst's. And I don't know who it belongs to." He indicated that the interview was closed.

"Mr. Anderson," said Barker, "do you know

who killed your business partner?"

Anderson rose from his chair, to his full six-two and glared at the captain.

"That is a hell of an insulting question to ask me," he stormed. "Besides, I understood he was killed by a hit-and-run driver. Isn't that true?"

"It isn't. He was murdered."

"You certain it was murder?" asked Anderson. "That is a serious thing, you know."

"I know," said Barker, "but apparently murderers don't." The captain came over and sat on the edge of the desk. "What do you know of Marie Jonathan?"

"Why . . . eh . . . why, she was Amherst's private secretary. I trust you don't suspect her of killing Amherst?"

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

"Including me?"

"I said everybody. Good day, Mr. Anderson."

Fifteen minutes later Barker drove up to a four-unit apartment house in the southwest section. The name under "3" was Jonathan. Ralph Jonathan, fairly drunk, opened the door. He was wearing a faded bathrobe. Barker introduced himself, showing his badge and credentials.

"What d'yer want to see me about?" demanded Jonathan.

"You were at the store the same night Amherst was murdered. Is that correct?"

"So what? Suppose I was? Ain't a man got a right to call for his wife and take her home?"

"Where's your car?"

"Out front," said Jonathan. "That blue coupé. What about it?"

Barker searched the car while Jonathan watched. He found nothing that held his official interest.

"If you're planning on taking a trip," said Barker, "don't. That's all for now."

Barker went to the store again and searched the delivery trucks. Under the fifth truck's front seat he found a monkey wrench, wrapped in old burlap. The burlap had dry blood on it and so did the wrench. He left and went to a phone and called Pete Logan, in the identification bureau.

"Pete," said Barker, "go out and get Gerald Graydon, supervisor of deliveries at the Amherst & Anderson store. He's my star witness. Take him to my office and tell him I'll be right over. If Smiley and Kreuger ask any questions, tell 'em that the

track is muddy at Hialeah. If they can figure that out, I can't. Be seeing you, Peter."

Half an hour later, Captain Barker reached his office. Pete Logan, Graydon and the two reporters were awaiting him. Jim Barker entered and locked the door behind him.

"Graydon, are you positively certain that Jonathan did not go up to the penthouse the night Amherst was found dead?" began the captain.

"Well, I don't see how he could get there without me seeing him. Of course, he may have sneaked up while I was writing out my reports."

Suddenly, Barker bent down near Graydon's chair and scooped up something from the floor. It was the lodge button. Only he didn't scoop it from the floor. It was in his hand all the time.

"You must have dropped this," said Barker.

Graydon looked at the button, then at his coat lapel, and said, "Gosh, I guess it must of come loose. Thanks. I'm proud of that button."

Barker stood up and paced twice around Smiley, Kreuger and Graydon. Then he stood over Graydon, and said, even-voiced, "Graydon, tell me something. What motive did you have for killing Amherst?"

Graydon sat statue-like. Then his facial muscles twitched. Next he spat out, "Are you kidding? I never killed nobody! Mr. Amherst was my friend. I liked the guy. Why should I kill him?"

"You told me that you have never been near the penthouse. Right?"

"Right," echoed Graydon. "Why?"

"Then how did that lodge button I just gave you get up there?"

"You . . . just found it on the floor, here," sputtered Graydon.

"I found it outside the penthouse door," corrected Barker. "I also discovered some dried blood."

"You must be crazy! I don't know what you're talking about. What are you trying to do, make me the goat?"

"You made yourself the goat, Graydon," snapped Barker. "You waited outside the penthouse door for Amherst to come out and slugged him over the head with a large monkey wrench. Then you dragged him back into the penthouse and closed the door. Next, you waited for all the delivery men to leave that night and then you carried Amherst down the stairs to his own car and drove to the spot where you planted him."

"It's a lie!" said Graydon. "I'm being framed!"

"You're being framed with your own pictures," said Barker. "Another thing, when you jacked up the car you must have had a hell of a time because the top cog on the jack was broken. More, it would take a strong man like you to work it. Amherst never could have used that jack in a hundred years. And you must have got nervous and pulled another boner. You jacked up the *left* rear wheel, when you took the trouble to puncture the *right* rear tire."

Graydon was silent.

Barker went to a burlap bag and took out the monkey wrench. "Remember this?" he asked. "I found it under the front seat of one of the trucks, where you put it."

Graydon stared straight ahead, trance-like. Barker removed the string from a brown bundle and brought out a pair of pants and a white shirt. Dried blood was on both. "And," went on Barker, "here are the clothes you wore on the night of the murder. They even have your initials on them and I appreciate that."

"All right. What else do you want for proof, a movie version of the actual murder?" asked Charlie Kreuger. "Brother, you are hooked!"

"O.K.," said Graydon. "I did kill Amherst."

"And the motive?" asked Barker. "I admit that is the one thing I don't know."

"My wife," said Graydon. "She is the cashier at the restaurant where Amherst sometimes eats lunch, three blocks from the store. Some of the boys told me that she was going to the penthouse while I was off duty. I never believed it until I saw her go up one day with my own eyes. I love her and didn't want to lose her. I told her that I knew all about it and she said she didn't give a damn. She said if I didn't like it that I could divorce her."

Graydon paused for a moment, then added, "I guess a man's a sucker to kill for a woman who two-times him."

"Check," said Kreuger. "Not only that, he's a dope."

Barker opened the door and two detectives entered. "Put Graydon in a detention cell," ordered the captain.

After Graydon left, Smiley asked. "But where did you find the shirt and pants?"

"I actually did some detective work on that," grinned Barker. "One of the things that puzzled me was how the killer got back to town after he took Amherst way out there on the Tami Trail and

planted him beside the car. It was five miles from town and one swell walk back. So I went out there and looked around and found a house just a quarter of a mile from where Amherst was lying. I found that the house had recently been bought by Graydon. Get it? So all he had to do was drop Amherst near the house and walk home. He figured that would make it look like a hit-and-run affair.”

“Swell story,” said Kreuger. “Just like a movie.”

“Movie, hell!” snorted Barker. “This is the real stuff.”

THE END.