



Rough Diamonds

*"Not so loud, you fool,"
cautioned Jarrett.*

***A Crook's Desperate Shakedown Scheme Goes to the
Mat With an Unexpected Showdown!***

By FRANK GRUBER

Author of "Murder Invitation," "Ranger Ransom," etc.

WHEN the stocky man stepped out of the doorway the spring went suddenly out of Phil Summers' step and his face became bleak.

"Hello, Phil," the man greeted Summers. "Long time no see."

"It could have been longer," muttered Summers.

"Aw, Phil," the man said with mock hurt, "that's no way to talk to an old pal."

"You never were a pal of mine, Jarrett," said Summers, steadily. "You know that."

Walter Jarrett shrugged. "Just the same, come on in here and have a drink with me."

Summers shook his head. "No, I'm on my way home."

He started to brush past Jarrett, but the stocky man caught hold of his arm.

"I said, come in and have a drink with me," he said, sharply. "You may be sorry if you don't." He shot a meaning look.

Phil Summers bit his lip. He knew what Jarrett meant by the veiled threat, had known from the instant he'd sighted him that Jarrett would bring up that old business. Jarrett always had been bad news to Phil Summers.

"All right," he said, wearily.

In the saloon Jarrett ordered whiskey straight; Summers contented himself with a glass of beer.

When the bartender had moved away, Summers said, "All right, spill it."

Jarrett coughed. "I'm no longer with the Mangan Jewelry Store."

"Mangan finally got wise to you?"

Jarrett reddened. "No, I just couldn't get along with him."

Summers didn't doubt it. Mangan, as he had cause to know, was a stickler regarding the conduct of his employees. One false move in the store or the least suspicion that an employee's private life wasn't in accordance with rules laid down by Mangan, and that employee was through. Summers had worked in the Mangan Store for five years, then Mangan had learned that Summers played the ponies occasionally—and Summers had been paid off.

"What's your losing your job got to do with me?" he said, now.

Jarrett looked at the glass in his hand. "I was just looking over some old things of mine today and you know what I came across? That old snapshot of you that Haggerty of *The Globe* took that time the cops raided the poolroom on Forty-sixth Street—you know the picture showing you being loaded into the paddy wagon."

Phil Summers flushed. "I remember the picture. You got it from that drunken reporter pal of yours

and you tried to shake me down for five hundred bucks for it, then when I wouldn't pay you snitched to Mangan. Well, that cured me of gambling. I haven't bet on a horse in four years. I'm married now and I've got plenty of uses for my money."

"Sure, sure," agreed Jarrett, "and you got a good job, too. With a bank."

Summers winced. "How did you know?"

"You didn't think I met you here by accident, did you?" asked Jarrett, grinning wolfishly.

Summers' eyes narrowed. "Cut out the cat-and-mouse stuff. What do you want?"

Jarrett shot a furtive look at the bartender and lowered his voice. "Why, I just got a tip that Mangan has a flock of uncut diamonds in his store. They can't be identified and they're worth fifty thousand dollars. I want them."

Summers' jaws showed bunches of muscle. "You want to steal them—and you want me to help you?"

"You're getting the idea, Summers. Only you're going to do all the work. Remember how Mangan used to change the combination of the safe every month and used to forget it regularly? And how you used to be able to open it just the same? You had a knack with that safe. I didn't, so—"

"So you want me to break into the Mangan Store at night, open the safe and get those uncut diamonds for you?" rasped Summers.

"Not so loud, you fool!" cautioned Jarrett. "That's the size of it. You get me those stones and I'll turn over that picture and film to you. If you refuse—I'll just mail the print to your boss. Catch on?"

For a moment Summers saw red. His hands doubled into fists and he had a wild impulse to smash them into Jarrett's face. But he fought down the impulse. It wouldn't do any good. Jarrett would send that photo to the bank for spite—and Summers would lose his job.

He thought of the payment due on the house, he thought of his wife; and the baby that was due to be born inside of a month. This, most decidedly, was not the time to lose his job. Jarrett was a rat; he'd found Summers now and would hound him as long as he could. If he found another job Jarrett would be after him again. No, he had to finish with the man now and for all.

"You'll positively give me the film and the print?" he asked.

Jarrett's eyes lit up. "You'll get them the minute

you hand over the stones to me. It's a deal?"

Summers nodded hopelessly.

JARRETT was waiting for Phil Summers when the latter entered Jarrett's apartment at two A.M. "You got them?" he asked, eagerly.

Summers drew a small chamois bag from his overcoat pocket. "The film," he said.

Jarrett drew an envelope from his breast pocket and handed it to Summers. Then he reached for the leather bag.

"Just a minute," said Summers. He pulled out the two enclosures from the envelope, scrutinized them quickly. Then he nodded. "All right, here are your stones."

Jarrett tore the bag from Summers' hand. Summers pulled out his cigarette lighter and flicked it into flame. He applied it to the celluloid film and the print and they blazed up. He dropped them to the floor and watched them burn.

Then Jarrett gasped. "Why—these are ordinary stones!"

Summers stepped on the ashes of the film and photograph. "Yes," he agreed. "I picked them up in the alley."

Jarrett came forward, his eyes blazing. "You damned double-crosser! Do you think you can get away with this? Tomorrow morning I'll go to your boss and tell him about you."

Summers sighed in relief. The only flaw in his plan had been that Jarrett might have more than one of the prints and would hold out on him, but it was evident from his threat now that he did not have any extra prints.

"Tomorrow morning, Jarrett," he said, "you'll be miles away from this city—or you'll be in jail."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Summers, "that I tied up Mangan's watchman, then scratched up the safe with a chisel. I didn't open it though, so it'll look as if someone tried to crack it and couldn't. Mangan will believe that someone was you— Because, I 'carelessly' dropped a card case in front of the safe. It contained some cards I had printed last night in a hole-in-the-wall shop—containing your name and address. If you think you can convince Mangan and a jury that you didn't drop that card case while you were trying to crack open the safe, you might try sticking around town. But if you don't think so—you'd better start moving. I didn't tie the watchman securely. He's probably getting free."

For a moment Walter Jarrett looked wildly at Phil Summers. Then, cursing frantically, he ran to the clothes closet and jerked out a coat and hat.

He was pounding down the stairs to the street when Summers walked leisurely out of Jarrett's apartment.

"I guess that'll take care of him for once and all," he mused. "After awhile he may wonder if I really went to Mangan's Store at all—but he'll never have nerve enough to come back and find out."