

# Doom On Wheels



*By Dale Clark*

*Ma and Pa Garrison were likable old folks enjoying their sunset of life in a trailer—when Death caught up with them. And Detective Sergeant Al Leo had to bait a phantom killer who could vanish through strongly bolted doors.*

THE Homicide Bureau car rolled off the suburban street, chugged along a curving gravel road which twisted under pleasant shade trees, among rows of white-painted, neat tourist cabins. "Riverview Rest" was an auto campsite covering ten tree-clad acres on the outskirts of the city.

Sergeant Al Leo, the homicide squad's ace trouble-shooter, sent a blue stare wandering over the grounds. He had never visited the camp before, and he was faintly surprised by the evidences of convenience. He saw electric wires strung overhead, playground slides and swings for the kids, an attractive stucco bathhouse, even a miniature grocery store.

"You know, doc, this isn't bad!"

"No, it isn't. I could go for this kind of a life myself, when I'm old enough to retire," the medical examiner agreed.

Farther back in the grounds, in the doorway of a stucco building marked "Office," a red-mustached man of middle years straightened quickly, stepped out as the car braked. He said, "I'll hang on the runningboard and show you where— It's over on Paradise Street."

"On— Oh, I see!"

Al Leo smiled slightly, noting placards tacked to the trees and naming the rows of cabins: Cloverpatch Avenue, Brighton Street, Dizzy Dean Drive, Eagle Avenue, and so on.

"My name is Miner, Edgar Miner," the red-mustached man bent over to say. "I'm the manager here. These people came in about four P.M. yesterday. They registered as Mr. and Mrs. Garrison, from Wisconsin. They paid for a week in advance, and I noticed he carried quite a roll. Here's the place!"

The car stopped, and the homicide men sprang from its doors. They numbered four, including Doc Thiele, the rotund little medical

examiner. Jim Pharon carried a kit of fingerprinting equipment, and Duke Smith toted photographic paraphernalia.

Ahead of his companions, Al Leo strode to the trailer. Firmly bolted to the rear of a Ford coupé, this traveling cabin appeared to be of home construction. Its sides were curved and clad with heavy galvanized metal painted blue. A tiny stovepipe chimney stuck up through the roof, and nearby was a structure that looked like a toy windmill. Striped awnings angled over the small, net-curtained windows. A kind of stepladder arrangement dropped from the sill of the rear door.

A lanky man seated on these steps unfolded his legs, stood up, and drawled, "You'll have to bust in, boys. She's locked tight's a trivet."

"This is Sam Beale, the watchman," the red-mustached man explained. "The other one is Earl Losky. He's the one noticed it, and he called Sam, and Sam called me, and I called you."

Al Leo turned halfway around on his heel, stared at Earl Losky. He saw an embarrassed youth, not much out of his teens, with pale eyes that somehow shrank and evaded Al Leo's stare.

"If it was locked up like that, how'd you know there was anything wrong?"

The pale-eyed youth flushed. "Well, I'll show you." Losky shuffled around to the other side of the trailer, pointed his forefinger at a rubber-tired wheel.

The tire was brown with blood that had dried into the tread.

"Mr. Losky rented the cabin next door to here," Miner offered, "He went for a pail of water this morning, and he seen it, and called Sam Beale over."

Al Leo nodded, and knelt down in the grass that was still dew-wet, and peered up

over the wheel. The floor of the trailer, made of matched oak, showed a tiny knothole through which the blood had drained.

“You won’t see nothing down there,” the lanky watchman said impatiently. “You got to stand up and look in through the window. That’s the way I done.”

Miner coughed. “Now, hold your horses, Sam! These here fellas are regular detectives. You’re only a watchman. You can’t tell *them* how to go about it!”

Al Leo, however, showed no signs of resenting Beale’s advice, or approving the camp manager’s suggestion either. His square, solid, tanned face remained entirely emotionless. He stood up, poked his head under the window awning, and looked. Then his mouth tightened.

“Ah-h! Whe-eew!”

The interior of the trailer was a shambles and a horror. Sergeant Leo’s blue stare gripped the exposed form of an elderly woman lying on the bunk against the opposite wall. Her thin gray hair spread in a fan on the pillow, and her pitifully lined features faced the detective. She wore a nightgown that was torn down over one shoulder. Blood pooled all over the bunk.

A frightful gash nearly severed the head from its shoulders, disclosing an indescribable horror of slashed flesh and veins and cartilage.

“Good—God—Almighty!” Al Leo said slowly, and the words did not form an oath.

The blood that had drained through the floor and clotted upon the tire came from the other body, which lay huddled in a gray bathrobe at the foot of the bunk.

AL LEO’S stare went to the back of the trailer, found the inside bar which fastened the door. He said, “Looks like we’ll have to break in the window here. Duke, I

guess you’re about the smallest.”

The sergeant took a penknife from his pocket, drove its blade into the wooden frame of the sash, and trimmed a hole through which he could unhook the inside latch. Meanwhile the photographer peeled off his coat. Al Leo gave Duke a boost, and the camera man wriggled through the opened window.

“Be careful in there!” Al Leo said. “Don’t touch anything!”

“I know that.”

In about half a minute the door of the trailer opened. Duke Smith’s face appeared, pallid.

The photographer took a long, eager breath of the clear outside air. Then he said:

“It don’t look like a case for us. The old man must have gone completely berserk. He almost cut her head off, and then done the same to himself. The knife is right there beside his hand.”

Al Leo said, “Let me see!”

Duke jumped off the steps, and the sergeant climbed up into the trailer. He stared around. There was a great pool of blood, and more blood splattered on the walls. But the trailer had been an extremely neat, cheerful, homelike dwelling. Its plywood inner walls were covered with gay wallpaper. A hooked rug lay on the floor.

Al Leo’s stare found a family Bible, with a pink silk marker, on the shelf over the bunk. A neat array of burnished pans and pots decorated the kitchen with its small Primus stove.

“Why, they had a regular home here,” he muttered. “Fixed up fine, and as spick and span as you please!”

There were even some flowers—nasturtiums—in metalware vases.

Al Leo crouched down and inspected the body of the dead man.

“Doc! Say, doc, look here!”

Thiele thrust his head and shoulders

into the trailer, and Al Leo pointed to the frightfully gashed throat of the old man.

“Does that look like a self-inflicted wound to you?” he demanded.

The examiner made quite a lengthy investigation. He studied the wound, and then gave his attention to the hands of the victim. He rolled up the sleeves of the bathrobe and compared the biceps.

He said, “Well, no, Al. No, it doesn’t look that way at all. A self-inflicted cut doesn’t as a rule involve structures on both sides of the neck. You generally find some tentative cuts, you know, and this is just one fierce slash. Then, being right-handed, he’d naturally have cut his own throat from left to right. This right to left cut, and the angle of it, too, looks pretty homicidal.”

Al Leo nodded, and muttered, “Was it this knife? It looks more like a razor cut, or at least an almighty sharp knife to me. And this is only a bread knife!”

Doc Thiele stared at the knife—a bread blade with scalloped edge and a handle made of looped metal—near the edge of the blood puddle.

“Al, I wouldn’t want to commit myself on that. That knife might be perfectly consistent with the wound. Personally, and not officially, I’d say you’re right. It looks like a regular hollow-ground razor job.”

The sergeant and the medical man looked at each other. Al Leo straightened up, backed cautiously around the body and its blood, and inspected the two windows on the bunk side of the trailer.

A hard frown printed onto his face.

Doc Thiele asked, “Locked?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Maybe we’re cuckoo. Nobody could possibly kill them like this, and bar that door on the inside afterwards.” Thiele peered at the door. It was equipped with a bar that swung up and down, and fitted into a hasp on the wall

when locked. Screws sunk into the door fastened a plate onto which the one end of the bar was hinged.

Al Leo nodded thoughtfully. “It would seem so.”

“Seem! It is so!”

“Yeah. How long would you say, doc?”

“I wouldn’t say exactly. They lost an enormous lot of blood, and they were old folks. Taking the *rigor mortis* and these here cadaveric lividities into consideration, I’d put it between sundown and midnight.”

“Personally or officially, doc?”

“That’s the best I can do. You can’t expect the exact hour and minute, you know that.”

AL LEO looked around again, this time very closely. He discovered the leather corner of a billfold protruding under a pillow. It was empty. But from a card in it he found the name of a relative to be notified “in case of accident.” He copied this name, and a Wisconsin address, into his notebook.

Doc Thiele said, “I thought he was carrying a roll. Miner said so.”

“Yeah, and it’s gone. He might have put it somewheres around here. But I don’t want to look yet—not before the boys get through,” Al Leo decided.

Both men climbed out of the trailer. Sergeant Leo nodded to Duke Smith, then said:

“Miner, I want to talk to you.”

The red-mustached man followed Leo around to the other side of the trailer, where the sergeant leaned against the fender of the bureau car and asked:

“Did this fellow Garrison seem to be out of sorts, or depressed, or anything like that yesterday?”

“Oh, Lord, no! Pleased as pink, you know!”

“Pleased?”

“Well, I mean he was good-natured.”

The red-mustached manager thought a moment, and said, “It was only about four P.M. when he stopped here. He told me that he and Ma—he called her Ma—never tried to drive more than a hundred or a hundred and fifty miles a day.

“They were just taking it easy, retired, no worries, seeing the country. He claimed they’d been to about all the National Parks already. They spent the summers going around like that, and then they tied up for the winters in Florida or California, you know. They’d been doing it for five years now.”

“He told you all that?”

“Huh! More than that! He was quite a talkative old fellow—but nice, quiet, not a blowhard. I liked him.”

“What else did he tell you?”

Miner said, “About this trailer—he made it himself. It isn’t as pretty as some of the factory ones, but it’s all right. That windmill doodad on the roof there, that charges a battery for the electric lights. He’s got all the conveniences. I mean he *had* ’em. He showed me inside, the gas stove, one of those little dry-ice refrigerators, a speaker wired up to the radio in the car. Oh, everything. He was proud as Punch.”

“What was his wife like?”

“She was a nice, motherly soul. That’s the impression I got,” the red-mustached man said. “I get to meet all kinds of people, sergeant, and I believe I can size them up, too. These Garrisons struck me as being A-I, fine, respectable folks.”

Al Leo chewed on his underlip a moment. He finally took the notebook from his pocket, tore a page from it. “Here—send off a telegram to this address. And you better call an undertaker.”

Leo walked slowly back to the trailer. It took Duke Smith only a few minutes to snap

his pictures, and now Jimmy Pharon got busy with his print powders.

Sam Beale said morosely, “You boys ain’t going to get much this way. Garrison, he showed off this trailer to all comers. There’s probably fifty different kinds of prints in there.”

Al Leo shrugged, and young Losky then said:

“What difference does it make? The old fellow killed her, and then himself. The door was locked inside.”

Al Leo stared at the youth. “Huh! What difference does it make to you? What are you so hot and bothered for?”

Losky’s pale eyes evaded the stare, and the lad colored a trifle. “He might have killed us all in our beds. It makes me shiver yet. I was over in the bathhouse with him last night, right in the very next shower. He could have pulled a knife on me then and there.”

“What time was that?”

“I guess nine-thirty.”

Al Leo nodded. His stare went back to the watchman. “What are your hours, Beale?”

“I live right here in the camp,” the lank man explained. “I generally stay up until midnight, maybe a little later. Then I lock up the gate, and anybody wants to get in or out has to ring a bell. The main thing is that these folks don’t try and check out before they turn in the bed linen. Sometimes a crook will try and do that real early in the morning. Then I help out in the daytime, show folks where to park, and so on.”

“You showed the Garrisons where to park this trailer?”

“That’s right, you bet.”

“See him after that?”

“Maybe an hour after that, over in the grocery, yeah.”

Al Leo said, “I understand he flashed a roll.”

“Yes, I warned him about that. He said

it was mostly ones, anyway. But of course it was foolishness to show off any money.”

AL LEO waited for Pharon to finish the print job. Then he pushed his own wide shoulders through the door, and began an extremely close search of the place. The undertaker’s machine pulled up in “Paradise Street” before this search ended, and the two pitiful bodies were removed.

Presently Al Leo finished his hunt, having leafed through the Bible, inspected the blood-soaked mattress, even poked around in the dry-ice refrigerator. He emerged from the trailer and carefully closed the door. This door fitted snugly. Its outer metal sheath flanged past the frame at top, bottom, and side; did so to seal out dust and rain. The hinges were on the inside. He had found keys inside, and he now turned the Yale lock,

Al Leo strode to the car where the others sat smoking cigarettes. He poked a yellow slip of paper to Doc Thiele. “Found this in there. Look!”

“Garrison carried annuity insurance, eh? Two hundred a month.”

“And he cashed this month’s check yesterday, up at Bay Royal,” Al Leo said. “But there’s no money in the trailer. Not a hide or hair of it!”

A silence grew.

Al Leo’s square, sober face darkened. His eyes gleamed. His lips seemed to become flatter and tighter, and he moved them slowly:

“This is a hellish, dirty business. Those Garrisons were all right, nice old folks. Evidently they had worked hard all their lives, had a right to a little quiet pleasure in their old age. And this had to happen! Somebody went in there and cut their throats for a lousy two hunderd bucks! It’s plain hellish!”

There was healthy, male anger in Al’s tone. It silenced the men in the car. Sam Beale, standing nearby, scowled. Young

Losky flushed, then shuffled quickly toward his cabin.

Doc Thiele hesitantly cleared his throat.

“But that door! It was locked inside!”

“It’s a stickler,” Al Leo admitted. “I don’t know how that was managed. But I’ll find out! First, I got to try and find out when it happened. I won’t need you fellows. You might as well drive in.”

Doc Thiele said, “How’ll you get back, if we take the car?”

“In a patrol wagon! With whoever killed the Garrisons!”

The big sergeant turned and walked to the cabin beyond the trailer. He rapped his knuckles on the screen door. The cabins on this side of the camp were the cheapest in the park, having sidewalls of white canvas. Al Leo held his badge in the palm of his hand, displayed that when the door opened.

The tenant was a large, bald, bland man clad in trousers and undershirt.

“What’s the matter, officer? What do you want to see me about?”

Al Leo pushed through the doorway, stared around the interior of the cabin. Bed linens were rumpled. An open suitcase reposed on the pine board floor. A briefcase and some papers lay on the one chair.

“Excuse it,” the bald man said. “I pounded the ear kind of late this morning.”

Al Leo shrugged, and said, “It’s about some trouble next door here last night. I thought maybe you might have heard something. A quarrel, maybe—or fighting?”

“You mean that tin shanty on wheels?”

“The trailer, yes.”

The bald man thought awhile, rubbing his chin as he reflected:

“Well, yes. Yes, I did. I heard them talking over there, but it wasn’t exactly a quarrel. It was queer, too. I mean they said some kind of queer things.”

“Such as—?”

“There were two voices, a man and a woman. The woman made a crack like this: ‘We shouldn’t have done it! We should have waited! They’ll catch us, sure!’”

Al Leo opened his blue eyes very wide.

“Yeah! Yeah! What did the man say to that?”

“I couldn’t hear him so well. He didn’t talk so loud, but it seemed like he was trying to cool her off. I guess he said she didn’t have to be scared, nobody would find them out.” The bald man rubbed his chin some more. Then he said:

“Oh, sure! I remember one more thing. I remember he said, ‘We got to stay all night. It’d be a dead giveaway if we pulled out now!’ That’s about all I got of it.”

“What time was this?”

“Ten-thirty—just after I hit the hay.”

“You didn’t hear anything before that?”

“Well, I didn’t come in until about ten.”

Al Leo nodded. “Came in from where?”

The bald man said, “From Bay Royal. You see, I’m a traveling man in the theatre supply line—program printing, tickets, and so on. I generally make my calls in the afternoons and evenings when the movie houses are open. That’s why I can pound the hay this way in the morning.”

HE handed the sergeant a card, and Al Leo glanced at the name. “Thanks, Mr. Hayes,” he said. “By the way, there was a murder here last night. It might be necessary for you to remain here for the inquest—tomorrow.”

“A murder! Good Lord!”

“Yes. These people cashed an insurance annuity for two hundred dollars—”

Al Leo displayed the receipt form— “in Bay Royal yesterday. Apparently they were murdered for that money.”

A scowl knitted under Hayes’ bald forehead. “In Bay Royal! Say—I believe I know who you mean? A little old chap, around seventy or so?”

Al Leo stared curiously. “That’s a rough description of Garrison. How did you know?”

“I happened to be in the bank at Bay Royal, myself. I remember there was some to-do about comparing his signature with an endorsement on his insurance policy. Killing that old man, officer, was an infernal crime!” The frown remained stitched on the salesman’s forehead. “I’ll certainly be glad to stay over for the inquest—if what I heard last night happens to mean anything.”

“It means this much anyway, Hayes, you shouldn’t mention it to anyone.”

“Okay, and I won’t.”

When Al Leo emerged from the cabin, it was to discover the flivver behind the next cabin, on the other side of the trailer, being loaded with suitcases.

“Hey, you! Losky!”

The sergeant hurried toward the flivver. The pale-eyed youth was locking the cabin door, and a girl sat tensely in the front seat of the flivver. She lost color as Al Leo approached. Her brown, frightened eyes pinned on the officer’s face, and her lips sagged.

Al Leo said, “You folks weren’t going, were you?”

Earl Losky’s voice sounded sulky. “We were. So what?”

“But you can’t. In the first place, I want to ask you some questions. In the second, I want you at the inquest tomorrow.”

The young couple looked at each other. The girl drew in her breath sharply. Her companion said, “We can’t stay. Honest. We

haven't got the money to pay for the cabin another day."

The sergeant shrugged. "No? All right, I'll fix that up with Miner. You just mosey your things back in there."

Suiting action to the words, he reached into the flivver and dragged out a pair of the suitcases. Young Losky, blushing, opened the cabin door. Inside, the bed was neatly made up and the floor swept. Breeze gusting through an open, net-covered window, combated a clinging fust of canvas.

The girl, hands tightly balled in her lap, perched on the edge of the bed. She watched Al Leo stretch out his powerful frame in a chair.

"Now, you two! About this business last night! You were in the bathhouse with him, Losky?"

"I said so."

"Uh-h, you said that was about nine-thirty. Which one of you got through in there first?"

"He did."

"You—Mrs. Losky—where were you then, at nine-thirty?"

She gulped, "The ladies' bathhouse."

"You or Earle got back here first?"

"I did. Just a minute ahead of him."

She seemed to be gaining confidence. She smiled slightly. Al Leo frowned, fired another question:

"That was before ten-thirty? It didn't take you any hour in the shower, huh?"

"No, of course not—"

"All right! Then you were here at ten-thirty? Now, tell me! Did you hear the Garrisons having a row, or anything like that?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, the fella on the other side did!"

Al Leo paused to light a cigarette. In a deliberate, cold voice, he repeated the conversation as Hayes had related it. His blue

stare switched from the girl's face, that had gone utterly pallid, to the husband's flushed one. He gruffed:

"You didn't hear *any* of that?"

The girl shook her head numbly.

"It's funny," Al Leo said. "These canvas walls wouldn't stop sounds very much."

Young Losky muttered, "We must have been asleep by then."

Al shook his head in a dissatisfied way. "Huh! Sound asleep, and folks being murdered for a couple hundred dollars not twenty feet away!"

He kept frowning and staring at the girl. Her breath came rapidly and shallowly. She looked plenty scared, and her gaze moved uneasily to the pale-eyed young man.

Al Leo stretched, stood up. "Well! Until tomorrow!"

**N**IGHTFALL came at the end of a day's labor. Al Leo had quizzed every person in the camp, without finding another witness to the murders on "Paradise Street." He had put through a number of phone calls, the last of these to Doc Thiele.

Now, at dusk, he slipped through the ten wooded acres of Riverview Rest until his way was barred by the high, barbed wire topped fence.

He waited a few minutes, then the Black Maria braked to a stop outside the park. Doc Thiele and half a dozen uniformed patrolmen piled out of the wagon. They thrust ladders up to the fence, climbed up and over, formed a knot around Sergeant Leo. He said:

"I want you boys strung out along here. Stop anybody that tries to take French leave. Doc, you come with me—bring the little bag."

The two walked toward the cabins, the medical examiner asking excitedly, "What have you got? You know who did it?"

"I've got this much," Al Leo said. "I know when it happened. She was killed first, shortly before nine-thirty. Garrison was killed just a few minutes after that."

"How do you figure?"

"She was alone, and put up a fight. Her torn nightdress and the condition of the bed shows that. If he'd been there, one or the other would have screamed. And she was alone, of course, while he went to the bathhouse. It must have been just before he returned. He got back in time to catch the killer."

The little doctor nodded. "Sure! That lets the Losky kid out. I kind of suspected him."

Al Leo frowned.

"He's not out! Being in the bathhouse is only *his* story. I checked his flivver license. Either his name isn't Losky, or the car belongs to somebody else. Besides, Hayes heard them talking. It had to be them, because the Garrisons were already dead."

They emerged into the alley back of "Paradise Street." Al Leo cast a glance aloft, asked, "Are you kid enough to climb a tree yet?"

The doctor, helped by a push or two, got up into the tree. Al Leo climbed easily. They perched on a bough, a dozen feet off the ground, and the conversation was resumed in whispers.

"But, hell!" muttered Doc Thiele, when he had heard Hayes' story recounted. "That pins it right on the Loskys. He robbed and murdered the old couple, and she wanted to beat it right then and there."

"It sounds like it. And they needed the money—maybe desperately," Al Leo whispered. "But that doesn't explain the door, barred inside like that."

"You could pinch them—get a confession—"

Leo's eyes gleamed in the dark. "I want more than that. It was a fiendish crime,

and I want an absolutely airtight case."

"You're working on it a funny way."

"Wait and see."

Staring down, they could watch moving shadows inside both canvas-walled cabins. Hayes, to judge by his shadow, was writing up his daily report. The movements in the other cabin were of more interest, and Doc Thiele breathed:

"They're packing their suitcases!"

"Yeah."

It grew pretty cold and uncomfortable in the tree. By ten o'clock the medical examiner was rubbing his thighs and stifling groans.

Finally the lights in Hayes' cabin blinked out. Ten minutes later, the click of a switch wiped out the white walls of the second building.

"There they go—"

"Hush-sh!"

Doc Thiele held his breath. He watched the barely visible figures—staggering with the weight of their suitcases—melt into the darkness.

"You're going to let them—"

Al Leo tensed, gripped his companion's arm. Bending forward, both men stared down at something that moved out of the blackness, sidled silently to the trailer.

Silence. And then, the very faint whine of wood moving on wood.

The damaged window of the trailer was being forced open. Leather soles squeaked on the metal flank. A thump. And more silence.

"Now!" Al Leo said.

He vaulted to the ground. The doctor followed, losing his bag as he fell. Al Leo spoke loudly:

"I just remembered I ought to seal this place up. Gimme the tape, doc."

He strode up to the window. Inside, no sound whatever. Al Leo took a roll of surgical

adhesive tape from Thiele's hand, proceeded to gum up the sash.

"What's the idea?" Thiele asked.

"It ought to be like we found it, for the inquest." Al Leo grinned. "I think I'll put some inside, too."

"Inside!"

"Sure, why not?"

The sergeant padded around to the back of the trailer. He stopped.

"What was that? You hear?"

"Hear what?"

"It sounded like a rat in the trailer."

Al Leo worked the key.

"It's fastened inside!" he said.

Doc Thiele did not say anything. Leo snatched the other's arm, shook it. The medical examiner said.

"How could it be?"

"Maybe the bar fell down in place when I closed the door," the sergeant said. "Maybe that's how it closed when the murderer escaped."

"Maybe," the doctor agreed.

"I'm going to yank that tape off, and go in there," Al Leo told him. "I'm going to see if that's possible."

**B**OTH men tramped back to the window, and Al Leo began peeling off the tape. He had about a third of it off when a very faint bumping sound emerged from the trailer, was followed by a scraping sound.

Al Leo whirled, charged. He crashed into a figure that swung around the side of the trailer. There was a yell, then a groan. A flashlight blinked from the ground.

"Hey! Hey, you!" a voice protested.

Sam Beale sat up, groaned again, and said:

"I been watching this place. Hell, sergeant, I didn't know it was you. I wouldn't have sneaked on you."

"You were watching?"

"Sure, out under the trees. I thought I seen some one monkeying here in the dark."

Al Leo swore, grabbed the flashlight, stepped around the watchman, and yanked open the trailer door. He threw the flash inside, and then up onto the door where the bar stood upended.

Sam Beale rubbed his head, said vaguely, "I thought you was in there. It seemed like somebody sneaked out."

Al Leo laughed harshly. He spotted the flash onto the watchman's face.

"Oh, yeah? It seemed like! Well, there was somebody!"

"I'd like to know who," Sam Beale said. "And why."

"Why is easy," Al Leo said. "I passed the word around that Garrison had two hundred dollars in cash. I changed his annuity receipt to make it look like that. All he really had was a hundred, and that's all the killer got. I figured he'd come back and hunt for the rest."

Doc Thiele said, "So that was it!"

"Sure! That was it, and as soon as the killer got inside I plastered the window to close that way of escape. I unlocked the door, and he was scared enough to drop the bar. Afterward he went out through the door, and barred it the same way he did after killing the Garrisons. With dry ice!"

Sam Beale's jaw sagged, his eyes flew open. He gasped, "With what?"

"He plugged the bar up with a piece of dry ice out of the refrigerator. That stuff evaporates fast, changing to dioxide gas. As it evaporates, the bar loosens and falls into its hasp."

"I'll be damned!" the doctor cried.

"So'll I!" Sam Beale got to his feet.

"You! You'll be worse than that! You'll be hanged!" Al Leo's hand shot out, grasped the watchman's coat.

"Sergeant, you're crazy—"

“Like a fox, I’m crazy!” Al Leo cried. “Look at your hands! You touched that stuff with bare fingers—the skin’s blistered on you.”

Beale shrank, jamming his hands into his pockets. Al Leo said, “That isn’t all. Pharon powdered the trailer for prints in there, and I’m the only one should have been inside it since. You got your fresh fingerprints to explain!”

The lanky man stiffened, whipped up one arm. His face twisted and became a mask of fury and fear.

Doc Thiele uttered a gurgled cry. “Knife! Knife!”

Al Leo rolled his square face aside, ducked his thick shoulders, as the blade flashed. He stepped back, stepped in, terribly fast for a man of his size. His fist pumped, pistoned.

Beale’s head bobbed wildly. He fell.

Al Leo stopped and jerked the knife from the man’s fingers. Holding the flashlight close, he stared into the brass lined interior.

“Blood traces! More to explain!”

Doc Thiele realized that the whole auto camp was coming to life. Electric glow spilled through the walls of Hayes’ cabin, showed the bald salesman wriggling into a dressing robe.

More light came from under the trees. A policeman carrying a bull’s eye lantern strode forward. He was followed by two more

patrolmen, each with one of the Loskys by an arm.

The girl sobbed, “We didn’t! We didn’t! We know nothing about it!”

Earle Losky stepped forward, faced Al Leo, and now he steeled his pale eyes to meet the sergeant’s stare.

“It’s this way,” the young man stammered. “Me and Juanita, we ran away and got married, see? But she’s not eighteen for a whole month yet. We figured her folks would have the sheriff after us, and annul the marriage. And they sure would know where to find us if we got mixed up in a murder case!” He swallowed a couple of times, and blurted, “Gosh, sergeant! I only got three days off from work—and heck—would you want to spend your honeymoon at an inquest?”

Al Leo said, “That talk of yours last night?”

“We’re from Bay Royal, and my wife used to sell tickets at a movie there. And when we saw Mr. Hayes’ car pull up next to this one I borrowed—gosh! We almost beat it before he phoned the folks back home!”

Afterward they spaded up bloodstained overalls in the garden plot behind Beale’s cabin, found a box of trinkets he had stolen from other tourists. But the case was closed now. Al Leo bent over the man, snapped cuffs on his wrists, and said:

“Come on! I promised myself a ride in the wagon with you!”