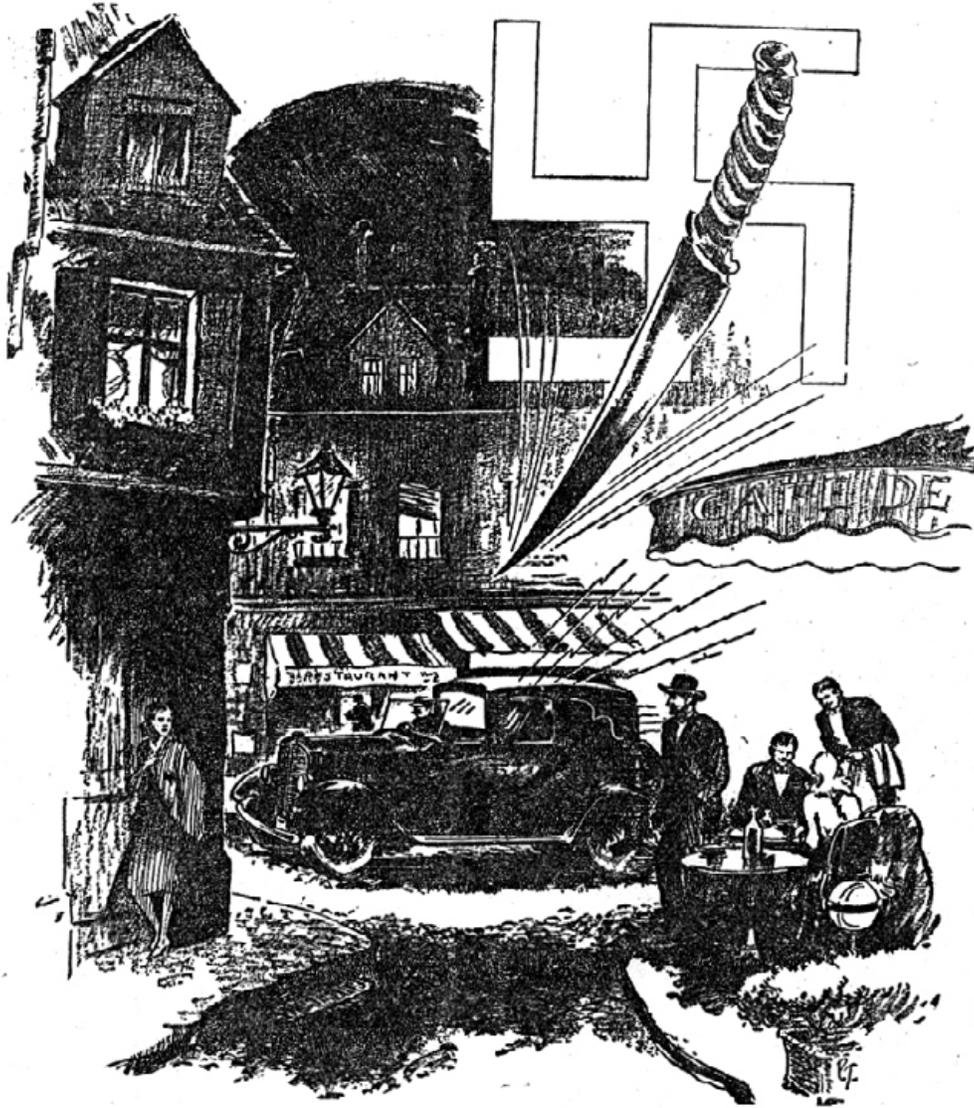


*Hiji's Beat Was in Africa, But Some Aspects of His
Calling Were Apparent, Even in Paris*



POLICEMAN BY TRADE

By SEABURY QUINN

CAPTAIN SIR HADDINGWAY INGRAHAM JAMESON INGRAHAM of His Majesty's Royal Frontier Houssa Police—much better known in West Central Africa as Hiji—paused in his stroll down the Rue des Batailles and drew a half crown from his pocket. Hiji was on vacation in Paris

and at a delightfully loose end. He had considerable time and money left, the night, after a superb dinner at the Hotel de l'Univers, was still comparatively young, and his head pleasantly empty of intention. "Heads I go in here," he told himself, "tails I trek over to Montmartre—" He spun the coin and clapped his hand upon it, then

carefully withdrew his fingers, as if he feared the silver might pounce at him. "U'm, heads. Jarnelli's it is, then." He crossed to the discreetly lighted door, nodded to the uniformed doorman who held the bronze-and-plate-glass portal open, and entered the lobby.

In Jarnelli's a marble grand staircase led to the first floor where the real attraction of the place—the roulette tables—stood. "Hiji, my lad," the Captain told himself as he mounted the stairs, "here's where we put it to the test, to win or lose it all—a whole guinea." He passed a uniformed attendant who might have been mistaken for an ambassador, pushed the double doors apart and paused upon the threshold of the gaming *salon*.

The room was big, at least forty feet wide by sixty long, and under crystal chandeliers three roulette tables were in play. Around them, tense as spectators at a prize fight, grouped the players, men in somber evening or dinner clothes, women in elaborate toilettes. Voices drifted through the place like fog. Muted whispers, subdued, nervously-shrill laughter, mingled with the scuff of moved-back chairs and the clatter of the rake among the chips and coin. Pausing to secure a stack of *placques* at the *controleur's* desk, Hiji laid his wager on a red square marked twenty-two and waited, half his attention upon the board, half on his fellow players.

"*Le jeu est fait, M'sieurs, Mesdames,*" the croupier's bored voice, as flat and unaccented as a puppet-master's in a Punch and Judy show, announced. "*Rien ne va plus*—the play commences; no more betting, *M'sieurs* and *Mesdames.*" The gabble of low, forced laughter and strident, nervous whispering stopped suddenly as the voice of a radio when the current is shut off. The little ivory pellet ran ticking round the barred wheel, its

clatter sharp as a machine-gun's against the taut silence. "*Vingt-deux, rouge*—red twenty-two wins—*M'sieurs, Mesdames,*" announced the croupier tonelessly as the ball came to rest, and Hiji leant forward to receive the stack of pretty but almost valueless *billets de banque* the croupier shoved toward him with his little rake.

"That does it." A young man three places from Hiji scraped back his chair and rose unsteadily from the table. He made a brave, defiant gesture of lighting a cigarette, but the lighter trembled in his fingers. His smile was a weak, sickly parody of the real article, and he swayed and wobbled like a drunken man as he walked toward the door.

"Poor chap, that must have hit him hard!" Hiji had noticed the lad as he came to the table. A lean-faced youth, whose pallor showed a false flush like a fever patient's, with long, fair hair and rather ineffectual mild blue eyes. His dinner clothes were obviously ready made and not of very good material. A bank assistant or a lawyer's clerk on holiday, he had catalogued him. One with no business in a place like this. The tension lifted momentarily and Hiji felt the atmosphere of the room press on him—perfume and powder smells, the jangle of bracelets and sharp edge of whispering.

"*Le voila, l'Anglais!*—there, the Englishman!" The whisper was so low that it was scarcely more than a breath, but Hiji heard it and swung partly round to view the whisperer from the tail of his eye. A heavysset young man, good looking in a beefy sort of way, square-faced, with a square chin cleft by a deep dimple, gray eyes set far apart and yellow hair that fitted his head like a cap. There was a hint of military erectness in his bearing, and the white line of a long-healed sword-cut down his right cheek. One of that locust-swarm of German "tourists" that spread

across Europe from Spain to Norway in the late thirties.

Hiji sauntered to the *controleur's* desk with an air of elaborate unconcern and paused a moment, seemingly debating whether to buy more *plaques*. The young man had stopped at the door to cast an agonized glance back at the game room when the woman overtook him. She was, slender, dark, *petite*, and exceedingly well gowned in a black velvet evening dress that left no room for speculation as to the perfection of her back. "*M'sieur*," she whispered softly, almost caressingly, "it is that you are in trouble, no?"

The boy looked at her, eyes glazed with inattention. "I beg your pardon?"

"*Mon pauvre*," she spoke impulsively, kindly. "You are in trouble. You are desperate, is it not so?"

"Yes," he answered jerkily, "I'm in trouble, all right." His lips moved tremblingly, like a little boy's about to cry, and tears showed in his eyes. "They let me off for a fortnight with two weeks' pay, and Tilbury had a system—worked it out by calculus; said, we couldn't lose—so I—ah—borrowed enough to stake us, and—"

"But of course, my little!" Laughter bubbled just below her words, she spoke like a young mother comforting her child. "It happens every day. You were impetuous, unfortunate, but not dishonest—"

"A lot o' good that'll do me when old Martinson finds out. I'll go to quad as sure as God made little apples—be a ruddy good example to the rest of 'em—"

"Why should *M'sieur Mar-teeng-song* hear of your misfortune?" She laced one of her slender hands into the crook of his elbow and drew him toward the exit. "I think that I can put you in the way of—how do you say him?—covering up?"

"Eh?" Delight and incredulity fought

for possession of his features. "You mean—Oh, no! I know—you'll want me to help out in a murder or something, and I'll end up on the guillotine—"

"*La, la!*" Her laugh broke through his frightened refusal. "It is that you have read too many novels by *M'sieur Oppenheim*; you are *melodramatique*, my little." Still chuckling softly she led him through the swinging doors and down the marble stairway.

Hiji strolled after them, attempting not to make his haste too obvious, but they had reached the curb before he cleared the lobby, and he was just in time to see them climb into a taxicab as he emerged. "Humpf," he reached into his pocket, drew an envelope and pencil out, and jotted down the cab's number. He was on leave, but his police instinct was dormant, not dead, and—

"My friend," the voice at his elbow was heavy, suave, a little arrogant, "I would not meddle in what does not concern me if I were you. Give me that note, if you please." It was the big blond man who had called the girl's attention to the wretched boy in the game room. Despite his wrestler's bulk he had moved silently as a cat, and Hiji had no warning of his presence till he, spoke. He held his left hand out for the envelope on which Hiji had scribbled the taxi's number. In his right he held a small but most efficient-looking *Orgies* automatic. "I take it you are on vacation? You would not wish to die—"

"Er—no of course; I should say not!" Hiji dropped the stick that dangled from his left elbow to the curb, thrust the envelope toward the other man with his right hand, and with his left let loose an uppercut that would have lifted an ox two inches. He hit from the hip and felt the man's jaw collapse under his knuckles. The fellow staggered back, his body

curving under the shock of the blow, then fell full-length on the pavement, arms and legs splayed out like the points of a starfish on the seashore. "Perhaps it will be just as well if I relieve you of the hardware," Hiji bent to retrieve the pistol which had slipped from the man's hand.

A grin formed underneath the pencil-line of his small dark mustache. "One thing you birds can never seem to learn," he murmured, "is that Englishmen can hit with their lefts as well as their rights. Charge that sock up to education, young feller me lad."

The blinking headlights of a taxi bore down on him and he waved it to a halt. "*La Prefecture, tout vite,*" he ordered.

"But *M'sieur's* friend on the pavement?" asked the cabby doubtfully. "Surely—"

"Surely," agreed Hiji. "Monsieur's friend on the pavement may lie there till he sobers up."

"Perfectly." The driver shrugged his shoulders. All Englishmen were mad as hatters, if this one chose to let his drunken friend lie there, a prey to thieves and pickpockets, while he rushed off to Police Headquarters—*qu'importe?*

THE taxi seemed in the last stages of paralysis agitans, but somehow held together as it rattled, shook and shivered down the roadway with amazing speed. It turned to sweep into one of the bridges leading to the Ile de la Cite and skidded to a stop, brakes screaming, tires almost smoking. Across the road, its absurd wedge-shaped hood staved in like a top hat hit with a brick, another vehicle had come to rest, and its driver stood on the asphalt hopping up and down in a sort of enraged dance, calling on high heaven, dogs, cats and other animals, Leon Blum and Pierre Laval with the impartiality of the excited Frenchman.

"What's up?" asked Hiji as his driver leaned from behind the wheel to offer the opinion that the other chauffeur was a pirate, a bandit and an assassin. The cabby broke off his invective to explain, "It is that this *imbecile*, this species of a most malodorous camel, had smashed himself upon the bridge pillar, *M'sieur*, and blocked the road completely—"

"Well, help him push his junk out of the way and tell his passengers we'll be glad to give 'em a lift," broke in Hiji. He had noted that the fares in the wrecked taxi were the desperate boy he'd seen in the game room and the woman who had volunteered to help him.

"But this is kind of you, *M'sieur*," the girl acknowledged as she climbed in beside him. "My friend must leave the Gare du Nord early tomorrow, and it would have been hours before we reached my flat."

"Glad to be of service," Hiji answered, and fell to studying her. She was a small, pretty woman with gleaming black hair, a straight little nose and dark bright eyes like those of an intelligent bird. Her delicately curved lips suggested quick transitions from gay laughter to storms of anger, like the uncontrolled waywardness of a willful child, and there was a faint, disturbing perfume about her.

She gave him her hand graciously as they reached the dark, castle-fronted building where she lived, but her companion demurred. "Bring him in for a drink, *cherie*," he begged. "He did the sportin' thing by us, and—"

"But of course," she agreed, and her lips smiled brightly though there was no smile in her dark eyes as she inclined her head in acquiescence.

Her living room was ornate in a restrained way. Everything in it was white except the floor of polished black linoleum. The walls were ivory and the

ceiling chalk-white, rugs of long-haired white fur lay across the gleaming black floor. A chaise lounge covered with deep-napped white mohair, an armchair of white brocade, and another chair in white leather set before a coffee table of camphorwood were the only articles of furniture. Through a partly open door they glimpsed the bedroom where soft-shaded crystal lamps were reflected in the mirror of a draped dressing table and silver and cut glass toilet articles shot back small points of light.

"You will excuse me one small, little moment?" she begged as they entered. "*M'sieur* must have the drink in payment for his kindness." She hurried to the farther room and they could hear her bustling behind the closed door. There was the cheerful sound of liquids being poured from long-necked bottles and the clink of ice in a cocktail shaker, then she was with them once more, holding high a silver tray on which three frosted glasses shone like jewels in a setting. She had found time to change her costume while she mixed the drinks. Now she wore a Chinese woman's habit, loose-hanging smocklike blouse, high-necked and long-sleeved, a lovely jonquil-yellow satin coat embroidered with great pink-and-white chrysanthemums, loose trousers of jade-green, long enough to veil her slender ankles but short enough to reveal white, blue-veined insteps above the black-embroidered felt-soled Chinese slippers of pale yellow satin. "*Pour vous, M'sieur,*" she indicated the glass standing at the apex of the triangle as she held the tray toward Hiji, "and this one is *pour toi*, my little," she held the tray out to the young man, "and this"—her dark eyes brightened with mischievous anticipation—"is mine. *A votre sante, mes amis!*" She smiled across the rim of her glass at them.

"Here's how!" exclaimed the young

man.

"Skoal!" echoed Hiji, and they downed their drinks together at a gulp.

There was something wrong with his cocktail. It didn't taste right even for a French version of a martini, which requires a large, charitable allowance from the connoisseur. Hiji turned aside to hide the grimace of distaste that rose involuntarily to his lips. There must have been too much vermouth in it, extra bitter vermouth—vermouth hell! He had placed that bitter, acrid taste now. Chloral hydrate—knockout drops. She had given him what the Yanks called a "Mickey Finn," and he had swallowed it like an eel swallowing a hook! Good Lord, and he was a grown man—

He rose from the big chair that seemed to suck him back into its depths like quicksand, took an unsteady step toward the window, and sat down again, his knees as weak and jointless as those of a rag doll.

"*Ma foi,*" he heard the lady announce with a giggle, "your countryman is not strong-headed, my friend," and the lad's snickering agreement.

SLOWLY, like a diver coming up from a great depth, he swam back to consciousness. He was in the lady's bedroom, lying across the pink chenille counterpane with his feet on the pink chenille rug, and as he roused on one elbow he realized his condition was deplorable. A sort of green mist swam before his eyes, his head felt infinitely larger than his scalp, the room revolved around him dizzily, and he had the feeling he might be sick any moment.

"*Mein Gott in Himmel!*" he heard from the farther room and looked through the slit of the door to see the big blond man whom he had knocked out half an hour—or was it half a day?—before,

glaring at the little lady in the Chinese costume. "You gave it to him?"

"But of course," she replied, and the flush that mounted to her cheeks betokened rising temper. "*Natürlich*. He needed only fifty pounds to make his losses good, and was pathetically grateful. He'll follow my instructions to the letter and suspect nothing. It is worth—"

"Rubbish!" the man broke in. "You splash *Der Fuehrer's* money around like dishwater! You should have promised him the fifty pounds when his mission was accomplished, told him to apply for it at some nonexistent address in London, and let him rot—"

"Stupid," the woman interrupted furiously, "it's fools like you who spoil everything. You and your double dealings! That boy is desperate, and with good reason. He's sure to be arrested if he cannot make good the money he embezzled. The first thing he would do if they arrested him would be to tell how he was cheated by us—how we hired him to post those letters to our agents in England with English stamps on them, so they would get through safely with no danger of the censor's opening them. What a fool you are!"

The insult stung the man like a wasp. "You dare call me—me, an officer of *Der Fuehrer* stupid?" He slapped her first on one cheek, then the other, and as she staggered back, seized her by her shoulders, shaking her as a terrier might shake a rat. Back and forth and sidewise he shook her, till her head bobbed giddily upon her shoulders and the pins fell from her hair and let the blue-black tresses down about her face. Protesting helplessly she opened her mouth, and the force with which he shook her drove her teeth together on her tongue, so that a little stream of blood came from her lips and trickled down her chin. A crack no louder

than the snapping of a man's fingers sounded and her head fell forward on her bosom as if it had been joined to her with a loose cord, her knees gave way and she slipped to the floor like a lovely doll from which the sawdust had been ripped.

The man bent over her, raised her, let her fall flaccidly to the floor. "*Todt!*" he exclaimed in an awed tone.

"*Todt* it is, old chap," agreed Hiji as he emerged from the bedroom. "You didn't know your own strength—when you were fightin' a woman."

"*Himmel!*" the man swung round as on a pivot. "You again, English pig?" There was a sharp click and the gleam of steel as he snatched a heavy case-knife from his pocket, pressed the spring that released its six-inch blade and poised the weapon for a throw.

THEY were some fifteen feet apart. "No time to rush in and close with him, he'd have that knife through my gizzard before I'd cleared a yard," Hiji told himself in a mute whisper as he reached for a spindle-legged gilt chair that stood beside the bedroom wall and held it before him like a shield.

"Pung!" The knife-blade glittered like a living flame as it whirred toward him, and he ducked his head involuntarily and held the chair legs forward to catch the blow. The steel sheared through the half-inch thickness of the chair-seat as if it had been cardboard, but the handle acted as a brake and kept the weapon from passing clear through.

"All right, now, young feller me lad, let's see how you can handle the dukes!" Hiji crashed the chair against the wall and stepped forward, shoulders crouched, right hand advanced left drawn back for a punch.

The German rushed at him, arms flailing like the tentacles of an octopus,

intent on grappling, and Hiji stepped aside, evaded the long, grasping fingers and let go a left hook which would have ended matters if it had connected with his adversary's jaw. Unfortunately it struck his shoulder, and though he rocked beneath its force he did not go down. In a moment he was back, both arms extended, reaching for a wrestler's hold.

HIJI stepped back warily and kept his right up. The other backed away, crouched for a moment, then launched himself across the slippery waxed floor to grasp Hiji round the legs in a flying tackle.

They fell together in a thrashing heap, rolled over flailing, gouging, punching, digging at each other's eyes and clutching at each other's throats. The German was a big man, at least a hundred and ninety, and hard as nails, but neither bigger, heavier nor harder than the jungle warriors Hiji had fought hand to hand. With a heave he drew his adversary to him, hugged him as a bear might bug its prey, and rolled until he felt the bulky body underneath him. "Now, you dam' kraut, you're for it—"

He felt a searing pain rake his left forearm, his sleeve was ripped to tatters and a line of bright blood marked the rents in the cloth. From some hidden pocket the Nazi had jerked a weapon like a set of brass knuckles, but armed with curving razor-bladed claws instead of knobs on its rings.

Hiji seized the fellow's wrist and dodged away from a blow aimed at his throat, felt the fingers of the man's left hand clamp on his neck, and with an effort calling up his final ounce of strength got to his knees, tottered to his feet, dragged the other after him and hurled him off with all his force.

"Get up!" His voice was hoarse and gritty in his own ears, choked with his labored breath and stifled with the

pounding of his heart. "Get up, you bloody rotter. Stand on your feet and fight!"

He stumbled toward the German who lay sprawled upon his back, his head bent forward at an utterly impossible angle, a look of shocked surprise upon his face.

"Get up. Get on your feet and fight, you swine, or—"

Then he saw it. From the corner of the other's mouth a little stream of blood was trickling, slackening and growing with each labored palpitation of his heart.

The man lay with his back pressed against the bottom of the bedroom chair which Hiji had used for a shield, and the knife—his knife—that had thrust through the flimsy wood of its seat had struck deep into his back and punctured his lung when he fell on it.

He raised his right hand in a feeble effort to give the Nazi salute. "*Heil Hitler!*" he hiccupped, gasped once and died.

"Good God!" exclaimed Hiji, not profanely, but with a sort of reverent wonder. "The blighter's caught in his own trap—taken in his own net—killed with his own knife!"

A quick examination of the woman showed she was dead. Her fragile neck had snapped as if she had been dropped from a gallows when the big man shook her savagely. "Nothin' I can do here," Hiji murmured as he sought his hat and stick and topcoat. "I'll let the gendarmes figure this one out while I go to the hotel and put stickin' plaster on these cuts. I'm due to head a young fool off at the Gare du Nord tomorrow mornin'."

THOUGH gray dawn had broken a scant two hours earlier the inner platform of the Gare du Nord was crowded and almost as brilliant as the lobby of the Opera during the *entr'acte*. Half a dozen trains were snorting eagerly to be off,

through the smoky atmosphere, lighted by the sputtering blue arclights as a darkened stage is brightened by spotlights, passed and milled an endless, busy, eager crowd: priests in flowing cassocks, sleek and well-groomed as blackbirds in May; policemen in their somber uniforms wearing sword bayonets; smart officers with service ribbons shining on horizon blue tunics—the French had not yet adopted the toneless khaki of America and Britain—commercial travelers, lugging overstuffed valises; Sisters of Charity in their dark habits with serene, calm faces under white coifs. Hiji found the Calais express, swung aboard and started down the corridor, his intent glance sweeping each compartment. At last he found his quarry, thrust the sliding door back, dropped into a seat and opened a copy of the Paris edition of the *London Daily Mail*.

“I beg your pardon,” protested his *vis-a-vis*, “this compartment’s taken.”

Hiji looked across the rim of his paper with a stare that would have done credit to a third-rate actor playing the part of a duke. “That’s not what my ticket says.”

“But I tell you it is reserved—I have—I’m expectin’—there’s a young lady—” A whistle shrilled, and with a rattle of couplings the train got under way.

Hiji folded his paper and studied his companion. The exaggerated nonchalance of his traveling kit—the obviously readymade tweed suit, the soft collar fastened with a too-heavy gilt pin, the wide gray-flannel cap and the sleazy silk-and-cotton cravat striped to suggest a public school tie—labeled him for what he was, a banker’s or insurance clerk returning from a holiday for which he’d scrimped and saved for months. He had his share of good looks. Twenty-two or so, blond, blue-eyed, neat and slender, he was rather prepossessing, but a pastiness of complexion, dark circles underneath his

eyes and an air of fatigue and jumpiness bore testimony that his leave had done him little good. “Looks as if your girl friend won’t keep her engagement,” Hiji announced dryly. Then, as the other made no reply, “I’m rather sure she won’t. She has another that can’t be postponed.”

“Eh?” The young man bristled. “What d’ye know about her?”

“Plenty,” grimly. “I know she gave you fifty pounds and a packet of letters last night. The money was to make good the—shall we say irregularities?—in your accounts. The letters you were to post in England. I know she was an accomplice in the pay of Nazi Germany, hired to snare just such unwary birds as you, and that Nazi employer—who was also probably her lover in his lighter moments—killed her in her flat last night.”

The boy was shaken as by a blow, but he tried to put a brazen face on. “You lie!”

Hiji half rose from his seat, a dark flush on his face, and the lad shrank back terrified. “Easy on, young feller. You know every word I’ve said is true. If she told you she’d meet you this mornin’ she was pullin’ your leg, offerin’ you a sort o’ extra on the bargain. Come, now, make a clean breast of it. It’s true, ain’t it?”

THE young man’s face seemed breaking like a smashed cup. There was a desperate, enmeshed look in his eyes and he shook like a man racked with ague. “Yes, it’s true,” he admitted. “She did give me the money and the letters—promised to meet me on the train and go to Calais with me; later she was to join me in London. She said”—his voice broke with bitter, self-lashing sobs—“she said she loved me—”

“I don’t doubt it,” Hiji agreed amicably. “Made it sound sincere, too, didn’t she?”

“She did! She put her arms about me;

kissed me—” His mouth squared as if he were going to be sick. “Lord, what a fool I’ve been!” He wreathed desperate fingers together. “You’re a detective, I suppose. Takin’ me in charge for speculation—”

“Lord love a duck, no!” Hiji denied. “Nothin’ like that. I want to help you, man.”

“What d’ye want? The fifty pounds?”

“No chance! Keep it. Put it back in your accounts. Old Martinson need never know—”

The young man looked bewildered. “But surely you’re not doin’ this for nothin’—”

“Rather not. I want you to do three things for me.”

“I’ll do anything you say—”

“Good enough. Here they are, then: Go to New Scotland Yard as soon as you

reach London. Give’ em the letters, and tell ‘em everything that happened to you last night—except about your havin’ tapped the till, of course. Next, promise never to attempt to beat the roulette wheel again. No one has ever done it. Monte Carlo graveyards are full o’ men who’ve worked out systems to beat the wheel. Most gamblers die in the poorhouse; a lot of ‘em in’ jail. Finally, don’t take up with foreign women. Go find yourself a nice, clean British gal and marry her. The shops and offices are full of ‘em. Maybe one works with you.

“Good bye—” he held his hand out as he rose. “I shan’t be seein’ you again; I’m droppin’ off at the next station. Good luck!”