

*A girl's heart would be broken and a man would die in the electric chair if Private Detective Patricia Brent did not win her. . . .*

# Race With Death



*By Marian Gailor Squire*

**L**ONG after other offices in the tall Palmer Building were closed for the night, a yellow shaft of light glowed under the door marked, "P. Brent. Private Investigator." In the inner office, P. Brent faced a late caller across a huge,

scarred desk.

Pretty, she would have been, under other circumstances—the girl whose tragic gaze met that of the detective. But her eyes were reddened from weeping, her face white and strained, and her clothes

dishevelled as though she had dressed with utter disregard for her appearance.

In decided contrast to her distracted client, was the crisp daintiness of P. Brent—P. for Patricia, and Patsy to her friends.

P. Brent was a definite shock to clients who entered the office, expecting to find a beetle-browed, gimlet-eyed sleuth.

There were those who had laughed indulgently when Patsy placed her number four pumps under the desk so long occupied by her late father. But they hadn't laughed long. For there was a keen brain under the banner of amber hair, shrewdness in the depths of the Killarney eyes, and the soft round chin masked strength and determination. The chin set now, as her client's voice rose on a note of hysteria.

"They're going to kill him! In just a few hours they'll put him in the electric chair—and I've got to save him, I tell you! He's innocent, and they're going to take his life—murder him . . ."

Patsy's heart was wrung with sympathy, but she knew that if she displayed any gentleness now, the girl would break completely.

"Ellen Blake," she said sharply, "You're going to be brave. You can do that for Don. Tell me everything you can remember. *One day*—" she added significantly—"that doesn't give us much time."

Her last statement shocked the girl into a semblance of calm. She locked her hands tightly in her lap, and bent a concentrated gaze on Patsy.

"Don Edwards and I were engaged," she began, making a valiant effort to steady her voice. "We were to be married. We were just waiting for an investment of his to pay, but he lost all his money in the stock, and then—then this horrible thing happened. I—I—"

"I know some of the facts," Patsy put in in a deliberately matter-of-fact tone. "Tell me just what occurred—from your side of the fence."

Ellen took a sudden sharp breath.

"Don worked in the office of Elliot Grodon—"

**P**ATSY nodded. She knew of Elliot Grodon. Not a politician, but power behind the throne of many local officials. Ostensibly, he handled investments.

"The day it happened," Ellen went on in her small faltering voice, "the day Bertram Arnold's body was found in Grodon's office, Mr. Grodon had gone to Chicago. Don knew that—" a sob struggled in the girl's throat whenever she mentioned the beloved name—"He knew it because he phoned for Mr. Grodon's ticket himself. So Mr. Grodon told everybody they could leave early, but he asked Don to come back at seven o'clock because Mr. Arnold was coming in with some valuable negotiable securities. He wanted Don to take them and put them in the safe. So Don came back, and when he opened the door, he saw—he saw—"

Ellen's nerve was breaking. Her pale mouth twisted, and the slender hands locked until the knuckles whitened. Patsy spoke quickly:

"I know. He saw Arnold's body. Arnold had been shot in the back of the head. The gun, you say, lay near the body. Now, did Don touch the gun? Just what did he do then?"

Patsy's psychology worked. Ellen answered with more strength in her tones.

"Oh, no. He didn't touch the gun. But his finger-prints were on it anyway. You see, it was Mr. Grodon's gun, and Mr. Grodon had given it to Don before he went away and told him to lock it in his desk." Ellen swallowed hard, but with Patsy's intent gaze upon her, her chin lifted

bravely. "You can imagine how Don felt when he saw—the body. For a second, he was just frozen, he told me. Then he grabbed the phone, and tried to call the police. But he couldn't get any answer. The line was dead. So he ran out of the office. . . . There weren't many people left in the building, so when the elevator didn't come right away, Don thought it wasn't running—"

"I see." Patsy's blue eyes darkened with intensity. "Then at the trial, the elevator boy testified that he saw Don running away. Is that right?"

Ellen nodded.

"And when the police came, and brought Don back, they found the telephone in perfect order?"

The other girl nodded, her eyes pools of tragedy. "Yes. But the worst thing at the trial was the testimony of that detective, Al Jason. I—I could have *killed* him."

AT any other time, the idea of the gentle Ellen doing violence would have amused Patsy. But the name, "Al Jason," caused her own scalp to prickle with righteous indignation.

Al Jason—Jason, of the sharp practices and ruthless cunning, had long been a blot on the escutcheon of honest detectives. Patsy felt that she would be avenging the name of her honorable father, if she could expose Al Jason for what he was. As a woman, she had realized the honesty and sincerity of the terrified girl who appealed to her. As a detective, she sensed that Don Edwards was being railroaded to the electric chair for a crime he had not committed. If anything was needed to strengthen her convictions, it was Al Jason's connection with the case.

She betrayed none of these thoughts to the other girl, however.

"Al Jason," she repeated softly. "And just what was Jason's testimony?"

Ellen blinked back tears. "Jason said he'd found little pieces of the missing bonds—little scraps of them, caught in the hinges of Don's suitcase when he searched his room. He had the pieces in court. That convinced the jury that Don was guilty."

"And Grodon," Patsy interrupted, "denied that he had given Don any instructions about the gun, but said that Don knew where it was kept?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Brent. He did." Ellen nodded confirmation. "But he must have forgotten. Because he felt very badly about Don losing his money. You see, it was Mr. Grodon who had advised him to make the investment." Ellen didn't see the spark this information struck in Patsy's eyes. "He only said he'd told Don about Mr. Arnold bringing a fortune in securities to the office. Of course, it looked awfully bad when they brought out about Don losing all that money, and planning to be—married."

Suddenly, Ellen's slender arms covered her face, and her slight body was racked with sobs.

Patsy rose with decision. She crossed to the other girl's side, and placed a comforting arm about her shoulders.

"Ellen," she said quietly, "we've talked half the night." Determination blazed in her eyes. A confidence rang in her voice—a confidence that bred courage in the weebegone Ellen. "We're going to save your Don. But right now, you're coming home with me, and we're both going to get some sleep." The enormity of her responsibility swept over her with the words. "I realize," she went on, "that there is only one day—but I'm going to pack a lot of action in it."

Ellen was encouraged in spite of herself. But another thought brought fresh tears to her eyes. "I—I couldn't impose on you. Why, I can't even pay you for all you're doing now. But I will, Miss Brent.

I'll work, and—"

"And," Patsy smiled warmly, "you'll call me Patsy. Now powder your nose and come with me. No more argument. Right now, we're going to get some food and go home."

Ellen clasped her hand gratefully, and protested no further.

Patsy's optimistic air was responsible for the first sleep Ellen had had since her sweetheart's conviction. But Patsy, herself, was far from feeling the hope she expressed.

**N**EXT morning, Ellen scrambled out of bed at sound of the alarm, and insisted on preparing breakfast while Patsy dressed.

She gave a gasp of amazement when Patsy entered the little dinette. A gasp most gratifying to the tiny sleuth.

"Why—why I'd hardly have known you."

Patsy wore a drab brown dress and coat, her bright hair completely hidden under a plain brown felt hat.

"That's the idea," she chuckled. "When people think of Patsy Brent, they think of red hair. I thought I might be able to get around town less obtrusively if it was covered."

It was only when the girl detective prepared to leave, that Ellen's emotions crashed through the barrier she had set up. She rose abruptly from the table, her head turned to hide the tragedy that welled up in her eyes.

"If only," her tortured voice cried—"if only there was something I could do. Oh, Patsy! I love him so. I couldn't live—I wouldn't want to—if that awful thing happened. And I can't even get word to him that there's—there's a little hope."

"Ellen." Patsy's hands gripped the trembling shoulders, turned them about. There was a smile on her soft lips, and

purpose in her eyes. "There is hope. More than a little." The two girls were walking toward the door, when Patsy halted abruptly. "There's one important thing," she said quietly. "Don't leave the house under any circumstances. I know it will be hard, but you stay right here by the telephone. I'll get in touch with you—Meantime—courage!"

With a flashing smile, she was out the door, and down the old-fashioned brownstone steps.

Unfortunately, Ellen did not heed her warning about leaving the house. She ran to the corner later in the afternoon, to get the newspapers. And she was noted by one interested observer—the last person in all the world who should have seen her leaving Patsy's home.

The smile remained on Patsy's face, lest Ellen be watching her from the front window. But Patsy wasn't nearly as confident as she seemed. Don had lost his appeal, and there was no hope of interference from the governor at this late date—not without concrete new evidence.

Down the narrow, crooked streets of Greenwich Village Patsy hurried, mentally cataloguing her next movements. As she turned blindly into the subway entrance, she crashed into a tall, muscular form, just emerging from the kiosk.

"Well," a rich baritone boomed in her ear. "If it isn't the little chipmunk! And what are you busy ferreting out now?"

Patsy recognized the voice, and looked up smiling as she straightened her hat.

"Michael Farris, you're mixing your metaphors. Chipmunks don't ferret. Besides, I'm after smaller game. I'm out to exterminate an insect."

Farris's good-humored face clouded.

"You wouldn't," he said severely, "be meaning an insect named Jason?"

Many times as she expressed herself on the subject of Al Jason, Patsy was

disconcerted.

"That's worse than reading my mail," she flashed. "You're reading my mind."

Before he could question her further, she sped down the subway stairs, Mike's parting words drifting after her—

"If you have any use for a plainclothes man, I'll be at home this evening."

A GRAND person, Mike Farris. And a swell police detective. But just because his father and hers had been boyhood chums, was no reason why he should appoint himself her guardian. Still, there was something dependable about Mike's broad shoulders. Patsy felt a momentary regret that she had not told him her troubles and enlisted his aid. But, no. He'd have insisted that the case was hopeless—tried to talk her out of undertaking it. His protests would have delayed her, and there was so little time. . .

As the train thundered uptown, Patsy's busy mind ran over the facts as she knew them. Granting Don's innocence, who would have wanted to put the blame on him? Al Jason? If Jason wanted Don out of the way, that could mean only that he was being paid for the job. Who would pay him? Grodon? If that was the case, then Grodon, himself, must be guilty of Arnold's murder. But Grodon had been in Chicago.

Patsy's first stop was at the office of the passenger agent of the Pennsylvania railroad. Using her delightful smile to best advantage, she soon had a startling bit of information. The Chicago ticket, ordered by Don Edwards for Grodon, had not been used! It had been cashed in, three days after the murder of Bertram Arnold.

The next twenty minutes found her in the basement of her own office building. She was deep in conversation with the house electrician.

"But Miss Brent," he was saying, "I can't leave here in the middle of the day. S'pose somebody blows a fuse? S'pose they call me for something?"

Patsy flashed her amazing eyes, and a ten dollar bill at the same time. The combination was too much for Jim. In a few moments, they were speeding uptown in a taxi.

"All I want you to do," Patsy was explaining, "is to go to the office of Elliot Grodon. Nobody will be there but the stenographer at this time. Tell her you're from the telephone company. Look in the phone box carefully, then meet me and tell me how it looked—the wires and all."

Jim nodded his understanding. They dismissed the cab a block from the building, and Patsy took a stand in the doorway of a vacant shop to await his return.

Very shortly, he rejoined her.

"Didn't have no trouble, Miss Brent," he reported cheerfully. "I dunno what you want, but that phone's been tampered with, sometime. Looks like a wire was pulled loose, and put back again. It wasn't no regular electrician done it, because it's wound different from the other wires."

Patsy's eyes gleamed with excitement as she thanked him cordially and hurried away.

AUTOMATICALLY, her feet took her briskly up Broadway, her mind racing with speculation—heedless of the jostling throngs, scream of traffic, shouts of angry drivers as she narrowly missed being struck by passing cars.

Every clock was a mortal enemy, ticking away the moments of Don Edwards' life.

With almost feverish efficiency, Patsy's mind arrayed the facts for her consideration.

Grodon had not been in Chicago at the time of the murder. Some one had disconnected Grodon's telephone; and when Don ran out of the building, the same some one had connected it again to make Dan's explanation look false. New evidence, and important. But it wasn't enough to save Don's life. And why hadn't Don's own lawyer learned these facts in his client's favor? Henry Greeve. Patsy knew him by sight. She might talk to him—cautiously—and see if she could get any information without letting him know her purpose.

With this in mind, she boarded a downtown subway. Greeve's office was on Chambers Street—near Al Jason's.

But Patsy never talked to Henry Greeve. Walking across City Hall Park, she spied a familiar figure. Al Jason in earnest conversation with another man. And that other man was Henry Greeve. Jason had given damaging testimony against Greeve's client. Their being together meant one thing—a thing she'd more than half suspected. Greeve had been working, not to save his client, but to convict him!

In that instant, Patsy decided on a dangerous course. Al Jason held the secret of the murder of Bertram Arnold. Somehow, Patsy was going to wrest that secret from him. Tucking her hair well under her hat, she set off in the direction taken by Greeve and Jason.

The two men parted, Jason continuing toward his own office building. Keeping well behind, Patsy followed. The lobby was empty when she reached the shabby building, and she slipped through and mounted the stairs. The sky darkened suddenly and when she reached the fourth floor, a light glowed dully through Jason's door. The next office was vacant. If only the door were unlocked. It was! She entered, softly closing the door behind her.

In the gloom, she could make out two rickety chairs, and an old table, precariously balanced on three legs, its fourth corner touching the wall for support. Toward the front of the office, a door, bolted on her side, connected the two rooms. She waited breathlessly, not knowing what she expected to learn, but with the definite conviction that she was on the verge of an important discovery.

The phone in Jason's office shrilled. Patsy stepped toward the connecting door, the better to hear. The "br-r-ring" was cut short by a nasal, "H'lo. Jason talking."

Patsy listened intently, every fiber alert. Silence. Then Jason's voice raised in anger. "Look here, Grodon. It don't buy me any limousines for you to say you got the stuff. You've stalled long enough. I took my chances and I want my cut—" again silence— "Yeah, I can talk. I sent the girl out. Remember it's lucky it's Edwards going tonight, instead of you. If I wanted to talk . . . . Oke. Your place—eight o'clock—and no funny business." The receiver banged angrily.

**P**ATSY trembled in a fever of excitement at the revelation of the phone call. Her suspicions were confirmed. Grodon had murdered Arnold, and Jason had helped pin the blame on Don Edwards. And they were going to let another man die for their crime! Not if Patsy Brent knew it. "The stuff," he'd said. That meant the bonds. "Your place" must mean Grodon's suite at the Marshall Arms. . . .

Now to slip out. She took a cautious step toward the door— There was a thundering crash, and Patsy gasped in dismay. Her foot had struck a loose board; the movement had dislodged the ancient table, and sent it hurtling to the floor.

Jason had heard! Her staring eyes penetrated the gloom of the office. The

knob of the connecting door turned, cautiously, then dropped back into place. Thank her lucky stars for that bolt! She heard the door to Jason's office open, heard footsteps pounding down the hallway.

Her eyes flew to the partly opened window. Like a flash, she was across the room. A narrow ledge ran across the outside of the window, extending a few feet to either side. Praying that the sound of the doors would drown out any noise she might make, she slipped lithely through the window. Placing her feet carefully on the precarious perch, she inched along out of range of the window, her fingers seeking what hold they could find in the crevices of the brick wall.

One glimpse of her, and Jason would know she had heard that call. She might as well drop to the stone court below as be discovered. Being Patsy, however, she thought more of being circumvented in her efforts to save Don, than she did of the fact that she, herself, was in danger.

She was barely in time. She could hear the door creak open. Silence. Then Jason's voice. "Who's there? Who's in this office!" Seconds. Seconds which seemed endless to the palpitating girl. How long could she hold on? Her fingers were cramped from the desperate hold on the crumbling bricks. Would he never leave. And—worse—would he come to the window?

At last, a muttered exclamation. Apparently, he had discovered the overturned table, and accepted that explanation for the noise. For at last she heard the door slam, and Jason's heavy footsteps resounding in the tile hall. She heard no other sound, and judged that he had not returned to his office.

Getting back in the window was a far more dangerous procedure than getting out. Her limbs were cramped from their

tense position, her fingers stiff and sore. She dared not look down into the yawning stone court.

At last, she gained the sill, and lowered herself in through the window.

**T**HERE was no sound from the adjoining office. She forced herself to wait long enough for Jason to leave the building, or return to his office if such was his intention. After twenty endless minutes, she slipped quietly out, sped down the stairs and gained the street unnoticed.

Patsy, like her father before her, had been born without a streak of fear in her make-up. Admirable, but not always sensible. For otherwise, Patsy would not have made her next move without being assured that help was at hand.

But summoning aid meant possible discovery. The bonds would be destroyed, and with them, all hope of saving Don Edwards from a horrible fate.

Patsy's eyes misted when she thought of the way Ellen's voice broke as she said, "Don." It must be good, she thought, to feel that way about some one.

"You haven't time to get sentimental, Patsy Brent," she told herself. "You've got a hunch to follow." And that hunch led her to the Marshall Arms, an expensive but almost ominously quiet apartment building in the East Seventies.

Her incredible luck still held. The Marshall Arms had automatic elevators, and she gained the seventeenth floor unobserved. One more hurdle. How to get into Grodon's apartment.

Somewhere in the back of her keen mind, a little voice warned her that things were going all too smoothly. For a maid was busy in apartment 17-C, and as Patsy started down the hall, the woman emerged and went into the next room where another servant was working, singing loudly to the

tune of a vacuum cleaner.

Patsy was in the hall closet of Grodon's apartment, behind the closed door when the maid returned.

"Whoops!" Patsy heard a rich Irish brogue through the door. "Sure, an' I was afther lavin' Misther Grodon's dure unlocked, an' wouldn't he be raisin' a rumpus if he was to know it."

"Wouldn't he, just," Patsy echoed mentally. Her day seemed to be made up of waiting for doors to slam so that she could emerge from hiding places. As she opened the clothes closet door, the rich beauty of Grodon's apartment brought a gasp of involuntary appreciation.

She stepped almost ankle deep in a luxurious Oriental rug. A wide divan occupied almost the entire west wall. Tapestries enriched the pale gray walls, and an antique chest supported priceless jade figurines.

It was this chest that drew her attention. If the bonds were actually hidden in the apartment, the chest seemed a likely place of concealment. But its massive drawers yielded nothing of importance, and she thumped it in vain for a hollow sound that would denote a secret chamber. There seemed to be nothing further to search in the living room, so she went into the bedroom.

**A**GAINST the far wall, was a huge studio couch; and suspended on the ceiling over it, an enormous mirror of equal dimensions. A white bearskin rug was flung carelessly over the foot of the bed. A chaise longue, a modernistic dressing table and two low chairs completed the furnishings—save for one object. It was this last that interested Patsy most.

It was a sturdy little cabinet with two drawers. Closer inspection proved that both were locked by some intricate

arrangement, but she could discover no keyhole. Patsy knelt beside it and began running her fingers experimentally over its polished surface, paying particular attention to a row of small carved animal figures across the bottom. The last, a tiny deer yielded unexpectedly to her touch, and the upper drawer shot out, striking her sharply on the forehead.

There, in the cabinet drawer, was a neat package of securities, crisp and green—the edges torn where the scraps "found" in Don's suitcase had been removed.

For a moment, the girl sat in stunned surprise. Then she rose, shoving the precious bundle into her handbag, a sob of relief tearing through her slender body.

In her two hands, she held a life.

A sound in the other room stabbed her ecstasy. Voices. Jason and another. Grodon. The telephone? It was in the other room. Escape to the bath, lock the door, and shout for help? No. She'd have to cross in front of the open bedroom door.

One other chance. Wait by the door, and make a dash for liberty when the two men entered the bedroom. But Patsy had counted without that huge mirror hanging over the bed. Any figure in the bedroom was reflected in that mirror—and Jason's sharp eyes had spotted her. . . .

Patsy felt a wrenching pain in her left shoulder, and her head snapped painfully as she was nearly jerked off her feet. She had a flashing picture of Grodon's face, mouth hanging loosely in terror. Then Jason's snaky eyes, wiry hand holding her arm in paralyzing grip.

"Well, if it isn't Miss Brent," Jason snarled. "Think it was a nice day to commit suicide?"

Steady. Steady, Patsy. There might still be a chance of bluffing it out. Keep your wits about you. Your life isn't worth much, when two murderous men want to



save their own hides. . . .

"You might ease up on the grip," Patsy replied as calmly as she could. "And speaking of suicide, Mr. Jason, there are some people who might want to know where I was, if I should disappear."

**T**HE eyes of the two men met. Patsy could read their message clearly. Maybe she'd failed to find the bonds. Better find out what she knew before they tipped their hands. Jason answered the unspoken question in Grodon's eyes.

"This," he said, indicating Patsy with a jerk of his head, "is the demon detective I told you about. Miss Patricia Brent. Patsy to her friends." And to Patsy, "suppose we sit down here a minute."

Grodon nodded, and went into the bedroom. Patsy's heart sank. He'd discover that the bonds were missing. What then, she could only conjecture—but it boded no good for Patsy Brent. Her worst fears were realized when Grodon appeared in the door, his face contorted with rage.

"They're gone! She's got them! I'll kill that little devil." He lunged toward Patsy, but Jason threw up a warning hand.

"Not so fast," he told Grodon. "She can't get out of here alive. But she's right about some people wanting to know where she's disappeared to. We got to figure this thing out."

Grodon stood, breath coming jerkily, glaring at the girl. Patsy felt as though she were in some terrible nightmare, but the menace in Jason's eyes was all too real.

"Guess you thought you had this thing figured out pretty well," he sneered. "For your information, master mind, it was your little girl friend tipped me off. I just happened to see her coming out of your place, and figured you were up to something."

Oh, Ellen, Ellen! Ellen, who wanted

more than anything in the world to help, sounded the death knell to their hopes. But Ellen hadn't realized the importance of not being seen. The damage was done, now. The important thing was to repair it. But how? A beautiful picture of big Mike Farris looming in the doorway, swam into her mind. But there was no Mike. Just these two men, bent on planning her murder—as they'd murdered Arnold, and arranged for the death of Don Edwards.

"If you'd put that stuff in your safe," Grodon grated, "we wouldn't be in this jam."

"Look who's talking." Jason was livid. "It wasn't my idea to bump off Arnold. *You* had to have the jack, to make up those phony investments. I helped pin it on the Edwards dope."

A sudden gleam came in Patsy's eyes. A chance—pitifully slim—but a chance. If she could make them angry enough. She laughed suddenly, a meaning laugh. The incongruous sound startled the two into silence.

"You're very funny." Her lips curled. "While you're fighting each other, it hasn't occurred to you that someone else is responsible for my being here."

Suspicion gathered in their eyes.

"What are you getting at?" Jason's voice was an ominous whisper.

She summoned a casual laugh. "Did you think I figured this out all by myself? Who do you suppose tipped me off?"

Again, the two men exchanged glances. So far, the scheme was working. Patsy read the answer even before Grodon spoke.

"Greeve! Who else?"

Heart pounding, she said airily: "Go to the head of the class. Who else, is right."

**J**ASON'S ferret eyes narrowed. He pushed Grodon aside and faced Patsy grimly.

“If you’re trying to pull a fast one, watch your step. Greeve had as much to lose as we did. How do we know this yarn is on the level?”

Patsy shrugged. It seemed the beating of her heart must be heard across the room. She breathed a silent prayer.

Mike had said: “If you need a plainclothes man, I’ll be home.” But even if he were home, could she get the message to him.

“It’s easy enough to prove. He’s waiting to hear from me. I have the private number he gave me, if you want me to call—”

No. She wouldn’t be allowed to telephone. She read that in Jason’s eyes, and his words were confirmation.

“Yeah? If there’s any telephoning done, I’ll do it. Gimme the number. We’ll see what this is all about.”

Patsy sank back on the huge couch. The telephone, an intricate arrangement was fastened to the end table. Changing her position brought her head on a level with the mouthpiece.

“Trusting soul, aren’t you,” she said, to distract his attention from her movement. “I don’t see why I should tip you off.”

Jason leaned over her, wiry fist doubled— “Come on. Gimme that number—”

“Oh, all right.” She appeared to reconsider. “You’ll find out I’m telling the truth.” With an inward plea to the Gods of Justice, she calmly gave him—Mike Farris’ number.

Grimly, still with suspicion in his rodent eyes, Jason dialed. Patsy felt she must suffocate. Would Mike be at home? Could she speak before he answered the ring. On these next few moments depended Don Edwards’ life. Hers too.

Patsy nerved herself for the crucial moment. Apparently, the two men attached no significance to her proximity

to the telephone. She waited, every nerve on edge for the click that told her the receiver had been picked up at the other end. So quickly did she speak, that the sentence was out before Jason could move.

“Greeve might be afraid to answer,” she said clearly toward the mouthpiece, “but I tell you, Al Jason, he told me to come here to Grodon’s apartment and I’d find the bonds—”

With a snarl of rage, Jason slammed the receiver down and clapped a rough hand over her mouth.

Patsy felt a sickening, crunching blow. Lights danced before her eyes—nausea swept over her, and a dull sense of defeat. Then two angry voices faded into nothingness, and the world was blotted out.

AT length, Jason’s voice dimly penetrated her consciousness. How long had she been out? Minutes? Hours? Not long, she decided by the trend of conversation. But long enough to be tied securely to a heavy chair.

Had Mike heard her voice? And if he had, had he recognized it and realized her predicament?

“We got one chance—” Jason’s voice a held a razor-edge. “Out the window. We can drop her from that service stairway in the back of the building. Take her up a couple of floors. They can’t pin it on you. She’ll be out of the picture—but first we got to find those bonds.”

So, they hadn’t found the bonds. Patsy realized that her purse had fallen under the couch when Jason struck her. They’d been so intent on disposing of her, they hadn’t noticed. Reprieve—a very slight reprieve. They didn’t dare kill her until the bonds were found.

Her lashes must have fluttered in spite of her effort to remain immobile, for Jason was coming toward her, a small black

object in his right hand. "We'll find 'em," he was saying. "I'll just make sure she gets a little more sleep."

Stars danced crazily through her mind as the black-jack descended smartly on her temple. And she knew no more until she awoke in the middle of an earthquake.

The noise was real enough, but she was dreaming, because Mike Farris was lunging through the door at Grodon.

Another figure struggled with Jason for possession of a pistol, and blue coats were surging through the open door into the melee.

Patsy tried to cry out as Grodon's hand groped behind him for a heavy bronze statue. But Mike saw the attempt and sent a crashing blow to Grodon's jaw. The statue thudded harmlessly to the floor—and so did Grodon. Mike stooped swiftly and fastened gleaming handcuffs to the man's wrists. Jason, too, was now wearing bracelets. Miraculously, Mike was at her side, loosening the bonds that secured her to the chair. She tore the gag from her mouth, and asked tremulously:

"Mike—the time? What time is it?"

"About ten."

Limbs numb beyond all feeling, she rose and staggered toward the couch. Mike steadied her with a strong arm about her shoulders.

"Take it easy, Chipmunk. What are you after?"

"My purse—" her words came in a little rush. "Oh, Mike, I've found them. There's time, thanks to you. I've—I've got to call the governor right away."

BLESSEDLY, he asked no further questions.

In a telephone booth at a nearby restaurant, Patsy remained for some time, talking animatedly.

Eyes sparkling, cheeks flushed—blissfully unaware of two angry lumps that materially changed the contour of her forehead, she rejoined Mike.

"I've talked to the governor," she bubbled. "Don Edwards won't be electrocuted tonight—or any other night. And I called Ellen. I think she's going crazy. But being crazy with joy is a nice kind of craziness."

Her knees buckled suddenly, and Mike lowered her into a chair, concern in his dark eyes.

"Bacon and eggs for two," he called to the waiter. "And three quarts of your hottest coffee. Now, Chipmunk," turning to Patsy, "we can talk."

Between sips of comforting coffee, Patsy sketched briefly her interview with Ellen, the day's discoveries, leading up to the finding of the bonds—and the entrance of Jason and Grodon.

"So you see," she finished, "it's two lives you saved to-night."

"Don't try to make me out a hero." He grinned to hide his embarrassment at her words of praise. "But if I was in the life-saving business, I can think of no life I'd rather save than Patsy Brent's."

"Mike Farris," she told him with a little catch in her throat, "you're a man!"

"Patsy Brent—" and there was something deeper than affection in his wide Irish grin—"Patsy Brent, the same to you!"