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Newshawk Bob Dakin had a scoop on the grisly torch murder—until Satan's typesetter headlined a . . . .

Murder Misprint

By Don Cameron
Author of "Death by Proxy," etc.

His arm swung upward in a vicious arc.

CHLOE RICHARDS dug her elbow into my ribs, wriggled over to her own side of the flivver and glared at me with the most scornful pair of eyes in the United States.

"Bob Dakin," she said, "kindly wheel this heap out of this lovers' lane and take me back to where people have good sense. A certain amount of playful joking is excusable, but every time you bring up the subject of matrimony I get cold chills. Besides, another car is coming. Wipe the lipstick off your nose."

I watched the other car stop fifty yards

down the rutted lane, its headlights fading into darkness without touching us. I said: "You know darned well I'd make you a perfect husband."

She folded her arms decisively. She tossed her head, and even in the gloom her red curls glinted.

"Not as long as you devote your heart and soul to a newspaper, you wouldn't," she said. "I'd want to see my husband once in a while. Just because a stock promoter went busted, you had to spike our date last night. It was our third broken date in a row. The only way you could get off tonight was by double-crossing your boss. You can't call your soul your own—and what does it get you?"

"Seventy bucks every Wednesday," I replied. "In a two-bit town like this we could live like—"

"I know." We'd been through it before, and she sounded tired. "But if you got fifteen bucks every Saturday for digging ditches, you could spend evenings and Sundays with your wife. There might be children, and a wife would want her husband to know—"

I stopped listening, because she wasn't being original. Being top reporter on a rag as understaffed as the Middletown *Sun* had its drawbacks, I admit. When a big story broke there was no dating, nor even sleeping, till it was cleaned up. Ever since Lee Harris, the financial wizard, had apparently gambled away a quarter-million entrusted to him by some of our very best people, I'd been working day and night on the investigation.

But this day, after Chloe had given me a sizzling lecture via telephone, I'd taken a drastic step. I'd sent Bill Riley, my city editor, a collect telegram:

STRICKEN WITH SCARLET FEVER COMMA WHOOPING COUGH COMMA LEPROSY COMMA AND NERVOUS BREAKDOWN PERIOD DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE ME IN OFFICE UNTIL TOMORROW

Then, after I'd sent it, I'd read in the afternoon paper that Harris had taken a runout powder with the remaining assets of his firm, and the cops were in full cry after him. I thought maybe Riley would fire me—again.

I told Chloe: "Some day Riley will die in a tantrum, and I'll be boss, and I can make the other guys do the work and spend a lot of time with you and the kiddies."

"You may propose to me," she said, "the day he is buried."

I was looking toward the other car up ahead. I could just make it out, and while I looked I saw a shadow moving near it.

"Ha!" I said. "Something's going to happen."

"Maybe," Chloe came back, "it will turn out to be a story, so you can neglect me some more."

A THIN line of bright orange streaked from the moving shadow toward the car and a small caliber gun said *splat!* Right away a ring of yellow flames spilled out of the windows of the machine and a long, wavering spear-point of fire licked upward from its top. In the brilliance I could see some one running away into the bushes at the side of the road.

"A torch murder!" I yelled, bearing down on the starter button. "This will shove even Harris out of the headlines!"

As the flivver jolted into the ruts, I had a glimpse of Chloe's face in the reflection of the fire. Half her expression was a mixture of horror and pity for whoever was still in the burning car, which was an expensive sedan. Half was anger at me, because my first thought had been headlines— which is only natural to a

reporter.

I slammed on the brakes, and Chloe pretty near went through the windshield. I anchored the flivver fifty feet or so from the burning sedan, knowing the gas tank would explode sooner or later and spray the vicinity with liquid fire. I sprinted over the ruts, with Chloe yelling at me to come back.

Heat scorched my face. I touched the handle of the door opposite the steering wheel, and the metal burned like a red hot poker. Right then I knew whoever was inside couldn't still be alive, even if the bullet hadn't been fatal.

He wasn't.

The door swung open, and the smoking body of a big man slid half out of the machine. I grabbed him by his bushy hair, and the hair came away in my hand. His clothes were smouldering, but I managed to get him by the shoulder, burning my hand some more, and drag him twenty feet or so away. Then I took off my coat and beat at the little yellow flames flickering over him, until they went out.

The smoke strangled me, made me weak and dizzy. But I remembered the *Sun* would be putting out its two-star edition in about half an hour, and I had to find out who had been killed.

Some gangster, I figured. The man's face was black and blistered so that his own brother couldn't have recognized him. I held my breath and opened his coat, and in the inside pocket were a leather billfold, undamaged by fire, and some letters, and on one seared finger was a signet ring with the initials "L. H."

I looked at the initials and realized I had seen the same ones on the door of the sedan. I looked at the envelopes of the letters and the cards in the leather case. I looked at the body again and remembered that Lee Harris had been a husky man with dark hair, graying at the temples.

I made it back to the flivver in nothing flat.

"Big story?" Chloe asked in a choked voice, not looking at me.

"A whopper," I assured her, kicking the gear lever forward.

She took a deep breath, and I knew I was in for it.

"It's all over," she said. "This is our last date. Your paper is more important than love, more important than other people's lives. I'm through playing second fiddle—"

SHE was still holding forth tearfully when I skidded the flivver to a stop in front of the farmhouse I had sighted crosscountry from the lane. There were lights in the windows, and the farmer who came to the door admitted cautiously that he had a phone.

I spied it on the kitchen wall and made a dive for it. He watched me with round eyes while I put in my call.

"Riley!" I howled, when he came on the line. "I got a yarn—"

"Save it for the next paper that hires you," Riley boomed. "I called your apartment. You're not sick. You're not working for the *Sun* any more—"

"It's Harris!" I told him, trying to shout him down. "He's been murdered. Some one shot him and set fire to his car. Tried to make it look like suicide, but I saw the killer—"

"You're drunk," Riley decided. "1 thought you were when 1 got your telegram. Sober up and see me tomorrow, and maybe I can—"

I let him finish. Then I said: "You beetle-browed baboon, listen!" I managed to convince him I was sober and sane, and gave him the dope. I asked: "Do you think you could make a little item of it?"

"I've just written the headline," he

said. “It’ll spread eight columns across page one—HARRIS MURDERED—in the biggest type we’ve got. I’ll tip off the cops and shoot a cameraman out.”

I hung up. I knew I was good for a bonus on the strength of that, and maybe a raise. I turned away from the phone just in time to see a girl duck back out of the light that filtered through the screen door to the kitchen porch. She was dark-haired, dark-eyed and pretty.

It struck me that I had seen her somewhere before. Then it struck me that no girl who had ever crossed my path would be likely to live out here in the sticks. This one would be the farmer’s daughter, naturally. It reminded me of a story. . . .

When I got back to the flivver, Chloe had mopped up the tears and was sitting straight. She wouldn’t look at me.

“Take mc home, please,” she said, her tones very chilly.

I tried to explain. “We’ve got to go back to where the sedan is. The police and a photographer are coming. We’re witnesses.”

“So you haven’t had enough of horror and tragedy!” she said. “You have to make sure the whole thing is made into nice pictures for people to have with their breakfast. I suppose you’ll have to get pictures of his weeping mother and his sweetheart—”

It clicked then. I grabbed Chloe and kissed her. I didn’t mind the slap she gave me.

The girl I had seen at the farmhouse—the one who had listened to my phone call through the screen door—was Harris’ girl! The cops had questioned her, and I had seen her picture in the afternoon sheet. Sandra Parker was her name, and acrobatic dancing in night clubs was her business, when she worked at it.

Inspiration gripped me. I could see a story that was a lot bigger than just HARRIS MURDERED. I could see the headlines growing, taking up most of the front page:

HARRIS MURDERED
BY DANCING GIRL
FOR STOLEN CASH

Because it might have been a girl I had seen running away from the burning sedan. I had thought it was a man, but I was some distance away, and my windshield wasn’t spotless, and the flickering light was tricky.

Why couldn’t it have been Sandra? She liked men well enough, if I knew her type, but she liked money better. She had played Harris for an easy mark, and now Harris was going to blow town.

Ladies can be grim, once they’ve made up their minds. A lady like Sandra would be apt to have a strong stomach. Once she got Harris running away from her with the money in his car, she could coax him to drive into a lovers’ lane. She could shoot him while he wasn’t looking, sprinkle gasoline around, set the car afire and light out with the loot.

The cops would find the charred body and the gun, and think of suicide first of all. Harris had plenty of reason to bump himself off. And when the homicide boys talked with Sandra, she’d swear she hadn’t been out of her apartment all evening—and who could say she was lying?

CHLOE and I were flies in the ointment. If I hadn’t decided it was time to propose to Chloe again, and hadn’t chosen the same spot for romance that Sandra had chosen for murder . . . .

“Just like a woman!” I said out loud.

We had turned into the lane, and ahead of us the sedan was still blazing. The cushions and the upholstery were pretty

well gone and the flames had grown smaller. It was an ugly mess, with the flame showing red and twisted through the darkness. I hadn't heard the gas tank let go, either.

Chloe took it for granted that my most recent remark had been meant for her. She turned sidewise in the seat to face me, and when the flivver hit a bump she slid off the cushion.

"That's right!" she said. "Take it out on me. I was doing my best to make it a pleasant evening—"

"You could have made it more pleasant," I had to point out.

"—And you insist on running into a murder. Why didn't you pick another place to park? Why couldn't we have stayed in town and had a bottle of beer? Why do you have to drag me into all these ghastly things?"

Maybe there are answers to questions like that, but I could never think of them. As it happened, I didn't have to just then, because the gas tank of the sedan chose that second to go *boom!* and it was as loud and spectacular a boom as I had ever seen or heard.

The rear end of the sedan jumped four feet into the air. A lovely fountain of sparks went up. The flaming gas splashed out, and for a little while I was afraid there was going to be more fire than would be comfortable. But the grass wasn't that dry.

It scared Chloe into throwing both arms about me. I stopped the flivver and assumed the role of protector and comforter, and she didn't raise any objection. . . .

When the headlights of other cars came through the back window of the flivver, a couple minutes later, I pulled off the road and Chloe and I walked, getting to the glowing wreck at about the same time they did.

The first car was driven by Pete Brennan, a homicide dick 1 didn't like, and with him was Bert Larkin, the district attorney, who I admired even less, due to past disagreements about what did and did not constitute legitimate news. The second car was Hinky Hansen's, and I was glad to see him. Besides being the fattest man in Middletown, Hinky is the best news photographer in five states.

Hinky unslung his camera case. He grinned, showing where he had sacrificed two teeth to get a picture of one of our local hoodlums entering court to perjure himself in a holdup trial.

"Where'th the corpthe?" he lithped.

"Yeah." Brennan growled. "Where's Lee Harris?"

"Spoiled my best case since election," Larkin said. "I could have been governor with the publicity I'd get prosecuting him."

You'd have thought Harris planned his own murder just to get Larkin's goat, to see the disappointed look on Larkin's mug.

I said: "Use your eyes, buzzards. He's right—"

I started to point, and something inside me flopped over. There was the spot where the body bad lain, marked by scraps of charred clothing. The spot—and that was all.

The body had vanished.

"Well," Brennan said definitely nasty, "where did you put it?"

"Speak up!" Larkin prompted.

Hinky Hansen didn't say anything, but he looked at me with reproach, as though he thought I had hidden the corpse on purpose, just to make his job harder.

"He was lying right there," I said. "He was all messed up, but his build and hair were like Harris'. The car had his initials on it. These were in his pocket."

I handed the billfold and the letters to the D. A.

Larkin said: "Arrest him. Brennan."

Brennan said: "You're pinched, smarty."

"What for?" I demanded.

Larkin's sneer would have gone over big in melodrama.

"For removing evidence. For putting us on a spot. Without a corpus delicti, how do I know anyone's dead? How do I know you didn't steal these papers somewhere? Either you're lying about the corpse to make a story, or you've hidden it to keep the other reporters from chiseling in. I'm going to hold you incommunicado till I get the lowdown."

"Hey, you can't do that!" Hinky yelled.

"You, too, if you make another sound," Larkin snapped. "I'll send you up for a year for obstructing justice. Your paper didn't support me in the election, anyway."

HINKY shut up and began walking around the sedan, looking for an angle that would make a good picture. Chloe looked from Larkin to me, her mouth open, as though she couldn't quite figure out what it was all about. Brennan was kicking around in the grass, looking for thumbprints or something.

I was doing some fast thinking. Larkin hadn't been kidding, and I had no desire to go to jail. If he really wanted to, I knew, he could trump up some technical charge against me and make it stick, and with the present political setup, not even the *Sun* could save me from doing time.

Besides, I had to find out what had happened to the dead man. If I couldn't prove there had actually been a corpse—Harris' corpse—I'd lose my job. That meant I'd lose my girl, if I hadn't lost her already. I couldn't expect Chloe to marry me and live on nothing.

I got close to Hinky. I whispered: "Keep them amused, will you? I'm going to duck and try to find Harris' girl."

"Thay the word," Hinky thaid, "and I'll go with you. I thaw her today. Boy, that dame ith thome thtuff!"

"Nobody loves a fat man," I reminded him. "You stick here. Go up the road about forty feet and let out a yell, as though you'd found something."

I edged nearer to the flivver. Chloe came over, and I nodded to her to get inside. Larkin looked at us suspiciously. Just then Hinky hoIlered: "Look what I found!"

Brennan and Larkin forgot everything else and made a dash for him. I hopped in the flivver and kicked the starter alive. I could hear Hinky explaining: "Hell, I thought it wath a dime!" Larkin and Brennan began yelling at me.

I cut the wheels short, and the flivver nearly tipped over in the ditch, turning around. I took the bumps hard. The law men didn't follow. But I knew they'd phone ahead and tell the cops in town to look for me at the *Sun* office.

Chloe found her tongue when we hit the concrete highway. She gasped: "Are you crazy, Bob?"

I told her I guessed I was. She tried to jump while I was squeezing the top mile out of the flivver, and I had to hold her with one hand. It was a wonder we didn't crack up.

Sandra Parker lived in the Blackstone Apartments, I remembered reading. I pulled up in front and told Chloe I had to see a man who lived there. I made her promise to wait. I didn't notice her fingers when she promised, but they must have been crossed.

I was sure Sandra could tell me the things I wanted to know, if I asked them the right way. I wasn't worried about not

finding her home; that was the logical place for her to head. If she intended to bluff it out, she couldn't afford to be seen running away.

On the way into town I had elaborated my theory. Sandra had heard me phone, and knew I had dragged the body out of the sedan, I decided. She had some reason for not wanting it found right away. Perhaps she was afraid the fire hadn't had time to destroy evidence that would show it was a case of murder, not suicide. Whatever her motive, she must have hurried back to the lane in another car and taken the corpse.

A dirty job for a lady. But it's surprising what a lady will do when she has her hard little heart set upon something really important, like a bankroll.

I DIDN'T ring Sandra's bell from the lobby. I rang four or five other bells, and when the electric lock on the inner door clicked, I pushed my way in and walked to the third floor.

Her apartment was at the back of the building. I knocked, and the door opened three inches on a chain, and Sandra's dark eyes peeked at me.

She said: "I'm not seeing reporters."

"You're seeing this one," I bluffed, "either here and now or later at headquarters. If you treat the *Sun* right, we might give you a break when you land in a cell."

She didn't argue. She unhitched the chain and stood back from the door and let me come in. I closed the door part way. I was too busy gasping like a landed fish to be careful with the door.

Besides being a fast worker, Sandra was a fast dresser—or maybe *un*dresser is the word. Her first sentence was: "I've been lying around all evening." I'd have believed her if I hadn't seen her at that farmhouse.

She had taken off the dress I had seen. She had put on a kimono of green silk and mussed up her hair. Flattened cushions on the sofa suggested that she had been relaxing. On a table by the sofa were a sizzling novel and a tall cool drink.

I observed that she must have done some record-breaking hitch-hiking to get back from the farmhouse in such short order.

"Farmhouse?" she repeated, pretending to be puzzled.

I sat down on the sofa. "Farmhouse," I said firmly. "There was the body of Lee Harris, and then there you were on the porch, and after that there wasn't any body."

She thought it over and decided on a story.

"I was riding with Harris. He wanted me to run away with him. He got nasty when I refused, and I had to run away. I was going into that farmhouse to phone for a taxi. When I heard what you were saying over the phone, I ran out to the highway and caught a ride back to town. I was afraid. I was thinking Leo must have killed himself. He threatened to."

"The cops might not think it's that simple."

Sandra said: "Listen, chum—you don't have to tell the cops you saw me. No one else did—not even the farmer."

"Why should I keep still about it?"

"Because," she said very softly, "1 can pay you. I've got some money. Quite a bit—"

I was going to ask whether it was money Harris had embezzled, when Chloe joined the conversation. Curiosity had brought her. She had seen Sandra's name in the lobby, had come up to the third floor and had pushed open the door I had neglected to close. She wore a smile that was chiseled out of solid ice.

Chloe said, with some sarcasm: "Is this

the man you mentioned, Bob?"

I stood up so fast I tipped over the table with the novel and the tall drink. I said: "Honey, I can explain—"

"Explain!" she cried. "Bob Dakin, you ought to be killed—"

A man's voice broke in just then. The voice said: "He will be, sister!"

A man shot out of the bedroom—a big man, who must have played football in his college days. He flew toward me in a low tackle, and when he hit me my legs went right out from under.

We rolled on the floor, and another table tipped over and the only lamp in the room went out. The fellow got a knee into my stomach, and strength flowed out of me like water out of a sieve. I managed to sink my knuckles into his meaty jaw just once.

It was a good punch, but not good enough. A second later something collided with my skull and lights blazed up inside my brain, brighter than the lamp had been, and then blacked out.

A lot of time drifted by before I awoke. I was on the floor in the back of an automobile. After a while some of the ringing went out of my ears and I was able to distinguish other sounds.

I heard the rattle of metal below me where a screw had loosened in the muffler, and the *clop-clop-clop* of a worn tire that had been patched and stuffed with so many shoes it wasn't round any more. Then I knew it was my own flivver.

A rag flavored with gasoline was in my mouth and my hands and feet were tied with strips of cloth. I tried to roll over and discovered there was another person beside me. I turned my head and looked straight into the scared blue eyes of Chloe, and the pale light of street lamps showed that she was bound and gagged, too.

She was wide awake, and all the terror in the world was in her eyes. I tried to say something, but the gag was in the way. I felt like a heel. First I had mixed her up in a messy murder, then I had lied to her about seeing Sandra, then I had—

Well, there was reason to suspect I had rushed her into the last chapter of both our lives, and the ending wouldn't be a happy one.

A MAN was driving the flivver fast. Close behind was another car, the beam of its headlamps flashing through the back window. The man in the front seat of this jaloupi would be the one I had scrimmaged with, I thought, and Sandra would be trailing in the other machine.

There was bound to be a payoff any minute.

I was on my back and something hard and bulky was digging into my shoulder. I squirmed to get away from it, and then I remembered what it was. It was a quart bottle partly full of Scotch whisky, which had helped sustain me through a recent all-night assignment.

It gave me the best idea I ever had in my life.

I managed to push with my feet till I was sitting up, with my shoulders against the door. My fingers were loose enough so that I could get a good grip on the neck of the bottle. There was a strip of solid metal at the bottom of the door frame. I whacked the bottle against the metal as hard as I could.

It broke. The smell of whisky rose about me. There was also a clatter of broken glass. The driver turned around, and my heart sank.

"What's going on back there?" he wanted to know.

I couldn't have told him, even if I had wanted to. I let my head sag, as though I were still unconscious. He kept looking back till the flivver jounced in the ruts at the edge of the concrete and he had to pay

attention to his driving.

The neck of the bottle was still between my fingers, one end of it jagged and razor-sharp. By bending my wrist I could reach some of the strips that bound me. I jabbed the glass at the cloth and it sliced through into my flesh. I could feel blood gushing.

Then we turned off the concrete into a bumpy road—a lonely road, I surmised, much like the one where an this craziness had started—and I was jolted so much that I stabbed myself twice for every time I got in a dig at the cloth.

The flivver stopped. The lights of the car behind grew brighter. The man turned around again, and for the first time I had a good look at his face. I almost passed out with shock. It was Lee Harris!

He saw the recognition in my eyes. He smiled in a way that would send cold chills down the chimney of a blast furnace.

"Don't worry," he said. "No one win ever know that headline the *Sun* ran an hour ago isn't true. The corpse is in the trunk of your car. He was a bum I found in a railroad jungle, who fitted my clothes. A little more burning and he'll fool the fingerprint experts."

Harris held up a can. He began to sprinkle watery stuff over Chloe and me. Only it wasn't water. It smelled like naphtha.

I stole a look at Chloe. Her face told me she had reached the same horrible conclusion I had, regarding what was scheduled to happen. Rage boiled and churned in me like a hell-broth.

Scared as I was, I kept jabbing with the glass and tugging with all my might at the cloth strips, while my mind paraded the truth of the whole business exactly as a motion-picture projector lays the image of a film upon a screen.

Harris' crime, in which Sandra was an accomplice, was as devilish as ever the mind of a man conceived. And yet it was one that had been committed often enough before, as insurance firms can testify.

Lee Harris was going to let another man impersonate his corpse, and let the burial of the victim close the case and end the police search and the D. A.'s investigation. Harris would then be safe from prison. He could take the money and live under another name in another city with his conscienceless girl friend.

He had chosen the bum for size and build, had driven him into that lane on some pretext, or at the point of a pistol, and had killed him and fired the gas-soaked sedan and fled. Sandra had waited nearby in another car.

But the murderers had discovered, belatedly, that Chloe and I were witnesses. They saw me drag the body from the car before it had been disfigured sufficiently for their purpose. Sandra trailed me to the farmhouse and heard me call in the story. She and Harris had stuffed the body into her car and returned to town.

MAYBE Sandra expected me to look her up. At any rate, they were ready when I came. She held my attention while Harris watched his chance to slug me. Chloe's appearance made it tough on herself.

They had carried us down the back stairs, loaded us into the flivver, transferred the charred corpse from Sandra's car. . . .

And it was still an air-tight scheme, if Harris went through with it. Larkin and Brennan already suspected I had stolen the corpse. Finding it in my car would only prove it. As for finding Chloe's body and mine similarly burned—well, they might think it a fantastic coincidence, or they might think it was foul play, but they couldn't prove a thing.

I grunted and braced my arms behind

me. I was able to do that because, while I was thinking about these things, sheer rage had doubled my strength, and I had ripped apart the pieces of cloth at my wrists. I reached toward my feet with the cutting glass.

Sandra stepped to the side of the flivver. She said: "Hurry, Lee. This business has got me jittery."

"In one minute," Harris said, "we'll be on our way. All I've got to do is slug this nosey reporter and his girl and untie them and put them in the front seat. Then a match—"

He leaned toward me, holding a revolver by the barrel, chopping its butt downward where my head had been.

It was his mistake. The gun swished through empty air. Harris lurched, and my fist got his nose, flattening it like a nose of putty. It did me good to feel the bone crunch ahead of my knuckles, to feel his blood instead of my own spurting over my fingers, to hear him howl.

I'd managed to kick the tangle of torn linen strips away from my ankles and pull the gag out of my mouth. I went over the back of the seat after him. I closed both his eyes, and it was a cinch he'd never see out of one of them again. I got him on the point of the chin, and his skull went hard against the horn button and the horn let out a squawk that blotted out some of Sandra's profane screeching.

Harris' gun exploded just before he passed out. The bullet scraped my arm. I twisted the weapon out of his loosening fingers and drew a deep breath of relief.

That deep breath came close to scorching my lungs. Right in front of my nose, suddenly, was a sheet of flame where the powder flash had ignited the naphtha. It came from the cushions and it caught a part of my sleeve, and I knew it would fill all the car in another moment.

It was like diving into a furnace, bending down for Chloe. I got the door open and leaped out with her. I threw her to the grass and we rolled over and over like a pair of wrestlers. I tore off her dress, which had started to blaze, and wrapped her in my coat, after I had ripped off the burning sleeve.

She wasn't even singed. I made certain as I knelt over her in the light of the flaming inferno that was making a crisp, stinking horror of Lee Harris' corpse—the real one, this time. I untied her and held her close and felt like a human being again.

Chloe called my attention to Sandra. The dancing girl had climbed into her sleek roadster and was trying to turn it around. I made the running board in a flying leap, ducking the wrench she swung on me.

Socking women is something I don't approve of as regular practice, but there are times when all rules should be suspended. I socked Sandra hard. She folded up like a pricked balloon.

There was a hundred thousand dollars in a brief case. We found it under the rear deck, where we locked Sandra for safe keeping before we went hunting another telephone.

When I put my call through, Bill Riley was raving. He screamed: "This time you're really fired! Larkin is going to send you to prison for life, and I'm for it. You've made the *Sun* a laughing stock. Whoever heard of a murder without a corpse? That crazy headline, HARRIS MURDERED—"

"Call it a misprint," I suggested. "Make it read HARRIS MURDERER. Then set these words to music—"

I gave him everything, not forgetting the fact that I was wounded, and hung up in the middle of his apology. I knew I had earned a bonus, a reward, a raise and a long vacation on account of that bullet

wound. A doctor friend of mine could be coaxed to say it was serious.

I said: “Chloe, honey, did you ever consider marrying a newspaperman?”

“After what I’ve been through,” she said, “I guess I could stand anything.”

Vacation, did I say? It was a honeymoon.