Ten Detective Aces, October, 1943

Postscript to Mein Kampf

By William Rough

Because Sam knew how Hitler did it, Sam knew how to outfox the smaller fry crooks.

IT WAS the war and Axis propaganda techniques that put salt on the tail of an idea that had been running around in Sam Pale's head for years.

Sam heard a lot of laughs when it got out that he was writing a book on how magicians, dictators, and slick jewel thieves operate in the same way. The laughs weren't to his face, though, because his employer, Surety & Indemnity, held a list of Investigator Sam's arrests and recoveries, long as your arm.

"Mebbe you got something," said Kelsey, Sam's partner, "but me, I don't see no tie-up between pullin' rabbits outta hats, Heil Hitler, and a smoothie like Archie Banes."

Sam said, "The trouble is you or nobody else *does* see it. If they did, we wouldn't get sucked in." He was plain as his name, a baldish, fiftyish little man who loved good cigars.

Kelsey shrugged. "I'm from Missouri."

"That's it. You think you should be *able* to see it. But you only see what a magician or cagy diplomat or crook *wants* you to see. He shows you one hand, all fair and square, but it's the other hand does the dirt. I wrote three chapters on it."

Kelsey was skeptical. "If you can't *see* it, how c'n you fight it?"

"I'm trying to figure that for my last chapter," Sam said.

"Mebbe you'll get an idea at the Winston shindig Saturday night," Kelsey said. "Archie came in from Bermuda on the same boat as them refugees they're throwing the party for. He'll have his eyes on the Broglio stone, but the place'll be so lousy with cops, it'll *take* a magician to lift anything."

Sam Pale said, "Archie's a magician."

SAM didn't feel better because the Winston mansion was lousy with cops Saturday night. He knew that well-trained people who concentrate, grasp suggestions quickly, and reason logically from supposed causes to consequences are suckers for a magician.

With that attitude and the fact that Surety & Indemnity had taken over the Broglio diamond, together with a dozen lesser stones which these wealthy refugees would be wearing, there was no excuse for Sam's being late Saturday night. Just the same, he was.

After shaving, he got to reading a special edition of a sociological journal on morale and Axis propaganda methods. He found four or five swell paragraphs concerning the diversion, the distraction, and the relaxation of attention which he rewrote for his own book.

He was a good hour and a half late when Kelsey's freckled nose came towards him through glittering gowns, gleaming shirtfronts, and the welter of conversation in French, German, Spanish, Hungarian, and Greek.

"What happened to you?" Kelsey said.

"There's enough ice here tonight to float another war."

"Is Archie—"

"He ain't done nothing all night. Relax."

Sam stirred. "That's just what he wants us to do."

"Nuts!"

"Don't he make off like he ain't doing nothing?"

"He *ain't* doing nothing!" Kelsey snapped.

"Hitler made off like he wasn't doing nothing, too. You know—"

"Everything's under control, Sammy."

"—what his next move'll be?" Sam persisted.

"I'll bite."

"He'll divert you," Sam said. "He'll make something innocent happen. And all the time, he'll be doing something else."

Kelsey started to grin, stopped. His eyes cruised the ballroom. His jaw dropped. "Hey, where'd he get to?"

Sam Pale yelped. "He diverted you already! Now he scrammed! Quick—what'd he do?"

Kelsey had trouble with his voice. "H-he gimme the Zenke pendant. It come off the dame's neck when Archie was dancin' with her. But I seen it with my own eyes, come off. And Archie marched right over to me with it. He couldn't've—"

"We got it on the books for fifty G's," Sam said thinly. "You figured he'd go for the Broglio stone, so he plays this one."

The emerald-cut diamond was cinnamon brown, weighing twenty-eight carats.

"See, the catch is busted legitimate," Kelsey said.

Sam threw a jeweler's glass into his eye as if it were a shot of whisky. His voice went bitter. "It's a fakeroo, Kelsey. Archie had it made with a busted catch so's it'd look like there was a real reason for it falling off the dame's neck. He showed you one hand, all fair and square, and the other hand did the dirt. He should work for Hitler!"

Kelsey's freckles were white. "We know his address, Sam."

Sam snorted. "And he knows we know it! He won't even take that diamond home."

"But we gotta try, Sam! We *gotta!"*

ARCHIE BANES was medium-sized, soft-spoken, and blond. He was relaxed in a green silk dressing gown when he opened the door. Luxurious smoke from a golden panatela in Archie's even teeth reminded Sam that he hadn't had a smoke for hours.

"Come in, Sam," Archie murmured. "Missed you tonight."

"And Kelsey missed *you,"* Sam said.

Archie Banes' twinkling eyes matched his green dressing gown. "Is he covering the back, Sam?"

Sam wagged his head, groped for a cigar, realized he hadn't transferred any to his tuxedo. "I came alone—to make a deal, maybe."

"I'll buy a drink," Archie said, promptly.

"Straight corn," Sam said. He rubbed his chin, realizing that Archie was *anticipating* every move. Archie *wanted* to make a deal. Archie probably knew that prices had dropped with the influx of refugee jewels and figured he could do just as well dickering with the insurance company. And that could mean that Archie had brought the stolen diamond home with him after all.

"Here's luck," Sam said.

"Are we talking cash, Sam?" Archie murmured.

"We-ell . . ." Sam looked at the golden cigar in Archie's mouth. "You got the diamond here, Archie?"

Archie Banes sighed. “Sam, I’m a big boy, remember? If I tell you for sure it’s here, all you do is go for the law and upset the place. Now, would I do that?”

“Not you, Archie,” Sam said. “But the slick way you’re talking makes me think you *do* have it here.” Sam watched Archie’s lips smile very carefully without any cooperation from Archie’s green eyes.

“Of course,” Sam added, “you got it hid where no cop would think of looking. And that would be right under my nose, wouldn’t it?”

“Let’s not play cops and robbers, Sam,” Archie said. “Here, have a cigar.”

Archie casually handed a humidor, full of golden panatelas, to Sam Pale.

Sam passed the humidor under his nose. “Wish 1 could afford these.” He looked at Archie. Archie’s smile was fixed. There was electricity in the air.

“Well, well,” Sam said. “When a guy starts figuring something’s right under his nose, the best way to divert him would be to put it even *closer* under his nose, wouldn’t it, Archie?”

Archie Banes didn’t move a muscle. His, “I don’t get you, Sam,” was too calm.

“This,” Sam said. He deliberately dropped the humidor. Cigars spilled out. And an emerald-cut cinnamon brown diamond.

“All right, Sam!” Archie Banes’ hand bulged under his green silk dressing gown. Archie was cold, concentrated. He grasped the situation instantly. Sam almost could feel Archie’s brain clicking logically.

“Lucky I keep remembering you’re a magician, Archie.” Sam bent towards the diamond.

“Easy, Sam!”

“Oh, I know you can’t let me get away with it, Archie.” Sam handed over the pendant.

“Turn around, Sam!”

Kelsey brought Sam to. Sam said, “Boy, look at the cigars! Lucky I made you hang back, Kelsey. You would’ve got clipped, too.”

Kelsey groaned. “What in hell happened?”

Sam touched his head, winced. “I got the last chapter of my book,” he said.

Kelsey groaned again. “That sock got you talking batty. I’m gonna bottle the town. Railroads, airports, ferry slips—”

“Forget it,” Sam said. “Nobody’s catching Archie. Besides, it wouldn’t do no good. He only got that fakeroo now.”

Kelsey didn’t say anything. It sank in. Kelsey yelped, “What?”

“I told you 1 got the last chapter of my book—how to fight this magic Hitler stuff,” Sam said. He groped in a pocket, pulled out an emerald-cut, cinnamon brown diamond. “This is the McCoy,” he said.

Kelsey’s freckles gyrated. “Cripes! How—”

“I vice-versa’ed him,” Sam grinned. “He figured he was on his toes, but I showed him one hand, all fair and square, while the other did the dirt. Like I’m gonna write in my book, Kelsey, this magic works both ways. All we gotta do is practice up.

“Have one of these slick cigars, Kelsey?”