

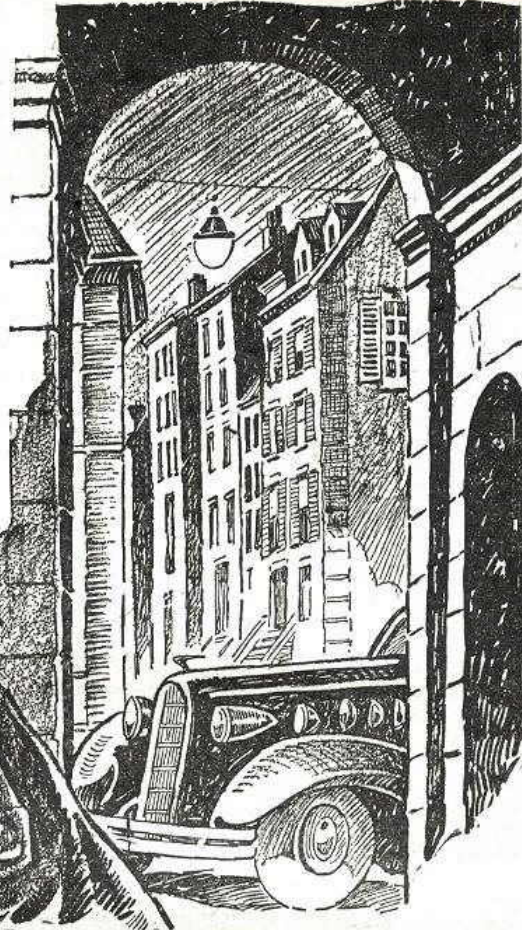
Blood in the Rain

By EDWARD S. SULLIVAN

Secret Service Captain Farrell was a mild little man until the counterfeiters killed his friend—after that he was a tornado!



Farrell looked at the contact man in the street. The machine-gunner had done his ghastly work well



CAPTAIN FARRELL drew back in the shelter of the doorway as the rain beat a tattoo on his hat-brim. It was one of the wickedest nights he'd ever seen.

No one who chanced to notice the moon-faced, mild-appearing little man huddling in the rain-swept doorway would have guessed that he was the chief of the San Francisco Bureau, United States Secret Service. Most of those outside the law who knew what lay behind that mild and scholarly exterior were safely stowed away in McNeil Island or Alcatraz. A few who had underestimated Captain Farrell's abilities were even more safely stowed away under six feet of earth.

Despite the pressing fact that he was soaked to the skin, the little Secret Service chief felt a warm inner glow and smiled

grimly as he peered down the street through his horn-rimmed glasses.

"All set," he muttered to himself, "if we're not flooded out before he shows up!"

This rainy night, if all went well, was to see the culmination of months of effort—the bagging of the gang that had been flooding San Francisco and Los Angeles with counterfeit Federal Reserve notes in such staggering numbers that the Secretary of the Treasury had personally called Captain Farrell on the telephone and ordered him to drop all other matters in favor of tracking down the money plant.

So expertly had the fake money been printed, and so adroitly had it been passed, that not a single arrest had been made—until today.

A bartender, warned by the Federal men, had challenged a twenty-dollar bill presented by a seedy little stranger. He summoned the policeman on the beat. A frisk of the stranger uncovered three other twenties in his pockets—each of them a perfect specimen, *but all with the same serial number*. The master counterfeiters, with elaborate plates but apparently a small printing press, had not troubled to print different numbers on their bills.

That seedy stranger, who gave the name of George Williams, now sat in a Ford coupe parked across the street from the doorway where Captain Farrell stood in the rain.

UNDER pressure, he had cracked and sung to high heaven—with what few lyrics he had to sing. Every Monday night, he said, he waited on the corner of Washington and Stockton Streets until a man appeared—a man whose name he did not know—and handed him a sheaf of the fake bills, for which Williams paid in good cash, at seventy-five per cent of the face value of the queer. The man had given

Williams detailed instructions for the safe passing of the money, which indicated to Captain Farrell that this "middle-man" was high in the councils of the counterfeiters.

"So help me," Williams whined, "he told me he'd kill me if I ever tried to follow him."

He was able to add only that the man had once let slip a hint that the fake money was manufactured in San Francisco.

On the promise of leniency, Williams agreed to lead the Federal operatives to the contact man.

The rain fell in sheets, borne before gusts of wind. The face of Williams, behind the wheel of the Ford, was a white blur.

Half a block behind him, a black sedan was parked, with Secret Service Agent Harry Murton crouched in the shadows of the back seat. Agent Matt Brophy sat in a fast coupe, midway down the next block. The Federal trap was set, with the two operatives ready to follow the contact man, at a signal from the captain.

Farrell took off his glasses and wiped them carefully with his handkerchief. His blue eyes blinked owlishly, like those of a baby. Only a few cars moved along the rainy street, their lights making tall reflections on the glistening pavement.

The captain jammed his glasses hastily on his nose and stiffened to attention as a green sedan swung out of the dark side street. There were two men in the front seat, and the rear was a pit of blackness. Cruising slowly, the driver craned his neck, looking at Williams, who sat alone in the Ford.

While Farrell huddled farther back into his dark niche, the car slowed, and the man sitting in the right-hand seat opened the door and jumped out. The car moved slowly on.

Captain Farrell noted the license number of the green sedan—7J7100.

Frowning, he turned his attention to the man.

The contact man's face was invisible as he stepped to the running board of the Ford. He wore a black overcoat and a green hat, pulled low. Leaning against the car, he put his head in the window and spoke to Williams.

The Secret Service chief looked up the street after the sedan. As he expected, the driver was making a U-turn at the next corner. He was coming back, then, to pick up the contact man.

Farrell held his breath as the big green car came slowly back. Now it was opposite the car where Harry Murton was hidden. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the contact man, still with his head in the window of the Ford.

The big sedan slowed to a crawl. Farrell's hand flew to his shoulder holster with swift premonition.

The night erupted into thunder. Orange flame spurted from the rear window of the sedan. Murton's car rocked like a boat as the tommy-gun raked it. The gunmen's car roared away with the throttle wide open. The contact man leaped from the Ford and ran to the center of the street.

Farrell dropped to one knee and blasted at the car with his automatic. But the machine-gunner had no eyes for him. The orange-spurting muzzle swung around, and the contact man rose to his toes, clutching at his chest. His hat sailed off like a clay pigeon.

Williams screamed once, wildly, above the clatter of the tommy-gun, then the glass of the Ford crashed, and bullets thudded into metal.

FARRELL emptied his gun at the rear window of the car. He saw the machine-gunner lurch forward in the seat. The rattle of the gun stopped. Tires screamed as the sedan rocketed around the

corner at fifty miles an hour.

The Federal man slipped a new clip into his gun as he ran toward the side street. Headlights flashed in his eyes, a car skidded to a stop. He leaped to the running board and shouted to Agent Matt Brophy. "After them!"

They roared up the street in second gear, following the diminishing taillights of the gun car.

Farrell, clinging to the door frame with one hand, whipped off his glasses and crammed them in his pocket. The rain pelted his face like hail.

The green sedan was two blocks ahead of them. There was power under the short hood of Brophy's coupe. With a hissing intake of breath, the captain flattened himself against the car as the brakes shrilled. A black hulk loomed directly in front of them.

The car veered crazily, slammed against the curb, knocking a spout of water from the rain-filled gutter. It lurched once, and the motor died. The black truck that had blocked their path lumbered on, picking up speed. Lightless, it was a monster in the dark and rain. The driver shouted unintelligibly.

When Farrell, weak at the pit of his stomach, but still hanging to the door frame, looked up the street, the red taillights were gone.

Red-headed Matt Brophy was cursing wildly.

"No lights! He did it on purpose. Let's—"

"He's gone," Farrell clipped, jerking the door open and climbing in beside the agent. "Turn around."

In silence, they sped back to the scene of the shooting.

A small crowd was gathered in the street. In the distance, police sirens wailed. Ignoring the crowd near the Ford, Brophy drove up to Harry Murton's sedan. The T-

men got out and peered into the bullet-torn car. Farrell's mouth was set. He opened the rear door.

Harry Murton, his automatic in his hand, was sprawled awkwardly against the farther door. His head was thrown back, his mouth gaped open. His chin and throat were shot away. Another mass of blood gleamed on his shirt-front.

"Dead."

Farrell closed the door, turned to Brophy, who was cursing in a lurid stream. The captain looked steadily at the red-headed operative. No words were necessary, and Farrell was not given to words. Murton had been in the service far ten years—five of them under Captain Farrell.

Grimly, then, the two Secret Service men slogged through the rain to the other car—the Ford in which Williams had been sitting. A police car whirled up as they approached, its red spotlight throwing a weird glare on the wet pavement. They recognized Inspector Bill Hanley, a hulk of a man in a raincoat. Farrell told him in a few clipped sentences what had happened, gave him the license number of the gun car. Then they turned to the carnage in the street.

The machine-gunner had done his ghastly work well. Both Williams and the contact man were dead. Williams hung with his arms and shoulders out of the car window, his head a sadden mass of blood and brains and bits of bone. The other man, the middle-man of the counterfeiters, lay where he had fallen in the street. The bullets had cut him almost in half.

Hanley threw the light of an electric torch on the dead man.

"I know him," he announced. "He goes by the name of Frank Viano. No record on the Coast. Came here a couple of months ago from New York. Supposed to be a racketeer. We gave him a going-over when

he landed."

Farrell listened absently as the big inspector rumbled on. Killing, after all, was police business—but the killing of a Secret Service agent was Uncle Sam's. The captain took off his glasses and wiped them, blinking with his weak eyes at the car up the street, where Harry Murton lay dead.

"We'll put out the dragnet for that car," Hanley said, "though it was probably stolen and is abandoned by now. We—"

"All right," the captain said. "I'll see you at your office in the morning. I'm going to look up a couple of angles. Come on, Matt."

BROPHY silently followed his chief to the corner drug store, where the round-faced captain edged into a telephone booth. He emerged shortly.

"I traced the license number of that car," he said quietly, "though it may not mean anything. Now I want you to go back and work with Hanley, watch what he turns up and meet me at the office in a couple of hours."

"Right." Brophy trotted away. Farrell looked after him unseeingly.

Farrell had sent the red-headed young operative away deliberately. One of his young assistants had already been slaughtered tonight, and he meant to sacrifice no one else needlessly. The avenging of Murton he considered a personal job.

His own life didn't matter, he told himself, for he was an aging man, a lone man and had already had more than his share of luck in dodging bullets. Pulling himself together, he went back into the phone booth—to call Harry Murton's young wife.

Half an hour later, a cab splashed through the rain, deposited Captain Farrell in front of a brick apartment house on

Irving Street, out near the ocean beach. Telling the driver to wait, Farrell stepped into the dim-lighted lobby and consulted the rows of names opposite the bells.

G. E. Berger, Apartment Three.

He compared the name with the one he had scribbled in his notebook, back in the phone booth. Nodding, he took a key-ring from his pocket, quickly found a key that fitted the apartment house door.

As he mounted the dark stairs, he slipped the automatic from his shoulder holster into his overcoat pocket. His mind raced furiously, in contrast to his slow steps. This man Berger was the registered owner of the green sedan that had dealt death to Harry Murton. Usually, stolen cars or stolen plates were used by killers for their jobs, and to trace the owner was futile.

But in this case, Farrell reasoned, how could the gunman have known in advance there was to be a killing? Certainly, if the men in the car had spotted the Secret Service agents or scented a trap when they first rounded the corner, they would have sped on. They would not have sacrificed their own man, Viano, needlessly.

AS FARRELL reconstructed the shootings, all had been well when Viano alighted from the car to make his delivery. Cruising back to pick him up, the driver and the gunman had spotted Murton in his parked car. After killing him, with Farrell himself opening fire on them, they dared not stop to pick up Viano and had blasted him down to shut his mouth.

The very fact that they had shot Murton and had seen fit to silence Viano, Farrell concluded, indicated that the men in the car were near the center of the counterfeit ring—if not the actual center themselves.

This car was one chance in a million—

Farrell walked down the corridor with catlike tread and stopped beside the door of Apartment Three. No sound from inside. Slipping the safety catch of his automatic, the captain flattened himself against the wall and touched a bell button with his left hand.

Silence was succeeded by hurried footsteps. The door opened a crack. Farrell kicked out with one short leg, and the door flew wide open.

A shrill scream greeted him. Farrell lowered his gun and hesitated when he saw that a gray-haired woman was the only occupant of the short hallway. She was in nightdress. She crouched against the wall, the back of her hand over her mouth.

Instinct, born of long experience, told Farrell to put his gun in his pocket. He took off his hat.

“Pardon me. Mr. Berger—”

Quickly he flipped back his coat and showed his gold badge as the woman drew her breath to scream again.

“What is it, Martha?” came a man’s voice from inside.

Heads were popping out of other doorways. Farrell stepped inside and pulled the door shut.

“Secret Service. Pardon my abrupt entrance. Just a routine matter. I’d like to see Mr. Berger.”

Mutely, with scared eyes, the woman led him down the hall, opened a door. Farrell crowded after her, his hand tensing involuntarily on the gun. In the brightly lighted room, an old man lay in bed, in a dressing gown.

“George, this is an officer of some kind,” the woman told him. “He wants—”

“You have a Studebaker sedan, Mr. Berger,” the Secret Service agent stated. “Where is that car now?”

“My car? Why, it’s in the garage.”

“What garage?”

“Homan’s garage—the public garage, around the corner on Twenty-Ninth Avenue. Where I always keep it.”

“George has been bedridden for a week,” the woman offered. “He hasn’t had the car out.”

“I see,” nodded the round-faced little agent, with a final glance around the bedroom. “Well, I’m sorry to have troubled you. Good night.”

WHEELING, he scurried out of the apartment while the aged man and his wife stared after him open-mouthed. With a word to the cab driver to wait, Captain Farrell walked swiftly around the corner.

A red and blue neon sign loomed over a big brick building—

HOMAN’S GARAGE
STORAGE - REPAIRS

The only sign of life as Farrell stepped into the wide driveway was a dim light, far back among the rows of cars. He wended his way toward it.

A mechanic in brown overalls, bending over a motor and holding a drop-light, looked up sharply as Farrell coughed discreetly.

“This car that Mr. George Berger keeps here,” the G-man said without preliminary. “Where is it?”

“Oh, the Stude sedan? That was stolen an hour ago,” the mechanic replied, without questioning the little man’s right to ask.

“Stolen? From here?” Farrell’s eyebrows lifted in surprise.

“Yeah—Shorty and I were here alone. The car was up front. First thing we knew, we heard it start up, and when we ran out, it was gone. We told the cops about it. Are you a cop?”

The Federal man ignored the question. “Didn’t you tell Mr. Berger?”

“We didn’t know his address. We told Otto.”

“Who’s Otto?”

“Otto Homan. He owns the joint.”

“Where does he live?”

“Yorkshire Hotel.”

The captain took off his glasses and squinted around the dark garage. Then he nodded wearily.

“Okay. Thanks.”

He whistled tunelessly to himself as he plodded toward the entrance. Apparently he’d reached a dead end—as he had feared. He had followed the lead of the license number on one chance in a million that it would pan out.

Farrell stopped, and his eyes narrowed. Parked near the entrance was a huge black truck. He thought of the truck that had loomed in the path of Brophy’s car as they chased the gunmen.

He touched the black snout of the truck. It was warm. He looked speculatively up at it, then shrugged and turned again to the driveway, where rain swept in gusts, rainbowed by the neon light. Emerging with his head down, he almost collided with a woman.

“Oh, pardon me,” she gasped, breathless. “I was in a hurry. Has Frank come back yet?”

The Secret Service man blinked and looked at her. She was a young girl with flashing black eyes. Dark hair tumbled wildly over her forehead. She was hatless. She had pulled her fur coat over her head against the rain. She gasped again when she saw Farrell’s face in the neon light.

“Oh, I thought you were—”

“Whom were you looking for?” asked the Federal man mildly. “Frank Viano?”

“Yes,” she nodded eagerly. “Is he back?”

“He won’t be back. He’s dead. They’ve killed him.”

The girl stifled a scream. Farrell

grabbed her arm as she sagged against him.

"You'd better come with me. I have a cab around the corner."

Dumbly, she let him pilot her up the street. Her coat fell back. Rain pelted on her face. The moon-faced little man watched her closely.

"Who killed him?" she managed finally.

"Those fellows." Farrell indicated the garage with a jerk of his head. "Back there."

"You mean—Otto and John and—But who are you?"

There was quick suspicion in her voice.

"Who are you?" the Federal man countered, still urging her along the street. They were almost at the corner.

"I'm—I was his wife!"

"Oh." Farrell considered a moment. "I'm no friend of theirs. They're out to get me. I want to get them first. Where are they now? In the room over the garage?"

He was guessing in the dark—there is always a room over a garage.

"No. They're at the plant."

The Federal man tensed—the fake money plant!

"The plant?"

"Yes—oh, I told him! I knew they—"

Abruptly, the girl was plucked from Farrell's arm as though a giant had grabbed her away. Farrell ducked instinctively. There was a crash of sound above the rain, and then a stabbing flash of flame.

THEN Farrell's gun was out and spitting lead at the unlighted car that had slipped up to the curb behind them. He heard the windshield crash. He saw the white face of the garage mechanic behind the wheel. Then a smear of black appeared, magically, on the white face.

The gunfire ceased. The car veered slowly, climbed the curb, and crashed into a pole. .

Farrell bent over the dark-haired girl, who had slumped to the pavement. Her eyes were closed. A thin, dark trickle of blood came from the corner of her mouth. Raindrops splattered on her face. He leaned close to her ear.

"The plant. Where is it?"

The black eyelids fluttered but did not open. Farrell waited tensely, unbreathing. The bloody lips opened.

"Forty-four . . . twenty . . . Santiago . . . look out . . ."

She shuddered. Foam flecked her lips. Farrell slipped his hand under the fur coat. The girl's left breast was torn away. She was dead.

The little man straightened like a jack-in-the-box and sprinted around the corner. He flung himself into the cab.

"Say," the driver began, "I heard shots. I don't like—"

"Forty-four-twenty Santiago Street, and make it fast," the captain clipped.

The driver started to answer, but something he saw in those blue eyes stopped him. He hunched over the wheel and they darted from the curb.

Five minutes driving through rain and blackness brought them to the Santiago Street address. It was a stucco bungalow, standing alone in a block of sand dunes. The ocean roared half a mile away, and the wind, unhampered, swept over the dunes like great sighing wings.

Farrell leaped from the cab and dismissed the driver. He stood alone before the dark house, rain driving at him in waves. When a full minute passed without any sound or light from the house, Farrell relaxed his grip on the heavy automatic in his pocket. Apparently the roar of the storm had drowned out the noise of the taxicab.

Slowly, he paced around the house,

stooping low and ploughing ankle-deep through the wet sand. At the rear of the bungalow, he cocked his ears as a faint clatter was borne to him above the wail of the wind. He took a step toward the house, and the clatter grew louder.

ANOTHER step brought him flat against the rear wall. A square window on the basement level loomed beside him. Peering close, he saw pinpoints of gold in the black square. He frowned. Then the explanation came to him. The window was painted black on the inside. The pin-points of gold were little scratches in the paint, where light gleamed through. The basement, then, was brightly lighted.

Farrell smiled grimly. The clatter he had instantly identified as the noise of a printing press. Now he heard the murmur of men's voices. Gripping the gun in his pocket, he walked to the front of the house. He hesitated as he noted the dark pillar of a police call box on the corner. Then he shook his head resolutely.

"Too many young men," he muttered to himself as he cat-stepped to the front door. "Me, I'm an old hand."

A Yale lock greeted him, but the door was warped by the punishing sea winds. Farrell drew a thin sliver of steel from an inner pocket, slipped it into the crack. He eased the door partly open, and ducked inside. Gently, he closed it, shutting out the noise of the wind and rain.

He held his breath for a moment. The clatter of the press and voices of men continued unabated. They had not heard. The upper rooms were dark, as far as Farrell could see. A dim glow came from an open door at the far end of the hall—evidently the stairway to the basement.

Gun in hand, cat-footed, the Federal man prowled swiftly through the house. The rooms were empty. On the kitchen

table were liquor glasses and cigar butts. Farrell moved smoothly toward the stairs, barely lifting his feet.

He was a far different Farrell now from the mild-faced man who had stood in the rain a few hours before. His eyes were narrowed to blue steel slits behind the bulbous glasses. Shoulders hunched, he moved with the swift sureness of a hunting cat or a leopard. In a brief second he was at the bottom of the stairs and covering the room with his gun while he blinked in the bright light.

SIX men were in the basement room. Their backs were turned. They were bending over the press, which had ceased its clatter momentarily. The Secret Service man cleared his throat politely. The six men whirled.

"I wouldn't move," Farrell snapped. "You're covered."

They stared at the little man in deathly silence, raising their hands slowly. There were two tan men in overalls smeared with grease.

There was a short, dark man, unshaven, in a black suit. Two young men with blond mustaches quivered visibly and raised their hands the highest. There was a tall, fat man, red-faced whose eyes started from his head as his lips moved wordlessly.

"I said, I wouldn't move," Farrell repeated. "If you move, I'll have to shoot you."

"Stop! Don't!" the fat man screeched. "Don't shoot me. I'm not one of them. I'm Otto Homan. I own a big garage."

"Yes," Farrell clipped, "a garage where the gang borrows its cars, and you report them stolen if they get in trouble."

"I gave them Berger's car," the fat man blubbered, "but I didn't have anything to do with the killing, I swear to God. It was this man—"

In his excitement, Homan turned half around and pointed a shaking finger at the dark, unshaved man.

“Why, you—”

The dark man darted his hand under his coat. Farrell’s pistol crashed as the two blond men dove for their guns. Homan, who had lurched into Farrell’s line of fire, screamed shrilly and fell against the wall.

The captain’s gun barked again, just as the dark man’s automatic spat fire. The room crashed to ear-splitting roars. In Farrell’s hand, the heavy .45 leaped again and again. The little Farrell stood stiff-legged, dodging not an inch.

The dark killer flung his hands over his head, spun around like a top and crashed to the floor, blood welling from his face. One of the blond men, winged in the shoulder, collapsed on top of the fat body

of Homan. The other young gunman flung his revolver away and cringed against the wall.

Throughout, the two men in overalls had stood immobile, their hands above their heads. A cigarette still dangled from the mouth of one of them.

“I told them not to move,” Farrell said sadly.

“You’re the boss,” said one of the overalled men. “What you say goes.”

The prisoners obeyed stolidly as Farrell herded them upstairs. He covered them with the automatic while he got Matt Brophy on the phone. He was the mild-mannered, moon-faced little man again.

“I’m sorry I kept you up, Matt,” he said. “You can go now. The case is cleaned up. Yes, I had a little trouble. I warned them, but they started shooting.”