

Dan E. L. Patch

The Hour Struck



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The Hour Struck

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The Hour Struck

By Dan E. L. Patch
CHIEF OF POLICE, YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

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Contents

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About The Lutheran Library

Contents

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

Foreword

1. Satan's Paradise
2. The Devil's Misfit
3. Antiquated Morals
4. The Pleasures Of Sin
5. Virtually An Outcast
6. A Night Rider
7. Organized Disorder
8. Behind The Black Mask
9. The Cult Murder Mystery
10. The Tightening Net
11. The Putridness Of Evil
12. A Vital Message
13. Facing A Difficult Situation
14. A Step In Vain
15. The Malefic Grapevine
16. Self-Created Circumstances
17. A Revelation
18. The Treacherous Trap
19. Seasoned In Sin
20. Lost To Disappointment
21. The Price Of A Drink
22. The Harvest Of The Unjust
23. A Council Of War
24. The Hounds Of Justice
25. A Time Of Testing

26. A Foregone Conclusion

27. A Tangled Web

28. The Hollow Tree

29. Idle Words Are Hard To Explain

30. The Clock Ticks On

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking spiritual truth.

DAN E. L. PATCH began his public service as a patrolman in the Police Department of the City of Highland Park. Within fifteen years, personal qualifications brought him through the various ranks to the position of Chief of Police. A quarter of a century of faithful service gave a feeling of joy and explicit confidence to all citizens who respected the law and who liked to see it administered without fear or favor. Professional competence was attested by the honor conferred by the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police when he was made their President for the years 1941-42. In later years he served as Chief of Police of Ypsilanti, Michigan.

By J. McGill Reynar, *Secretary of The Christian Business Men's Committee of Detroit.*

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Foreword

THIS NARRATIVE aims to be a revelation of human nature. It was not written to describe specific individuals but rather to portray the weakness of sinful flesh. The characters were created and clothed with the garments of human traits characteristic of our times. Entirely fictitious, they portray no actual person or persons living or dead. Should they appear to resemble characters in real life, it is a matter purely coincidental for which the author is sincere in offering apologies.

The hero depicts the victim of “fifth column police politics” prevalent in far too many communities today. The heroine, facing unavoidable circumstances, has no alternative but to fight for the right to protect the good name of those whom she loves.

The villains are numerous and represent a system of corrupt politics motivated by selfishness, greed and sin in the hearts of men. The characters portray traits of human nature which identify the *modus operandi* of a personality.

DAN E. L. PATCH

1. Satan's Paradise

CRIME! He could feel its relentless unseen forces, sinister, insidious, evil, seeking to engulf him. He knew its possibilities. His mind visualized it—a giant reaching out to seize and destroy character! His character—a victim of this giant! Such was the fact. Crime! Ever present! What a fiendish monster! Nobody knew it better than John Whepley.

It was fitting that the Chief of Police should know crime. Thirty years as a police officer matching wits with the underworld had been an education. Those hard, cruel years had taught him much. He saw crime as it is: a tenacious parasite, living, thriving, multiplying; saw it shorn of sensation and glamor, a devastating curse gnawing at the very Vitals of civilization. The evidence was everywhere. He saw it in the sheep's clothing of the crafty politician bartering for tainted votes; saw it take shape, thrive and grow unhampered in the masses under the guise of organized labor; saw it in unscrupulous subordinates coveting his job and the right to live; saw it in the modern Pharisee serving the god of self-righteousness. Truly there was no escape. It was everywhere!

A shadow darkened the doorway of his office. He glanced up to discover a young lady, her presence unannounced. The light of twenty carefree summers shone in her hazel eyes. Her beauty was a beauty of character rather than feminine charm. She was the type of girl that commands respect, the type of young woman that men turn to admire. Her military bearing revealed her self-confidence. That there was a mutual understanding between them was evident.

Her radiant smile took the worried look from the Chief's eyes.

"You look overtired tonight, Daddy," she said, coming to his side to throw an arm about his shoulder.

"Just your imagination." He feigned the reply unassumingly, and busied himself with the papers on his desk.

She bent and kissed his troubled brow. "Mother wants me to make a purchase at the drugstore. Do you mind if I take a moment?"

“Don’t be long, honey,” he replied, in response to the pat she gave him on the cheek.

“I’ll be back in a jiffy. The car is parked in front. I’ll meet you there,” she said, disappearing through the side entrance.

He arose and stood looking out the window as she maneuvered through the traffic to the opposite curb. A young military officer met her. Together they joined the crowd and disappeared. Chief Whepley continued to watch the milling throng as the street lights came on. The familiar figure in the red suit and the young marine returned to his view and again were lost from sight.

He returned to his desk and sat thinking in the twilight. He would go home in a few minutes. Lately he had formed the habit of sitting in his office without snapping on the light. Thoughts seemed to come clearer when he was alone. It kept the intruders away, those whose only purpose for visiting his office was to waste his time with political gossip. He knew their tactics. He was tired; he had no time to listen to propaganda. There was nothing constructive in it. It always meant trouble for someone. He swung around in his office chair and faced the window.

“The battle is not yours, but God’s,” he said, half aloud, looking beyond the crowd in the street.

He let his mind return to previous thoughts. He often found himself meditating upon this verse of Scripture. It brought comfort and consolation in the trials that faced him as a police chief. Crime and its problems were always confronting him—problems for which he had no cure. It is not the prerogative of man to stay the motivating power behind the crime. Law does not change human nature, and his only weapon was law. He knew why success eluded him, why the leaven of crime multiplied, why he was helpless.

A smile of sympathetic understanding softened his features. There was no malice; only pity for those lacking the knowledge of his problems. He laughed at the ridicule he must face because of his philosophy. The world did not believe him—the world that hangs in grim determination upon the bootstraps of self-sufficiency and fails to see the quagmire of sin and crime in which it is sinking.

“The battle is not yours, but God’s.” He dared hope. His foundation was secure; come what may, he would not relinquish the thought that right was above might!

The bu-r—r—r-r of the telephone interrupted his meditation. Hastily he searched the street for the girl in red. Reluctantly he turned and picked up the receiver. The world was a madhouse.

“What’s wrong now?” he debated, hesitating to answer.

“Is that you, Chief?” the excited voice of Tom MacCallister, proprietor of the Paradise Tavern, greeted him. “Zeke Pool’s on a rampage.”

“Again?”

“Yes, he’s vicious. Get him out of here. Hurry, before we have a murder!”

Chief Whepley pleaded for particulars. Tom had left the telephone. A woman’s scream—muffled—came out of the distance.

“Hello! Hello! Hello!”

No response.

The Chief slammed the receiver irritably. Tom MacCallister was always having trouble with some drunk. Why did people want to run such a place, anyway? Was Zeke Pool back? He questioned the possibility. Zeke should be in the house of correction. The Chief recalled Zeke’s criminal status.

I have it! New Year’s Eve—they released him a week early. Fine business—six hours’ start with a new resolution, drinking a toast to quit drinking. That was Zeke. He always had the best intentions to quit drinking between drinks.

Yes, it was New Year’s Eve. Chief Whepley had not eaten dinner. He was waiting for his daughter to take him home. Duty demanded that he return to the office and spend the evening investigating holiday revels. Many would be celebrating the departure of the old year and the birth of the new. Police records would tell the story in the morning; the jail would be full. No one could foretell the consequences, heartaches and trouble that many families would have to face.

It was his job—meeting trouble; trying to reconcile circumstances to the situation. Occasionally it could be done, but all too often there was no amicable solution. He would probably have to work all night. He could not ask his men to serve extra hours of duty and shirk the responsibility himself. These unpleasant thoughts passed through his mind as he donned his uniform cap and overcoat and walked out to the night captain’s desk.

Sergeant Marcus was in charge.

“Where’s Captain Underwood?” the Chief inquired.

“He was just here; he’ll be back shortly,” Sergeant Marcus replied. “Someone called for you a moment ago—all the cruisers are busy—”

“Yes,” Chief Whepley interrupted impatiently. “Trouble at Satan’s Paradise again.”

“It’s Satan’s Paradise all right. Tom doesn’t care what his place is called as long as he gets the money—”

“You are dead right, Sergeant. Tom seems to enjoy his unsavory reputation.”

“He is capitalizing on it, anyway. What’s wrong there now?”

“Zeke Pool is out again—drunk as usual. He’s raising roughhouse. Tom wants a policeman.”

“Yes.”

“Where’s the Captain? I was going to send him over.”

“They called for you—”

“It’s a good job for the Captain. MacCallister always wants the ranking general to straighten out his troubles. He calls me if it’s nothing more than a dog fight,” he replied irritably. “How soon can you send a cruiser?”

“Things don’t look too promising,” Sergeant Marcus explained, avoiding the Chief’s gaze. “Cruiser 1 is covering a hit and run accident, Cruiser 2 is at the First National with a night-vault money transfer, and No. 3 is out of service on a detail for the Mayor. The wagon is at the county jail with the last load of prisoners for the year.”

The Sergeant continued to fidget with the records before him. The situation was embarrassing. He was watching a side office off the lobby.

“Have you any idea how soon the Captain will be back?” the Chief demanded. .

“I expect him, sir—”

“In other words, you’re in charge of the station, the cruisers are all busy, the dicks are out to supper, the Captain is lost, and it’s up to me to go out and arrest a habitual drunk—”

“I—I—I’ll go for you, if—if you insist—”

“No, I’ll take the call. Send the Captain over as soon as he comes in. My daughter will be here any minute. Tell her to wait. I’ll call if I need help.” The Chief’s orders were emphatic as he turned and disappeared through the door leading to the Department garage.

“What’s eating Old Silvertop tonight?” Captain Underwood chuckled, stepping from the unlighted side room and approaching the desk.

“Sh-a-a-ah! He just left. What are you trying to do? Get us both fired?” snapped the Sergeant. “Why didn’t you come out when the Chief asked for you? Now we’re both in hot water. He wants you to go right over to Tom MacCallister’s hell hole. He’s waiting—”

“Right over, did you say—”

“That’s his order.” The reply evidenced impatience and alarm.

“Oh, I’ll go over all right—when I get back. But, for the purpose of the record, I ain’t back yet. Let Old Silvertop handle it.” Captain Underwood smiled belligerently.

Sergeant Marcus cringed inwardly with a mixed feeling of fear and idol worship. Some day he would be promoted when Captain Underwood became chief. He might not have to wait more than a year; still, there was the possibility; something might happen. He had to play safe.

“I don’t want to question your judgment, Captain,” he said, “but it’s orders. You’re supposed to go over. Duck, here comes Miss Whepley. The Chief said to have her wait. You can go out the back way.”

“Why, hello, Miss Dee.” Captain Underwood smiled suavely, ignoring the Sergeant’s remarks. “I was just going out to meet your father at Satan’s Paradise. Evidently he had to drop in for a bit of New Year’s cheer before going home to dinner.”

Della Whepley froze. She detested Captain Underwood. He was always making slurring remarks about her father’s character. She did not like his caustic wit. Everyone knew that her father did not drink intoxicants of any kind. What right did the Captain have to address her by the name her father used? She resented the fact that he spoke to her at all. His subtle familiarity irritated her. Walking to the desk, she faced Sergeant Marcus.

“Did Father leave any order for me?” she asked, framing the question in a manner that would avoid all appearance of prying into police matters.

Sergeant Marcus was flustered. How much did she know? Was she suspicious? His conscience troubled him. How should he reply? His eyes shifted to Captain Underwood. Cap should have given him a cue. They were both guilty of insubordination. The Captain should have met the Chief as he had been ordered to do.

“There was just a little trouble, Miss Dee. A drunk at Tom MacCallister’s tavern. Your father is waiting for me to come over there and handle the matter. I was just going out as you came in and delayed me.” She loathed the irony of his smile.

She tried to ignore him.

“You wait here, Miss Dee,” he said coyly. “There is no occasion for alarm. I’m going right over; there isn’t an officer in the Department who wouldn’t lay down his life for your father in an emergency.”

Her eyes snapped fire. How could her father trust that man?

“I’ll wait for Father in the car, thank you,” she said, turning and retracing her steps.

“Wh-e-e-e.” Sergeant Marcus whistled. “I guess you stepped on her corns that time. She’s on her way right now for MacCallister’s joint. She’ll meet the Chief over there and give him the lowdown on your efficiency in responding to orders.”

“Leave the Old Man to me. I still have a trick up my sleeve that he never dreamed of.” Captain Underwood’s smile was sinister.

The telephone rang vigorously. Sergeant Marcus lifted the receiver.

“If they want me, I’m at Satan’s Paradise,” said the Captain. “Have a conference there with Chief Whepley.” He raised his voice cockily as he slipped out the rear door.

2. The Devil's Misfit

CHIEF WHEPLEY entered Paradise Tavern through the rear door. A drunken derelict, known to the tavern trade as “Hypo” and to the police as “Zeke Pool,” was the center of attention. All eyes were focused upon him—bleary, befogged eyes.

Zeke, unsteady and fighting to keep his equilibrium, held the neck of a broken beer bottle in each hand. Waving them above his head, he struck out dangerously at an imaginary enemy. Broken glass was strewn about his feet. Blood was gushing from his forearm and from a cut over one eye—a self-inflicted injury. He muttered threats against the opposing “enemy.” Zeke was in a mood to kill.

Chief Whepley analyzed the situation and unhesitatingly walked to the center of the room. He chose a position where he could command attention. It was more than drink that troubled Zeke; he had been smoking marijuana.

“Looks like you have them on the run tonight, Zeke. What seems to be the trouble?” the Chief asked in a low, indifferent tone, as he walked to a decorated pillar ten feet from the derelict.

“Wha’ zat, Chief? Who called yoo-u over here?” Zeke staggered forward, gripping the necks of the bottles more firmly. “—just got ou-ta stir—yoo-u ain’t a-gon-ta lock me-e up, are yoo-u?” The look in Zeke’s eyes was far from pleasant.

“Let’s shake hands and talk things over,” said the Chief with extended hand, stepping backward as Zeke approached. His object was to draw him nearer the exit.

“Come over here and sit down,” he invited. “Where have you been? I haven’t seen you lately.” There was a smile on the Chief’s face that was amusing.

Zeke struggled forward, dropping one of his weapons to grasp the extended hand.

“Now, Chief, you know where I’ve been.” His sense of humor was sufficiently aroused to permit him to forget his imaginary troubles.

Chief Whepley greeted him with a handclasp that had a double significance. It was the opportunity he sought to throw Zeke off balance and cause him to drop the broken piece of bottle in his left hand when he grasped a chair for support. It was a game of strategy at which two could play. The exit sign over the rear door caught Zeke's eye. He did not purpose to go out. Turning half around, he slid into an unoccupied booth in a darkened corner of the room. Not to be outwitted, the Chief sat down opposite him. The table was between them. His motive was to get Zeke in a frame of mind which would permit him to handle the drunken man without resorting to violence.

Zeke eyed him with suspicion and reached for an empty bottle.

The Chief pushed it beyond his reach, then cleared the table of all bottles and motioned for a waiter to take them away. At the same time he leaned over the table to engage Zeke in conversation. It would not do to exercise unnecessary force. He had seen his antagonist in such moods before and knew what could happen. Patience was far better than bloodshed. He asked Zeke several unimportant questions. Zeke would forget about his imaginary enemies and the matter that troubled him if he were handled diplomatically.

Patrons, impatient because the fight they expected did not materialize, crowded around Zeke and the Chief, who waved them aside and beckoned to Tom MacCallister to restore order. Tom came forth reluctantly—he wanted Zeke thrown out bodily. There were muttered protests from the crowd. Slowly the men filed back to their tables to resume their beer-drinking. They huddled together in groups discussing the affair. They were looking for action and were disappointed because the expected excitement had not materialized.

A jargon of comments was heard. Chief Whepley was a coward. Old Hypo must have something on the Chief. For what was he waiting? The police never did anything right. The Chief had been called to make an arrest. It was obvious that Zeke should be in jail; talking to him would do no good. Was the Chief really afraid? A buzz of gossip went from table to table. Zeke had been arrested fifty times. Jail was like home to him. He had spent nearly as much time on the inside as he had out; jail was the place for him. Tom MacCallister wanted him there.

Someone revived the story of Zeke's shooting his mother-in-law. He had served three years in a Southern penitentiary. Nobody knew his real name. He had migrated North and kept his past a secret to keep from reporting on

parole. Mystery hung over him like a shroud. According to rumors, he had a wife and three children. Zeke sometimes mentioned them when he was drunk, but no one had found out where they were. They were said to be struggling for existence on a Southern plantation, believing Zeke to be dead.

From outward appearance, all that Zeke carried with him of the past was the memory. Drink had been his downfall. Some day he was going to stop. He had often promised himself that he had taken the "last drink." Some day he would save money and send for his family. He was always going to "start life over," but that day never came. He had too many friends who were eager to share his company and his last dollar. They always frustrated his good intentions. Now he was a homeless vagabond, erratic in his plans and his habits. He had failed to do for himself that which the law had tried and failed to do. He had but one remaining virtue: the desire to reform.

He had come to hate policemen. They were always crossing his path. They existed to hound him and deprive him of his liberty and the right to existence as he saw it. He was the master of his own soul; if he chose to smoke marijuana cigarettes or spike his beer with barbitol tablets, it was his own affair. Otherwise life held no thrill for him. Existence was drab and to be feared.

Still, his former self prevailed at times. He wanted to be what he once had been; he was not cowardly enough to commit suicide. His mother's God haunted him; her prayers harassed him. He was weary of life and afraid to die.

Captain Underwood walked in at the other end of the room. Tom MacCallister called him to the bar; there was a common understanding between them.

Zeke stiffened with resentment. Captain Underwood wore a blue uniform which had the same infuriating effect upon him that a red flag has upon a bull in an arena. He sensed trouble and was prepared to meet it.

Aware of the thoughts in Zeke's mind, Chief Whepley arose and met the Captain in the center of the room.

"It will not be necessary for you to wait, Captain," he said. "Zeke is not looking for trouble tonight. You can go back to the office and relieve the Sergeant. We will be along directly."

Captain Underwood turned on his heel, saluted officiously and retraced his steps to the bar.

In response to a signal understood between them, Tom MacCallister followed the Captain to the front door. For several minutes they stood looking over the crowd and discussing some problem in a monotone. If Chief Whepley saw any significance in the situation, he failed to let it disturb him. He had his own problem. Stepping to the rear exit, he beckoned to Zeke.

Befuddled Zeke tried to analyze the situation. The psychological effect of the Chief's actions touched him. He understood the sign of the cocked thumb. He had employed it numberless times. The Chief was beckoning him to take a ride. He had expected force. A hundred pairs of eyes were upon him—making him feel conspicuous, humiliated, chagrined. He did not often feel that way. Chief Whepley was his friend, Captain Underwood, his enemy. He had never thought of it that way before; he had a choice between the two. Regardless of his choice, however, he must return to jail.

"All right, Chief; take me. I'm going to hell, anyway. Take me," he said, ambling over to face his aggressor.

"You don't expect me to go with you," came the quiet but forceful reply.

"No, Chief." Zeke proceeded to light another reefer. "I'm going to hell. Do you hear me? Hell. Your policemen—no one can stop me."

"I'm not going your way, Zeke. Don't expect me to take you." The Chief smiled.

"Do you want me to go to hell, Chief?" Zeke began to cry. "Do you want me to go to hell?"

Patiently Chief Whepley flicked the burning reefer out of Zeke's hand. The cigarette spun across the room and lay smoldering on the floor. A thin ribbon of peculiar blue smoke rose from it.

Zeke slumped into a chair beside a table and lay with his head on his arms. Reaching in his pocket, he withdrew several pennies and a dime which he threw on the marble slab before him.

"One more drink, Chief, before we go," he said. "The last one on me—it's all I have."

"No more drinks tonight, Zeke. Put up your money. You'll need it."

"Just one—New Year's—I'm going to hell—last resolution," he muttered brokenly, shoving his money toward the edge of the table.

A waiter stepped forward, eager for his last dime. Chief Whepley shook his head and waved him aside.

Zeke straightened, and, leaning with his chin in his hand and one elbow on the table, he said, pointing with the other arm extended, "Look, Chief.

See, that's why I'm going to hell. They're after me. There it is; see the long arms right over the table?"

"Yes, yes, I see," the Chief said, trying to appease him. Let's go."

"There it is! A thousand-legged octopus—see, up there near the ceiling." Zeke pointed eagerly. "That's the devil; see the long tentacles? See his arms—one for every table."

"Yes, yes, we'll go outside—"

"Ha! Ha! No one can escape!"

"Get him out of here!" Tom MacCallister interrupted the seance. "He's ruining my business."

"One of your prodigies, Tom." Chief Whepley's voice carried a note of pity. "Leave him alone. The vision is far more real than you think."

Zeke saw what to him was a real enemy. To him the two Chinese lanterns appeared like eyes protruding from a cloud of smoke that represented the monster's body. Thin ribbons of smoke rising from smoldering cigarettes at each table formed the arms of the octopus-like creature. Zeke was merely describing the satanic influence at work in the tavern—an influence that touched the lives of those seated at the tables. The logic was not that of a deranged man. Zeke saw that which others failed to see; he felt the presence of an unholy influence. The prince of the power of the air was in command.

Zeke Pool left the tavern in company with Chief Whepley. He was reconciled to go voluntarily back to the jail cell that awaited him. It is the only recourse society has to offer apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Zeke had chosen to shun that for the pleasures of the world. He had courted odds for an untimely reckoning and lost. He had no appeal from the law of averages. His sins had found him out; his conscience was a consuming fire that gave no peace to his troubled soul.

Ruled by the satanic majesties responsible for the evil influence increasing in the world, he had no place to turn for comfort. He was one of the devil's misfits. To Zeke, hell was a fact, concrete, more than a myth from which he had found no escape. Like an ostrich, he had hidden his head in the sands of unbelief to dodge the consequences of personal sin. There was no consolation; the faithful prayers of his mother still pursued him.

Reaping that which he had sown, he had no recourse but to go back and cringe in a cell. There he saw beyond the gay, hilarious pleasure-mad crowd of New Year's revelers at Tom's tavern. He envisioned the devil's future

harvest— there was no margin of profit in counting the cost. Faces of his erstwhile friends and their associates appeared to harass him. Truly, the way of transgressors is hard.

3. Antiquated Morals

THE MEAL that Chief Whepley anticipated at home with his family on New Year's Eve did not materialize. He had learned to face such disappointments. They came often. Mayor Friese was responsible for this change in plans. He stopped in while Zeke Pool was being booked. Consequently, Captain Underwood and Sergeant Marcus were busy. Chief Whepley had just stepped into his office when the Mayor followed him. It was an opportunity to make the most of a matter which had been on his mind for some time. He had continually postponed it, dreading to face the Chief. Now he had the excuse to close the old year right and forget the antique methods of the past. He meant to begin the new year in a modern way. "Help yourself to help others" had always been his campaign slogan. The Chief might prove hard to handle—he anticipated as much—but the time had arrived; he must find a way.

"Well, Chief," the Mayor began, "another year has rolled around. You have a good record."

"Thanks, Mayor. I'm glad to see the town clean."

"A mite too clean, in fact, if you get what I mean. The balance sheet could have been improved had you taken advantage of opportunities—"

"Opportunities—"

"Yes, opportunities. I don't mean to say we're in the red, but you've missed the boat. You had opportunities to help yourself and your friends," he said, taking courage.

Chief Whepley's jaw set as he nodded slowly.

"I have always treated you to the benefits—political benefits—of the Mayor's office. You—your appreciation might have been more liberal," His Honor added.

"Get it off your chest. I'm not used to riddles—"

"Chief, you're a fool—too straight-laced for your own good. This town expects you to be more liberal—I don't mean wide open—but be liberal

within reason—close your eyes to trifles. People will gamble in spite of all you can do. Why make it so tough? You’re deserting your best friend.”

“Not my best friend.” The reply was modest.

“Don’t preach to me. You make me sick with your moral equations. I know what you will say. I don’t want to hear any of your Sunday-school philosophy. We’ve got past that stage in life here. A real he-man sticks by his friends. You’re not much of a political asset—”

“Wait a minute, Mayor,” the Chief interrupted, “you’re still talking in riddles. If you are asking me to put my stamp of approval on vice and gambling, my answer is No, with a capital N. That is the kind of political following that meets you in the penitentiary. My advice is to forget it.”

“Everybody does it, Chief, nowadays—”

“The mayor of this town has never had that name, to my knowledge.” The remark was meant for chastisement.

“You have to give the people what they want,” His Honor hedged, squirming in discomfort. “You don’t need to be so precise. Why try to stick to a code of antiquated morals? They’re so moth-eaten and moldy that civilization does not recognize them any more.”

“Good law enforcement never suffered as a result—”

“We need to wake up to the need of the hour. You’re a good Chief—well liked by the church groups, but church groups are in the minority; people don’t go to church like they used to. As Chief, you’re supposed to represent all classes, as I do as Mayor.”

“But it doesn’t imply that I have to wink at the law when it comes to enforcing it.” The Chief’s reply left no room for doubt.

“It will pay you to think it over, Chief.”

“I have given it proper consideration. I am certain the better class of citizens doesn’t want—”

“—not so hasty, Chief. Be reasonable. There isn’t anything crooked about it. The state licenses gambling at the race track. You are just over the fence from the biggest track in the country. It is legal there. Why wait like a bird of prey for the straggling handbook operator or a policy writer who happens to get on your side of the fence, granting it may be a technical violation of the law?” The Mayor defended his position.

“You do admit that it is a violation of the law?” Chief Whepley asked innocently.

“Well, you know,” His Honor sputtered, “they haven’t exactly changed the statute. There are a lot of old blue laws still on the books that no one thinks of observing. There is reason to all things. Everyone does a little gambling nowadays. It’s fashionable—even some of the churches are not averse to this method of raising cash. They don’t call this gambling. There’s nothing criminal about it. What’s the difference if you bet on the horses or play Keno? Everybody does it.”

“Not everybody, Mayor.”

“Well, everybody but you, then,” came the irritable response. “Half your police force bets on the ponies occasionally.”

“You’re wrong; there isn’t ten per cent that crazy. I know there are some, but not with my knowledge and consent,” the Chief replied.

“The Chief of Police is not supposed to be a godfather to his men.” Mayor Friese chuckled.

“—nor permit a policy house or bookie joint to operate under his jurisdiction.” The Chief’s smile did not conceal his authority.

“The Chief’s job pays a good salary in this town.”

“Implying_”

“—you’d better think it over, Chief.”

A deep flush crept from beneath Chief Whepley’s collar.

“Sit down, Mayor!” the Chief thundered, rising to close and lock the door of his office.

Central City’s unscrupulous and fickle Mayor dropped into the nearest chair. He looked sullenly at the floor.

“Do I understand that if I don’t agree to let certain gambling interests open up and run unmolested from police interference that you are to use your influence to terminate my tenure of office?” Chief Whepley’s stature presented a challenge that made the Mayor uncomfortable.

“Well, you know, Chief, how it is. I’m not talking personally. I’m only the Mayor—I have but one vote. Other members of the Council may not feel as I do—”

“But your insinuation is that I had better dance to your music—”

“I was only warning you how things are. I want you to feel that I am coming to you as a friend—you have been a good Chief. We have no serious crime problem. I have always liked you; you should give the matter a little consideration, for your own good,” His Honor pleaded.

“It doesn’t need further consideration. My answer would be the same tomorrow as it is today. As long as I am Chief of Police, this town isn’t going to be opened to any form of vice.” The Chief was emphatic.

“That isn’t it, Chief. We don’t want the town to run wide open. The Council expects a conservative policy in law enforcement. They asked me to speak to you about it. There’s nothing to get excited about. They want you to be Chief. They expect you to be tough on the real criminals. But, but the way they put it, you’re—well, too ordinance bound. You could be more cooperative. We want the people satisfied.” The unconnected statements were weak.

The telephone rang again and automatically Chief Whepley turned to answer it.

“It’s for you, Mayor,” he said, recognizing Tom MacCallister’s voice.

Mayor Friese welcomed the call. He was glad to get away from the searching eyes of the Chief.

“Yes, Tom,” he said, turning his back to keep the conversation as private as possible, “in his office—yes—I can’t tell you—you shouldn’t have called here—no—tomorrow morning—well, yes, if it’s necessary—now—I’ll come over.”

“Tom has a way of making things uncomfortable for his friends.” The Chief’s casual tone made the Mayor squirm. He thought he had been clever enough to conceal the identity of the man who had called him. How much did the Chief know?

“Yes,” he said, trying to appear unconcerned. “Tom had trouble with a drunk tonight. He wants to tell me about it. I suppose I’ll have to go over.”

“All right, let’s go over and see.” Chief Whepley was suspicious.

“I won’t be able to go over right now,” the Mayor interjected anxiously. “Suppose I call for you in a half-hour.”

“Any time you say, Mayor. I haven’t had dinner yet, but you name the time and I’ll be ready,” the Chief replied.

“It’s eight-twenty. How would nine o’clock suit you? That will give you time to eat. Sorry we can’t make it right now. It won’t hurt Tom to wait.” The Mayor’s face glowed with pleasure over the arrangement.

Chief Whepley unlocked the door and walked with the Mayor to the front entrance, where they separated. The Mayor went to his car and the Chief to the corner restaurant, each watching the other. The Mayor wanted to be sure that he knew where the Chief was going to lunch, and the Chief

wanted to be sure that the Mayor had the impression that he was to be occupied for at least a half-hour.

Entering the restaurant as the Mayor drove to the corner and waited for the light to change, the Chief sat down at the table directly in front of the window. This gave him a clear view of the corner. The Mayor continued through the intersection and made a right turn at the alley paralleling Main Street. At this juncture Lieutenant Allan Edmund entered the door and confronted his former chief.

“Why, hello, Allan. How’s the new lieutenant and the marines? I didn’t know you were in town, or were you talking with Dee across the corner a while ago?” the Chief asked, offering a hearty handclasp.

“Yes, I just drove your charming daughter home and came back with the family car to pick you up,” he replied.

“First, let me congratulate you on the fine record I hear you are making in the marines. Can’t get away from that natural ability of creating a name for yourself, I see.” The light of sincerity shown in Chief Whepley’s face. “What was that you were mentioning about Dee?”

“So you are already checking on my date with your daughter?” The twinkle in the Lieutenant’s eyes evidenced the mutual pleasure that the meeting provided. “I have been invited to dinner tomorrow night. Do you suppose that I dare brave the lion in his den?”

“If it’s Dee’s wish, there’s no one more welcome than an undefeatable marine,” he replied, smiling.

“Thanks, Chief. Then it’s a double invitation. I’ll be there if the Mayor doesn’t run me down. I just saw His Honor pass in his car. I see he’s still wearing that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde smile. Who’s he gunning for now since I joined the marines and got into a clean scrap?” There was wisdom without malice in the reply.

“It’s merely my head that’s scheduled for the political meat block this time. The Mayor always carries a doublebit axe, one side for his friends, the other for his enemies. I saw him at the office five minutes ago. He’s on his way now to Satan’s Paradise,” the Chief prophesied. “Tom called him at my office and invited him over. We are going over together but I’m satisfied he’ll see Tom before our scheduled appointment in a half-hour.”

“What’s cooking?”

“Politics, my boy, politics. In less than five minutes Tom and His Honor will have their heads together preparing for the spring election political bar-

becue at my expense.” The Chief chuckled.

“Too bad you can’t secure a leave of absence to fight for your country as I did,” the Lieutenant replied.

“My leave of absence is coming by request. It will bear the distinguished monogram of the Honorable Wynn D. Friese written in transparent ink. The good people who see no evil, hear no evil and know no evil must not be corrupted politically, you know.” A mischievous smile played around the Chief’s eyes.

“Until they suddenly discover that the milk of human kindness is not part and parcel of the Mayor’s make-up,” Lieutenant Edmund emphasized.

“Exactly! The good people—”

“—never wake up till it’s too late,” he interrupted. “Suppose I drop around and take a peek at Tom MacCallister’s joint. You have weathered the storm of battle in many a political arena in this town. I’ll find out what I can for you. It’s my turn to extend a favor.”

“It’s my fight, Lieutenant; don’t get mixed up in it. You will be coming back to the Department after the war. Take my advice, don’t make new enemies that you may have to face later—”

“As a marine on furlough, I’m a free agent—”

“—better keep out of it. There’s no political band wagon that carries clean colors. You are always in danger in this town. There is always someone ready to roll a rock in the road; don’t risk it.” The Chief’s advice was timely.

“You can trust me, Chief. I just want to look the situation over for my own satisfaction—reasons mutual and otherwise.” His good-natured smile was encouraging.

“May God hasten that day when police departments can function free from political interference.” Chief Whepley breathed a prayer as he paused, in reverence, before partaking of his evening lunch, which was hours past due.

4. The Pleasures Of Sin

DEE WHEPLEY had just completed the task of preparing the evening meal and waiting on her invalid mother when the telephone rang. Perhaps her father was coming home after all; she secretly hoped so; he had been extremely depressed lately because of the political situation.

“Is that you, Dee? Are you alone?” said the voice at the other end of the line. “This is Detective Winton. I’m at my wits’ end tonight trying to figure out the detail of covering a matter that concerns your father.”

“He is still at the office. Tom MacCallister—”

“Yes, I know. That’s just it. The Chief may not be home until morning. The Mayor has him under his wing much against his will and I don’t feel like burdening him with any more troubles.”

“What can I do to help? I think I know—”

“It’s political conniving but I don’t think you know the angle. This is something new. I would like to see you a few minutes. May I come up?” She knew he was gravely concerned.

“Certainly, I’ll leave on the porch light. How soon may I expect you?” she asked.

“Right away; but forget about the light. It will be well to keep our meeting secret. I’ll bring Mrs. Winton and Shirley with me,” he explained and hung up.

Dee was intensely curious. Something of the utmost importance to her father and the Department was in the offing. She could feel it. But, why was Detective Winton bringing his wife and daughter at this late hour? He knew that her mother was there, an invalid these nine years. He often dropped in to visit with her for a few minutes when he had some matter to discuss privately with the Chief.

She finished the dishes and went to her mother’s room to arrange it in order to receive guests. She mentioned in a casual way that Detective Winton and his family were coming over, but did not refer to the conference he had requested. It would only worry her mother, and she wished to avoid that

as much as possible. It was so easy to imagine things, and, after all, perhaps there was nothing wrong. Her father was always reminding her of worries that never became facts.

A few minutes later the door chimes announced someone at the grade entrance. It was Detective Winton and his family.

“Pardon this intrusion, Miss Whepley. I hope our call does not upset your mother,” he apologized, ushering his wife and daughter into the hall. “I hate all this mystery; but I wanted to get over here without being seen. That’s why I came to the side door.”

“Shirley and I think it’s fun, do we not, daughter?” Mrs. Winton remarked.

“Anyway, we safely eluded the three political stool pigeons that the Mayor has had on our trail for the past week. We left them guarding our car and the front door of the First Church.” The detective laughed heartily

“Daddy says it will be one watchnight service that they will never forget.” Shirley joined in the humor of the occasion. “We left through the rear entrance of the church and drove over here in my coupe.”

Keenly alert, Dee invited them into her father’s study where they might sit in the dimly lighted room protected by closely drawn blinds.

“I have an urgent mission for you and Shirley tonight,” Detective Winton hastened to explain. “Mrs. Winton came to stay with your mother while you girls are out for a few hours.”

“—sounds as if we are to play detective.” Dee laughed.

“You are going to do more than play. I want you to cover a real detective assignment,” he replied, stepping into the hall where he had left a black suitcase.

“We are going to a masquerade disguised as two of the town’s ancient citizens. Daddy brought the costumes along for us to change here,” Shirley explained.

“The new secretly organized fraternity, Royal Order of —well—Flat Feet—that’s a good enough title, isn’t it? They’re meeting again tonight after a masquerade to form a ladies’ auxiliary. I have two tickets which will admit you by special permission,” said the detective. “You are to attend this party and make your getaway before it’s time to unmask.”

“What are we supposed to do?” Dee was cautious.

“Count the number present and try to determine how many of them you can identify. The purpose of this masquerade is to provide an alibi for cer-

tain members of the Police Department who are to attend a secret meeting elsewhere tonight. Someone will impersonate them at the party,” he outlined. “I want you girls to keep your eyes and ears open and bring back all the information you can.”

“I’ll know most of the policemen and their wives, I think,” Shirley ventured.

“You two girls should be able to recognize most of them whether they are masked or not,” said her father.

“I know quite a number of the politicians. They’ll be there with bells on, I suppose. I am sure we will be able to tell who is who when we get there,” Dee said seriously. “What I’m concerned about is the environment. The atmosphere of this party may not be too wholesome.”

“The setting is apt to be far from sanctimonious. I feel guilty asking you girls to attend.” Detective Winton was apologetic. “Perhaps it is not the wisest plan after all.”

“We have attended nice parties given by the policemen and firemen, haven’t we, Daddy?” Shirley faced her father with the question.

“—before they organized, honey; things are different now,” he replied. “I’m afraid they are courting an unholy background that will lead to the road of ruin. No police department can remain efficient and flaunt the law either in secret or in public.”

“We’re supposed to be on a witch-hunting expedition,” Shirley interjected.

“Father seems to think that this new police organization will produce ghosts of reality—”

“No doubt about it, Dee; the Chief is right about that,” Detective Winton interrupted.

“It will be fun spying on them.” Shirley’s brown eyes sparkled.

“I’m not going for the fun of it; it’s strictly a matter of business.” Dee emphasized her determination. “I may have to blush for shame behind my mask, but I’m going to find out all I can about who is responsible for undermining Father in the Police Department.”

“That’s the sole purpose of sending you girls. I can’t go myself, that’s obvious, and expect to get any information,” said the detective. “Suppose you are discovered; the most that can do is to excite curiosity.”

“We’re not going to be discovered,” Dee said.

“No,” Shirley agreed, taking the suitcase and mounting the stairs. “Our rating as detectives doesn’t permit that,” she called over her shoulder.

It was only a matter of minutes before the two girls returned dressed for the occasion. Dee did not want her mother to know the real purpose behind their plans. Consequently Mrs. Winton was called from Mrs. Whepley’s room to help with the final arrangements. It was necessary that the costumes reveal no traits of character that would aid in identifying those in disguise.

Shirley’s coupe had been left at the alley gate and within a half-hour two strange characters joined a party of late arrivals and made their way with them to the entrance door of a dimly lighted hall over a group of store buildings. Several men preceded the girls into the outer reception room where their tickets were carefully scrutinized before they were admitted. It was evident that they were taken for someone else. Dee caught the name “Joyce” mentioned by two of the attendants and understood that they were discussing her. ‘Who was Joyce? She could recall no one by that name. Where had Detective Winton secured the tickets of admittance? Perhaps Shirley knew; she meant to ask her at the first opportunity.

The girls mingled with the crowd to keep from becoming conspicuous. A dance was in progress at one end of the hall but they were not interested in dancing. They represented two ancient spinsters who did not approve of dancing. Each carried a bag with an assortment of yarn and her knitting needles over one arm. Their place was on the sidelines with their knitting and an ear for gossip. They were old in appearance but young eyes peered through the wrinkled masks to observe all that was taking place.

It was obvious that a bar had been set up in the back room, as a number of those present had evidently been drinking. Men and women alike were attracted to this feature of the entertainment. Free beer was inviting its problem; both men and women were becoming argumentative over matters of trivial importance.

Someone dressed in a clown’s attire carried a cracker box which represented a candid camera. He dashed about the room taking “pictures” of everyone in a ridiculous manner. When he reached Dee and Shirley he made a great commotion as he “photographed” the two “spinsters” in their costumes. He was particularly interested in having them pose with Police Commissioner Bly and Councilman Yochum when they came in. The two politicians were embarrassed and tried to flee the limelight.

“Imagine Yochum and Bly afraid to meet the public,” Cinderella chided winsomely, slipping an arm between the two men as they “posed.” “Wait until Mayor Friese and Commissioner Ackley arrive; they’re not camera shy.”

The clown dropped his cracker box, kicked it across the room and ran and fell on it. In a minute he was back on his feet. Dee and Shirley watched him with interest; he was a clever actor and kept the party in an uproar.

As the hour approached midnight and the final grand march, in which all were to unmask, the hall became a bedlam. The Mayor and Commissioner Ackley entered. Cinderella made her debut in their honor. The candid camera clown took many pictures. An argument started in the barroom because of a refusal to serve one of the policemen another drink.

“I was on the committee that arranged for Tom MacCallister to donate the drinks for this party,” a thick voice mumbled. “Give me another schooner of beer.”

“Shut up,” someone yelled. “You don’t know what you are talking about. We paid for this beer.”

“Paid for, my eye. Tom delivered a dozen cases; didn’t cost a dime. I got a receipted bill in case the Chief starts to ask questions—”

“Keep your trap shut, will you?” said another. “You’ll keep popping off until Old Silvertop gets an earful; then we’ll be on the carpet.”

“The Chief won’t be here that long—”

A scuffle ensued; someone slapped a hand over the offender’s mouth and silenced him. Quiet reigned for a few minutes, giving Shirley and Dee an opportunity to listen to the conversation around them. Several women were discussing the removal of Chief Whepley from the Police Department. It seemed to be understood that Mayor Friese had made definite promises to dispose of him. One woman understood that he was to be retired; a second was of the opinion that he was to be demoted to his former position as Chief of Detectives. Commissioner Ackley, who was in frequent attendance at the bar, voiced the opinion that he should be fired for failing to support the Mayor.

Just before it was time to unmask, the girls crowded past the bar near the rear exit. Detective Winton had assured them that the lights were to go out, which would be their signal to make a getaway. They wanted to be ready to choose the means of departure. The “photographer” stood with his back against the switchbox on the rear wall. The back door stood open, filled

with several men discussing a plot for a girl hitchhiker to commandeer the Chief on one of his trips to the state capital. The cracker box “camera” clicked in the face of Mayor Friese. Police Commissioner Bly protested. The “photographer,” grievously offended, turned back to the wall.

“What were you saying?” said Commissioner Yochum.

“Joyce is the girl to put it over on the Chief, if anyone can,” one of the men remarked.

“She is supposed to be here tonight,” answered a policeman whom Dee recognized.

“We will soon find out,” another replied, glancing at his watch. “It’s ten minutes to twelve.”

The conversation changed to a party given by “big shot” politicians of the community. Plans were being made to hold it in the adjoining county early in the spring. Chief Whepley was to be invited as well as law enforcement officers of neighboring cities.

“The Chief won’t attend if he finds out that the lid is off on wine, women, song and gambling,” said a voice that startled Dee.

It was Sergeant Marcus; she was sure of it. What was he doing there? He was supposed to be on duty until midnight.

A pistol shot announcing the New Year rang out in the night air. A commotion from the hall floor announced the grand march.

Suddenly the lights went out. Sergeant Marcus cursed openly, pushing the men in the doorway before him as he crowded into the room. Everyone seemed to be trying to reach the ballroom floor. “Lights! Lights!” came the cry.

The shrill whistles, the automobile horns, the bark of revolvers and the people shouting on the street resounded through the midnight air. The New Year had arrived and the policemen’s party was in a state of confusion.

Dee and Shirley crept along the outer wall, feeling their way toward the exit door. A burly form outlined in the darkness blocked their passage. They could barely discern that he stood with one arm braced across the opening.

“Duck,” Dee whispered to her companion, as she dropped to her knees and slipped past the figure.

Shirley followed, brushing against the man’s legs as she passed. He wheeled and kicked wickedly, thinking that a dog was at his feet. The blow grazed Shirley’s side as she started to rise to her feet in the outer hallway. Refraining from emitting any sound, the two girls crept down the outside

exit to the street below. The world welcoming the birth of the New Year confronted them. The past was behind but not forgotten; the experience of the evening revealed problems that only time, patience and diligent civic service could solve.

5. Virtually An Outcast

CHIEF WHEPLEY'S EYES followed Lieutenant Edmund as he left the restaurant on his self-imposed mission of tracing Mayor Friese and investigating his activities at Satan's Paradise. Lieutenant Edmund had spent twelve years in the Department with Chief Whepley, prior to securing a leave of absence to join the marines. Consequently his knowledge of the art of investigating served him well. He was a free agent in that respect. He was on furlough. If he chose to investigate the Mayor's activities, he was free to do so. It was an opportunity for him to prove his loyalty. Perhaps it was an opportunity to Checkmate the Mayor at his own game. Who could tell?

Because of his ability and willingness to assume responsibility, Lieutenant Edmund had left the Department virtually an outcast. The whip hand of the Mayor had handicapped him in his duties as an officer. It was a whip hand that created factions and demoralized the Department. These factions were unjustly critical; they had ulterior motives; they sought to serve their own purposes and by so doing belittled constructive progressiveness.

They were dissatisfied with themselves and with everyone else. Nothing was right but payday and sundown. Duty was a burden; what they were forced to do they did grudgingly. Anyone of Lieutenant Edmund's type was too progressive, overzealous and the pet stool pigeon of the boss. They did not like him or anyone whose first interest concerned the welfare of the Police Department. He was too prone to advise them of their shortcomings, and because the truth hurt, they organized as a unit to court the favor of the Mayor.

When the Police Commission took the progressive step of selecting Lieutenant Edmund to take an academic course in police training, the action stirred up a hornet's nest of resentment. All the old drones in the Department immediately trod a footpath of protest to the Mayor's back door. His office was overrun with disgruntled misfits until he trembled in despair. They represented political strength. The Chief would not play politics; here was an opportunity to capitalize on human weakness. They had self-im-

posed grievances; he needed political supporters whom he could depend upon to do his bidding.

Consequently the Mayor's despair turned to ambition. Here was an opportunity to swing the political strength of the Police Department in his favor. The only requisite was to open the door for several promotions. If he could find a way to dispose of Lieutenant Edmund and Chief Whepley, he could satisfy the hue and cry of these political prodigies. Throwing caution to the wind, he entered into a conspiracy with certain key members to mobilize the Department for the price of as many promotions as they demanded. The die was cast and the profit turned to the wicked who eameth deceitful wages.

Chief Whepley tried desperately to hold his department together. The handwriting was on the wall—handwriting that spelled doom for the promising young lieutenant. There was no way to stem the tide of opposition; he had been marked for the political execution block. Consequently Lieutenant Edmund applied for a leave of absence to join the marines.

The Mayor was eager for the opportunity to get rid of him. It was an opportunity that he had not expected; now he could follow the line of least resistance and still appease those clamoring for action. Therefore, desire supplanted wisdom, for as a man thinketh, so is he.

The Chief leisurely proceeded to finish his lunch. There was no way to combat the forces of evil that were pitted against him. He would be eligible for retirement in six months. The Mayor had suggested a way out; he could place his reputation and honor at the disposal of a political machine. He knew what that meant: a hole in the dike of good government. How could he knowingly permit vice and gambling to go uncensored? In six months a flood of complaints and criticism would descend upon his head. If he retired then, it would be under fire. No, he must find some other way; his respect for righteousness would not permit him to gamble with his reputation and character. Surely he could find some way to survive the pressure.

He glanced at his watch. It was time for him to meet the Mayor at Satan's Paradise. What a name to characterize a place of business! No good could come from such a den of iniquity. The Chief shuddered. He was thinking of the human wrecks who had gone to ruin in that environment. Department records told the story, reeking with vileness—the price paid by society for an experiment with sin.

Yet, Tom MacCallister gloated over the public ridicule that advertised his place as a “hot spot.” It brought volumes of business. Curious seekers from far and near came searching for a thrill and the opportunity to boast of a new licentious experience.

The Chief hesitated at the back door. He loathed the place. His conscience convicted him on each occasion that duty required him to enter, but that was his responsibility as a police officer. He was always confronted with these dark pictures of life. Society which courted a semblance of decency was blind to the pitfalls that existed there. How the other half of the world lived was remote knowledge, an attraction that enticed many. Tom MacCallister’s tavern was a melting pot for the underworld. The refined might enter; but they seldom left untainted. Everything which appealed to the lustful sensations of pleasure was to be found there. The files of the Police Department revealed the harvest of sin, the price of vanity so often sold. No one knew better than Chief Whepley how the leaven worked. Tonight, New Year’s Eve, a pleasure-mad crowd faced the destiny of those weighed in the balances and found wanting. In the night of revelry to follow there were many who would fail to escape the price of sin which had found them out.

He passed the rear door to the front of the building where a hilarious stream of patrons milled in and out. The night was young and many were still visiting friends and viewing the holiday decorations.

Lieutenant Edmund stood near the entrance to the tavern alley with a group of newsboys gathered around him. He had always been their idol in police uniform, and now that he was a lieutenant in the marines he was even more attractive. They were plying him with questions concerning his experience in the service.

Chief Whepley understood the significance of Lieutenant Edmund’s patience with boys. He was selling good will— friendship which had always paid handsome dividends when he was a police officer. The boys were still eager to serve him. Two of the group were already working on an assignment he had given them, a mission in detective work calling for an investigation of the activities of Mayor Friese.

The Chief found them inside when he entered the tavern. Apparently they were selling newspapers, but his trained eye detected the dual purpose of the mission. The Mayor and Tom MacCallister were conferring at the far end of the restaurant counter. One of the boys was under the table near them

diligently searching for a lost penny. The other boy was behind the two men and stood with one ear cocked in their direction while he displayed his wares to a patron seated at this same table. The casual observer would not have suspected that the two boys were listening to a confidential conversation.

“Captain Oscar Underwood will make the kind of chief of police this town needs.” The low, oily voice of Tom MacCallister was scarcely audible.

“I am concerned about his animosity toward the Jews; he thinks Hitler has the right idea when it comes to handling them. I don’t want to antagonize the Jewish vote.” Mayor Miese leaned closer over the end of the bar.

“Underwood isn’t pro-German—”

“He’s pretty outspoken with his anti-Jewish theories. I’m no Jew lover myself, but this is one of those things in which it is wise to be diplomatic.” The Mayor chuckled *sotto voce*, glancing over his shoulder as a matter of precaution.

“The Captain does not have the same technique as the old Chief, I’ll grant you that; but I don’t think there need be any fear about his handling the job. We certainly need the change.” The tavern proprietor blurted the opinion none too cautiously, much to the chagrin of the town’s leading politician.

“Easy, Tom, with your opinions,” His Honor advised.

“Underwood has his faults, but they don’t begin to equal the Chief’s. If you want my candid opinion, he’s the man for the job. You’ll find it’s a wise move.” Tom stepped around to give the Mayor a slap on the back.

The familiarity irritated His Honor. It was too open and conspicuous. He wanted Tom’s vote, his support and good will, but he did not welcome this open affection. He knew the attitude of the church people regarding political friendship.

“You know how the sentiment in the Department has been swinging lately.” Tom persisted in following the Mayor. “The public—”

“Yes, yes, I know all about it,” His Honor interrupted curtly.

“Underwood is warming up to the church crowd. His wife attends regularly, I understand—took him to a W. C. T. U. meeting Friday night,” chuckled the barkeeper.

“Yes, yes.” The Mayor’s face was crimson as he pushed toward the door to escape Tom’s hand on his shoulder.

“—bet he felt like a fish out of water—part of his political grooming. Watch Underwood. He’s a coming leader.” The low laugh was one of understanding.

Chief Whepley confronted the Mayor in the doorway. His Honor turned in confusion and pushed Tom MacCallister aside, looking over the crowd to locate someone whom he knew. Lieutenant Edmund appeared next to embarrass him. It was useless to try to leave the tavern. His only recourse was to mingle with the crowd and pretend to be interested in the floor show.

“Save me a New Year’s extra,” Lieutenant Edmund called to the two newsboys. “Here’s a dime; I’ll get the paper at the corner.”

One of the boys stepped over to receive the coin and to engage in conversation. “The city edition will be out in a half-hour,” he said, giving the Lieutenant a knowing Wink as he pressed toward the exit.

To avoid becoming conspicuous Chief Whepley ordered coffee at the restaurant counter. The marine used the opportunity to join him.

“This much is certain: MacCallister’s meeting with the Mayor doesn’t spell ‘Happy New Year’ for you, Chief,” whispered Lieutenant Edmund.

“Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them; for their heart studieth oppression, and their lips talk of mischief.” The Chief smiled.

“Well quoted, Chief! The book of Proverbs has the answer for their evil intentions,” said his companion.

Lieutenant Edmund drank his cup of coffee, rose and walked over to stand beside the Mayor, who was watching nine fat women present a vulgar act called “The Beef Trust.”

“Tom sure finds a variety of talent. The patrons should get their money’s worth if volume counts,” said Mayor Friese, pointing to a streamer over the stage reading “A Ton of Fun.”

“Excuse my frank opinion, Mayor. The act should be labeled ‘Fostering Gross Corpulent Obesity.’” He enjoyed the opportunity to ridicule the Mayor. “I’m dead certain Chief Whepley never passed censorship on the avoirdupois displayed here.”

Trying to find words to express himself, the Mayor flushed to the roots of his hair. Six months ago he could have reprimanded the young lieutenant. All he could do now was to nurse his anger and respect the marines.

“New Year’s Eve—annual affair that comes but once a year,” he mumbled. No other excuse seemed plausible.

“Once in a lifetime is too often for the good of the community, judging from my experience as a police officer.” Edmund’s reply irritated His Honor.

“Times have changed.” The Mayor’s jaw snapped.

“From bad to worse—”

“Constructive changes—”

“You mean, Mayor, conditions have changed to the point whereby it becomes difficult for a politician to say ‘No’ to the Beef Trust.” The marine was enjoying the drama.

“These people are defense workers. They are fighting for their country just as you are. They must relax. They need recreation, entertainment—”

“—booze and a rotten, suggestive floor show to keep up their moral courage.” Lieutenant Edmund was emphatic in the interruption. “I can’t see it, Mayor. Half the people here are disgusted with the act. A third of the remainder are morbidly curious, and the rest are too drunk to know what it is all about. Certainly the decent people don’t want it; and yet you take the opportunity to permit it.”

“I’m the Mayor of this town—”

“Obviously.” The tone of Lieutenant Edmund’s insinuation puzzled His Honor.

“What do you mean, Lieutenant?” he asked, suavely, regaining his composure. “You always were frank with your advice.”

“That, perhaps, explains why I am in the marines.” The significance of the reply did not escape the Mayor.

“It’s an honor to serve one’s country, I’m sure—”

“Quite right, either at home or abroad. Even to the point of retaining Chief Whepley.”

“Chief Whepley!” His Honor made the pretense of being puzzled.

“Yes, Mayor. The political grapevine rumor afloat isn’t healthy for the community. There’s too much talk about your having promised certain factions to rid the Department of the Chief.” The Lieutenant tried to hold the Mayor’s eye.

“No, Lieutenant. Absolutely no. I can’t imagine how such a story got started. Certainly Chief Whepley knows better—”

“He knows better than to disbelieve it,” came the uncompromising reply.

“Not—not later than this evening I—I—I told him different. He—he knows that I am pleased with him as Chief. The town is free from crime.

Chief Whepley will be here as long as I'm Mayor."

"You can balance yourself on the political fence just so long; then the inevitable happens." It was not difficult to see through the camouflage.

"Don't bother your head about political fables—"

"I have been looking the crowd over," Lieutenant Edmund interjected. "There are two factions here, one spying upon the other. Then there's a neutral group, unconcerned and indifferent to the trend of politics, a neutral group preyed upon by both factions courting favor with a bombardment of propaganda unequaled in the history of the city."

"I have friends on all sides," replied His Honor, with noticeable chest expansion.

"Political friends, who no doubt will cut your throat at the first opportunity—"

"You're not a politician." The Mayor emphasized the remark with a tailored grin.

"I am grateful for that small favor, Mayor. I'll take the marines and leave you with the trials and tribulations of a political czar," said Lieutenant Edmund, coughing because of the thick tobacco smoke.

"Very well, Lieutenant, we'll continue our debate on some less conspicuous occasion. It's a pleasure—having this opportunity to see you again." The political baron slapped him on the back with a gesture of friendliness meant to leave the impression with those present that he and Lieutenant Edmund were bosom companions.

6. A Night Rider

THE MAYOR'S CONVERSATION with Lieutenant Edmund had not been welcome. He hoped to read an account of the Lieutenant's having been lost at sea in the Pacific theater of war. When he granted the Lieutenant a leave of absence by fathering the resolution through the Council, he did it with the secret hope that something would happen to prevent his return to the Police Department. Tojo could have him. He was like Chief Whepley—too hard to handle politically. He was not the type of tool that the Mayor could use to advantage.

The situation in which he found himself at Tom MacCallister's tavern demanded a type of political conniving too deep for the average mind to comprehend. Lieutenant Edmund was defending his country. He wore a marine uniform; he must respect that if not the man. In two weeks his furlough would end and his presence in the community would cease to trouble him. The fact that he had been seen talking to the Lieutenant publicly would carry weight. It was less dangerous than intimacy with Chief Whepley on this particular occasion. He made it a point, however, to speak to the Chief in a manner that carried authority and dignity becoming the Mayor's office. Tom MacCallister and his constituency was a factor that he could not afford to offend. He wanted to leave the impression that the Chief was completely under his thumb. When he talked before the W. C. T. U. the following Friday, it would be different. Talking on the evils of the present "beer garden," he would mention some of his observations New Year's Eve while making the rounds of inspection with Chief Whepley. He would tactfully avoid mentioning a specific tavern or the names of the persons who were operating questionable places. The implication would be that he had left the entire responsibility with the Police Department. It was the Chief's duty to see that the law was enforced. He would avoid any pressure that would place him in a compromising position.

"Well, Chief," he said, stepping to his side, "I would like to have you accompany me. I want to be personally assured that everything is under con-

trol in this experiment of permitting places that sell liquor to remain open all night on such an occasion as New Year's."

"Just a minute, Mayor. It seems to me that someone seated at the table in the rear at our extreme left may be headed for trouble. I'll speak to Tom about it before we go. They have already had enough to drink." Chief Whepley's keen eye saw things which others failed to observe.

The Mayor stepped aside so that he could get a better view. There were four men seated at the table in question, barely visible through the haze of smoke. He knew every one of them unofficially, knew their connection with a secret cult intimately. They were friends in disguise, friends of a long-standing political following sworn to effect certain reforms. Their organization had no officially recognized title. Their purpose at Tom MacCallister's place was to secure information that could be used in promoting their scheme. They appeared much more intoxicated than they were. It was necessary that one of them should be locked in the same jail with Zeke Pool. Zeke was a former member of their cult. He had already talked too much; he must be silenced. A night rider from a neighboring state had been selected as the "fall guy." He carried credentials identifying him as Robert Smith. It was expedient that Chief Whepley should be the man to place him under arrest. There was a threefold purpose in view that must never be revealed. His arrest would be legal and appear on the police blotter as a routine matter which would throw him in contact with Zeke Pool. Zeke was an outcast; he could not visit him as a friend. Such a visit would arouse suspicion. His mission was more secret than that of the Gestapo. His arrest would give him personal contact with Chief Whepley and above all, it would permit him to talk officially with secret members of the Cult within the ranks of the Police Department. Captain Underwood must know he was in town, and why.

Bang! A beer bottle crashed through a plate-glass advertising sign hanging on the wall. The hubbub of erratic voices which indicated a well-patronized tavern, ceased.

There was silence after the first shock of the disturbance. Tom MacCallister hurried to the scene of action, demanding the identity of the culprit responsible for the damage. Chief Whepley stepped to the side exit and placed his hand upon the shoulder of one of the four men who had been sitting at the table where the trouble originated.

“You were a witness to this act occasioning the malicious destruction of property. I should like your name and address. Perhaps you can throw some light upon the motive back of it,” he said, with authority.

“There’s your man, Chief; can’t you see he’s drunk? You don’t need a witness. All he can do is to plead guilty,” the man replied indifferently.

“Nevertheless, it’s the customary procedure to get the names of witnesses who can testify to the facts.” The Chief was ready with pencil and notebook.

“Oh, all right, then; my name is Jay Parrotino. I was with my brother Tony here. We’re from Kokomo, Indiana. You’ll find us registered at the Annex Hotel. Art Rumby is the third man in the party. He’s also at the Annex, and hails from Lima, Ohio. We bumped into this man here, had a few drinks, and were ready to leave when he went wild and threw the bottle. The place for him is in jail. We don’t want any part of him. He’s nothing to us.” The lengthy explanation appeared logical and to the point.

“That’s right, Chief. I don’t want to get anybody else in trouble. I guess I had a drink too many. I threw the bottle, all right. The party is too dead for New Year’s. I’ll pay for the damage,” the culprit explained nonchalantly.

“The Police Department does not run a collection agency, my friend. We’ll have to let the judge decide how the damages are to be settled,” said the Chief.

“Oh, all right, if that’s the way you feel about it, let’s go,” was the caustic reply, as two uniformed officers arrived in response to a call from Tom MacCallister to take charge of the prisoner.

The three witnesses followed the procession out to the waiting cruiser, and watched while their erstwhile friend was seated in the back of the car and driven away.

“Merrily we roll along, roll along—ro-o-ll a-lo-ng,” a voice trailed in the distance.

The Mayor walked to his car, followed by the three men. The fact that they desired to talk with him was embarrassing; this was neither the time nor the place. With a curt reply to a question, he entered his car, stating that he was sorry that it was necessary for him to keep an appointment. The fact that his actions were not satisfactory was obvious.

“I wanted to compliment your Mayor,” said Jay Parrotino, turning to address Chief Whepley, “but the size of his hat band and chest expansion evidently does not permit compliments.”

“The Mayor has considerable responsibility.” Chief Whepley was versed in the art of avoiding statements that might be critical.

“You can take a message to Old Hi-pockets from me that after the next election the size of his hat band will be the same,” he retorted.

“The Mayor’s office in the city hall is open from nine to five every day but Saturday afternoon and Sunday.” The Chief smiled.

Lieutenant Edmund, having returned from an interview with the news-boys on the corner, joined the Chief. Together they walked through the alley in the direction of the police station.

“So that’s Chief John R. Whepley. Exceedingly choice with his words, isn’t he?” Art Rumby observed. “This is going to be interesting.”

“When it comes time to put him through his calisthenics,” Tony Parrotino replied.

“I’m not so sure about our playboy Mayor’s dependability. He’s riding the fence, playing both ends against the middle. I don’t like his attitude. He is as pliable as a jelly bag. It’s going to take pressure from all sides to keep him in shape,” Jack Brown elaborated, with an air of wisdom.

“It’s easier to handle that kind—”

“Where have I heard that statement before, Tony?” his brother asked skeptically.

“When Whepley’s brother-in-law sold us on the idea that the Chief could be handled like a Punch and Judy act.” Art Rumby picked absently at the mole above his collar. “It’s getting so you can’t trust anyone.”

Chief Whepley turned abruptly in the alley to face Lieutenant Edmund.

“What’s wrong with that arrest that I just made?” he asked seriously. “There’s something off-color that doesn’t ring true. I’ve been wondering where to put my finger on it.”

“What was the fellow’s name?”

“Smith—Robert Smith, if that means anything. They will have his right name at the station. We’ll inquire when we go in,” the Chief said absently. “He wasn’t as drunk as he tried to appear.”

“I think you are right. There was no object in throwing that bottle. If you are going into the office to talk to him, I think that I’ll drop into Tom’s joint again and take a bird’s eye view of the place from the musicians’ platform.” Lieutenant Edmund turned and approached the three witnesses standing at the end of the alley.

7. Organized Disorder

IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT for Lieutenant Edmund to find an observation post. Tom MacCallister's tavern was profusely decorated. A seat at the end of the orchestra platform afforded a haven where he could hide from curious eyes. The fact that he did not drink kept him from mingling with the crowd. There were many people there whom he knew, and many people imbibing intoxicants whom he did not care to meet. He had no time for the incoherent chatter that he knew must follow. His mission was serious, a self-imposed duty prompted by loyalty to his former Chief.

He scrutinized the scene. There were nearly a hundred tables in the room. At least four hundred people were present. They came from all walks of life. Some wore costumes and some were attired in evening dress. All wore paper hats and carried noise makers furnished by the management. Everything to please a gay, carefree crowd had been provided. The rattle of glasses and change assured Tom that he was to have a "big night." Old and young, motivated by the spirit Of New Year's Eve, were there to sacrifice to the god of passion in fulfilling the traditions of the past. For many, it was the last fling before a new resolution—a resolution made to be broken in the months following. Hopes ran high in thoughtless preparation of new vows. It was the custom to make new resolutions, but human nature to break them.

Lieutenant Edmund studied the crowd. The characters were numerous, but none outshone the conspicuous little man, past forty, who sat at the left of the orchestra. One never forgot the red, woolly head of this ex-featherweight pugilist known to all as Kingpin. Still cocky as a bantam rooster, he loved nothing better than a fight, but his days inside the ropes were over; his field of battle changed to the political arena.

In his real name, Vincent DeVaud, he owned and edited the Daily Press, but few knew him by any name other than Kingpin. It fitted him as the political boss of Central City. This coined expression appealed to his vanity. He gloated in pride over it, capitalized upon it, and permitted but a small

minority of his friends not to use it. Those who called him “Vine” were his most intimate friends and few in number.

Kingpin was the key man in a political faction that opposed the Mayor. Or did he oppose the Mayor? The question was one for debate. He had given the Mayor his support in the election on two occasions. He took credit for “making” the Mayor politically, but he opposed him as a third term candidate. There was an undercurrent of animosity that distinguished them as enemies in the coming campaign. What their ultimate positions might be was a matter of conjecture.

Kingpin was surrounded by a bodyguard of four men. Why, they scarcely knew, except that their idol never went to such places alone. They never drank to excess; drinking was taboo for Kingpin’s bodyguards; he reserved that right only for himself. Yet he feared no man, judging from his scathing editorials. What he feared was a system that opposed him politically or any opposition to his effort to dominate the City Hall. Moreover, he feared himself—his weakness for drink and women. In either case he was not his own master. He maintained a bodyguard to protect him from himself, and to witness for him when emergencies arose that might make him a prey to his enemies. Tonight his cohorts would hear him make his annual resolution. This year they would drink a toast, to rule or ruin the Mayor and his colleagues. Tonight they were girding for battle and preparation for the coming spring election. Kingpin would set the pace.

On the opposite side of the room several of the Mayor’s supporters were seated at a table discussing the possibilities of the forthcoming fray. They were a group of the “ins” casting about for a harbor of safety. That they were conscious of the local publisher’s presence was self-evident. Their whole discussion concerned Kingpin and his plans which he would fight daily to uphold through the medium of his editorial column. What would be his line of attack? How had he strengthened his political strongholds? Who were to be the victims to suffer dishonor and appear on his casualty list? At heart they were with the Mayor, but for economic reasons their loyalty must be governed by the desire to be on the winning side. Their mission was to keep abreast of political movements as influenced by public sentiment.

A third group was scattered through the crowd in pairs or units of three. They were members of the secret Cult, some of whom, for private reasons, belonged to all factions. They were creating an invisible empire which eventually was to be victorious. Their mission was to select candidates and

manipulate the appointment of others who could be induced to do their bidding. The three witnesses had separated and joined this movement, seeking new contacts. Their companion reposing in the city jail had been forgotten.

No one would have suspected their ulterior motives except those having a knowledge of their tactics. They were gathering bits of information, half-truths, facts that could be utilized in a program of propaganda to injure and destroy the character and reputation of those who politically opposed the advancement of their secret group. Where no facts were to be had, circumstances created them. It was their duty to see that conditions were brought about which would slay their opponents with poisoned darts of gossip. Gossip was a weapon which ever served to identify them, crafty though they were in trying to conceal it. Strangers to the community, they were careful not to have the fact become known that they had an interest in local political battles. To be suspected of having personal interest revealed weakness, and few there were who fully realized the part they had to play in kindling that fire of hatred and animosity for others which they nurtured in their hearts.

Lieutenant Edmund reflected upon the situation in the light of Isaiah's prophecy: *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! ...Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.* Surely the devices of man were an abomination unto the Lord. Men were planning, plotting, conniving to annihilate the friend or neighbor who opposed them politically. It made no difference whether they used fair means or foul; their only concern was to escape the law. At heart they were relying upon a self-righteous wisdom that justified their acts. When the law failed to administer discipline as speedily as they desired, they were not opposed to joining a night-riding party. Such was the mission of the three witnesses and the prisoner who had been arrested at their table.

They had just come from another state, having fulfilled the duty of educating an unfaithful member who failed to fulfill his obligations. The crack of a blacksnake whip around his ears in a remote and lonely section of the country had given him a change of heart. Motivated by forced loyalty, he promised to return to his home and diligently foster the cause of the Cult. His lips were silent but his memory carried him back to events of the evening which were to haunt him forever.

Their next victim sat in a beer garden miles away. He had betrayed a confidence. While drunk he had talked out of turn, an unpardonable of-

fense, when revealing secrets of the organization which he had faithfully sworn to guard. He was a marked man because of his unfaithfulness. He must reckon with the facts. The fiendish wrath of the invisible empire was about to strike. A friend would place him "on the spot." Night riders from a distant city would be there. He would be chastised for an offense he could not remember.

A new face appeared to puzzle Lieutenant Edmund. It was someone whom he felt that he should know but failed to recognize. He was first attracted by the fact that this individual had some object in contacting various groups which he had been watching. It was evident that he was well known to all of them and carried a message of grave importance. There were whispered conversations that made the man's actions mysterious. He was cautious in his movements and apparently guarding against a suspected foe. When a streetcar conductor wearing a uniform resembling that of the city police stepped into the tavern, he skulked behind a group of patrons who hid him from view.

Curiosity conquered the Lieutenant. He hid in the shadow of the decorations until he was able to step up to the man whose back was toward him. Turning, he confronted Lieutenant Edmund with a violent start.

"—lo," he said, viewing the marine uniform with evident relief.

"Hello, Bill, you're a stranger in that slouch hat. I thought you always wore a cap. I've been watching you for ten minutes and did not know who you were until this moment. What's up tonight, a masquerade?" said the marine jovially, extending his hand.

"No." The curt reply did not correspond to Bill Hayward's feeling of relief. "What is it? Marines?" He continued to study the neat attire of the officer confronting him.

Lieutenant Edmund's firm grip relaxed to drop the fish-like palm of a former acquaintance. Bill Hayward was Chief Whepley's stepbrother. Nearly ten years younger, he had followed the Chief to the city to utilize the popularity of the young officer in securing a position. Since this he had served fifteen years in the City Water Department to earn a position of trust and responsibility. A promotion to chief assistant proved his downfall. Immediately he became a changed man, drunk with authority and sorely lacking in judgment. Inflating his ego, political factions asked him to champion their causes. Minor victories enhanced his desire to rise to the heights of po-

litical fame. From this time he pondered on methods of changing existing conditions.

When political reverses came and his faction lost control in the Council, it was a personal affront that left him vindictive and rebellious. From the remnant of the political battle, the "Silent Six" withdrew to form the nucleus of a powerful political machine to be created as an invisible empire. To this was added the "Junior Six," which comprised a group idolized within the haunts of the innermost secret chamber of the "Dirty Dozen." Drawn by lot, each of the twelve was charged with a particular mission. They were key men chosen and banded together for a specific purpose: to undermine the political foundation of all opposing factions.

To Bill Hayward fell the duty of joining the church to which Chief Whepley belonged. It was his sworn duty, but not his choice. He did not understand godly things. Fear seized him, and, to make recompense for his unfaithfulness as a member, he exchanged places with another, to whom the lot fell to spy upon Communist organizations. By choice he chose to go forth to learn the secret of their power and to acquire such knowledge of their tactics as might be beneficial to the invisible empire. Rather than serve God, he went forth in secret and in great aspiration to accomplish something spectacular in politics. He devoted all his spare time to this cause. His family scarcely saw him for weeks on end. During the day he was tired and indifferent to his responsibilities. At night he prowled in secret, visited meetings, posing as a Communist sympathizer when need occurred, and went to bed only when physical exhaustion compelled him to do so.

For several years the group grew, feeling their way cautiously. Only the proved and secretly tested prospects were eligible for consideration. No one was contacted openly and told the purpose of the mythical organization. An organization which was, and yet was not. Many who knew nothing of its merits unwittingly found themselves members because they had trusted some unworthy friend.

Undesirable elements enter all movements, and so it was with the secret Cult. These members were undesirable because they could not be trusted; they could not be depended upon to conform to the unscrupulous principles of organized disorder which the membership desired. Yet, the movement flourished. Men eager to force their ideas upon others became leaders. Behind the movement was the belief that a perfect order of government was in the process of creation. The utopia for civilization where peace, prosperity

and happiness would forever prevail was their visionary ideal. Men must be made to see the light and conform to their principles.

As in all movements that violate God's laws of compensation, unforeseen difficulties were constantly causing trouble. Many were met in the self-sufficiency and strength of man, but not all. The Cult members had failed to consider the truth of Isaiah's prophecy:

Woe upon them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

God had not been taken into account: Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

8. Behind The Black Mask

AT A GIVEN SIGNAL known only to members of the Cult, Bill Hayward turned abruptly and left Lieutenant Edmund. He had an important duty to perform—a duty that must be met. Success depended upon rigid enforcement of orders. To this time everything had moved with clock-like precision. Every member had been loyal to the cause. However, occasionally it had been necessary to exercise discipline in order to guide the wayward. In every case of this nature the Cult authorities had been able to predetermine the outcome, and therein lay the secret. Bill's knowledge of human nature was measured in the light of such experiences. He little dreamed that it was possible to overestimate men; he did not know that what one did all would not do in a given set of circumstances.

Lieutenant Edmund was passé in Bill's estimation. The Mayor had loaned him to the marines for the duration in order to get rid of him. He was a man without portfolio as far as law enforcement was concerned. Suppose he did leave him standing watching the clock, as it were, to strike the hour of midnight? The puzzled expression on his face might have spelled trouble for someone when he wore a police uniform, but not now. He could tell the marines any complaints he might have.

The picture that Lieutenant Edmund saw was altogether different. Bill Hayward's action and the group with which he associated had excited his curiosity. There were questions in his mind that would have to be answered; but he was not fooled. Bill could not be expected to furnish the information. It would be unwise to question him. Far more could be accomplished by leading him to believe that he was not under suspicion.

Thus, a mutual war existed between the two opponents. Bill, relying upon his cleverness to deceive others, did not dream of opposition. The fact that Lieutenant Edmund was serving his country eliminated him. Truly, he did not like him; they had nothing in common; he was Chief Whepley's friend and no friend of the Chief's was to be trusted or admired. It was an unwritten law in the Cult. The Chief was unfriendly to the principles to

which they adhered. He had been antagonistic without excuse to their efforts and ideas. His definition of right and wrong was too finely drawn. The very fact that he was Chief of Police prevented progress. Something must be done about it. He had listened to too many promises—promises that did not materialize. The Mayor's secret promise to get rid of the Chief was one of them. Other members of the Council had made the same promises to no avail. A day of reckoning must come: a dark horse, some member favorable to the progress of the invisible empire, must replace the Chief as executive head of the Police Department.

When Bill left Tom MacCallister's tavern his antagonism toward Chief Whepley and Lieutenant Edmund was left behind. He had other duties to perform first. The Chief's removal would follow in due order; it was a question of time. His New Year's resolution decreed that it must be accomplished. But he must practice the policy of the mystic order: first things came first. The signal had been given to perform another duty. That was part of an organizer's responsibility. Bill gloated over that title. To strike when the iron was hot was his motto, and, unfortunately for his victims, it had proved effective. Tonight they would be outside the jurisdiction of Chief Whepley. There were too many police officers assigned to extra duty. The Secret Six had agreed that it was not wise to take undue chances. Why encounter the danger of interference when the countryside afforded a perfect haven for the task at hand?

Lieutenant Edmund, although no longer in police uniform, left the tavern with a duty to perform—one of those self-imposed duties that might lead anywhere. He walked to the corner and awaited the approach of the newsboy to whom he had talked earlier in the evening.

"What's the dope, Ted? How did they leave?" His questions were to the point.

"Jitney number twenty-eight, going north. Eleven twenty-nine."

"Bill Hayward and who else?"

"The three witnesses. There were five with the driver." The lad was sure of his facts.

"Did you hear the orders?"

"Sure. Smoky Joe is at the wheel. The fellow Bill is riding in front with him. The other three are in the back seat. They're going to Five Points," Ted explained.

"Smoky Joe's jitney—Five Points—good—"

“The black sedan. Jitney number twenty-eight. State license PX six-six-zero-six,” the boy added eagerly.

“Fine work, Ted; keep an eye on Kingpin and his bodyguard, will you?” Lieutenant Edmund emphasized his request with a slap on the back that signified loyalty. Every newsboy wanted to be a marine.

“You’ve a fine spirit, son. No policeman is a better detective than the newsboy on the corner.” The Lieutenant whispered in his ear, “When I get back from the service maybe you’ll be old enough to join the force.”

“When I get to be a policeman I want to work for you.” There was devotion as well as seriousness in the reply.

“Keep your ears open and your mouth shut until you see me or the Chief. Watch the company Tom MacCallister keeps,” the young marine advised.

“I’ll be watching and storing it here,” the lad replied, touching his forehead in a salute. “I’ll have all my gang on the lookout.”

“Fine, Ted. You have never failed me. I’ll be depending on you to deliver the goods. Keep the beam on the Mayor.”

“Sure, you’ll be surprised—” A customer interrupted and Ted bounded off, crying his wares in eagerness to make another sale.

“Fine material—that boy,” Lieutenant Edmund repeated half aloud. “Smart as a whip and as keen as they make ’em. Swell little detective. He should make the Department some day, if he holds his own.”

While Lieutenant Edmund was musing upon the events of the evening, Ted Parker was not only selling newspapers but also gathering information. He was a stalwart lad, just past sixteen, and as loyal a friend as one could find. There was hardly a person in town whom he did not know, at least by sight. He could call every policeman, fireman and city official by name. Likewise, he could name the shortcomings as well as the good qualities of most of them, should he choose to do so, but he never let these influence or prejudice him. He was a diplomat; it was “good business” to treat them all alike. It was a policy he pursued at all times—and one that always paid handsome dividends.

Ted was one of those lads with more horse sense than the average. He knew when it was wise to talk and in whom it was safe to place confidence. He made it a point never to betray a trust, nor permit others to do so. His method of gathering information was an art that few understood. Other newsboys were often delegated to a task, little dreaming that they were

serving two masters. Thus Ted was able to secure information without being exposed.

Bill Hayward had unknowingly matched wits with this newsboy whom he felt he had no occasion to fear. When Bill left the tavern, Ted was in his usual place crying his wares. He did not appear to be interested in Smoky Joe or his passengers. Bill, taking his usual precaution, had not permitted the jitney driver to stop for all his passengers at one point. He was not that foolish, but he did make the mistake of telling the three witnesses to station themselves at various jitney stops where he would stop for them.

Ted had been instructed by Lieutenant Edmund to watch Bill and any companions with whom he might associate, and the newsboy's curiosity was aroused when he saw him approach Smoky Joe and mention the price of a trip to Five Points an hour before the time of departure. The conversation had not been meant for other ears but Ted managed to listen unsuspected. It was the information that Lieutenant Edmund wanted. Other newsboys whom he had posted at various intersections would supply the rest.

When Bill and his henchmen finally went on their way, he was certain there were no clues revealing their destination. He had not told anyone where they were going. Even Smoky Joe had not been definitely told about the trip, nor had he asked. He knew better. His experience on former trips had taught him to keep his own counsel. Where he had been with Hayward was a closed book. Tonight was a new chapter; he would follow orders as directed and ask no questions. Nevertheless, he always had a comprehensive understanding of what was taking place without the facts to prove it. The Cult depended upon a leader to direct the course of events. Bill Hayward was group commander of a unit to which Smoky Joe belonged. Joe did not know of this New Year's Eve adventure, but word had gone out confidentially that all roads that night led to Five Points.

When they arrived, a traffic officer was on duty at the main intersection to direct those who gave the proper signal to the clandestine meeting place. The road left the main highway and turned into a pasture lot. Here two men were stationed to see that none passed without credentials unless properly identified. The winding road skirted a wood lot and led to the edge of a lake and a lone log cabin. Some twenty people were gathered at this rendezvous where an initiation ceremony was to be held for new inductees.

After the dramatic events of an impressive ceremony, five members arrived in a car with a badly frightened and confused man who had been

transported to the scene to be disciplined. His kidnapers had said they would assist him to “find a job.” The ruse was successful and the unwilling victim found himself a human guinea pig forced to undergo chastisement at the hands of a strange mob.

The first ordeal was a severe grilling concerning an alleged affair with another woman. He looked into the masked faces of his tormentors and became panic-stricken. When, out of sheer fright, he refused to answer questions, someone in the crowd suggested that he dance to the music of a sixshooter. A suggestion was all that was needed to put the words into action. A big burly fellow, hiding behind the black mask that covered his eyes, stepped out swinging a 38-caliber police positive around the forefinger of each hand. Another attempt was made to get the victim to talk.

Tongue-tied, he stood frozen to the spot, watching his antagonist.

Bang! The beach sand splattered around him, forcing him to jump violently.

“Dance, you fool! Can’t you see we mean business? Talk or else!”

The fellow did not respond to the crowd. They wanted more action. A cry went up cheering the bully with the guns.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Both guns barked in unison, the shots coming dangerously close to the poor fellow’s feet. Wild-eyed, he bolted, nearly knocking two men off their feet as he sped down the beach toward the thicket.

Bang! Bang! Another gun barked in the hands of a half-drunk onlooker whose thought of exposure, if the fellow escaped, prompted him to shoot recklessly.

The man stumbled and fell, the victim of a shot.

An appalling stillness revealed the effect of the tragedy upon the assembly. A search for friends began. In twos, threes and groups of four or more, they began to drift into the shadows and disappear. The purr of a motor starting in the cold night air told of the get-away. Soon the lane was filled with moving cars. The party was over and everyone present was searching his mind for an excuse that would explain the act.

They were panic-stricken in their desire to establish an alibi proving them to have been elsewhere. Ghostly memories haunted them; the black masks could not hide their consciences. The memories of a dead man pursued them—a dead man whose lifeblood ran red on the frost-covered beach sand. God’s decree was changeless: Thou shalt not kill.

9. The Cult Murder Mystery

MURDER ALWAYS ACCELERATES law enforcement. Every ounce of police effort is required to meet the emergency. A question mark hovers over the circumstances. The public wants to know the how, who, when, where and why of the tragedy. A link in the chain of human events has been broken; another character is missing from the stage of life. The public demands full details.

Kingpin did not welcome the interest displayed by the citizens of Central City. He was looking for news—sensational news—and political revenge. Consequently, he had a reason for withholding certain information from Chief Whepley. The ethics of correct police procedure did not serve his purposes. He did not want that kind of investigation. Instead, the Police Commission sat huddled in the basement room of Satan's Paradise while the Press maneuvered the setting for a political "spontaneous combustion" that was to rock the foundation of government in Central City.

The Cult murder mystery blazed in the headlines of the New Year's extra linking Central City with the tragedy that occurred twenty miles away. There were clues that led to the haunts of the underworld of the great metropolis that hummed in the sister city. A full-page story in the Central City Press tied the two localities together. The victim's family lived in Central City. He had left them New Year's Eve to accompany a group of friends who were to recommend him for a better position. The young wife, burdened with the duties of caring for three small children, had asked no questions; the three children were too small to realize the tragedy that had come to their humble home.

The New Year began with disappointments that mystified them. Expecting to meet their father, they found a policeman at the door. He asked to see their mother. When she came to the door, he asked to see her in private, but thought better of it when she directed her children to return to their play. Speaking softly, he told her to be brave and face the unwelcome news that concerned her family. Stunned and dry-eyed she listened while he related

the sad circumstances and hoped against hope that there had been some mistake—that the martyred man was not her husband.

Christmas toys strewn about the floor no longer attracted the children. Halfheartedly they followed their mother's orders, but six little eyes and ears were working at cross purposes with three little hearts that had lost interest in Christmas. The policeman's presence was unusual; his questions concerning their father were unusual—questions which they did not understand.

They saw the policeman quietly close the door, leaving their mother to sob with grief. She realized the fact that she was a widow and must face the world with three small children. Why had the policeman brought such heartache? What had they done to earn this stroke of chastisement? The children crowded around their mother, their little faces looking up with puzzled expressions of curiosity.

The policeman had tried to be sympathetic, had tried to break the news in a kindly way; but there are no kind words in a death message—a tragic message that robs the home of the father and loved one that no one can replace.

When the mother's tears gave vent to the pain in her heart, the children shared her grief. Together they clung to her skirt and cried, trembling with fear. She gathered them into her arms and tried to explain their father's absence. He would never return. Her voice broke—she could not tell them that.

The Police Department deals in hard, cold facts—facts of heartache, tragedy and sin. Chief Whepley first learned of the Cult murder through the officer assigned to deliver the death message. He stopped at the Chief's home on his return to the office to advise him of the unusual procedure connected with the investigation. While the jurisdiction of the crime did not primarily concern them, there were matters that did require the services of several departments. The victim's family and home in Central City involved them in the investigation. His friends and associates would have to be checked for clues. Whom did he know there? Who had last seen him alive? What were the circumstances? How had he left town? Who had accompanied him on the death ride?

Unknown to Chief Whepley, the case involved far, far more than murder. Kingpin had introduced a new element into the investigation that was to burden the city with a political tie-up costing thousands of dollars. Under

the guise of serving justice, the long-suffering taxpayer unwittingly had been serving two equally unscrupulous political factions, both of whom sought the Chief's job.

Chief Whepley had worked virtually the entire night. Police duty came first. He hated politics. Consequently, he had earned the ill will of both factions. The many New Year's accidents, crimes and tragedies were problems for the police, and his personal problem; he was a servant of the public, not of the politicians.

At the midnight hour, a drunken driver, asleep at the wheel, drove down the wrong side of the street across the main intersection and crashed into a telephone pole. Sudden death was the result. The Chief was present at the investigation. It was his task to notify the bereaved family of the casualty. How often the police officer is called upon to review such tragedies!

He arrived home in time for an early breakfast. He was discouraged and heartsick. When would men learn the way of life? The memory of the grief-stricken mother and three children disturbed his two hours of rest before he returned to the office to investigate the tragedies which had occurred. The morning paper lay on the front porch unopened. He did not want to read the tragic reports that he knew must fill its pages. He had been too close to the scene of events. There were other events—city, county, state and national—which did not concern him, but they were all evidences of the sin in the hearts of men.

In the interim, an account of the Cult murder mystery appeared in an extra edition of the Press. It involved entangling alliances that Chief Whepley could not escape. As the investigation progressed a number of citizens were discovered to be associated with an unscrupulous political organization. Police, fire and government services were prominently represented in the membership. Doctors, lawyers, clerks, mechanics and labor representatives had been chosen as members so that they could watch the political pulse of the community.

Several of Chief Whepley's men were named as a nucleus operating under the guise of the "Heart Club" to foster membership in the organization. The Heart Club was a recruiting station where prospective candidates were checked, scrutinized and unknowingly sifted for qualifications favorable to membership. Those who passed inspection were invited to a secret meeting and inducted by force regardless of personal convictions. Once a man entered the inner circle, there was no turning back. Heart Club members found

ineligible for membership in the secret circle were permitted to continue, unaware that they were merely an outward shield for the parent organization. They were never notified of the meetings of the nucleus; they were merely a protection for the Cult.

Secretive, cunning, conniving, they moved from community to community, welding a new link in the chain, broadening the Cult membership and operating unsuspected under the name of some innocent-sounding social or political club.

To complicate the situation, Kingpin seized the opportunity to despoil his political foes. It was a day of revenge that he had long sought. Here was an opportunity to link them with a diabolically operated political organization in the name of justice. The mere fact that they had attended a questionable meeting was enough for him. Courting the favor of one of the prodigies of the Cult, he pictured the possibilities of giving him a white-collar job in the city government. Assured by the Council members that this was possible, he deserted the cause, turned traitor to those in league with him and betrayed the secrets of the organization.

The Mayor was called. The Council met in secret session and split over policies at the midnight rendezvous. The balance of power, however, remained with Kingpin. Much against his better judgment, the Mayor called Chief Whepley and directed that a hand-picked group of police officers selected by the Press be appointed to conduct a secret investigation of the Police Department regarding membership in the Black Cult.

10. The Tightening Net

CHIEF WHEPLEY sat in his office early Monday morning following the never-to-be-forgotten holiday week end. He had already interviewed Zeke Pool and Lem Chase regarding the episode at Tom MacCallister's tavern on New Year's Eve and disposed of them by ordering action in court. He recommended that Pool be placed on probation for hospitalization and that Chase be retained in custody long enough to check his record with the RBI. There was something about his offense that did not ring true. Few men deliberately try to get into jail as Chase had done. There was a reason for his action, and Chief Whepley proposed to find out what motivated it.

He pondered the matter. The morning paper containing the latest development in the Cult murder was spread across his desk. Somehow there seemed to be connecting thoughts. The two continued to run together in his mind. Who was Lem Chase? Why was he in Central City? He seemed to be a mysterious character. Why had he chosen to hide under the mysterious alias, "Robert Smith"?

Through the Window he saw the Mayor and Kingpin engaged in a sidewalk conference in front of the city hall. A group of policemen were in Captain Underwood's office. Another group gathered around a team of detectives who sat in a car under a side window of his office. The entire Department was in a state of uncertainty; all were busily discussing the Cult investigation. The hand-picked super-Sleuths selected to work under the direction of the Mayor were conspicuous. Who was to blame for the digression from police principles by ordering this assignment? Who suspected whom? The morale in the Department was at a low ebb. Chief Whepley tried to analyze the situation. There was no logical reason to handle an investigation in this way aside from politics. How would it all end?

"Good morning, Chief." Mayor Friese slid into a chair in front of the Chief's desk. "Kingpin tells me that they have picked up the gunman in the Cult murder."

“Yes, I just talked with the sheriff—ruthless murder. He’ll plead guilty and let the state support him on a life sentence—”

“And tell everything he knows in the meantime.” Mayor Friese was uncomfortable.

“What would you expect from a ‘rat.’ They all squeal, don’t they? I haven’t any sympathy for those who have been associated with him. Let them take their medicine,” said Chief Whepley. “The only thing I question is the political investigation attached to it.”

“It isn’t politics. It’s a fact-finding investigation to serve justice, as far as I am concerned,” said the Mayor.

“Conducted by politicians—”

“Seven of your best policemen have been assigned, have they not?” the Mayor ventured knowingly.

“By your order as chief executive of the city, subscribing to the political advice of the Press,” the veteran police officer replied.

Mayor Friese reddened perceptibly.

“I think I made myself clear. I don’t wholeheartedly approve of conducting any criminal investigation as a political subterfuge.” Chief Whepley was emphatic.

The Mayor’s eyebrows lifted. The Chief was helping him. “As well say it, Mayor, as to think it. I may look to Kingpin like a member of the Black Cult. It’s too bad to disappoint him, but the facts don’t prove it.” The Chief smiled. “Personally, I am glad to have you take the responsibility of the investigation; still, it does not make it ethical, according to the mechanics of good police work.”

“You agree that there should be an investigation then—”

“Definitely.”

“What’s wrong with having it conducted through my office?” the Mayor inquired seriously.

“You can’t fight fire with fire, Mayor. Not in politics. Two political factions, both motivated by a consuming fire of malice, hatred and greed for power, cannot serve justice.” There was no doubt in the Chief’s mind.

“Political sins? Consuming fire? Rather fatalistic theory, isn’t it, Chief?” the Mayor questioned.

“He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity. You need no better authority than the Good Book,” was the apt reply.

Mayor Friese squirmed uncomfortably in his chair. The discussion had taken an unfavorable turn. Chief Whepley was a pessimist, a dissenter, a fastidious hypocrite, a slave to his own ideas. If the Cult murder investigation served no better purpose than bringing about the Chief's resignation, he would feel justified.

It was not difficult for Chief Whepley to decipher the thoughts running through the Mayor's mind. He had not kept his ear tuned to the local political wave length in vain. His ability to sift kernels of truth from the chaff of unfounded gossip usually kept him well aware of the trend of political thought. He had never been an asset to any faction versed in political skullduggery. Therefore, he had many secret foes ready and willing to bargain with someone whom they could use as a tool.

"Quite an interesting meeting of the Board of Supervisors last Friday, I understand," said the Chief.

"Very," replied Mayor Friese.

"By the way, Mayor, Whom does Kingpin propose as the new Chief of Police of Central City?"

"Just what do you mean, Chief?"

"Referring to the conversation you had with Kingpin in the Blue Room at the Fine Arts Apartments, Friday noon." Chief Whepley's eyes twinkled with curiosity. "Walls have ears, you see, especially when a group of supervisors get together for an extra highball."

"Just idle talk. Vinc had a few too many. Don't let any of that gossip worry you, Chief; there's nothing to it. Central City needs you. The citizens of this town would never stand for a change of police executives, and Kingpin knows it," the Mayor explained graciously.

"Unless it can be proved that I am a member of the Black Cult—"

"Now, Chief, how ridiculous; you know no one would believe that," said His Honor suavely. "Those who think no evil see no evil, you know."

"Perhaps I am a bit too farsighted, Mayor."

"Yes, I, forgot it. Sit tight; you have nothing to worry about"

"Then there's no truth in the rumor that Kingpin hopes to link me with the Black Cult and eventually effect my resignation or dismissal?" Chief Whepley found reason to ask.

"Absolutely none, Chief. You'll be here as long as I am Mayor. The public would not stand for a change. You have an enviable record." The reply had a false note of assurance.

“Think no evil—of a politician,” Chief Whepley mused, welcoming the interrupting ring of the telephone.

11. The Putridness Of Evil

WHEN THE DYNAMIC EXPLOSION occurred which exposed the Black Cult, the clandestine membership scurried like rats for cover. The Central City nuclei hurriedly met in a secret subterranean hide-out to formulate plans for covering their trail.

Captain Underwood took a day's furlough to go fishing through the ice. Sergeant Marcus joined him on his regular day off for the week. Bill Hayward called the office by telephone and said he was sick. The trio, however, met in a cottage on the bank of a distant river where certain of the number could fulfill the pretense of ice fishing and plan their strategy.

Under cover of night two patrolmen and three members of the Central City Fire Department joined those already at the cottage for a meeting of the Dirty Dozen, who were to meet before the basement fireplace. The only evidence that betrayed the secret conference was a thin line of smoke which rose from the chimney of the cottage and filled the crisp night air with the odor of burning driftwood.

Mayor Friese and a member of the Police Commission quietly paid a midnight visit to the rendezvous to lend moral support. They had a legitimate reason for being away from home. They had previously attended a lodge meeting, which served as an alibi for their absence from the city.

The main topic of conversation was the Black Cult murder and who was responsible for the investigation. Mayor Friese deftly blamed Chief Whempley. The Chief was not there to defend himself. No one wanted him there. He had not been invited. There were obvious reasons why he should have no knowledge of the meeting. It was not his party; he was outside the fold, a predetermined traitor without portfolio.

In the early stages of the organization the Chief had been selected for membership. Bill Hayward had made the recommendation without consulting him. To induct him into membership became a problem. The Chief was cold to all advances and successfully dodged all traps to entice him into a meeting. He seemed to have a foreknowledge of events and avoided them in

an uncanny way. Consequently, the members were suspicious of each other, thinking that he had an informant in their midst. They were filled with mistrust and fear. The Chief had earned their enmity; he was one in whom they dared not place confidence.

Ostracized and unknowingly on the black list, the Chief had the right to be grateful. The Lord had directed his footsteps in the pathway of righteousness in a way that he did not understand. The sword of the Spirit had gone before him in battle, leaving Cult members to tremble in fear.

“Certainly Chief Whepley is not to be trusted!” Bill Hayward exploded vehemently. “But the man that should be tarred and feathered, hanged and then burned at the stake is your mutual friend, Kingpin. You—you are playing right into his hand. Anyone but a jellyfish would have stopped him cold when he proposed the investigation. Now we’re all in the net. How—how are you going to stop such a rat?” Rage overcame him.

“Perhaps we’d better let Chief Whepley take over the job,” someone suggested.

“No, Mayor Friese is right. He’s on the spot—there’s no way to avoid it now. We’re all in the boat together. We can’t be fighting over who shall have an oar.” Captain Underwood was emphatic. “Chief Whepley would have us all fired or in jail.”

“You can say that again,” said the Mayor.

“Chief Whepley is the man we want fired, eh, Captain?” Sergeant Marcus interjected.

“How about it, Mayor? We thought that was understood,” someone added.

“That comes within the province of the Police Commission. They hire and fire. You have a representative here. He might answer the question,” His Honor replied.

“I am only one out of three,” came the weak response. “What do you expect me to do—prefer false charges?”

“It’s time someone got busy,” Sergeant Marcus said sullenly.

“What do you propose, Sergeant?” the senior patrolman inquired.

“Put him in a frame with some woman!”

“Ha, swell chance,” one of the firemen replied. “He’s devoted to his wife; he’s in church every Sunday; doesn’t dance, drink or smoke. How are you going to frame a guy like that?”

“That doesn’t say it can’t be done, does it?” Sergeant Marcus remonstrated irritably.

“It’s got to be something that the public will accept as reasonable,” said Police Commissioner Bly. “What’s the Chief’s hobby?”

“I’ve got it,” said the junior patrolman. “He likes to hunt. Have someone take him out hunting and plant a couple of hen pheasants in the hubcaps of that new sedan he’s driving.”

“And have him arrested for violating the game law. Swell idea,” Commissioner Bly interrupted. “Something like that might work.”

“No,” said Captain Underwood. “In the first place, the hunting season is over. You’ve got to give the Chief credit for having some sense. He wouldn’t go hunting out of season; all of you know that. Commissioner Bly is right. The setting has to be something reasonable; hunting out of season isn’t the answer.”

“I still maintain that an entangling alliance with some woman is the best bet,” Sergeant Marcus persisted.

“You have the job of setting the stage,” said the Captain authoritatively.

“Someone has got to help. You don’t expect me to do it all alone, do you?” the Sergeant whined, looking sheepishly about the circle for support.

“You are wasting a lot of time arguing about something that will eventually take care of itself.” Mayor Friese emphasized the purpose of the meeting. “You forget that Kingpin is pushing an investigation that may have us all behind the bars.”

“If he has his way we’ll all be in jail, all right,” Bill Hayward agreed.

“Obviously, from the report in the papers, someone belongs there,” an inconspicuous member tormented.

“Shut up!” Hayward barked.

“I can at least prove that I was not out at Five Points the night of the murder,” the same voice retorted.

“Remember the oath you took and you won’t have to prove anything.” A rigid tenseness followed Hayward’s reply.

Silence spoke volumes. The men eyed each other suspiciously. Discord threatened. The iron nerve of the Cult was becoming jittery. Safety depended upon unity. They had to stay together. Confidence in each other must be maintained.

Captain Underwood analyzed the situation and arose to command attention.

“We’ve got to face this thing sanely,” he said. “It is true that some of us may have to go to jail and some of us may be fired. No one can foretell what may come of this investigation. Politics makes strange bedfellows. Secretly we must stick together. Openly we must denounce the Black Cult—”

“Kingpin should be shot for coining the name ‘Black Cult’; no one ever heard of such a thing until he spread it across the headlines,” Bill Hayward interrupted.

“And the public ate it up,” continued the Captain. “The name kills us. We’ve got to deny connection with anything that it implies.”

“Underwood is absolutely right,” said the Mayor. “Openly we are against the Black Cult.”

Sergeant Marcus protested. “Swell invisible empire we created. If we go to jail we can rot there, shunned like poison.”

“Secretly the invisible empire will be at work. Those on the outside will never desert the cause, no matter how the investigation turns out. There will be a day of reckoning politically,” the Mayor assured them.

“What’s our first duty, then?” one of the firemen asked.

“Loyalty! Secret loyalty,” said Commissioner Bly.

“Yes, and in the meantime, we’ve got to sit tight with our eyes and ears open,” said the Captain. “But, for the benefit of the public, ‘hear nothing, see nothing, know nothing.’ Get the idea?”

“The Captain is pretty shrewd,” Sergeant Marcus whispered to his companion on the right.

“We may face temporary defeat,” Captain Underwood continued, “but we mustn’t get discouraged. We must face the future and build for tomorrow.”

“What can we do?” The question was mutual.

“Gain public and moral support.”

“How?”

“Everyone accused of Black Cult membership must appeal to the public as a martyr—persecuted and unjustly accused.”

“How can we get Chief Whepley’s job if we turn out to be a bunch of jellyfish?” Sergeant Marcus argued.

“Listen, Sergeant,” Captain Underwood said, patiently. “Forget about Chief Whepley’s job for the time being. We must employ strategy.”

“Spill it. What’s your plan?”

“We must look to the political future. Every one of us should join some church. Get your wife acquainted with the women of the church. Appeal to the good will of the membership—”

“You can count me out, Captain. When I go to church it’ll be in a casket,” Bill Hayward sneered sullenly.

“Listen, Hayward, the church people are the most gullible individuals on earth. They love to be taken in—in the name of religion. The best of them are nothing but hypocrites. What of it, if it only serves our purpose?” Captain Underwood chuckled.

“Less than a month ago you were condemning Kingpin as a religious farce—drunk on Saturday night and up before breakfast to go to church. I can’t see it.” Bill ran his hand through his pompadour and scratched his head. “I’m not that kind of hypocrite. It doesn’t make sense.”

“You joined the Communists for no better reason. Judas was one of the twelve disciples,” the Captain replied. “I tell you, Hayward, our only hope is to line up with the Christian people if only for political reasons.” He was becoming impatient. “You’ll find that you are going to need some kind of cloak when Kingpin gets through with the Cult murder investigation.”

“It’s nothing but politics!”

“I don’t like it. Once you find yourself stripped bare of all externalities that hide the secrets of your Cult membership, you’ll wish that you were in the front pew leading a prayer meeting.” Captain Underwood joined in the applause.

“Well, I guess it’s settled that we all go to Sunday school,” said Mayor Friese, grinning from ear to ear and rising to depart.

“We’ll see you in church,” said Commissioner Bly, joining the Mayor.

The consuming fire of political sins lay hidden in the putridness of evil. Mayor Friese cringed inwardly at the thought. A vision of Chief Whepley rose before him. Why should he be pursued by this ill omen?

Like rats deserting a doomed ship, the Dirty Dozen skulked away under cover of night, vindictive, suspicious, doubtful, fearing each other.

12. A Vital Message

ZEKE POOL walked away from the state hospital where he had been convalescing since the Monday following New Year's Day. He had requested Chief Whepley to visit him. He waited a week, and when the Chief failed to appear, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

A surprise visit from Art Rumby and Tony Parrotino stirred Zeke to action. He saw them coming down the corridor and trembled. He suspected their mission, certain that it was not prompted by good will. Before they entered the room, Zeke covered his face with a newspaper and pretended to be asleep.

"This is the ward, isn't it?" Tony asked, looking around him.

"Yes," Rumby replied. "This is one twenty-eight; that's the number the Captain gave me. He should be here."

"There's someone behind the screen next to the wall," Tony whispered. "I'm not so sure I would know him unless he was drunk."

"I'd never forget that voice—"

"But he ain't talking—you nut. Why don't you ask the nurse or someone?" Tony urged.

"Because I have to obey Captain Underwood's orders. He said to walk right in without asking a lot of foolish questions. We're supposed to greet Zeke like old friends, give him the package and get out before someone starts to question us." Rumby was nervous and impatient.

"Open the bottle where Zeke can get a good whiff, and he'll come to you." Tony chuckled, enjoying his own wit.

"Shut up, Tony," said his companion, walking away and studying the form under the newspaper.

"Is that you, Zeke?" he finally whispered, stooping so that he could look under the lower edge.

The slumbering man stirred uneasily.

"Wake up and see what we brought you." Rumby, afraid of his own voice, glanced about the room while he gently rustled the paper across

Zeke's face.

Tony Parrotino shook the bed. "Ho, Zeke," he said, "we want to talk to you."

"Next floor; two twenty-eight," said a guttural voice—a voice which they were sure they had never heard.

"We want Zeke Pool," said Rumby, starting to lift the paper.

"Two twenty-eight." An even deeper guttural tone resounded through the room.

Several patients turned in their beds to discover what had caused the commotion, while Zeke slapped his hand over the paper on his face and growled something about "a stairway at the end of the hall."

Rumby and Parrotino, finding themselves the objects of attention, backed out the door. A couple of nurses stood in the corridor near the front entrance. The two culprits, not wishing to be questioned, retreated to the back stair and ascended to the third floor before they discovered where they were. Someone opened a door on the floor below. A nurse in a white uniform barred their passage to the upper hall. An exit to the fire escape welcomed them. They bolted through it without ceremony, fearing that they were being pursued from all directions. Finding themselves outside, they descended the fire escape to the second floor and tried to re-enter the building, but the door was locked.

"What do you men want?" a feminine voice called from a window above them.

The two fugitives tumbled onto the lower extension of the fire escape which was suspended by a weight. The ladder swung to the ground and the two men rolled off, sprang to their feet and dashed around the corner of the building.

Zeke came down the lower corridor in time to get a glimpse of the scene through the rear window. He saw a package in midair as it shot past and fell to the sidewalk with a crash of glass. Next came the swinging ladder carrying two men clutching desperately at the side rail. There was another crash and the fire escape governed by a balance weight rose, settled into place and all was quiet.

It was several seconds before Zeke could comprehend what had happened. He had left his room intending to hide in another part of the building until he was certain his callers had left. He had directed them to the second floor to make possible his escape. How they came to be on the fire escape

he did not know, but he recognized them with a feeling of satisfaction as they shot past the window.

A nurse stopped him in the hall to question him about particulars.

Zeke shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "I dunno, lady," he said, "the devil's after their appendix, I guess.

"What were they doing here?" she asked, laughing.

"Search me," said Zeke. "Are they here?"

"They were here! I understand they were looking for you. Don't you know them?"

"Listen, nurse, they don't know me. I don't want to know them; and if they come back, I'm not here. They're no friends of mine and I don't want anything to do with them. Understand?" Zeke emphasized.

Apparently satisfied, the nurse went down the corridor, leaving Zeke to his own resources. When he was sure the coast was clear, he slipped into the basement and out through the furnace-room door to the back yard. Reaching the spot below the fire escape, he stopped to inspect the package which lay broken on the sidewalk.

The odor of cheap whiskey filled Zeke's nostrils. The pool of liquor was spreading slowly around the broken package. Shivering as though stricken with ague, he stooped to examine the contents. His old appetite for liquor returned as he groped feverishly among the broken fragments. The whiskey-soaked tablets of a small bottle of barbital fell from the parcel mingled with broken glass as he lifted the heavy paper wrapper. Zeke dropped to his knees to recover some of the tablets.

The janitor, dragging a shovel and carrying a broom and a basket over his shoulder, appeared to interrupt the plans of the derelict.

"Here, I'll take care of it," said the janitor, shoving Zeke aside.

Grasping a handful of saturated tablets, Zeke arose and shuffled around the corner of the building.

"Get back inside," the janitor called after him.

"All right," Zeke mumbled, crunching a half-dozen barbital tablets.

Crazed with the desire to quench his thirst and satisfy his inordinate craving for whiskey, he crept back to the basement. Where he secured an old overcoat which he found hanging in the furnace room. Zeke assured himself that no one was watching and then bolted for freedom.

The janitor, having seen him return to the building, dismissed the matter from his mind. Orderlies and nurses busy with an overcrowded schedule did

not miss him until the supper hour.

By this time Zeke was several miles away. A friendly motorist had taken him within a half-mile of Chief Whepley's home.

Fortunately, Zeke had no money and his mania for drink had to be endured. Gradually the ringing testimony of the driver of the car had its effect upon him.

"Marvel not... ye must be born again. Ye must be born again," Zeke repeated aloud.

It was a message that pursued him constantly—a vital message. He had heard it on the lips of his dying mother. His wife, in pleading with him to forsake the evil of drink, had quoted this verse. Chief Whepley had told him that there was no other cure for his sin-sick soul. The nurse at the hospital had pleaded with him to take Christ at His word and lean wholly upon Him for strength to overcome his appetite for liquor. Now the admonition of the strange driver followed him with the same soul-renewing verse of Scripture ringing in his ears.

Zeke had fought God with the determination to win. Mocking God, he drank and drank and drank—drank to drown his troubles. Forsaking loved ones, he drank until his friends became enemies and his enemies became his only friends—the only friends to whom he could turn in the time of need. Chief Whepley was one of them.

13. Facing A Difficult Situation

DEE WHEPLEY was just coming down the walk leading from the front door when Zeke stopped on the sidewalk and stood studying the general perspective. He was looking at the contour of the building trying to decide if it was Chief Whepley's residence. He had forgotten the street number; he remembered only the architectural design and the landscape.

As Dee approached he studied her carefully, still uncertain of his bearings. He let her pass but asked, when she turned to watch him, "Does the Chief live here, lady?"

"Why do you inquire?" Dee was cautious. "You will find the Chief at his office."

"I have reasons to want to see him elsewhere," he replied. "...some important information concerning his daughter."

"Is that so? I am sure the Chief would be interested," she said deferentially. "Shall I call him for you?"

Zeke stepped in front of her as she attempted to return to the house.

"I don't want the Police Department, lady, I want the Chief—"

"Whom shall I say wants to see him? I'll ask him to come down to the house," she interrupted, edging a step nearer the front door.

"Are you the one they're going to kidnap?" he asked suddenly. "Are you the one they call Dee? I want to talk to your father."

"Isn't that thrilling. Kidnapped! Who's the big bad wolf?" Thoroughly on her guard, Dee stepped aside and hurried to the front porch.

"Don't be frightened, lady, I'm your friend. That's why I came to tell you that some policemen can't be trusted—your father."

"Yes, Chief Whepley is my father. I'll call him," she said, waiting to analyze the situation more thoughtfully.

"Then you are Miss Dee?"

"Yes," she smiled. "I'm Miss Dee. You can trust me to call Father; I'll have him come right down and meet you."

“Don’t talk to anybody else,” he cautioned. “Someone might be listening. Don’t tell him I am here—they have his line tapped.” Zeke was becoming excited, fearing that she might call the Department and have him taken to jail. “Tell them,” he added as an afterthought, “that somebody is sick, and that he must hurry home.”

Chief Whepley was not in his office when Dee called. The operator was not certain where he could be located and made an effort to switch Dee to Captain Underwood’s line. She graciously declined without revealing her identity. The thought, They have tapped his line, was in her mind. She did not know the man who had requested her to call her father, but there was something about his attitude that caused her to believe that he was sincere. She did not like Captain Underwood, anyway. He was always too cocksure of himself. She did not trust him, and evidently the stranger at the door wanted the message delivered only to her father. How was she going to meet the situation?

She replaced the telephone receiver and sat thinking. She was facing a difficult situation. Why should anyone want to kidnap her? She thought of calling the F.B.I., but decided that she had no facts upon which to base a complaint. Certainly her father would not approve. He would insist upon a preliminary investigation, at least, before calling the Bureau. To whom could she turn?

She picked up the receiver and held the connection down with her right hand. Unconsciously she released it and dialed a familiar number.

“Oh, is that you, Allan!” she said with surprise when her call was acknowledged.

“Why, hello, Dee. How did you know I was in town? Just got in. Haven’t been here five minutes. What’s happened?” asked Lieutenant Edmund at the other end of the line. “Is your father—”

“I’m going to be kidnapped,” she called happily, finding protection in the consolation of hearing his voice.

“Headlines, eh! It’s always news to be kidnapped by a marine. Shall we make it six-thirty or seven?”

“I’m serious, Allan. There’s a man out front—”

“Who’s my competitor? I protest; no one can do that,” he laughed, with his usual good humor.

“Please be serious. Can you come out right now? There’s a man trying to reach Father. It’s about a plot to kidnap me. For some reason he does not

want to go to the police station.” Dee gave a lengthy explanation of what had occurred.

“Who is he—”

“Frankly, I don’t know,” she confessed weakly. “He declined to tell me. He seems to know Father, and some of the other policemen whom he does not trust.”

“Hold him. I’ll call a cab and be right out. Don’t let him in the house but keep him waiting on the porch,” he instructed.

Dee tried again to reach her father at his office but was unsuccessful. Since the Black Cult investigation nearly all those connected with city affairs hesitated to volunteer information. The switchboard operators were doubly cautious and when Dee called and refused to leave her name, the attendant on duty hesitated to give information concerning the Chief’s whereabouts.

Dee arose and stood behind the drapes at the front window. Zeke was impatiently watching the street in either direction, half expecting to see a cruiser manned by several burly policemen. If Dee had difficulty in reaching Chief Whepley’s office and should talk to someone else about a kidnap threat or a suspicious man at the door of the Chief’s residence, there would surely be trouble. Zeke, conscious of his shabby attire, realized that some neighbor might call the police at any minute. In that event he would be picked up and brought before Captain Underwood. Their associations in the past had been far from pleasant. Recently the breach had grown until the thought of meeting him filled his soul with fear.

Dee went to the door and engaged Zeke in conversation. She realized that he would be wondering about the telephone call. What would she tell him? He had insisted that the message should be given only to her father. She did not want to tell him that he could not be reached. It was against her principles to lie to him. If she told him that she had called Lieutenant Edmund it might frighten him away.

“I am hoping to reach Father in a few minutes,” she said. “Since you mentioned that someone might be listening in on the line, I think that I’ll leave word to have Father call the house.”

The look of anxiety left his face and for several minutes they discussed current topics until a cab turned the corner and stopped in front of the house. Dee’s heart gave a leap of joy when she saw Lieutenant Edmund

alight and hurry toward the door. Zeke, in turn, analyzed the situation; his face had a puzzled expression of surprise.

“Hello, Zeke, how’s things? I expected to find you in the marines. That’s no way to treat a friend. What good turn brings you here? You are not trying to steal my girl, are you?” His greeting brought a smile of welcome to Zeke’s face.

“I’m waiting for Chief Whepley, but I can tell you just as well. You’ve always treated me square,” and he grasped the friendly hand which Lieutenant Edmund extended. “I always trusted you as a policeman. I surely can trust you as a marine, especially if this young lady is your sweetheart.”

“What’s troubling you, Zeke? Now that I am here, Dee might invite us in to talk things over.” He turned to her with a knowing wink.

“Certainly, you may come in,” she replied, particularly addressing her strange caller. “Shall I try to reach Father again for you?”

“It’s not necessary as long as Lieutenant Edmund is here. He knows me well enough—or perhaps I might say, too well—”

“This is Zeke Pool, Miss Whepley. Suppose we talk things over. Then I’ll call your father, if you wish. How about it, Zeke? Is that O.K.?” he interjected.

“At your service, Lieutenant. I’m on the spot, anyway, but it’s safer to be on the right side of the law. Chief Whepley convinced me of that. I sent word for him to come to the hospital to see me. He didn’t come. I think I know why.” Zeke gave a breathless resumé of his efforts to find the Chief. “I’m satisfied that the Chief did not come because he never received word. His enemies at the police station intercepted the message.”

“What about the plot to kidnap Dee?” Lieutenant Edmund’s police training exerted itself. “Sit down and tell me about it.”

“It’s a long story,” Zeke began. “I had a good education—made friends easily—friends that have been using me for a tool. I was easily led. I was inducted into the Black Cult and became a trusted and loyal member—until they discovered that I was a slave to drink. I talked out of turn. I was chastised, beaten, unmercifully disciplined, according to the unwritten law of the Cult. I was threatened with a coat of tar and feathers, and even death if I was ever again found disloyal. This did not cure my appetite for liquor. I still thought I could handle it and keep out of trouble. But it’s the old story; it got the best of me again and again. Then their tactics turned.”

Zeke looked about the room like a hunted animal in deathly fear of an unknown and mysterious enemy.

“Yes, yes; go on.” Lieutenant Edmund nodded sympathetically.

“The climax came at an induction ceremony of new candidates,” he continued. “We were in an old barn. Our identities were concealed by the hoods and black robes of the Cult. I had been drinking as usual. Captain Underwood was officiating as the Exalted Grand Demon. He noticed my condition and rebuked me. I made the mistake of identifying him by name—an unpardonable sin. I was thrown into the pit of a stone silo and forgotten. There was no escape. I remained there several days without food or drink except for ensilage and the liquor found at the bottom of the pit. I was forced to exist upon that.

“Oh,” Dee gasped, a look of horror spreading across her face. “How did you escape?”

“At the next conclave someone unbolted the lower door to the silo and left it open. I crept out, secured a robe and a hood from a carrying case and joined the circle assembled under a dim light on the driveway floor of the barn. They were discussing a kidnap plot. I kept in the background and listened.”

There was a moment of tenseness before he continued, turning to address Dee.

“They were planning to kidnap you,” he said.

“Kidnap the Police Chief’s daughter? It doesn’t make sense,” said Lieutenant Edmund as his trained mind questioned the statement. “There could be no hope of reward there.”

“They were not after money. They did not expect that. The scheme was to force Chief Whepley’s retirement—force him into the position of a physical breakdown—prove that he could not stand the worry and strain of such trying police responsibility.”

“Diabolical in its very conception,” said the Lieutenant. “It reveals the conniving of a deranged mind.”

“Political insanity, you mean,” Zeke emphasized.

Lieutenant Edmund considered the time element.

“When did you say this occurred?” he asked.

Zeke grinned. “I didn’t say; but it was before my last trip to the ‘State Hotel’—just before I got the ninety days,” he explained. “I have been in the hospital a month.”

“The kidnap plot—”

“Never was attempted,” he interrupted. “Captain Underwood was to have been the hero who, single-handed, traced the kidnapers to their lair and rescued the victim. The crooks were to have escaped in an exchange of gunfire and covered their trail so completely that they could not be traced.”

The puzzled expression on the Lieutenant’s face caused a moment’s pause in the narrative.

“Think I’m lying, eh?” Zeke interjected with a smile. “Don’t blame you a bit. I know it sounds like a fish story; nevertheless, it’s a fact. The plan fell through because Captain Underwood turned thumbs down on the proposition. He didn’t want to match wits with the FBI agents and run the risk of having them uncover his connection with the Black Cult.”

“I have been wondering how sure you are of your facts,” said the ex-police officer, toying with a notebook and a pencil.

“You mean that I have got to forego the sensation and thrill of being kidnaped?” Dee remarked, rising. “You men go ahead and talk while I get lunch.”

She flashed them an encouraging smile and left the room.

For the next half-hour Lieutenant Edmund was the serious-minded, fact-finding police officer. His questions, right to the point, revealed that Zeke was in possession of many facts that could not be proved except by his unconfirmed statement. He had identified Captain Underwood by the sound of his voice and a glimpse of his face in the dim light of the old barn when he adjusted his hood. In his own mind he was certain, but Lieutenant Edmund foresaw the difficulty of a positive identification before a jury or a police trial board.

On the second occasion when Zeke escaped from the old silo, Captain Underwood was not present, to the best of his knowledge. Zeke had remained in the background until the conclave was about to disband. To avoid disclosing his identity when the members were counted and interviewed by the guard at the door, Zeke slipped through a chute into a horse manger and covered himself with hay. Before daylight the next morning he dropped from a window in the hayloft onto the roof of a straw-covered tool shed and made his way back to the city.

Troubles began in earnest when Zeke appeared at one of his old haunts. Cult members, posing as friends, showered him with attention. Hungry and forlorn, he permitted them to buy him drinks and a steak dinner in a cheap

saloon. He remained drunk for several days while various members tried to obtain information from him. Fear and his knowledge of Cult tactics guarded his tongue. He avoided all questions concerning the meeting at the old barn, but he continued to drink. Dead drunk, he was taken to a room over the saloon and beaten by men whom he never saw.

When the Cult members saw that the information sought was not forthcoming, they continued to furnish Zeke with beer drugged with barbitol tablets, but the effect did not serve their purpose. Their victim became a stupefied derelict. Someone suggested a “reefer.” If Zeke smoked marijuana, he would “talk,” perhaps.

When he was sufficiently sober to try the experiment, they made the mistake of leaving him alone with one man. He smoked the first “reefer” and went to sleep. He was awakened and forced to smoke another, with the result that he overpowered the guard, went back to the saloon and was arrested by the police.

This was Zeke’s first trip to the house of correction. He had been in jail before and even “served time” in a Southern state, but he had never been in an institution where he was allowed the privileges that he found here. Erstwhile friends continued to visit him with a supply of “doctored” cigarettes. They supplied him with just enough liquor to stimulate his appetite for more. Consequently, when Zeke was released, he returned to the beer gardens to continue his orgy of drinking. One arrest followed another for months and when the Cult murder investigation began he was on probation, confined to the state hospital.

He had walked away from the hospital to get relief from his tormentors. Certain that his message to Chief Whepley had purposely been intercepted through the order of Captain Underwood, he decided that the Chief should be informed of the matter. He needed a friend whom he could trust. Chief Whepley needed a friend to advise him of the undercurrent of opposition—one whom he could trust. Here was an opportunity to exchange favors. Zeke had come to realize that it was the only way for him to escape from himself.

14. A Step In Vain

PLANS WERE MADE to return Zeke to the hospital. This was Chief Whepley's advice. Upon his arrival home, he listened to Lieutenant Edmund outline Zeke's story. The Lieutenant was brief and to the point on the question of evidence. There was little, if anything, that could be proved definitely. Cult members would, no doubt, again seek the opportunity to get Zeke in their clutches. If he were to be turned loose on the street he would become an easy victim of their artful wiles. The Chief foresaw this and made plans that he should be returned under another name and assigned to a room where he could be kept under surveillance. The Chief knew the superintendent, and therefore had no difficulty in making and carrying out the arrangements.

Zeke was reconciled to follow the Chief's advice. He was an outcast without friends or funds. There was no one else whom he could trust. His only hope was to remain in obscurity as a state charge. He was in no condition to work. There was no possibility of overcoming his craving for liquor in his own strength. He had come to the end of the road; a pauper's tomb awaited him. He was afraid to die and face the uncertainty of a Christless eternity.

The duty of returning Zeke to the hospital was undertaken by Dee and Lieutenant Edmund. It was an opportunity for the two young people to be of service and still cast no reflection upon the Chief. The transfer to the institution was a serious obligation, but the return trip was a pleasant interlude in which they could talk over consequences and speculate upon the outcome.

How would the matter end? The complicated circumstances offered security to no one. The Cult investigation would surely involve several members of the Police and Fire Departments. The politicians were vying for an opportunity to rush in and slay their opponents by any means, fair or foul. There was no question of Zeke's knowledge of secret affairs. Because of his weakness for liquor, certain Cult members feared him for what he knew,

and knowing that he knew was an uncomfortable feeling—a feeling that prompted them to take drastic means to silence him.

How often the finite mind of man fails to conceive the complicated mass of troubles that are involved in the first step! To venture is easy, but to retreat in safety is a step in vain. We are held accountable for misjudged deeds. Such proved to be the status of the members who found themselves in the net following the Cult murder mystery. Oh for the power to reclaim the past, but time would not stand still! Servants of sin, they saw no hope but to struggle on! Zeke Pool's death meant nothing compared with exposure. Zeke was a marked man—marked to die a servant to the curse of drink, drink provided by those who contributed to the supply as a means to an end. Ungodly in their thoughts, they harbored the sinister hope that opportunity would, ere long, sound the death knell.

Lieutenant Edmund, familiar with the political background of city affairs, foresaw impending shadows more clearly than Chief Whepley. The Chief was “too close to the trees to see the forest.”

“Father's far too patient for his own good.” Dee ventured the opinion. “He's always ready to give everyone the benefit of a doubt.”

“It's very evident his enemies capitalize upon it—no doubt in that respect,” said the young marine. Turning the car into the family drive, he said, “Suppose we drop in and talk the matter over with the Chief.”

“I never did trust Captain Underwood,” Dee replied, facing her father. ’

“The Captain isn't to blame for all his faults, daughter. He's human and a gullible victim of the whims of the politicians. If it weren't Captain Underwood it would be someone else nibbling at the bait. You can't very well condemn a man for wanting to improve himself. All good policemen should aspire to be Chief some day,” said the veteran of years of service.

“But you know he's disloyal. He doesn't respect you—he isn't faithful to the best interests of the Department,” Dee protested. “It wouldn't hurt his conscience to see you fired tomorrow if it afforded the means of elevating him to the Chief's office.”

“That's politics in Central City. Few policemen attain a standard above that which is set by the politicians,” her father replied, smiling.

“Still, you sit quietly waiting to be fired—”

“I wouldn't say that, daughter. You forget that plans conceived in iniquity bear unrighteous fruit,” he reminded her.

“But after you're fired or retired, it'll be too late—”

“Not when you’re in the will of the Lord, daughter,” the Chief again interrupted.

“Don’t you think, Chief, that the Lord is more inclined to help those who help themselves?” Lieutenant Edmund asked seriously.

“Certainly, Lieutenant; you are quite right, but He does not expect you to strike in the dark. You must first find out who your enemies are and then follow the will of the Lord in disposing of them,” said the veteran of experience. “It never pays to take matters in your own hands when it means obligating yourself to any group of politicians.”

“Even though it means your position as Chief—”

“Yes, daughter, even though it means my position as Chief,” he replied with serious concern. “Once you become subservient to the politicians, you immediately cease to be Chief. I don’t want the job without portfolio.”

“With Kingpin and his unscrupulous bunch of politicians on one side and the Black Cult on the other, the possibility of remaining Chief either with or without portfolio is very remote,” the young marine remarked impatiently. “You haven’t a chance unless you appeal to a vote of public sentiment.”

“In which case you get on the band wagon with a group of unsavory politicians.” Chief Whepley was determined in his reply. “As the tool of political bigwigs, you cease to exist as an individual. I cannot conform to those policies.”

“The public would not stand for it, if they knew—”

“They have never seen fit to change the system here in Central City,” the Chief interjected.

“If you would champion the cause—”

“Yes, and become a political football instead of a policeman, I could permit the good name of Whepley to be dragged into the political mire and become a martyr to the cause—but what would it profit, counting the cost?” The twinkle in the Chief’s eyes revealed the depth of wisdom in the sagacious reply.

“Well, best wishes, Chief. I’m glad I’m fighting with the marines,” said Lieutenant Edmund, rising. “There’s at least one consolation: you always know who your enemies are.”

“If it wasn’t for these gray hairs, son, I sure would be fighting with you,” came the earnest answer. “There’s no distinguished service cross given for vanquishing politicians.”

“Quite right. Most political rewards come with greater headaches,” said the Lieutenant. “Sorry I must run along and leave you and Dee to face these trials and tribulations alone.”

“Hurry back. The armed services of your country may be essential, but the need here in Central City is of equal importance,” Chief Whepley replied seriously, stepping over to take the Lieutenant’s hand. “You know, son, I appreciate a man that I can trust.”

“I will be with you in spirit if not in person. I may not return soon enough to help you dispose of our enemies in the Black Cult, but I am sure going to do a good job in taking care of the Japs. Wherever the marines are, remember we’ll be fighting for you and Dee,” he said gravely.

“I’m going to spend the next half-hour in the study while you and Dee work out a plan of strategy for an early victory,” the Chief added, motivated by a keen sense of diplomacy.

There were three groups in the struggle. Chief Whepley, those in the service of the Police Department loyal to him, Lieutenant Edmund, Detective Winton and the Chief’s daughter and respectable citizens of the community who had taken the trouble to become interested, were on one side. On the second side were the Kingpin and his political conniving constituency who were struggling to hold the balance of power. On the third side were the members of the mysterious Black Cult, wielding the wand of propaganda to deceive, coerce and befuddle the voting public. The taxpayers of Central City were as gullible as goats, and were continually trying to digest the political propaganda.

15. The Malefic Grapevine

WYNN D. FRIESE, the conniving Mayor of Central City, stopped at the office of the Chief of Police promptly at eight o'clock. Chief Whepley had preceded him by ten minutes, and was reading incoming reports when he entered.

"Good morning, Your Honor," the Chief said by way of greeting, certain that the Mayor had something of unusual importance on his mind. "What's the new order of business that brings you at this hour in the morning?"

"Ah! New business? I don't know of any new business." His Honor did not know how to begin the conversation. "—didn't expect you down this early. New business—maybe that is the way to put it, Chief."

"Have a chair, Mayor."

"How'd you like a month's vacation, Chief? I've been thinking—"

"Vacation?"

"—thought you might like to get away. Florida. A month with pay—Captain Underwood—"

"Vacation with pay?"

"Yes, Chief—county detectives could handle the investigation—not so embarrassing—Captain Underwood."

"Sit down, Mayor!" His Honor wilted into a chair at the Chief's order.

"You deserve a vacation," he mumbled weakly. "You have earned it—thought—"

"Well, you can stop thinking. I'm not taking any vacation. Do you realize what that means?" The Mayor's eyes fell before the Chief's gaze.

"I don't know why, Chief. Everything will be all over when you get back."

"Mayor, I'm not taking a vacation! If you want to fire me or retire me, all right, but I am not running away. Is that clear?" Chief Whepley's penetrating gaze pierced the soul of the chief executive.

"You wouldn't be running away," came the weak protest.

“—nothing else but. I’m not playing into Kingpin’s hand on a deal like that. I’d be branded as a member of the Black Cult before the echo of the train whistle died at the city limits.” The Chief’s wisdom left the Mayor puzzled.

“Chief, I thought—”

“You mean you didn’t think. You’ve been letting Kingpin do the thinking for you long before he branded this political mess with the name of the Black Cult. You have been his tool from the beginning in this investigation. You have the power to retire me, but you can’t make me take a vacation.” The Chief’s fist crashed emphatically on his desk.

“Captain Underwood—”

“I am far ahead of you, Mayor. You have permitted the Captain to cry on your shoulder for some time. Why don’t you demand my retirement?” the Chief inquired, with a curious light in his eyes. “Underwood will make a good Chief if you’re looking for a political tool.”

Suddenly the Mayor glanced at the clock. He arose anxiously and went to the window. He picked up his hat and gazed outside.

“Think it over, Chief,” he said. “It might be wise for you to take a vacation.”

“Thinking is the one liberty that you politicians cannot deny me,” the Chief said seriously.

“Do you mean to imply that anyone has directly interfered with your equable liberty in matters of law enforcement?”

“Just hobbled is all.” There was a depth of meaning in the Chief’s smile.

“Hobbled?”

“Like a pugilist facing his antagonist in an arena with his hands tied.”

The Mayor appeared to be puzzled.

“Political interference,” the Chief explained. “I have been tied with it so long that it’s a practical joke.”

“I I_”

“—didn’t tie me personally, of course. No, you are just one of the opposing fans that like to help out the opposition by delivering a discouraging blow from the side lines.”

“Perhaps a vacation—”

“Let’s have a definite understanding, Mayor. I’m not taking a vacation.” Chief Whepley returned to his duties.

The side door closed behind the outwitted chief executive, and yet the Chief sat unconcerned, even though he was aware that Commissioner Ackley was waiting in the other doorway demanding an interview.

“Has Mayor Friese been in this morning?” he inquired nonchalantly, stepping in to face the Chief.

“I just told him that I was not taking a vacation.”

“You’re not!” He could not hide his surprise.

“No, not now nor at any other time when the Department is faced with an emergency like the Black Cult murder mystery.”

“The Police Commission could demote you to your former position as Chief of Detectives,” the Commissioner ventured.

“Is that a threat?” The Chief’s voice had a peculiar ring.

“No-o, I was just pointing out possibilities,” he hastened to reply.

“I’ll let the public decide that.” There was a veiled inference in Chief Whepley’s answer.

“I don’t want to be misunderstood. I am not making any threats, Chief. You know that—just a remark that I heard— thought you might take it for what it’s worth.” He appeared anxious to free himself of responsibility in the matter.

Commissioner Ackley, having fulfilled his mission of poisoning the Chief’s mind with the thought of possible demotion, took his departure in congenial humor. He had sown the seed of propaganda which he hoped would bear fruit. Tomorrow another Commissioner would sow other seeds of discord. The object was to keep the Chief in a state of uncertainty. It was the Cult’s method of attack to harass and worry an opponent until the opportunity arrived to strike the deathblow. Any malicious method that would tighten the yoke of responsibility for the Chief and cause him to chafe and gall under the load was fearlessly employed. His enemies had but one concern: to be crafty enough to protect their own interests. Commissioner Ackley was only fulfilling his duty as a member.

16. Self-Created Circumstances

THE STORM CLOUDS of disaster hovered over Central City. The political activities of Kingpin and his forces were the topic of conversation. The Cult murder investigation created the sensation of the decade. Members of the organization scurried to cover, burying, as it were, all connections associated with the activities of the past, changing the black robe of the order to a spotless garment of innocence. Countless numbers who were unsuccessful in the attempt to conceal their guilt lost their positions with the city. Some were convicted and sentenced to prison for the part they played in the conspiracy that culminated in the Cult murder. Others—policemen, firemen and political leeches tied to party factions—were tried for the infraction of some municipal law and dismissed from the city payrolls.

The litigation and endless sessions of court procedure cost thousands of dollars and the bewildered taxpayers who groveled in the dark for lack of understanding paid and paid and paid. With Kingpin in control, the pendulum of political reaction in his favor swung to the extreme.

The price of temporarily-achieved victory was astonishing. The political reaction was a radical revolt from equality and justice. There was no middle ground of equitable rights for the conservative thinker.

Kingpin was contumacious in his desire to effect a political housecleaning. Few dared to oppose him. Those who were not wholeheartedly with him were publicly condemned in the Press. Chief Whepley felt the scorn of Kingpin's wrath because he dared to oppose him. A scorching editorial branded him "kith and kin" of the Cult when it became apparent that he demanded the conventionality of evidence before giving his consent to a petition demanding the dismissal of alleged Cult members in the Police Department.

Consequently, the Police Commission and a majority in the Common Council fell prey to the Wishes of Kingpin. The Mayor's investigating committee of super-Sleuths procured evidence that served the purpose of those in authority to dismiss legally those who opposed them. Then came the

question of technicalities; attorneys for both factions fought the issue to the bitter end. The skeptical public stood on the side lines and wondered. The pendulum started to swing back; the people were less vicious. Kingpin berated the fact, using the medium of the Press to vindicate his ideas, but the inert response of the public to his appeal was disheartening. Still he fought, determined not to be vanquished. The spring election brought disappointment; an opponent with liberal ideas gained a seat on the Council. Mayor Friese was elected for a third term by a small margin. Kingpin had supported him, not because he approved of him as a logical candidate, but because he had been his tool. He served him as a means to an end—a political end that served his own selfish purpose. A state printing contract could be obtained if he “pulled the right strings.” Mayor Friese could help him; and it was an understood fact that such help was forthcoming. It was an obligation earned for supporting him in the election.

The election returns were a disconcerting blow to Kingpin. He had spent a great deal of money in the campaign—money that he expected would pay handsome dividends through political manipulations in city affairs. He was desperately in need of the state printing contract. Troubled with insomnia, he walked the streets with a bodyguard at his side. He was financially embarrassed. That which he had hoped for had not materialized to his satisfaction. The old habit, a weakness for drink, pursued him. The company of questionable women afforded a pastime that momentarily permitted him to forget his difficulties.

Under cover of night he led a double life. He had been “successful” in this for many years. He prided himself on the fact that he had always been able to escape the public eye. His secret sins were his own; his broken-hearted wife having died long ago, he was accepted by Central City as a bachelor. No one except his political enemies had been concerned about his past. Their only medium of attack was gossip, and that never reached the pages of the press. He saw to that.

Divine law has decreed that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Kingpin ridiculed the idea. The Church was an institution to be used to personal advantage. He was always a church member prior to election. The advantages were self-evident; therefore, the Church needed him when he most needed the Church. He had no other philosophy. That the way of the transgressor is hard was a motto for the “other fellow” to observe. It was not applicable to himself, so he thought. He lived the life of a fatalist as an

evidence of his self-sufficiency. Deep in his heart, however, was fear, and he drank and gambled to conceal that fear.

His association with Mayor Friese had been a gamble from the start. They did not like each other. At heart they were enemies, particularly since the Mayor's first term, but for political reasons it was expedient that they tolerate each other. "Politics makes strange bedfellows," as was evident from the alliance of Kingpin and the Mayor. They had but one common aim: a desire for a more liberal policy in law enforcement.

That each used the other to serve his own ends was evident. Their public contacts proved it. Where they had nothing in common they were enemies; where they agreed upon policies they were friends. The Board of Commerce Cruise was an example. It was an opportunity to enjoy more freedom than was conventionally permitted within the confines of the city. At this gathering everyone met on equal terms at the expense of the gambling and liquor interests. That the future would call for a pay day was a certainty that no one considered. Tom MacCallister and Cye Leech were "two good fellows," high-caliber businessmen, successful in their enterprises. Tom's tavern was the most popular place of its kind in town, and Cye's reputation with the Racing Commission and as an operator of a coin-machine company was statewide. Both of them had a great deal of money and hosts of friends in the sport world. Their friendship was an asset to any campaign manager, and, incidentally, gave the Mayor and Kingpin a common understanding politically.

The gala event for law enforcement officers, politicians and the parasites of the underworld was held in the pinetempld hills of the adjoining county. It was a private party held on the lake shore within the confines of a large estate. The well-fenced grounds provided a haven of security for those who attended. Curiosity seekers were not permitted to interfere with the carefully-laid plans of the promoters. Great care—was taken in selecting the roster of attendance. Those invited were chosen with a definite purpose in mind—a purpose that would materially benefit the hosts. Many walked into the trap blindly only to discover that they were enmeshed in a net of complicating circumstances from which there was no escape.

One of the greatest disappointments was the fact that Chief Whepley did not attend.

"His sense of smell for a political set-up is as keen as a fox's for iron," Commissioner Yochum grumbled. "I bet the Mayor all the shoes in my ra-

tion book that I would have him here. It begins to look as though I'm going to walk barefoot."

"Don't worry about the shoes. You'll chisel a pair somewhere in the black market," Captain Underwood chided. "What I'm worried about is the political points on the Police Chief's badge that you have promised to show me."

"There wouldn't be a thing to it if the Chief had come as we had planned," said the Commissioner.

"It's time to quit fooling. I told you the Chief wouldn't be here. He knows what the score is. He doesn't go anywhere except to church unless he is sure whom he will meet there," the Captain snarled. "I'm getting sick of this political skull-duggery."

"You're always jumping the gun, Captain; take it easy, take it easy," the Commissioner advised suavely. "A good politician doesn't expose his feelings to invite public censorship. Be patient; there'll be a day of reckoning soon."

"Procrastination; going to, going to. You've been sowing the seeds of postponement and harvesting a whirlwind of calamity since the day you were first appointed commissioner," Captain Underwood lamented.

"You are not showing the white feather, are you, Captain? Look at this set-up—perfect. The only thing lacking is that Chief Whepley failed to show—don't take your disappointments too seriously—"

"Things that never materialize are always perfect as far as you're concerned—that's the trouble," Captain Underwood remonstrated. "Here we are associating with gamblers, thieves and crooked politicians—half of them evading income tax—and you expected the Chief to be here."

"Perhaps your responsibility »may account for the Chief's absence?" The inference cut like a knife.

"I don't know anything about the Chief's plans," snapped the Captain, flushing to the roots of his hair. "Anyone will give him credit for having good sense."

"What's so wrong—"

"Everything is wrong. No one is going to be able to leave this party without a cloud over his reputation. Look at the questionable characters here—women of the street—ex-convicts—shady promoters, racketeers—the undesirable element of the underworld—booze flowing like water. A gambling set-up unequaled this side of Monte Carlo. Who is paying for it?"

You know as well as I do—the underworld—these undesirable characters posing as your friends.” Captain Underwood exploded. “Common sense tells you the environment is bad.”

“No one will ever know—”

“Honor among thieves, eh?”

“Well, you’re here, Captain; the only thing you can do is make the most of it.” Commissioner Yochum meant to drop the subject.

Captain Underwood knew the consequences. He was in the net with the rest; there was nothing he could do but face the consequences and hope for the best. If nothing came of it, so much the better; but he was apprehensive. His experience as a police officer assured him that the gambling might cause serious trouble. The unexpected could occur; someone might talk out of turn; there might be an accident or an arrest. His mind whirled; he was afraid. His better judgment had told him that he should not attend. He had not planned to be there and would not have been there if Commissioner Yochum and the Mayor had not insisted. Now it was too late; he was in the trap that had been set for Chief Whepley—the trap that Old Silvertop had avoided. He was at the mercy of the politicians and the promoters who sponsored the party. Exposure would ruin him if the true facts were disclosed. His wife would divorce him for associating with the lewd women in attendance.

The perspiration stood out on his brow. What would Chief Whepley do in this situation? The thought stunned him. The Chief would be without friends—at their mercy. Why had he consented to such a scheme? He pondered the consequences. He hated himself, the scheming politicians, the gamblers. Oh, if he could only recall the past! He should arrest them—for that was his sworn duty—but he did not dare. They should be in jail.

He faced reality. He could not arrest them; he was one of their number; he was guilty of the offenses they had committed. He was in the compromising position that had been planned for Chief Whepley. Why had he not realized this before? He was a victim of self-created circumstances. His power of authority had been sold for a mess of political pottage. He was in a precarious position; defenseless; wholly at the mercy of his friends. Were they friends?

Friends? Had he only known the sinister implications of that word!

17. A Revelation

THE ALMOST CONSTANT RINGING of Chief Whepley's telephone had been a reminder for twenty-five years that there was no escape from duty day or night. There was no way that he could escape responsibility while on duty or taking a day's rest. Some problem constantly demanded his personal attention. The citizens of the community would have it no other way. He was their Chief—a servant in time of trouble. Try as he would to delegate responsibility to others, he was faced with difficulties—difficulties for which he had found no solution; old friends and citizens insisted that he respond personally; he was the Police Department. Substitutes, regardless of their qualifications, were not acceptable.

During the Black Cult investigation the problem had become increasingly acute. The telephone seemed to ring constantly. Finally he requested an unlisted telephone number, and gave specific orders at Police Headquarters that no one was to be given his telephone number except in an emergency.

Consequently when the Chief was aroused at two o'clock on the Sunday morning following the spring election, he knew that something exceedingly important must have happened. Captain Underwood's voice greeted him.

"Sorry to disturb you, Chief," he said. "We have Public Enemy Number One cornered in a house; thought I had better call you before we take a bushel of tear gas over and throw it through the windows."

"Who is it?"

"Tiger Face."

"Is he alone?"

"He's at his brother-in-law's place on South Street. You know the address."

"They have two children."

"What of it?"

"You certainly wouldn't throw tear gas in a home where there is a family?"

“Chief, this man is a killer. Anyone that goes in that house faces a machine gun. The County Sheriff’s department has men here. They got the information through the F.B.I. Tiger’s ‘gun moll’ was there today and left a suitcase. She’s liable to be back any minute. Tiger must be in the house. Someone is bound to get killed.” Captain Underwood was gravely serious.

“Naturally, Captain, I don’t want any of my men killed, but it’s taking too long a chance to throw tear gas into any private citizen’s home except as a last resort,” said the Chief.

“Maybe you have your tombstone picked out. I haven’t.” The Captain was perturbed. “What do you suggest?”

“I’ll come over.”

There was a group of officers waiting at the station when the Chief arrived. Each was armed to the teeth. The mission was important, and serious thought must be given to the situation.

“I still think that—that we would be justified to use tear gas under the circumstances,” said the Captain.

“It is well to go prepared, but we will use no drastic measures until we face gunfire,” was the determined reply.

“What do you mean, Chief?”

“That we’ll go over and go through the place if we can get in. We have no alternative. You say you are sure that Tiger Face is there; we cannot afford to miss the opportunity of apprehending him,” he replied. “We would look ridiculous if we later found out that he had been here and we had made no attempt to capture him.”

Three cars loaded with officers left the police garage and silently approached the address on South Street. Plans were made at the scene concerning the best method of approach. The place was dark except for a dim light in an upper bedroom.

“That’s where he is,” Captain Underwood whispered in the Chief’s ear.

“I’ll go around and ring the front bell.” The reply was solemn.

“Chief, you’re a fool. You’ll be a corpse on the front porch in less than a minute.”

“I haven’t selected a tombstone but I would rather have the headlines carry a notice of my funeral than face the consequences of gassing some innocent family,” he replied gravely.

“Don’t do it; it’s sudden death for anyone to take such a crazy chance,” said the Captain. “Think of what it means to our families.”

“You can stay in the alley and guard the car and the tear gas,” the Chief replied. “You can take command if an emergency arises where it is absolutely necessary to use gas. I’ll go to the door. The rest can surround the house.”

Detective Winton, with drawn gun, crowded ahead of his superior and mounted the front porch. “This is my place, Chief,” he said. “You will have a better opportunity to supervise the raid if you stand in the shadow of the shrubbery.”

Two deputy sheriffs followed Detective Winton and stayed close to the wall at the front door, each with his right hand on his service revolver.

Bur-r-r-r. The ringing doorbell echoed and re-echoed through the otherwise silent house.

A tense group of officers awaited the outcome. Disastrous possibilities faced them. The rattle of a machine gun might be the answer to their summons. The setting invited bloodshed.

Suddenly lights flashed throughout the house, first in an upper bedroom at the rear, then in the stairway leading to the lower hall, and finally in the front room where the officers were crouched along the wall.

Chief Whepley breathed a sigh of relief. Someone was coming to the door—someone who was not apprehensive of danger from without—someone who did not fear the law.

The door opened from within. A middle-aged man clad in a bathrobe stepped into the doorway. The three officers on the porch relaxed and concealed their side arms. A whispered conversation followed between Detective Winton and the tenant before the officers were permitted to enter. The little man questioned their authority to search the house without a search warrant, and he resented the fact that his home was being invaded by police officers at this unusual hour. Detective Winton offered a diplomatic apology, then stepped outside and called his superior.

“I just wanted to assure you that your home is entirely surrounded by police officers. This is Chief Whepley; perhaps he can convince you that our mission here is one that not only embarrasses yourself and your family, but the community as well,” said the detective, who stood in the doorway.

“Perhaps you are a victim of circumstances,” the Chief replied, “but we have the information that your brother-in-law is here in your home. You know, of course, that there is a price on his head, and that he is hunted as

Public Enemy Number One, and wanted by the police. You certainly cannot afford to involve yourself and family by harboring him.”

“He is not here.”

“Very well; let us determine that fact to our satisfaction. We do not doubt your veracity, but it is our public duty to make certain that he is not here and that you are not harboring him under threats of duress.” The Chief’s patience left its appeal.

“My daughter is sick—”

“We must search the home, nevertheless.”

“Without a search warrant?”

“As you prefer. I can send an officer and get the judge to prepare the necessary warrant if you insist, but it only delays the process. The fact remains that we must satisfy ourselves that you are not harboring a criminal.” Chief Whepley was emphatic.

“Tiger Face is not here. He hasn’t been here for ten days, and then only for a few minutes. I am not shielding him. He did not tell us where he came from or where he was going. I’ll call my wife; she will verify my story. Her brother is not here,” the home owner protested.

“Then why delay the search?” The Chief smiled, a twinkle of determination in his eye. “You are evidently protecting someone.”

A queer expression spread over the man’s features. His nervous reaction was evident. The Chief’s remark gave cause for alarm. Further efforts of protest were feeble. Detective Winton cautiously approached the stairs. One of the deputies went to the side door and admitted other officers to search the basement. Another permitted the officer at the back door to enter and guard the owner while Chief Whepley accompanied the detective upstairs. An F.B.I. agent suddenly appeared, and sought admittance at the front door. Chief Whepley vouched for him and permitted him to join the search. Every approach to the house was covered, and every precaution was taken to protect those participating in the search. A ladder procured from a neighbor’s garage stood alongside an upper bedroom window. A dark form near the top of the ladder clutched a submachine gun in readiness for any emergency that might arise.

A thorough search revealed that the bird had flown. The suitcase was empty. A nervous little mother ran excitedly through the upstairs trying to explain to each officer that her brother had been there and gone. His sweet-

heart had left that very afternoon. Where, she did not know. Her name was Violet; she was supposed to be married to the man they hunted.

Chief Whepley stood watching her intently. For some reason she was overeager in her efforts to assist the officers. She invited them to search every closet, every dresser drawer, every conceivable place of concealment. She insisted that she had nothing to hide; that the officers were welcome to search everywhere.

The hunt continued, but without success. It was noticeably apparent that the man and his wife were greatly relieved when the officers had searched the house from basement to attic and were ready to leave, satisfied that they were the victims of an anonymous tip.

“Are you satisfied that the place has been thoroughly searched, Captain?” Chief Whepley directed the inquiry to his subordinate who had insisted upon using tear gas.

Captain Underwood did not reply. He had been so sure of his facts that he could not resist the temptation to leave his post of duty in charge of another and follow the detail of officers through the house. He was certain that Chief Whepley faced death. His pride was wounded. He was moved with a vague disappointment. The turn of events humiliated him.

“The F.B.I. men were always sure of their facts before,” he finally mumbled weakly, glancing at the agent at the Chief’s side. “There certainly is no heavy suitcase concealed here.”

“The black suitcase is in the closet at the head of the stairs,” replied the agent.

“It’s empty. If it contained a machine gun, where is it? I have searched in every possible place large enough to conceal it. I have been through every room. It isn’t in the clothes chute, fireplace, furnace, coal bin, washing machine or bassinet.” Captain Underwood was angry. “And it isn’t in any trunk or box or under any of the beds.”

“Has the girl’s room been searched thoroughly?” Chief Whepley asked innocently.

“I have been through it three times. One of the children is sick. The doctor was here today and left a prescription. I did everything but strip the bedclothes off the bed. There is nothing in there.” There was rebellious rebuke in the Captain’s reply.

“Let’s search the room again,” said the agent. “Your Chief seems to think that the mother is overly concerned about disturbing her sick daugh-

ter. I'm inclined to think that his hunch is worth investigating."

Captain Underwood reluctantly went back to the sick chamber and approached the mother sitting on the side of the bed.

"You will have to move your children," he said gruffly. "The Chief doesn't think that we have been thorough enough in our search."

"Oh-h-h! My poor sick darling. They want to kill you!" wailed the distracted mother, throwing herself across the bed. "I'll have to call the doctor. My sick baby, my sick baby!"

The two girls joined in the lament and clung to their mother. To reason with them was impossible. The mother was determined that she could be appeased only if the officers consented not to conduct the search. The situation was delicate. How to effect their purpose was a question of doubt. The mother became frantic, fighting the officers until she was exhausted.

"We'll handle this situation," said Chief Whepley, directing Detective Winton to assist him in lifting the moaning woman from the bed bodily.

He then directed the other officers to place the children at the foot of the bed. Over the mournful protest of the mother the transfer was successfully made, and almost immediately the bedlam ceased.

"There is the object of your search," said the agent, lifting an old quilt out of a pocket in the center of the box-spring mattress and exposing a dismantled Thompson machine gun.

Captain Underwood was dumbfounded. His surprise nearly equaled that of the speechless husband. Both were stunned by the revelation.

18. The Treacherous Trap

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MACHINE-GUN cache in the box-spring mattress was a discovery that lingered long in the memory of Captain Underwood. It recalled circumstances that were painfully embarrassing. "Tear Gas Tiger" became an expression that made him boil with indignation. The vexing raillery of brother officers was hard to endure. To him these jests were insults which belittled his character as an officer.

That he should choose to blame Chief Whepley was not hard to understand. He was responsible to the Chief in obeying orders. That the Chief's judgment was superior was evident from the manner in which he conducted the search, which had obtained results that he had not anticipated. His thoughts were always of himself; the Chief had considered others. He must devise some scheme to vacate Chief Whepley's chair in the Police Department. Another election had come and gone and he was still faced with unfulfilled promises. All politicians were alike; they used a man as a tool when facing an emergency and then promptly forgot him. He was becoming desperate. There were many members in the Department who opposed him. The delay in promoting him to the position of Chief of Police was irritating others who were expecting their reward. There were many promotions scheduled to become effective as soon as Chief Whepley was removed.

Captain Underwood began a relentless vigil. Chief Whepley was kept under constant surveillance in the hope that some unexpected happening would afford an opportunity for the Captain to realize his ambition. Captain Underwood and other subordinates in the Police Department were determined to unseat the Chief.

There had been nothing secret in Chief Whepley's plans. He usually left word where he could be located in the event of an emergency. He had no knowledge that those whom he considered his friends were plotting to betray him to his political enemies when he left the police garage. It was a pleasant day in early June—a day on which one could forget the world and its troubles. Chief Whepley was in a mood to forget. He wanted to forget

the problems of the Police Department. He had endured trials and tribulations since the Black Cult investigation started, and was weary of political strife. Consequently, he journeyed forth alone in his personal car, rejoicing in the opportunity to forget his troubles.

In spite of gas rationing and the Government order to conserve rubber, there were other cars on the highway leading to the capital. Two of them were on a special mission of their own—a mission connected with Chief Whepley's trip to the capital.

Unaware of the occupants of these cars and their purpose, the Chief continued on his way, carefully obeying traffic regulations as he proceeded. To protect himself, for several months he had been overcautious in following this policy. He wanted to be sure that nothing happened which would involve him or invite unfavorable publicity. There were many hungry politicians—political wolves—seeking such an opportunity. It was wise to guard against any situation which might embarrass him.

The occupants of the car preceding the Chief knew this. They had been carefully warned that he would be on guard against anything suspicious and that he would have to be taken by surprise if he fell into their trap.

Pursuant thereto, the unexpected happened. The opposite side of a small knoll furnished the setting.

Chief Whepley passed the brink of the hill, jammed the brake to the floor board and seized the emergency brake.

One hundred feet in front of him a girl rolled into the highway. The car preceding him sped from View. There was no time to get the license number. From all appearances the setting was a natural hit; and run. Where the girl came from he did not know, but there she was, and he could not leave her exposed to oncoming traffic while he attempted to overtake the fleeing car.

His car came to a sudden stop on the gravel at the right of the pavement. He sprang from the driver's seat to pick up the girl. A light coupe swung past the Chief and circled the prone figure on the highway. There were two girls in the car. The driver, wearing a yellow hat with a black veil, was watching the car disappear in the distance. Her foot rested steadily on the accelerator until she could feel the pressure against the floor board. She glanced at the needle of the speedometer. With a look of determination she glanced back and forth from the instrument board to the highway ahead. The speedometer registered seventy-five, then eighty, then eighty-five,

eighty-seven, eighty-eight, and on a straight mile of highway the needle pointed to ninety.

The fleeing driver ahead, aware of the pursuit, bent every effort to increase the distance between them. It was a race fraught with danger and excitement. Both cars shot past a sign telling of a state police post a mile ahead. In a few seconds the first car sped past the post, and the second stopped. The girl with the yellow hat dashed through the front door giving instructions to the sergeant on duty to relay a broadcast giving the license number of the fleeing car and the reason why the apprehension of the driver was desired.

A trooper sat before the microphone giving instructions to a state police cruiser to cover a kidnapping plot. The girl in black and yellow interjected the information that the fleeing car which she had pursued was connected with the offense in question. Immediately the state police post became a hive of activity. Radio orders were dispatched ordering a blockade of the road ahead. Another cruiser already at the scene of the crime was instructed to await the arrival of the two girls.

In the meantime a drama involving Chief Whepley and the girl on the highway was in progress. As he approached the prone figure, she suddenly sprang to her feet and seized him by the neck, screaming that she had been attacked. Several cars approaching from the opposite direction stopped. Several people ran over to the struggling couple in the center of the highway.

“This man tried to attack me,” the girl screamed. “He’s a villain. I was hitchhiking. He stopped and picked me up. I jumped from his car. He is trying to force me to go with him.”

“I saw the whole thing,” said a tall man in a sport roadster, who had left his car parked on the opposite side of the highway. “I was just coming out of my farm home when this man grabbed this girl and tried to force her back into his car.”

“This girl was not with me,” Chief Whepley started to explain.

“I saw you; there was another car ahead of you. They passed the house going west just as this happened,” the irate man interrupted.

“That’s the car that knocked this girl down—”

“Hold that man. My wife is calling the state police. Don’t let him lie out of it,” the man stormed.

Chief Whepley was dumbfounded. He knew that he was the victim of a deliberately planned plot. He had no witnesses. This woman's word would be taken in preference to his. His only hope was to remain calm and place himself at the mercy of a police investigation.

One thing was in his favor; he believed that the man who declared himself to be a witness was a victim of misplaced judgment. He apparently did not know this woman. His attitude was not that of an actor; he was sincere in his belief that he had seen her leap from his car. What he actually saw, if anything, was the girl who leaped from the car that preceded his. The driver of this car was the real accomplice in the plot. Who was it? He would give anything to know.

A state police cruiser arrived, and the two troopers proceeded to make their investigation. Several minutes later the light coupe driven by the girl in the black and yellow hat returned to the scene. One of the troopers went to her car and engaged her in conversation. Apparently there was a mutual understanding between them.

The other officer proceeded to take the names of Witnesses and write a history of the case.

"This is the man you want," said the spokesman of the group, referring to Chief Whepley. "He has refused to give his name or show any credentials of identification. The girl is there in my car. We'll come in and testify any time you want us if necessary."

"We already have sufficient facts to take them to Headquarters for questioning," the trooper replied. "We want the names of all witnesses and, of course, would like to make arrangements for each of you to appear voluntarily for a statement."

"I am ready to go now," said the man. "I think it's the moral duty of every citizen to protect innocent people from such a fiend as this. Do you want all of us to go with you?"

"Only those who have personal knowledge of the facts—"

"That lets me out." There was a chorus of dissenting voices of those who did not wish to be detained by the investigation.

Taking charge of the young woman who had instituted the complaint against Chief Whepley, the trooper placed her in the cruiser and then directed the Chief to return to his own car where the second trooper sat at the wheel.

“Sh-u-u-h!” the girl in the black and yellow hat cautioned, placing her finger over her lips as the Chief walked around the rear of his car and met her face to face.

“What are you doing here—”

“Sh-u—u-h! Not so loud. Shirley and I are still playing detective. Get in with the trooper. We’ll follow in my car,” she whispered out of the corner of her mouth as she hurried to re-enter her own car.

“God bless you girls,” the Chief murmured, his heart swelling with pride.

“You have a remarkable daughter,” said the trooper, when his prisoner seated himself at his right and the car began to move.

“I don’t understand it, but I suppose that I am under arrest,” he replied, feeling for an opening.

“Even a chief of police can’t kidnap a girl and get away with it in this state!” laughed the trooper.

“Who is the girl that claims the distinction of a girl friend?” Chief Whepley asked.

“She calls herself Jane Smith today. Your daughter happens to know that her real name is Joyce Tirnlin. She’s going to have plenty of surprises when we get to Headquarters,” the trooper replied.

“Joyce Tirnlin?”

“The same mythical girl that Detective Winton has been checking, but this seems to be the first time that any of us have had the pleasure of a personal meeting,” said the trooper.

“I have no pleasure in her acquaintance.” The Chief smiled drily.

“Unspeakable joy will be your portion when you get the whole story,” he replied, launching into the details of the narrative as Dee had related it to him.

The trip to the state police post proved a revelation to Chief Whepley. The net intended to capture him ensnared his adversaries instead. The wisdom of their own conceit had confounded them. The seed of wickedness which they cultivated in their hearts had produced a bitter harvest. The gall of despair planned for Chief Whepley had become their own portion. So are the ways of everyone that is greedy for gain.

Since the night of the masquerade when Dee and Shirley learned that a questionable woman, answering to the name of Joyce, was plotting to blackguard the Chief’s character, Detective Winton had kept his ear tuned

to the malefic grapevine of the underworld. He sent a trusted informant to take counsel with them and lurk privily in their midst. Consequently, information flowed freely concerning divers and sundry plans discussed to dispose of Chief Whepley. The basis of every plot was to bring him to the point of public disgrace. It must be something that the public would accept without question. How could it be done? A woman was the logical answer. Joyce Timlin was that woman, a beautiful blonde whose big blue eyes were deceiving in their innocence. Joyce was unknown to the community, a newcomer to the underworld haunts of Central City. Her past, present whereabouts and local connections were carefully guarded as a dark secret. She must be accepted as a lady above reproach; therefore she moved in the background of elite society. She purposely avoided becoming conspicuous, but awaited the day of favorable opportunity.

Detective Winton's informant supplied the bait that provided the effective lure. The word was innocently dropped in her presence that Chief Whepley planned a trip to the state capital alone. The eventful hour had arrived, and Joyce was advised to make the trip also. Detective Winton was subsequently informed. Dee Whepley and the detective's daughter Shirley were assigned to shadow and protect the Chief. Detective Winton remained at his post of duty to avoid suspicion in the Police Department. He was certain of an "inside connection" but had never been able to support his theory by proof. It was Sergeant Marcus' day off; the detective expected him to play a part in the plan, but the car and driver that called for Joyce at her apartment did not provide the clue. The license number of the car was issued to Art Rumby. Detective Winton smiled; the plot was beginning to congeal.

The facts related by the trooper were enlightening to the Chief. A deep sense of gratitude for Detective Winton's loyalty overcame him. He was also indebted to Shirley and to Dee for their trustworthiness. He would never be able to repay this voluntary contribution.

"How did you girls accomplish this fine piece of detective work?" Chief Whepley asked, addressing Dee and Shirley as they alighted from their car in front of the state police post.

"We've just been following orders," Dee replied, with a smile of amusement twinkling in her eyes.

"Someone has been keeping me in the dark. As a police chief I'm supposed to know what's going on," he replied. "Now all this has to happen before I get the news."

Another trooper drove up. He was sitting behind the wheel of Art Rumby's tan coupe. The owner, under arrest, occupied the seat at his side. "There's your man, Dee," Shirley said jovially, watching the trooper conduct his prisoner through the front door of the post to confront the Sergeant.

"The sum gross total of that crook belongs in jail." Dee was emphatic in her opinion.

"He has no one but the girl in the yellow hat to thank for it," said Shirley. "I don't think he appreciated your efforts in directing a state police post broadcast."

"Your daughter has the right technique when it comes to furnishing information for a radio message. While you were struggling with the woman we since arrested, she had the presence of mind to verify the license number and the description of the car and the driver wanted as an accomplice in the plot."

"And she got her man," Shirley temporized.

"And the mysterious woman in the case," the trooper mimicked.

"There are others who will not escape the net. This is only the beginning," Dee remarked in a serious vein.

19. Seasoned In Sin

WHAT WAS INTENDED to be a political bombshell was in reality a political dud in an outstate justice court. The timed explosion meant to disgrace Chief Whepley backfired in the newspapers. Instead of headlines exposing the Chief, there were accounts of the conviction of Art Rumby and Joyce Timlin on a disorderly charge. Confronted with evidence that Detective Winton produced which linked them together in a plot to defame their victim, they were glad to follow the advice of their attorney and plead guilty. A minor jail sentence was more to be desired than the alternate of a lengthy trial and public exposure of their connections with the Black Cult. It was better to suffer in silence as martyrs to the cause of the invisible empire. Their deleterious act was an honor. They were being loyal to a purpose yet to be fulfilled.

Defeat meant delayed progress. The flame of hatred burned higher because of their experience. They were seasoned in sin, and were determined to destroy all opposition. Detective Winton's name was added to the list of those who had earned their ill will, and a plan was devised to lead him to the political guillotine with Chief Whepley.

The new blow was a result of the dissension in the Police Department. It was a bold stroke maliciously aimed to force the detective's resignation. A charge backed by affidavits that he could not afford to fight confronted him. Only his resignation would save him from disgrace. His character hung in the balance. Sergeant Marcus and Police Commissioner Bly, who were directing the scheme, were to dictate terms. There was no alternative. He could quietly tender his resignation to take a better paying position in a defense plant and the public would never be the wiser.

"Here is something you'll be interested in," said Sergeant Marcus, ironically handing the Chief an envelope containing several affidavits.

"Sit down, Sergeant," he replied, reaching across his desk to accept the proffered parcel. "What do we have here? A petition for another raise in wages?"

Sergeant Marcus chose to stand. He always felt uneasy in the Chief's presence. The Chief seemed to look into the depths of his soul. The Sergeant's face reddened with anger.

"We don't want to cause any trouble for anyone, but you can't expect efficient work from men who have no respect for their superiors," he finally mumbled. "We haven't anything against Detective Winton. We don't want to see him lose his job. He can resign."

"Have a chair, Sergeant, while I look this over—"

"The quietest way is the best. We don't want any publicity. The girl doesn't want it, either," came the mumbled interruption.

"This alleged offense is two years old?"

"Yes."

"Who prepared the affidavits?"

"I wrote them myself," said the Sergeant proudly.

"You have a typewriter at home?"

"My wife has."

"I notice that there are two different dates on each affidavit affixing the affirmation of oath. One seems to contradict the other. On which date did the affiant sign the affidavits?" the Chief asked indifferently.

"The last one—the one signed before the notary public. The girl and her husband came over; they both signed that day," the Sergeant explained.

"They first saw these papers on that date?"

"That's right."

"Yet directly above their signatures they perjure themselves by pretending to have seen and signed the affidavit two days before. Isn't this a little inconsistent, Sergeant? How do you expect such depositions to stand up in court?" the Chief queried.

"It isn't necessary that they go to court. All you have to do is to call Detective Winton in and have him resign."

"Without charges?"

"You have these affidavits charging him with criminal assault. What more do you want? It isn't even necessary to show them to him. The Police Commission can ask for his resignation. You can explain the charges to him and he'll resign," said Sergeant Marcus, growing impatient.

"These charges are serious—"

"We expect the Police Commission to act. We haven't gone over your head. You have the facts. Detective Winton can easily get another job. His

resignation is all we ask,” he interrupted gruffly. .

“If these charges are true, he should be fired. We don’t want policemen who have the reputation of criminals. I’ll advise the Police Commission,” Chief Whepley replied emphatically.

“Detective Winton can resign and save all the trouble.”

“The Police Commission can decide that.”

“We don’t want any cover-up.”

“Just whom do you mean by ‘we,’ Sergeant?”

“Practically the whole Police Department. We have known all along that things were not as they should be. Here’s an opportunity to get rid of one undesirable.” Sergeant Marcus turned on his heel and started for the door.

“If the facts in these affidavits are borne out, no one will have cause to worry except the guilty.” Chief Whepley was determined that justice should prevail.

What was the ulterior motive behind this effort to get rid of Detective Winton? Something mysterious, something remote and unknown, some selfish underlying factor that he did not understand. The Chief wondered. He could see a sinister motive behind the deed. Who was responsible for it? Sergeant Marcus was only a tool in the hands of others who did not wish to appear openly. He was being used unwittingly as a tool to accomplish some treacherous purpose. The Chief was sure that the affidavits were false, but how was he going to prove it? They had been surrendered in consideration of Detective Winton’s resignation. At face value they spoke for themselves, but he must appraise their criminal value. If proved true, the facts would send the accused to prison. Politics! Politics! How was he to meet the challenge? He would be glad when the time came for him to retire.

“What about Detective Winton’s resignation?” Police Commissioner Bly demanded the next morning when he met the Chief by prearranged appointment in front of the city hall. “Call him in and tell him he’s through. The Council is demanding action.”

“Do you think he’s guilty?”

“Certainly he’s guilty. Haven’t you got affidavits to prove it?”

“Yet all you ask is his resignation.”

“We don’t want any publicity.”

“Neither do I; that why I’m not asking him to resign—”

“You, you—do you know what that means?” Commissioner Bly stormed, his temples bulging.

“Certainly.”

“I’m demanding his resignation, unless you prefer to hand yours in.” He smiled sarcastically.

“Sergeant Marcus started this investigation, but he had no authority to do so. I’m going to finish it. The Sergeant and all witnesses are going to appear before the prosecuting attorney. We’ll let the chips fall where they may. There’s only one course to take: we must stay in the middle of the road. If Detective Winton is guilty of this charge, I shall ask for a warrant for his arrest.” The Chief’s voice was low and firm.

“The Commission can compel him to resign or fire him,” said the Commissioner.

“But you can’t force me to compound a felony by consenting to it without giving him a trial,” the Chief answered with conviction.

“No one wants such needless publicity—”

Chief Whepley reached for the telephone and dialed the prosecutor’s number.

“You’re making a foolish stand, Chief,” the oily voice of Commissioner Bly continued. “The members of the Department contend they should not have to work with Detective Winton. Why not let him resign so that we can keep the Department together?”

“I will not help to protect any criminal—”

“You’re making a mistake, Chief,” he interrupted in protest.

“We’ll let the prosecutor decide that.” The reply left the commissioner in doubt.

For three days a parade of witnesses kept the staff of stenographers busy at the prosecutor’s office. The Chief left no stone unturned to get to the bottom of the complaint involving one of his men. He was determined to uncover the facts. Sergeant Marcus had shown an unusual interest in securing the affidavits. Would they stand the acid test? That was the important question.

In summing up the statements of witnesses, the Chief readily discovered that there were many discrepancies and contradictory details. The main affidavit, which was considered impregnable, became the object of question. The affiant readily admitted that it had been obtained under a form of intimidation. This naturally weakened it. Chief Whepley, however, would not allow technicalities to decide the issue. He was concerned with the truth. Whether Detective Winton was guilty was the main point. Half-truths

would not suffice. He could not permit a suspected member to remain in the Department.

With minor details unsubstantiated and the affidavits stripped bare of definite facts, there was no possibility of a conviction, but still the Chief was not satisfied. The supposition remained that the offense might have happened. This left Detective Winton in an embarrassing position. He was still the object of suspicion.

“You have established to the satisfaction of any jury that we do not have sufficient grounds to prosecute,” said the attorney for the state. “The date of offense must be established. The mere unconfirmed statement of the girl might be sufficient to convict if the time were given. Without time, place and corroborating details there is no hope of a conviction. If this girl was criminally assaulted, she certainly knows how, when and where it occurred.”

“She was led to believe that her only responsibility was to sign the affidavits,” the Chief pointed out.

“We cannot dispute the fact that she signed them, but how to prove that she knew anything about them is something else—”

“Let’s decide the issue by bringing the complainant and the accused together and let them argue it out,” Chief Whepley advised. “If she still insists that she was assaulted, we’ll demand that she sign a complaint.”

Detective Winton and the girl suddenly found themselves facing each other in an inner office. The prosecutor and his private stenographer sat behind a huge mahogany desk. Chief Whepley and the assistant prosecutor, who had arranged the meeting, stood in a doorway.

The detective and the girl held each other’s gaze for a few tense seconds before her eyes dropped to her lap.

“Is this the man who should be in prison for the offense with which you have charged him?” the prosecutor asked kindly.

“I don’t want to send him to prison—”

“You signed an affidavit against him?”

“Because Sergeant Marcus wanted me to. He told me I would not have to go to court.” The reply was scarcely audible.

“Is Detective Winton actually guilty of this charge?”

“No.”

“You don’t want to see him go to prison?”

“No.”

“Did you charge the detective with this crime because you are mad at him?”

“No.”

“You don’t hate him?”

“No.”

“Can you tell us how you happened to sign the affidavits?”

“To keep from going to court. Sergeant Marcus knew that I would have to get married. I didn’t want him to tell my people. He said he could fix it all up if my boy friend and I signed some papers for him. He brought them over just as you have them typewritten there and we signed them before a notary.” She trembled violently. “He told us that there wouldn’t be any trouble.”

“Is Detective Winton involved?”

“No.”

“Who is?”

“My boy friend. We’re going to get married. Sergeant Marcus said we couldn’t get married without my parents’ consent. I’m not eighteen—then—then it will be too late,” she sobbed.

20. Lost To Disappointment

A SUCCESSION OF SPECTACULAR INCIDENTS occurred in Central City. Excitement was in the air. Chief Whepley had dared to defy the Police Commission and suspend Sergeant Marcus. The order read “incompetency and conduct unbecoming a police officer.” The Commission ordered the officer returned to duty. Chief Whepley insisted upon a trial before reinstatement. He was accused of being a dictator. Police Commissioner Bly appealed to the circuit court for a writ to show cause. A court order subsequently permitted Sergeant Marcus to return to duty pending a hearing and the findings of the Commission. In the meantime he enlisted in the army and secured a leave of absence to avoid the consequences of a trial. The Police Commission, in a final hearing, rebuked the Chief for taking such rigid disciplinary action and dismissed the charges filed against the wayward sergeant.

At this same meeting the Commission offered further rebuff to the Chief by recommending the appointment of a probationary patrolman over his protest. They insisted upon the authority to hire and discharge and reserved sole authority to judge the qualifications of new applicants.

“This applicant has been arrested, convicted and has served time on a disorderly charge,” the Chief pointed out. “We can’t afford to approve the appointment of a man like that.”

“What of it? It all came out of a family argument. We have letters here absolving him from blame,” said the chairman. “We are at war; these are times when we can’t be too technical.”

“You criticized our approval of the last applicant because of a record of arrest for assault and battery at a college football game,” Commissioner Bly reminded him. “It seems to me, Chief, that you are too exacting in your opinion of candidates. Both these men have fine personalities. I move the appointment, Mr. Chairman.”

“I’m not criticizing your authority in making the appointment. The charter gives you that right. My point is this: it is unethical. It isn’t fair to the

candidate nor the city. How are these men going to appear on the witness stand when called upon to testify?" the Chief argued.

"Perhaps their previous court experience will be an advantage," Commissioner Lovett remarked significantly.

"A definite disadvantage," said the Chief seriously. "No one should be appointed to any police department who has to admit upon cross examination by the defense attorney that he has been arrested and convicted."

"You have raised this same issue before and nothing ever came of it. Are you ready for the question?" The chairman was becoming impatient.

By the unanimous vote of the Commission another political prodigy was born. Central City was to suffer later for this choice. Chief Whepley's department was filled with young, ambitious recruits who wanted to be policemen in their own right but found themselves bound by the fetters of political obligation. Their birthrights had been sold in their appointments. There was no way that they could redeem themselves as long as they were in the clutches of this monster of politics.

Chief Whepley was helpless. There was no way for him to stay the oncoming tide. He knew that disaster was about to break. The untainted Department would become corrupt. How soon would graft be gnawing the efficiency which he had fought courageously to maintain? He had thought that the recent appointment of a Police Commissioner to replace a deceased member might improve the board. Their latest action proved that he was hopelessly lost in disappointment. He had personally arrested the new Police Commissioner, who had been taken to court and convicted five years before in a gambling raid. Was it strange that the qualifications of a policeman need not be above that standard?

The following week the request announcing Chief Whepley's intention to retire was read before the Common Council. His twenty-five years of service with the present department would permit him to retire March first. He named that date. That would give the Commission four months to consider whom they were to select to replace him.

The announcement was like an explosion. The Council was not prepared to consider the request. What was the Chief going to do? What were his political aspirations? His recent quarrel with the Police Commission was too obvious. Consequently, the matter was tabled until the next meeting.

Chief Whepley slipped out the back door when the Council adjourned. He knew that the reporters would press him for an interview. Friends and

enemies alike would demand a statement giving his reason for retiring. He had no statement to make; he was graciously stepping out in favor of a younger man. He was weary of the political scheming that was continually going on around him, but he had no comments to make. He was not appealing to public sympathy.

With the shortage of manpower due to the war, he would have no difficulty in locating another position. He had made no definite plans; did not want to make any until his retirement had been approved.

Mayor Friese was the first to interview him. He was just closing his office desk when the Mayor stopped at his office.

“—thought I would catch you before you left the Council chamber,” he remarked. “Where did you go? We don’t want you to retire now. I came over to talk to you about it.”

“March is nearly four months away.”

“Do you know what that means? I expect to run for Mayor again. I can’t afford to have your retirement become a political issue,” His Honor emphasized. “Why not date your application to become effective after election?”

“And have the Police Commission demote me in the meantime?”

“I’ll handle that angle.”

“The charter provides that I may retire upon my own application after twenty-five years of service. There is a secret understanding in the Police Commission that I must go. I shall accept the ultimatum gracefully and retire without pomp, ceremony or vengeance,” said the Chief. “Furthermore, I do not aspire to public office.”

The Mayor smiled. The question that he dared not ask had been answered. The Chief had allayed his fears; his retirement was not the potential threat that he had anticipated.

“You are not filing for Mayor this spring?” His Honor asked quizzically.

“I’m not a candidate for anything. I don’t want any part in this political mess; it’s too rotten.”

“Politics is politics the world over. Society demands it—”

“Not the type molded by the invisible hand.”

“You should worry as long as the public is satisfied.” The Mayor had a curious grin.

“The public is blind—”

“You mean, not as skeptical as you are, Chief. Politics is the art of selling one’s self to the public,” said His Honor.

“It’s the art of camouflaging in this town.”

“Then you are not a candidate—”

“No, as long as the public chooses to condone such tactics, I cannot gratify as a servant worthy of such hire,” the veteran in law enforcement assured him. “It is useless to attempt to clean house for an unwilling tenant.”

“Never thought you were thin-skinned, Chief. A good politician must learn to take the bitter with the sweet,” the Mayor replied jovially. “Law enforcement is your forte, anyway. You should run for sheriff next fall.”

“No, thanks; politics doesn’t interest me. All I want to do is to retire and forget—”

“I certainly admire your spirit. You have served Central City well. You have an enviable record and a disposition of which one may well be proud. How you have kept from becoming cynical is a mystery.” Overzealous flattery was evident in the Mayor’s insincere praise.

21 The Price Of A Drink

TOM MACCALLISTER lost no time in making plans to capitalize upon Chief Whepley's retirement. It held many promises for him and his business—promises whose fulfillment he awaited with great anticipation. The reward involved financial opportunities that Chief Whepley had always denied him. The Chief did not favor selling liquor by the glass. His influence in the community had entirely defeated the sale of hard liquor. The new Chief of Police was to be more liberal—Mayor Friese had given him that assurance. His application to maintain and Operate a regular bar would receive favorable consideration. Members of the Black Cult were to be given a “square deal.” Chief Whepley's retirement meant a new era in Central City.

Tom's hopes were high, but he had learned through bitter experiences never to trust a politician who was liberal with promises. Consequently, he did not take everything for granted. His plans demanded a scheme to accomplish a desired end. A stag dinner was the logical conclusion, an informal affair that enticed the Mayor, certain members of the Police Commission and political constituents known to be favorable to the liquor interests.

The dinner was given in the basement of Tom's tavern. Mayor Friese walked into the trap innocently one evening after a Council meeting. Police Commissioner Bly casually invited him to a meal before going home and, not having had dinner, he accepted the invitation readily.

“Come in, Mayor.” Tom beamed with enthusiasm when they arrived. “Glad to have you drop in for an informal get together like this.”

“What's the big idea?” His Honor hedged, when he saw the banquet table set for a dozen people. “We just dropped in for a sandwich—”

“This is your birthday, isn't it?” Tom queried jovially, slapping the Mayor on the back and shoving him into the center of the circle.

Mayor Friese was noticeably disturbed.

“The Mayor is a jolly good fellow. The Mayor is a jolly good fellow.” A chorus of voices greeted him and added to his embarrassment.

His eyes fell upon the smiling countenance of Commissioner Yochum. Commissioner Ackley stood at his left, as enthusiastic as a child. Two members of the Secret Six had arrived; others were expected. He scrutinized the group carefully. Except for MacCallister, he did not question the right of anyone present to be there. All were his friends. Why had they permitted themselves to be placed in such a compromising position? What other guests were expected? He dismissed the thought and gave himself freely to the spirit of the occasion. It was his birthday. He was in the prime of life: forty-five; the future held great promises. His eyes were on the legislature, following his next term as Mayor.

Tom had done his work well. The Mayor was in a difficult situation. He did not dare to deny his friends the right to surprise him with a birthday dinner. To desert them would jeopardize his political future. If he stayed—Tom's lips curled with a cunning smile. It was an opportunity to play a trick which he had been saving for months.

"You are to occupy the seat of honor with your friends tonight, Mayor," Tom invited, escorting him to the chosen seat that had been carefully prepared for him. "You may sit here and officiate as our special guest."

"To whom am I indebted for this honor?"

"Just the gratitude of a few of your friends who have taken this way to express their sincerity," Commissioner Yochum replied.

"There are no misunderstood motives in a birthday dinner, I hope," said Commissioner Bly, with a flourish. "Let's sit down and do justice to the occasion."

The group sat down to a banquet fit for a king. Tom outdid himself. There was nothing forgotten that would embellish the feast. A rare bottle of champagne was opened and served in a toast to the Mayor.

"We drink to His Honor, Mayor Wynn D. Friese, the finest Mayor Central City ever had, as fine a Mayor as any city could boast," Tom proclaimed with an air of egotism. "Long live our Mayor."

"Fine speech, Tom; it's right from the heart. The Mayor deserves every word of it. We drink to the health, happiness and prosperity of our Mayor," said Commissioner Bly.

A waiter brought in a steaming platter on which were four roasted ducks, which delighted both the eye and the palate.

"We are of one accord, Mayor," one of the guests remarked. "Accept our best wishes."

Someone started humming “Hail, Hail, the Gang’s All Here.” Tom refilled the champagne glasses. The guests conversed busily while the Mayor was being prevailed upon to carve the fowl and serve the assembled guests.

“Who’s late at my party?” he asked casually when all present had been served. “Who is supposed to occupy the vacant chair on the opposite side of the table?”

“That’s reserved for your campaign manager,” Tom replied indifferently, careful to select a certain bottle from which he refilled the Mayor’s glass. “He’ll soon be here to drink a toast to insure your election.”

Mayor Friese was perturbed. The campaign manager that he wanted to conduct his next campaign was a member of the Men’s Temperance League. He certainly could not be expected to frequent the basement of Tom MacCallister’s tavern. A word of protest came to his lips, but he thought how ridiculous the statement would sound and remained silent.

His mind did not cease to function, however; there must be some mistake. The situation was perplexing. He drained his champagne glass thoughtfully. Had Tom really invited Deacon Stillman to this birthday dinner? He eyed the basement entrance in misery, half expecting to see the indignant deacon enter and denounce everyone assembled. Deacon Stillman would never neglect such an opportunity.

The Mayor’s appetite suddenly disappeared. He nervously fidgeted with his champagne glass while he sipped the contents.

Tom MacCallister eyed the Mayor with a self-satisfied grin, and was ready to refill his glass the moment it was empty. He was enjoying the drama. The Mayor was advancing his cause. By the time the evening was over he would be ready to listen to the terms which he proposed to dictate.

The doorbell sounded three times. Everyone stared; the Mayor dropped his fork and sat rigid with expectation. Tom rose and leisurely went to answer the bell. The door opened. Then followed an exchange of greetings which brought a frown of discomfort to the Mayor’s brow.

Kingpin bounded down the stairs and eagerly offered congratulations. A bodyguard followed him and took a seat in the background where he would be the least conspicuous.

“Well, well, well, Mayor; glad to find you the honored guest here—sorry to be late—wouldn’t miss an occasion like this for all the beer at the brewery.” He winked at Commissioner Ackley. “That’s saying a lot, isn’t it,

Commissioner? How about a highball? I propose a toast to His Honor, Mayor Friese.”

“Just in time, Kingpin. We were just wondering what was keeping you,” said Commissioner Bly discreetly, casting a wary look in the direction of the Mayor, who had turned to search for a spoon which he had brushed into his lap. More glasses were drained in the proposed toast and the meal continued. Kingpin became “the life of the party” with his usual abundance of wit and good humor. Tom, motivated by the obsession to refill the Mayor’s glass unobserved, encouraged conviviality. The Mayor’s resentment because of Kingpin’s presence had to be removed. Liquor would accomplish the desired end. Tom was confident of this, nor was he disappointed. Having been a bartender for years, he was certain of his victim’s physical reaction to intoxicants. His customers were his victims whether they chose to admit it or not. Tom had the ability to bring men under the power of his will—if he mixed their drinks. He had given this birthday dinner for the sole purpose of making the Mayor his victim. A new Chief of Police was to be selected, and circumstances must be manipulated in such a way that the appointment which he desired would be assured. In Central City, liquor by the glass was an issue that law enforcement must not oppose. The new Chief must favor the idea. Tom and Kingpin both agreed that Deacon Stillman was a dangerous character in a political campaign. They did not want to reckon with him as the Mayor’s manager in the spring election; nor could they afford to oppose the Deacon openly. Their recourse was to see that the Mayor changed his opinion. He must be obligated to them in such a way that he could not afford to rebel against their wishes. He must be ruined if he failed to accept the terms which he proposed. The party reached a hilarious conclusion. The Mayor, not a drinking man, found himself well “in” his cups, an experience with which he was not able to cope. The silverware eluded him until he hesitated to make the attempt to finish his dessert. A full glass of wine was at his right elbow. He was stricken with fear when some of the guests remarked that the parting toast should be drunk in his honor. To make himself heard, the Mayor raised his voice in a loud protest that he was not “much of a drinking man” except on social occasions such as this.

Kingpin rose to his feet and walked around the table talking jovially to the other guests. He was indifferent to the Mayor’s condition. His body-

guard advanced and stood aloof with his right hand in his coat pocket and the other absently turning the flap of the upper left lapel.

Mayor Friese started to rise, stumbled and fell over Tom MacCallister's foot, which threw him on his hands and knees to the floor. The Mayor reached for the chair which Commissioner Ackley held before him. The Commissioner stepped back, pulling the chair out of the Mayor's reach. The crowd saw a joke in the fact that the Mayor had to crawl to reach the chair. Several minutes passed before he was permitted to find support in the friendly hand of Kingpin who helped him to rise unsteadily to his feet. The group laughed loudly. Everyone crowded around the Mayor to console him—except Kingpin's bodyguard, who stood where the view was most advantageous.

Kingpin motioned for him to take a position on the stairs while the guests prepared to escort the Mayor to his car.

"This is a good view from here," he said, standing beside his bodyguard. "Take a couple of good shots and get out before they get wise."

The Mayor had paid the price of a drink. He did not hear the click of the camera which was focused upon him. He did not see Kingpin's sinister smile. He was ignorant of the fact that he had been outgeneraled politically.

22. The Harvest Of The Unjust

“DO YOU MEAN that you are really going to retire just to please a bunch of crooked politicians?” Dee demanded of her father when she discovered that his resignation had been read before the Council.

“Certainly, daughter. There’s nothing else left for me to do.”

“You can still fight; nobody admires a quitter. Demand your rights and the public will stick with you. You could be elected Mayor hands down in this town,” she flared indignantly.

“I have already given my word that I shall not seek office to gain revenge—”

“You’re a chump, Father. What are you thinking of? This town needs a good thorough political housecleaning from cellar to garret,” she said peevishly.

“You are correct in every detail.”

“Then why shirk the responsibility of satisfying the major need of the community?” she asked.

“The public is not ready to accept the challenge of good government. The people must be in a mood for sane thinking before they can discover that they have been duped by corrupt politics,” he explained simply.

“You can inform them of the need.”

“That’s politics.”

“Did I hear someone say politics?” said Reverend Gilmore as he walked in unannounced. “You must be a mind reader. I just dropped by to settle a question of politics myself.”

“Have a chair, Pastor. What’s on your mind?” Chief Whepley asked.

“I understand you are talking of retiring.”

“We were just discussing it,” Dee replied, answering the question directed to her father.

“I came to seek your support in the campaign this spring. The Mayor wants me to run for Commissioner and support him for Mayor. What do you think of the idea?” the visitor asked.

“I wouldn’t recommend it.”

“It means that you can still remain Chief of Police, if you wish.”

“As the political tool of the Mayor—”

“I wouldn’t put it that way. All the Mayor and I ask is your support.”

“You can consider me definitely out of the picture. The responsibility of throwing the Police Department into politics is not going to be upon my shoulders,” the Chief emphasized.

“You can at least vote for me?”

“No,” replied the Chief tersely.

Several seconds passed before the pastor regained his composure. “You—you mean that you would not vote for me for City Commissioner?” he asked weakly, wondering if he had misunderstood the Chief.

“That’s correct. I shall not vote for you for Commissioner or any other political office—”

“Why?” the puzzled parson asked. “I have always been your friend. You—you are a church member.”

“And as a Christian you would expect me to be honest. I am not voting for you because I don’t want to rob God. No pastor should desert the cause of Jesus Christ to try and redeem the world through politics. It isn’t a pastor’s calling; therefore I cannot conform to that principle.” The Chief made his meaning clear.

“The real reason couldn’t be revenge, could it, Chief?” The pastor’s lip curled. “You oppose the reappointment of Black Cult members in the Police Department and I suppose you also question their right to join my church.”

“That’s part of the master plan, isn’t it?”

“Master plan?”

“Yes, nominal church membership provides protection for a disciple of the devil, doesn’t it?” The Chief was pessimistic.

“What do you mean?”

“Church membership is a sacred trust, justified only in a sin-confessed conversion. Would to God all Black Cult members might boast such a conviction!” Chief Whepley was sincere. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“A church member carries his own testimony—”

“Unconfessed sin speaks louder than words.”

“Do—”

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” There was a plea in the Chief’s eyes.

The telephone rang.

“It’s for you, Pastor,” Dee said, turning to address him. “Mayor Friese wants to talk to you.”

Pastor Gilmore talked in low tones for several minutes. There was a discussion concerning politics which those present chose to ignore, until the pastor, with the receiver to his ear, stepped from the hall to address the Chief.

“Mayor Friese would like to discuss the future with you,” he said. “I have tried to explain—perhaps you had better talk to him.”

“No, tell him he’s welcome to call on me if he desires. I don’t want to be misunderstood,” said the Chief, with an indifferent smile.

“He’ll be right over,” Pastor Gilmore advised, stepping back into the room and resuming the conversation. “The Mayor analyzes things pretty well. We should be able to get together.”

“Evil companionships corrupt good morals. Awake to soberness righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God: I speak this to move you to shame,” the Chief quoted effectively. “Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor’s good.”

“That is why I propose to run for City Commissioner.”

“Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men... Let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God,” the Chief reminded him. “Your calling is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to all men.”

The door chimes announced the Mayor’s arrival.

Dee went to the door to admit him. “Come in,” she said sweetly. “Father is expecting you.”

“Hello, everybody,” His Honor greeted them cordially as the clergyman and his host rose to receive him. “Thought I had better drop over in person. We cannot afford to have any misunderstanding, can we, Chief? Police Commissioner Bly is waiting in the car. May I invite him in?”

“Bring him in, by all means,” said the Chief. “We don’t want anyone to wait in a car. Tell the Commissioner he is more than welcome.”

Dee waited at the door to admit them.

“I suppose you’ve met Commissioner Bly?” the Mayor asked, as he returned to the porch. “He seems to be acquainted with everybody he meets.”

“Yes, Miss Dee and I are old friends. At least, I know of no serious differences,” said the Police Commissioner, as he went into the front room to greet Chief Whepley and his guest.

The two men were made welcome.

“I have been trying to convince the Chief to run for Commissioner this spring.” Pastor Gilmore directed the conversation to the proper subject. “His name would add strength to the good government slate, don’t you think?”

“Couldn’t be better,” Commissioner Bly ventured.

“There wouldn’t be a question about his election, that’s certain.” The suave tones of the Mayor voiced an appeal. “How about it, Chief, you’re only one step from the office of Mayor. You can follow my next term.”

“I thought that was settled.”

“What do you mean, Chief?” Commissioner Bly asked.

“I made it quite plain that I am not seeking office—”

“He expects the office to seek the man,” Reverend Gilmore remarked. “He wants to be inducted into service, if you please.”

“That’s the only way they will ever get me into the political army. I don’t want any part in it, now or at any other time.”

“Then it is definitely understood that you are not running for office even though you retire?” The Mayor wanted to be certain.

“Absolutely!”

“Would you openly oppose the Mayor and Commissioner Bly if they should run together on a slate at the spring election?” Reverend Gilmore queried.

“What would you expect in a forced retirement as Police Chief?”

“Suppose that you were assured that you could remain as Chief of the Department if you supported them in the campaign?” he asked cautiously.

“I wouldn’t be interested.”

“You mean that you would not support them—”

“That’s as clear as I can make it—”

“That means—Do you realize the position?”

“I know exactly what it means,” said Chief Whepley clearly. “It means that I have to retire. Either way it means that the Police Department is going to be thrown into politics. It means that Mayor Friese and Commissioner Bly must take that responsibility. It means corrupt politics which I refuse to condone. Gentlemen, is that clear?”

“They have a right to run for office if they wish,” Reverend Gilmore whined weakly.

“The Mayor has the right to run for a fourth term if he wishes. That is a question of merit. As for Commissioner Bly, No! No Police Commissioner should be granted that privilege.” The Chief was firm in his convictions. “It certainly violates all principles of good government.”

“You are prejudiced.”

“I should be; I should oppose them politically, but I shall not. I am leaving the judgment to God. My retirement becomes effective March first. Let me go in peace. Those who sow the seed of unrighteousness shall reap the harvest of the unjust.” There was pathos in the Chief’s voice.

“Listen to the religious crack-pot preach,” Commissioner Bly mumbled irritably.

Chief Whepley had been waiting for this opportunity to speak. Turning to Commissioner Bly, he said, “I have discovered that there are no good politicians—no, not one. There are good office holders, yes, office holders even in Central City who are not politicians. But the wickedness of the politician is great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually... Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“Su-sufficient—!” The eyes of the Police Commissioner blazed with indignation, but his political training would not permit him to expose his feelings by further remarks. His was Pearl Harbor strategy.

The Mayor cleared his throat.

“Do you know, Chief, I rather admire your philosophy of life,” said Commissioner Bly suavely. “I think that you should reconsider your application for retirement. The office of Chief of Police is a financially profitable position.” Chief Whepley smiled knowingly.

23. A Council Of War

POLICE COMMISSIONER BLY lost no time in calling the Police Commission to arrange a date for a council of war. He tried to persuade them to hold a midnight meeting but failed in the attempt; the best he could do was to gain their consent to meet at seven o'clock the following morning. He would gladly have come at four o'clock. Sleep was impossible. The Chief's remarks burned like coals of fire in his memory. He could not forget them. Chief Whepley had dared to speak the truth; he had dared to refer to him as a worthless politician. The fact smote him with conviction. His blood boiled with indignation. No one had ever dared to face him with such a frank statement. Was this public sentiment? He wondered. He would retaliate—but would the Commission vote with him to oust the Chief?

The special meeting convened promptly at the city hall. Vindictive and resentful, Commissioner Bly related his experience of the previous evening and demanded that a resolution be passed to dismiss the Chief immediately.

"I suppose we could prefer charges and convict him of telling the truth." Commissioner Lovett's dry humor enraged his colleague.

The air was filled with oaths. "The Chief is done! If you don't fire him, I'll resign from the Commission. I won't consent to anything less than that. The Chief has to go!"

"You've got your pen and ink with you, have you, Commissioner?"

"Pen and ink?"

"Yes, you had better start to write your resignation," Commissioner Lovett taunted. "This isn't an official meeting, you know; we can't take any action today."

"We can agree upon what we are going to do."

"I thought you could take it with a smile. You let the Chief get under your skin," the obscure member of the group remarked.

"The Council has agreed upon retirement. To oust the Chief now would ruin the Mayor politically," said Commissioner Lovett. "We don't want to do something that will lose the election."

“What do I care about the Mayor? He would double-cross his grandmother if he thought there was a chance for another vote. I think I’ll run for Mayor this spring myself,” Commissioner Bly stormed, running his fingers through his hair like a maniac. “I think I will run for Mayor.”

“You’d better run for the woods if you fire Chief Whepley—”

“Oh, yeah!”

“There are a lot of dumb people in this town, but they don’t run from every snake in the grass—”

“Just what do you mean by that remark, Lovett? Are you inferring—”

“I’m not inferring, deferring or referring,” the Commissioner replied, “but I am telling you that Chief Whepley has a lot of votes in this town, once he decides to go out after them.”

“He won’t have anything when I get through with him—”

“If you have any sense you’ll leave the Chief alone and let him retire.”

“You are the only political wiseacre in this town who knows all the answers.” Commissioner Bly was furious. “I make the motion that the Chief be fired.”

The obscure Commissioner chuckled. “I’ll amend the motion and recommend that Chief Whepley be granted an immediate leave of absence,” he said.

“I’ll support the amendment,” said Commissioner Lovett, with a wink of approval at his colleague.

“A swell pal you turned out to be, Lovett. I’ll remember this,” snapped the irate Commissioner.

“Are you ready for the question?” The chairman proceeded with the order of business.

“If that’s the way you want it I might as well make it unanimous,” said Commissioner Bly peevishly. “It’s two against one; I have listened to this bally-hoo about getting rid of Chief Whepley long enough. Nothing ever happened but talk. I still think that he should be fired. If we wait until tomorrow it will be the same old story. I am for anything that will get him out of the Department.”

“Well, the resolution is on record whether it is legal or not,” said the chairman, polling the vote.

“The Chief would be a fool to protest on that score. I think he really wants to retire and get away from this headache.” The third Commissioner’s version was received favorably.

Mayor Friese stormed into the room unannounced.

“I—I’ve been looking all over for you,” he panted breathlessly. “Called everywhere I could think of but here— What —what are we going to do? The Chief is the first witness.”

“What?”

“The grand jury! Haven’t you heard? Captain Underwood just tipped me off. They started serving subpoenas this morning—”

“Is it in the paper?”

“Headlines a foot high—I—I thought you knew—” The Mayor tugged at his collar and adjusted his tie, walking nervously in front of the only window.

“We just gave the Chief a leave of absence—”

“—leave of absence? Man, what do you mean? The grand jury?”

“I was at the Chief’s home last night. I see it all now. I thought he was pretty cocky. No one could talk to him. He knew all about the grand jury then.” Commissioner Bly was serious.

“The Commissioner wanted him fired. We met this morning to consider it. We passed a resolution to give him a leave of absence until his retirement becomes effective,” Commissioner Lovett explained. “Bly was determined to get rid of him. We didn’t know about the grand jury.”

The Mayor dropped into the remaining vacant chair and stared at the group helplessly.

“What does Captain Underwood know about it—inside information, I mean?” Commissioner Lovett was the first to speak.

“I—I don’t know. He tipped off Cye Leach—got word to everyone he knew. Cye already knew about it. The gamblers are all under cover.”

“What are you worrying about, then? You haven’t any troubles, have you, Mayor?” Commissioner Lovett was the first to smile.

“I wouldn’t have if I hadn’t listened to every Tom, Dick and Harry who wanted something,” the Mayor confessed.

“You at least admit that you have come to your senses.” The silent member of the group expressed himself. “Let the grand jury rage. It doesn’t worry me.”

“It’s a swell time to crow now.” Commissioner Bly exploded. “Chief Whepley is to blame for all this and you know it. He’s always preaching to someone.”

“You might have been better off if you had listened. What is it the Chief always says? Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—”

“Shut up!”

“...handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness—”

“Sh—”

“...and their word will eat as cloth a gangrene.” The third Commissioner was determined to finish. “It’s a quotation that I never forgot.”

“I don’t believe a word of it,” Commissioner Bly thundered. “The Chief was always trying to scare somebody with some religious bug-a-boo. The trouble with you is that you let it get under your skin.”

“Maybe. It won’t worry the grand jury any if I did,” the little man remarked, bringing disorder that disbanded the meeting.

24. The Hounds Of Justice

THE DENS OF INIQUITY in the secret haunts of Central City's underworld buzzed with gossip. Where would the grand jury strike? Who would be included in the investigation? Who would escape the net? Fear hovered about the haunts of the libertines. No one was certain in whom to place confidence. Someone was supplying information to the grand jury. Grand juries do not thrive on silence. Why must people talk? The underworld cowered before conscience. Who would be the victims? What avenues of escape were open?

The grand jury was a disturbing firebrand that sent questionable characters scurrying to new haunts under cover of darkness. Their own shadows filled them with alarm. Turbulent with fear, the tenderloin district became a seething mass. The wanton and wayward shifted to quarters which promised solace and comfort as they sought desperately to keep the hounds of justice off their trail. The underworld was no longer secure. Its inhabitants sought a new and more secure refuge. Consequently, those relying upon political protection besieged their erstwhile friends with calls.

Mayor Friese, Commissioner Bly and Captain Underwood were reminded of past favors—favors which had obligated them to those whom they had exploited. The situation was far from comfortable. If they admitted the connection, they risked exposure; if they denied comfort to those in distress, they feared reprisals from those turning state's evidence before the grand jury. Their sin had found them out. How were they going to keep the secret from the public?

Tom MacCallister was among those whose troubled consciences embarrassed them. He had always contributed generously to campaign funds when he was promised proper remuneration. Captain Underwood brought his demands to the Mayor. He zealously sought gossip that could be employed to spread propaganda. Maliciously he distorted facts, and when the statement reached the ears of those for whom it was intended it had been made to resemble truth.

Propagandizing fact was a favorite pastime with Tom MacCallister. With this purpose in mind he arranged a meeting with Captain Underwood in the basement retreat beneath his barroom. He had news that would be a bombshell in the Mayor's camp if the proper strategy was employed.

"What does Mayor Friese think of the opposition which he will have to face in the spring election?" Tom asked, opening the conversation.

"Opposition? What do you mean?"

"Chief Whepley; his petitions are out, and he plans to run against the Mayor. He will have five thousand signatures by the end of the week. The petitions are scattered all over town." Tom made sure that the Captain grasped the full significance of the possibilities.

"Chief Whepley has assured the Mayor that he is not running for office. There must be something wrong. The Chief would never go back on his word," Captain Underwood said seriously. "Who told you about the petitions?"

"I saw some of them. I think the Chief's daughter is behind the move. She has wanted him to run against the Mayor ever since he was forced to retire." Tom was certain of his facts.

"The Chief will never go back on his word!"

"What does the Mayor think about it?" the bartender wanted to know.

"He doesn't think; the grand jury has him guessing—"

"You mean that the Chief has been outguessing all of us for four years? You can't make me believe that he isn't back of this grand jury. Then the Police Commission helps him by giving him a leave of absence to conduct it; of all the stupid things I have heard of, this is the most stupid," Tom stormed furiously. "When the truth is known you will find that he is behind the petitions sponsoring him for the mayoralty race!"

"He'll never run for Mayor in this town." Captain Underwood fondled his service revolver.

"It looks to me as if a one-way ride would be the only thing that might stop him." The tavern keeper was careful to speak softly. He did not wish to be quoted.

A knock at the door caused the two men to stiffen with apprehension. Captain Underwood lurched from his chair to hide while Tom went to the door.

"Who's there?" he asked.

The rustle of a paper which was being pushed under the door attracted his attention. Tom picked it up and was confronted with a grand jury subpoena for his bartender.

“The deputy just served this on me,” the bartender said softly. “He was looking for you, too; I told him that you were not in.”

Tom MacCallister opened the door and peered cautiously about, making certain that he had locked Captain Underwood in the basement. Perhaps they were looking for the Captain also. He did not want to run the risk of having him subpoenaed under the circumstances that prevailed. Such a situation would result in a number of embarrassing questions.

“Where is the deputy?” he asked.

“He has gone down the street; he will be back in a minute. If you don’t want him to find you here, I’ll let you out the back way,” the bartender explained.

“I might just as well face the music. You did not mention Captain Underwood, did you?”

“No, I don’t look that crazy, do I?”

“I’m concerned about your deeds, not your looks. Captain Underwood has not been here, understand?”

“Captain Underwood has not been here. I’ll swear I never saw him.” The bartender’s face was blank.

“Did anyone call the Mayor?” Tom MacCallister demanded suddenly.

“No!”

“Call him!”

“Do you want to talk with him—”

“Not on the telephone. Tell him you are waiting for blackout orders. He will know where to meet me. The hour is nine o’clock.” Tom gave the sign of the Black Cult.

“There will be no mistakes,” the bartender assured him.

Tom MacCallister paced the floor until the deputy returned and handed him a subpoena.

“I’m a little later than I expected. Thought it might be possible to get Captain Underwood to help locate a party. You haven’t seen him around, have you?” the deputy asked innocently.

“Wish I could help you out. Shall I tell the Captain that you want to see him—”

“Forget it. Think I’ll close the books for tonight and go home.” He wanted to appear unconcerned.

The telephone rang vigorously. Tom nudged the bartender to take the call. The tension was aggravating. Why did the deputy not go on his way? Did he know that Captain Underwood was still in the basement? Beads of perspiration oozed from Tom’s brow. He stooped beneath the bar and wiped them on his apron. The bartender, speaking in guttural tones, was telephoning. Tom caught enough of the conversation to realize that he was talking to the Mayor. Why did they not stop talking? He searched for an excuse to terminate the conversation.

“We don’t need more beer delivered until Monday,” he thundered at the bartender. “Tell him we are busy here— too busy to discuss orders. I’m waiting to go to supper.” Tom sighed with relief, secretly pleased by his cleverness.

The deputy followed the tavern keeper to the door and walked with him to the corner where they parted. Tom made sure that he would not be followed and then went to the telephone in the drugstore. There were several important calls which he had to make. He would have to instruct his bartender to release Captain Underwood. He was exceedingly uncomfortable. He could not go before the grand jury without consulting the Mayor. He had much to consider but did not perceive that the labor of sin is labor in vain.

25. A Time Of Testing

DEE WHEPLEY'S sudden disappearance crowded the grand jury headlines off the front page of the newspaper. In spite of Captain Underwood's efforts, as acting Chief of Police, to treat the matter as having little consequence, the press presented the incident as a kidnapping. It was true that there was no evidence to support such a contention except the bare statement of Dee's father that there had been foul play. Captain Underwood argued that there was no motive for a kidnapping; no demands had been made for a ransom. There was, therefore, no object in such a theory, but he intimated that she could have vanished intentionally as part of a preconceived plan to gain public sympathy and thus recall her father to the duties of Chief of Police. Chief Whepley had been on leave of absence for two months awaiting March 1, his scheduled date of retirement. It was a known fact that Miss Whepley had contemplated a trip to her sweetheart's marine base in the East. There were soldiers, sailors and marines scattered over the length and breadth of the land; it was only logical that she might have started out in her car to pay Lieutenant Allan Edmund a surprise visit. There was scarcely a police department in the country which was not besieged with requests to locate missing girls. Distracted parents everywhere were worrying over missing daughters who suddenly decided to visit some army, navy or marine base.

Chief Whepley, burdened with the duties of the grand jury, lacked time to conduct a personal investigation. Detective Winton was out of the state and would not return for ten days. Chief Whepley was facing a blind alley. The Police Commission had limited his ability to act in an executive capacity. He could not demand the members of his former department to act; they were subservient to Captain Underwood's orders.

The Chief placed his confidence in his ability to read human nature. He knew that his daughter had not left her invalid mother and her home voluntarily. There was a motive behind her disappearance—a motive unknown to him. There were two possible theories, both unsupported by concrete evi-

dence, but one thing was certain; his daughter had been detained—possibly murdered—to accomplish some specific purpose. She had no known enemies; therefore, the plot involved the enemies of others. It was only logical to believe that his own enemies were involved, but where was the motive? It was not a probability that the Black Cult instigated this plot. No, there were other motives. Had Dee been stricken in order to curtail his activities with the grand jury? If so, there were an endless number of possible clues. He was retiring from the Police Department. Captain Underwood was right; if he and his daughter were attempting to gain public sympathy and thus restore him to the force as Chief of the Department, the theory might have merit. He knew Dee, too, very well. She would never stoop to such an underhanded method of courting public good will in his behalf.

He analyzed the facts at hand. Dee and her mother were home during the afternoon. He had been detained at the staff headquarters with other grand jury investigators. Dee had prepared the evening meal and carried it on a tray to her mother's bedroom at five o'clock. They had eaten together, as they often did when he was not expected to return for dinner. They had talked about the trip that Dee was planning to take the following week end. She had talked with Shirley and Mrs. Winton concerning plans to care for the invalid mother while she was away. At six-thirty she suddenly discovered that this was the last date to purchase gasoline with the current series of "A" book coupons. She had a new "B" book which she was saving for her trip, but she needed all the gasoline which had been allowed.

"I am going to run out to the gas station for a few minutes, Mother," she said. "They will be closed in less than an hour. I will get the car serviced for gas and be right back; do you mind?"

"Go ahead, daughter." Mrs. Whepley smiled. "Daddy will be home by the time you return. I won't mind waiting."

Dee grabbed her purse, hurriedly kissed her mother goodbye and dashed out the door. At seven when the Chief arrived, Dee had not returned. A neighbor had seen her back out of the driveway, turn and go east. Here the clue ended. All the gasoline stations in the vicinity were closed when the Chief started out to make a check. The Police Department took up the search and canvassed the district without result. No one could be found who remembered having seen Dee or her car that evening except the one neighbor. Friends were called with the same disheartening result; no one had in-

formation that would lead to a clue. There had been no accidents. The earth seemed to have swallowed Dee.

All the forces of evil had struck in a final effort to break Chief Whepley's faith in God. He was fighting a losing battle with his fellow men. They had apparently gained an advantage by dealing falsely. Many of those whom he had trusted had traded honor for iniquity; they had gone the way of the lustful of heart. Now his daughter had been kidnapped. There was no end to the road of trouble. Where was the profit? Where was the place of justice? Surely God would reward them according to their iniquities.

With a heavy heart, Chief Whepley turned to the task at hand. He must endure for the sake of his invalid Wife and Dee. He must not let the load of trouble break his spirit or his faith. It was a time of testing, but God would see him through. His enemies were not hiding behind a shield of all-sufficient wisdom.

He joined his wife in prayer before making a long distance call to arrange for consultation with Lieutenant Allan Edmund. He knew that the clue did not lie in that direction, that Dee had not left home on a secret mission to visit the marine base, but there was comfort in talking with someone in whom he had implicit confidence.

"I think you are right," Lieutenant Edmund agreed, when the Chief explained the situation. "It is a matter that must be investigated outside the members of the Police Department. I only wish it were possible for me to be there. I think Ted Parker can help us. Turn him loose on the cold trail. That boy is a wizard at finding information where there isn't any. Tell him to call me at my expense."

"I had that in mind when I called you. I knew that you would approve. Ted would turn the world over for you and Dee." The Chief's voice betrayed the depth of his feeling.

"I wish it were possible to get a leave."

"Ted and I will carry on."

Consequently, the Chief and Ted Parker, unaided by the newspapers and the Police Department, diligently gathered evidence. Acting under instructions from the Chief, Ted was given a detailed account of Dee's last movements. He had a list of articles which she carried in her purse, and knew the license number and other details about her car before he departed in search of the proverbial needle in the haystack. Central City held a clue; it was Ted's job to find it.

He started out on his bicycle at daylight after Dee had been missing nearly twelve hours. The only clue was the general direction of travel. Some gasoline station should hold a clue; there was the possibility that she had been intercepted while stopping for gasoline.

The forenoon passed and the diligent search continued. In the meantime Chief Whepley called every gasoline station which could be reached by telephone, notifying them to be on the alert for either "A" or "B" book coupons bearing the license number of Dee's car. It was a known fact that she had marked the number on some of them. Perhaps some station could furnish information. The faint hope encouraged anxious hearts.

The Chief's telephone rang at three o'clock; Ted was eager to describe his efforts.

"We have our first clue," he said. "I am at the Red Dot Gas Station at Seventh and the Trunk Line Highway. Dee evidently stopped here for gas."

"Yes?"

"It's lucky that I stopped on my way back. The station doesn't open until noon. The attendant said that he was busy last night when a girl drove up and waited in line for gas."

"Yes?"

"He described Dee's car, said that a girl and two men drove up in another car. The girl got out and went over and talked to Dee. Then one of the men got out. The next thing he remembers is that they were backing out of the driveway and went down the alley together, and they were in Dee's car."

"Yes, yes, what makes you think that it was Dee?" The Chief wanted particulars.

"I know that it was Dee; I have parts of the covers of her gas ration books." Ted was jubilant. "The attendant said that there seemed to be some sort of trouble going on in the car as they drove away. I went down the alley and found some of the scraps of paper that they had thrown away."

"You matched them together and found that they belonged to Dee?"

"Yes, I have part of the name. The address is all there. There is no question about my being on the right trail."

"What about the description of the people involved?"

"They were supposed to be about Dee's age; the attendant doesn't have much information. There was a line of half a dozen or more cars waiting to get gas before the deadline on closing."

"What time was it?"

“Seven-thirty. The station was ready to close,” Ted explained. “He was only going to wait on those that were in line.”

“Dee did not wait to get gas?”

“No.”

“Too bad she did not buy gas. Then the coupons would have been definite proof.”

“What about the stub and parts of the cover of her”A" book? Isn't that proof enough that she must have been there?" Ted asked seriously.

“Right you are, son. Now, the big job is to find the missing coupons and the crooks that are holding Dee,” he replied. “Keep up the good work. God will reward your faithfulness.”

“I will trust and faint not. His way has been made perfect in all the earth,” said Ted with assurance.

26. A Foregone Conclusion

THE DISCOVERY of parts of gasoline ration books which Dee carried inspired Ted and Chief Whepley to greater effort. This was evidence which could be given confidentially to the state police and the F.B.I. There were reasons to believe that Dee had been kidnapped. There was a possibility that she had been taken across the state line; if so, it was a federal offense. It was a possibility that could not be overlooked. The gasoline ration coupon clue was a valuable one; however, Chief Whepley insisted that the news should not be released to the public. He was cautious in releasing news for publication; he did not want to notify the crooks responsible for Dee's disappearance that their use of her gasoline coupons might cause their capture. The fact that the coupons had been torn from the books and the covers mutilated gave a clue to their intended use. Such purchases might lead to their downfall; smaller clues than this had often been contributing factors in solving a case.

The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Chief Whepley was watching for someone connected with Dee's disappearance to stumble. He had, in times past, outguessed a great number who had overstepped the bounds of caution. He knew that man could not supersede God's laws. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. He was acquainted with the afflictions that beset the human race. He knew the ruin which awaits those who violate the ordinances of heaven.

A week passed and with it the last day for filing in the primaries. Police Commissioner Bly and Mayor Friese were to be rival candidates in the spring election. There were to be no contests in the primaries. Kingpin had hoped for a "dark horse" to file, someone whom he could support, but no one with a reputation worthy of respect was willing to jeopardize his good name. Consequently, Kingpin's support would again go to Mayor Friese. He could not conscientiously favor Commissioner Bly. It was a choice between two evils, of which Mayor Friese was the lesser. There was consolation in

the fact that Chief Whepley, faithful to his word, had made no attempt to file, although urged to do so by his friends.

Tom MacCallister was jubilant; the election of a candidate favorable to his principles was assured. Both Mayor Friese and the Police Commissioner had his approval. Through a political trick, the election of a desirable candidate had been made certain.

Chief Whepley, burdened with the mystery of his daughter's disappearance, was not concerned about the outcome of the political contest. His retirement would be in effect before the April election. He had hoped to get away and forget, but there was no such possibility. Of paramount importance was news of his daughter's whereabouts. There was no way of predicting the future. He could not rest until the criminals that had kidnapped Dee were captured and prosecuted. Then there was the problem of the grand jury.

Ten hectic days and sleepless nights passed. Then, suddenly, came the report of the purchase of gasoline with a "B" coupon on which was the defaced license number of Dee's car. Ted discovered the coupon with one numeral changed within an hour after the purchase had been made. The new evidence gave zest to the hunt. The station was vigilantly watched for the return of the customer. Three days later an "A" coupon was used, and the same numeral had been changed. The heavy figure was in marked contrast to Dee's fine writing. The station, however, was on the opposite side of the city. This attendant was carefully interviewed, and he insisted that the license number on the car corresponded to the number on the coupon. His description of the young man who made the purchase was similar to that given by the attendant at the Red Dot station. New hope burned within the hearts of the weary parents. Ted scarcely slept; he virtually lived on his bicycle. The kidnapers were still in the vicinity of Central City, and he was determined to make every possible effort to discover their whereabouts.

In the meantime the Central City Police Department, under the direction of Captain Underwood, dragged the river and furnished the newspapers with daily accounts of their activities. The public must be convinced that they were doing everything within their power to solve the mystery. They were besieged by anonymous calls. Mayor Friese and Police Commissioner Bly took an active part in the investigation for political reasons. Consequently, their demands were met first, with the result that there was a great display of effort and no accomplishment.

Chief Whepley, familiar with the underlying principle, kept his own counsel. He and his friends continued their private investigation apart from the local police. The case was shrouded in mystery.

“Why did anyone want to kidnap the Chief’s daughter?” was a question that everyone asked and nobody answered. It was the first question that Detective Winton asked upon his return, but he was restricted by a multitude of assignments and other duties and not permitted to conduct an extensive investigation.

“Virtually the whole force is working on the case now,” Captain Underwood informed him. “Everything is being done that is reasonably possible. There isn’t any definite proof, yet, that a crime has been committed.”

“Yet? But it is a foregone conclusion that it involves foul play?” Captain Underwood grasped the significance of the question.

“You will do well to stick to your police assignments. There is too much theorizing on the basis of gossip,” he snapped. “Chief Whepley can produce his daughter if he wants to.”

“Yes?”

“Yes, there’s no doubt about it. It’s just a play for sympathy,” the Captain grumbled. “—no telling what kind of story will be attached to the publicity stunt when she returns.”

Thereafter Detective Winton did not reveal his thoughts. He knew that there was something radically wrong with the case, but what it was he did not know.

On the fourth week end following the kidnapping, the state police, under the direction of the O.P.A., conducted a surprise tire inspection. No advance publicity was given. The driving public, unaware of the move, had no alternative but to submit. Travel was impossible without passing one of the inspection stations at strategic points throughout the city. The inspection had scarcely begun at one of the outlying centers when a car attempted to evade the depot. The police, alert to any effort of this nature, were prepared for the emergency. They had been instructed to let no one escape.

Two men were in the car when they approached the depot. There was no place to turn off; they were in the center of the block. They were afraid to turn around and try to pass the two officers stationed at the corner directing traffic. To proceed meant to submit to the inspection which they feared. This was the one thing that they did not want. The side drive of a local residence seemed to afford the only opportunity for escape. They made the bold

attempt, drove to the back of the lot, deserted their car, and tried to leave by the rear gate. The family bulldog disputed the right of way and chased them across a neighbor's Victory garden. The ire of the quiet neighborhood was aroused. People appeared from all directions, and the two men soon found themselves surrounded by the police.

An inspection of their tires told the story. Two of the tires belonged to the car which Dee was driving when she was kidnapped. Explanations were difficult; the unforeseen had happened; their alibi was weak. When the captives were separated and questioned, each told a different story. When searched, one of them carried several coupons from Dee's ration book. Here again they disagreed regarding the manner of possession. God had permitted them to trap themselves; there was no way to escape the net.

27. A Tangled Web

CHIEF WHEPLEY was gladdened by the news that two suspects connected with Dee's kidnapping had been arrested. At least some of his carefully laid plans had been successful. The next step was an extensive investigation of the two characters. Due to the nature of the arrest, federal officers were active in the investigation. The fact that they had violated O.P.A. regulations placed the suspects at a disadvantage. Their flimsy alibi that they had purchased the tires secondhand from an unidentified citizen only complicated matters. The tires were rationed goods; they had secured no application to purchase them. No report of the transfer or attempt to comply with O.P.A. regulations had been made. They possessed illegal gasoline coupons. Photographic comparisons proved definitely that the coupons had been torn from the stub of Dee's ration book. The speedometer reading on their car showed that they had used three times the amount of gasoline that they were legally permitted to buy. Determined to lie their way out of a complicated situation, they started to protect themselves with falsehoods as circumstances confronted them. One lie was needed to conceal another. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap is a fact. Man cannot alter divine truth. Foolishly confident that they were clever enough to defy God and man, the two young men enmeshed themselves in a tangled web of lies.

After the second day of questioning, the Chief had the two men brought in together.

"I have listened to the stories of your activities covering the past month," he said. "One thing is certain; you don't agree; you differ regarding facts, what you have been doing, where you have been, how you secured the tires you have on your car, where and how you came into possession of the gas coupons which belonged to my daughter. I am interested in but one thing: where is she? Is she alive and well?"

Both men feigned ignorance.

"I don't expect an answer now," the Chief continued, "but I do expect you to listen to the discrepancy in your own stories. I want you to prove to

each other that you are lying, and that I know that you are lying. Tomorrow morning I shall expect the truth—confession is good for the soul.”

Chief Whepley talked to the two men for nearly an hour without demanding the facts of the case. He knew that they were in no mood to talk. He did not want them to talk while they were together. The psychology of the interview was to make them think; he wanted them to think until their minds were confused. They were hungry for news of the progress of the investigation. Chief Whepley knew that, and he knew also that they were fearful of the outcome. He wanted to keep them wondering about how much the police really knew.

With a deliberate objective in mind, he outlined the results of the investigation and presented the incriminating evidence with which they were confronted. He wanted them to draw their own conclusions, to see the danger in conflicting statements, to feel the entangling cords that were slowly being drawn about them. Without direct accusations he was declaring that he knew they were criminally involved.

Unable to talk, the two men eyed each other suspiciously. How did the Chief know all the telltale facts which he related? There was but one conclusion: someone had been telling him. Each suspected the other.

Satisfied that his remarks had made the men think, the Chief rang for the state police sergeant. “You can take them back to their cells now,” he said. “Keep them separated; they don’t want to be bothered until tomorrow.”

Ted Parker burst into the room unannounced.

“You sure had the right hunch, Chief,” he exclaimed. “Detective Winton and Lieutenant Edmund are bringing in the rest of the tires with the man that bought them. He’ll talk—”

“It’s all right, Ted.” Chief Whepley laughed at the queer expression on the lad’s face when he discovered that he had let his enthusiasm run away with his tongue. “The Sergeant is just taking these fellows back for another rest.”

“I thought you were alone—”

The Chief’s smile put Ted at ease. “So Lieutenant Edmund turned the trick. I’m glad that he is here,” he concluded.

One of the prisoners lingered in the hall to hear the remarks. A detective cruiser stood beneath the window. Detective Winton and the handsome marine were watching their prisoner and inspecting three tires which they had just taken out of the trunk of the car.

The condemned man at the window looked determined. It was several seconds before he discovered that the Sergeant was watching him. Like an automaton he turned and followed him to the cell block. He did not hear the key click behind his partner as he was being locked in; he was meditating upon the consequences of his acts. His mind was upon another scene—a scene that he would give anything to recall. He visualized a group of faces—faces that accused him. Unconsciously he raised his arm as a shield, but the vision lingered. One face stood out among all others; the pleading eyes haunted him. Where were his friends? He was deserted. He must rely upon his own resources. He had been betrayed. His friends were afraid to defend him.

“Sergeant,” he panted suddenly, “can I talk to Chief Whepley? I—I’ve got something to tell him.”

The state police officer understood. One look told him that the psychological moment had arrived; his prisoner wanted to unburden his soul. Without replying he retraced his steps past the condemned man and, turning at the doorway, beckoned him to follow. A moment later he confronted the Chief.

“Lieutenant Edmund is here,” the prisoner said in a strange voice. “She—she—asked about him—your daughter—she has not been harmed. I want you to know.”

“Where is she?” The Chief did not permit his voice to show emotion.

“Take me in your car. I’ll show you.” His face relaxed. “I’ve told too many stories. Take all the men you like—you won’t have to handcuff me. I want to get this thing over.”

“This is not just a wild-goose chase?” Chief Whepley smiled sympathetically.

“I’m sick of the whole mess. This isn’t a trick to get away. There’s no use trying to fool you—you have the tires. I—I want to tell the truth—”

“You wish to see me alone?”

“Let’s go, I’ll explain when we get in the car.” The man wanted to escape his thoughts.

Turning to address Ted, the Chief ordered: “Tell Lieutenant Edmund to come in. Have Detective Winton drive my car around in front. We’ll bring this fellow out and let him show us where Dee is. That’s the understanding, isn’t it?” he asked as an afterthought, addressing the prisoner.

“Yes, sir.”

Within ten minutes the Chief's car rolled from the driveway to mingle with the traffic. Following the direction given by the prisoner, they followed the Trunk Line Highway leading to Five Points. Detective Winton, with Ted at his side, was at the wheel. The glow of the afternoon sun on the windshield made driving difficult. Although on an urgent mission, Detective Winton drove cautiously. Chief Whepley and Lieutenant Edmund, who occupied the rear seat with the prisoner, analyzed the situation impatiently. Dee had been missing nearly six weeks. Hope loomed ahead for her recovery. Would they find her unharmed? What trouble lay ahead? Were they approaching a gun battle? The Chief glanced through the rear window to find the state police cruiser loaded with men following them at a convenient distance.

Come what may, they were prepared to meet any emergency. The Chief's confidence was in God. Regardless of the consequences, all things would work together for good. Eternal justice must prevail.

28. The Hollow Tree

THE TWO CARS loaded with police officers turned into the driveway of Chief Whepley's old homestead. There was obviously something wrong with the information; still, the prisoner insisted that he knew what he was doing.

"Do you mean to tell us that Dee is here—that she has been here since the night she vanished so mysteriously?" Chief Whepley questioned skeptically.

"She was here three days ago—"

"Do you mean to say that she stayed here voluntarily? That she wasn't kidnapped?" Lieutenant Edmund asked.

"She is supposed to be here voluntarily. No one has made any demands for a ransom payment, has he?" The prisoner appeared puzzled.

The state troopers left the second car and separated to occupy strategic positions around the house and outbuildings and await further orders.

"You lead the way, and we'll follow." The Chief addressed his prisoner. "I hope you know what you are talking about."

"She—she was here. I'm not lying—if she's gone—"

"You've been double-crossed, is that it?" Detective Winton had a motive for the question.

"The old granary!" Perspiration stood in beads on the Chief's brow. "I hope she is still here."

The old farmhouse was deserted. There was no evidence of activity about the premises. Weeds grew around the back porch, convincing Chief Whepley that no one had occupied the homestead as a dwelling place during the past season. The door of the chicken house stood open and swung in the wind. A roller on one of the barn doors was off the track, a fact which proved that it had not been used for some time. Dee could not be there. Why consider the thought? The Chief's judgment told him that his daughter was not there voluntarily. From external evidence it was doubtful if she could be there at all. What motivated this mysterious character whose activ-

ities they were investigating? Was it possible that he was connected with the kidnapping? The Chief was losing hope.

Ted, impatient with curiosity, surveyed the house and barn. It was deserted. Serving as an advance guard, he preceded the Chief and Lieutenant Edmund who, with their prisoner between them, found their way through the growth of weeds to an old house long since converted into a granary. It was the Chief's boyhood home, where he had been born and reared. A dense growth of lilacs, snowball bushes and other shrubs virtually hid the lower part of the former residence except for a drive along the opposite side.

"There's one encouraging thing: someone has been through the driveway with a car," Detective Winton remarked, "and there's a new padlock on the door."

"Hark!" Ted signaled for silence and cupped his hand over his right ear. "Didn't you hear that?"

"I just saw a red squirrel run over the roof; he's making for a hole in that old butternut tree. They've lived there for years," said Chief Whepley.

"She-u-a-a-h! Inside. Thumping noise," Ted whispered.

"She's still there." The prisoner seemed relieved. "— locked in," he panted.

Lieutenant Edmund tugged furiously at the door. "We'll have to break the lock to get in here," he said, backing away to look for some other means of entrance. "What about a window?"

"They have been boarded up for years," said the Chief. "Get a ladder; maybe we can pry the boards off."

"Why not take the easy way if you're going to burglarize the place?" The Sergeant laughed. "Here's a wrecking bar. Try this. You should be able to pull the hasp off."

"Let me have that," said Lieutenant Edmund, seizing the proffered bar and lunging at the door.

He labored vigorously for several minutes trying to break the huge hasp, but without success. A state trooper took movies of the scene. The evidence might prove valuable in the investigation.

"Who has the key for that padlock?" Detective Winton asked suddenly, facing the prisoner with a determined look. "Why not give us all the facts? Neither of you men carried a key when you were locked up. Where is it?"

The man debated the consequences of his next act. "It might be there in the trunk of that old butternut," he finally suggested, stepping off the loading platform and approaching the hollow tree.

Detective Winton watched closely and slowly reached for his automatic. They were dealing with a desperate character who was at an advantage. Suppose there were hidden firearms in the trunk of that old tree? This man would commit murder or suicide if the opportunity afforded.

Chief Whepley read Detective Winton's mind and quickly stepped beside the prisoner, who was searching for something in the hollow trunk.

"It isn't there," he said, his face drawn in a frown of disappointment. "Oh, here it is, after all. I guess I was reaching too high."

He turned and handed the key to Ted, who raced to the door, confident that the mystery of the old house would soon be solved. Lieutenant Edmund and Chief Whepley crowded around him at the door. In half a minute they were inside, going from bin to bin; small rooms had been partitioned off for the storage of grain. Lieutenant Edmund bounded up

the improvised stair and swung a door open by lifting a crossbar that held it from the outside.

"Sweetheart!" he exclaimed, rushing to take Dee in his arms. "Are you hurt? Can you talk? Are you all right?" Words tumbled over each other.

"Allan," she cried, "and Father." She threw her arms around the neck of the stalwart marine and sobbed for joy. "How did you find me? I—I had almost given up hope." She smiled through her tears.

He kissed her tenderly before releasing her to her father's waiting arms.

"Honey, are you sure you are all right?" The Chief's voice broke with emotion. "Six weeks and no word."

"Mother?" Her voice was husky with pathos.

The Chief read the question in her eyes.

"How—how is Mother?" She repeated the question, fearful of what the answer might be.

"God has been her refuge and strength in—in this trial we thought she could not bear. Your mother's faith has never faltered." He consoled her with a kiss. "Her last words this morning were" —a lump was in his throat, " 'Daddy, I know you will bring our daughter home tonight.' I couldn't disappoint her."

"Can we go to her now?" Her childish plea brought tears to the eyes and emotion to strong hearts.

The formality of the investigation was temporarily shortened for the sake of Dee's invalid mother. There was no question about the identity of the two prisoners. They readily admitted their connection with the kidnapping, but loyal to Tillie McNervine, their companion in crime, they were reluctant to reveal information involving her. They had left her to guard the victim the day they were captured. She had been gone only twenty minutes when Dee was discovered. They were thankful that she had escaped.

Two state troopers were assigned to await the possibility of her return. Her personal effects were still at the rendezvous. Would she return for them, or had she fled, satisfied that her two companions had been grasped by the inescapable hand of justice? The newspaper accounts, of course, would put her on her guard, but duty demanded that officers remain on the plant until definitely certain that all possible efforts to capture her had been made.

29. Idle Words Are Hard To Explain

DEE'S SPECTACULAR DISCOVERY threw Central City into a state of confusion. The facts were first released by the Associated Press. Kingpin, boiling with indignation, stormed the state police post demanding an explanation why his paper had been ignored. Mayor Friese called a secret conference to discuss the matter with Commissioners Ackley and Yochum. Police Commissioner Bly and Captain Underwood had a discussion with Tom MacCallister in the basement retreat of his tavern. The spring election was only four days away. What effect would the kidnapping story have upon it? Whom would it favor? The local Police Department had been belittled through the investigation. Ex-Chief Whepley had chosen to ignore them entirely. Why? Did the grand jury have an answer to the enigma? What was the real motive behind the kidnapping of the Chief's daughter? Was he seeking reinstatement as Chief of Police? Did he covet public sentiment to appease injured pride? Why? Why? Why? There were questions on everyone's lips. The politicians were worried. Who owned the old Whepley homestead? Was it true that Bill Hayward had cheated the Chief's mother out of her property by faking a deed in a life lease transfer? Did Bill Hayward still own the place? Was it true that he had lost it on a mortgage to raise funds to defend himself in the Black Cult investigation? Was it true that Mayor Friese had secretly promised to reinstate Black Cult members to their former positions if re-elected? Were certain members of the Council and the Police Commission former members of the Black Cult? What was the underlying cause of the malignant political cancer that continually gnawed the Vitals of, Central City? Was there no hope? Wherein lay the cure?

The community needed a saviour with miraculous power over existing evils. Who would it be?

Dee's story of the kidnapping defied all critics who sought to dismiss it lightly. The state police had pictures to verify the facts. Chief Whepley had the signed confession of the two prisoners implicating them in the crime. The motive was a deep-seated Black Cult political plot fostering the growth of the invisible empire. The petitions which Dee sponsored seeking the nomination of her father for Mayor prompted the move. Even though the Chief had declined to run, that did not suffice. There was the possibility that he might change his mind. Chief Whepley must not be Mayor of Central City. All future hopes of the Black Cult depended upon his staying out of the mayoralty race.

It was a deep-seated conspiracy, secretly planned so that no local citizens would be involved. The two men and the girl responsible for kidnapping Dee came from distant cities. They received instruction from a go-between who acted as a mediator for local Black Cult members. This man had disappeared. They did not know him nor where he could be found. Those who had vouched for him were in another state. They had committed no extraditable offense. The hope of finding the missing links in the chain of evidence was remote. That was part of the deep-seated plan of the Black Cult. The secret of success lay in the carefully planned espionage system to wreak political vengeance upon the community. Central City groaned under the curse, struggling vainly for relief.

"You must be elected Mayor next Monday," Tom MacCallister declared, addressing Police Commissioner Bly. "Mayor Friese kept only half of his promises."

"If the membership is not protected, the invisible empire will crumble into dust," was Captain Underwood's version.

"Everyone has to be restored to his job, regardless of consequences."

"Unless they are still in jail." The tavern keeper's humor was irritating.

"Everything was all set until they blundered in the kidnapping. I don't like the looks of that," said the Captain. "I don't know what they can do about it, though; there wasn't any ransom demanded. How are they going to prove a motive?"

"That was all decided before, but no one dreamed of the O.P.A. then. Chief Whepley is the old fox behind that move. I'll wager a new hat on that," Tom said despairingly. "That extensive tire inspection check by the O.P.A. didn't just happen."

“That doesn’t excuse the blunder of using unrationed tires and gas coupons, does it? I personally advised against violations of law. If they had listened to me, things would have been different,” the Captain grumbled.

“Kidnapping isn’t a violation of law in Central City, I take it,” Tom MacCallister wisecracked. “The real trouble is—no one had nerve enough to furnish Chief Whepley with a wooden overcoat.”

“Extra! Extra! MacCallister indicted! Grand jury names tavern keeper one of Big Four in political corruption!” The startling cry of a newsboy froze the hearts of the three plotters in the basement retreat.

Captain Underwood and the Police Commissioner exchanged questioning glances.

“Some more of Chief Whepley’s dirty work,” said the barkeeper unflinchingly. “It’s a mystery to me why someone doesn’t give him a monopoly on a tombstone.”

“What possible significance could the grand jury place upon that remark?” Commissioner Bly dropped the casual observation.

“I’m no mouthpiece for the grand jury—”

“Idle words are hard to explain,” Captain Underwood cautioned.

“I’m as blind as a wooden Indian, as deaf as the Greek god Hypnos, and as silent as an Egyptian mummy.” The tavern keeper laughed.

“There’s nothing funny about a tombstone,” Commissioner Bly said seriously. “I don’t think the grand jury would see the joke.”

“What they don’t know won’t hurt them. Has anybody tried to kill the Chief?”

“If they did, somebody would bungle the job. Old Silvertop has more lives than an alley cat. Every move made to kill him politically gives him a new lease on life,” Captain Underwood lamented. “I wonder what’s going to happen next?”

“Maybe I had better call my attorney and find out. I suppose I will have to surrender and post a new bond. One thing is certain: I’m not going to jail.” Tom sobered at the thought. The future was uncertain.

Questioning eyes surveyed the condemned man. A strange tension was in the atmosphere. What was the background of this indictment? How was he involved? Would he implicate others? Who were they? Would he protect himself at the expense of others? How could they defend themselves? They were like puppets in his hand. Did Tom MacCallister dare to reveal hidden facts? How insignificant they were when exposed to the truth! Would Tom

prove true to the oath of the Cult and stand steadfast, a martyr with a silent tongue?

The recently-installed telephone rang. The trio surveyed each other. Fear was in their eyes.

30. The Clock Ticks On

THE EVENTFUL ELECTION DAY arrived. Police Commissioner Axis Bly and the present incumbent, Mayor Wynn D. Friese, were the candidates. The opponents were alike in principle. The machine was protected against defeat in any event. Regardless of which candidate was elected, the political puppeteers were the same.

Nevertheless, a spirit of rivalry dominated the contest. The two opposing factions made public demonstrations of strength. Rumor had it that the opposing side supported a candidate who would be indicted by the grand jury. Nobody wanted such an official. Certainly not Central City. They did not want a Mayor who would disgrace the good name of the community. Confusion reigned among the respectable electorate. There was no candidate in whom they could place confidence. Conscientious voters refused to support the candidates.

“What’s the use?” many lamented. “Why go to the polls? We do not even have a choice between two evils in selecting a Mayor. With Commissioners Ackley and Yochum unopposed, it’s only a waste of time to vote.”

However, when the polls opened, those who had been indifferent found that they faced a new issue. A delegation of church women went from door to door and distributed stickers instructing the voters to paste one on their ballots, mark their crosses before the name of their candidate, and vote for ex-Chief John R. Whepley for Mayor. The names of two prominent citizens pledged to support a new regime also appeared as sticker candidates opposing Commissioners Ackley and Yochum.

The news spread like wildfire. Dee Whepley was managing the campaign. A battery of telephone operators called every voter listed in the directory. Everyone who had previously signed one of Chief Whepley’s petitions received as a personal appeal to vote.

During the forenoon both Commissioner Bly’s and Mayor Friese’s campaign headquarters viewed the matter as a huge joke. No one had ever been elected as a sticker candidate in Central City—but by three o’clock the

enormous vote polled became alarming. Could this be a protest of indignation against the present regime? The known majority needed by the mayoralty candidates to insure their election had been superseded in the enormous vote cast at that hour of the day. The situation was alarming. Anything might happen. Something must be done—and done quickly.

Consequently, Mayor Friese and Commissioner Bly arranged a hasty conference. Who was the stronger candidate? The weaker should withdraw from the race and support the other. They could not agree; neither trusted the other. Captain Underwood and Kingpin were called into the conference to pass judgment upon the situation.

“I should like to know what Tom MacCallister thinks of the turn of affairs,” Commissioner Bly ventured to ask. “Nobody seems to know where he stands in this election.”

“You can bet your last drink that he isn’t supporting Chief Whepley,” Captain Underwood declared.

“Tom would support the devil if he thought he could strike a bargain,” the Mayor snapped irritably. “He surely isn’t working for me.”

“Me, either,” said the Police Commissioner.

“You mean to say that he is supporting Chief Whepley?” The Captain was dumbfounded.

“Could be.”

“Well, I’m going to find out.”

“You’d better save your breath, Captain. In the first place, does anyone know whether Chief Whepley will accept the office of Mayor if he is elected?” Commissioner Bly inquired thoughtfully. “He has repeatedly declared that he would not run.”

“He may not be running, but he is in the race, if I am any judge,” Kingpin volunteered.

“He certainly is not taking any part in the campaign today,” said the Commissioner.

“Why don’t you find out just where the Chief stands? Where is he? Nobody has seen him all day, as far as I know.” The Mayor was serious.

“The Chief is at the grand jury office. He didn’t take time to vote; he said no one was going to accuse him of voting for himself, so I understand.”

“Will he qualify as Mayor if he is elected?”

“It’s good propaganda to circulate,” Commissioner Bly remarked. “People won’t vote for someone who doesn’t want the office.”

“Voting for a sticker candidate is different. No one believes that there’s a chance of election. It’s just the novelty of the thing,” said the Captain. “All they are concerned about is a change.”

“That’s all right, but I think we should know personally where the Chief stands. This state of uncertainty gets me down,” the Mayor said peevishly. “It’s up to Kingpin to get the facts.”

The conference disbanded temporarily, but Kingpin returned an hour later to state that Chief Whepley had consented to attend a press conference—if all candidates were in attendance.

The five men reconvened by agreement.

“Who does the Chief think he is? What does he mean by stating who must attend his press conference?” Police Commissioner Bly asked angrily. “He seems to think he is already elected. I don’t like it.”

“Obviously, Mayor Whepley has the floor.” Tom MacCallister’s reply annoyed them.

“I’m not going!” Mayor Friese barked.

“In which event the Chief won’t be there,” said Kingpin. “He evidently recognizes your importance.”

“He, he—what?” The Mayor resembled an enraged bull. “Chief Wh-e—”

“Quite a gust of hot air, Windy,” said the Police Commissioner. “I’ve heard it before. What were you saying about the Chief’s dancing to your music?”

“Shut up!”

“We are wasting a lot of valuable time! I’m going back to campaign headquarters,” said the opposing candidate. “I think I’ll swing my support in your favor, Mayor.”

The Mayor did not reply. He had never faced such a situation. Defeat was tragic; but defeat at the hands of an unorganized machine was humiliating. His consciousness of possibilities gave no consolation. He would not mind if Commissioner Bly defeated him, but Chief Whepley.

He consulted his campaign workers. Everything possible was being done; every vote favorable to his cause was checked and rechecked. The vote was astounding. How did Dee Whepley organize this energetic group of workers? Some of his own friends were in her camp. Where did they stand? Had they deserted him, or were they merely curious? He wished that he knew.

The clock ticked on steadily, bringing nearer and nearer the hour when the polls must close and the counting of votes begin. At eight o'clock a record vote had been established. Never in the history of Central City had such interest been shown in a mayoralty campaign.

When the count began, Mayor Friese and Commissioner Bly had their representatives challenge questionable votes at every booth. For the first hour no candidates led. Then Chief Whepley outdistanced both opponents. By ten o'clock it was conceded that Central City had elected a new Mayor and two Commissioners as sticker candidates.

The shock was great. What had happened to the unbeatable machine that had so long dominated the city? Mayor Friese was bewildered. How had it happened? What would happen when Mayor Whepley took the reins of government? Two new Commissioners, a new Mayor—the fact stunned him. The grand jury was in session! What did it mean?

A noisy delegation, hilarious in their enthusiasm over the election victory, approached the city hall. An improvised band led the procession, followed by a platform truck carrying Dee and the key members of her campaign staff. Smiling Lieutenant Edmund stood beside her. The newly elected Mayor and the two victorious Commissioners stood on a table in the center of the platform surrounded by the happy group.

“We want the key to the city hall. Where is Mayor Friese?” the crowd shouted. “What became of Ackley and Yochum? Where’s the ex-Mayor? Where’s Commissioner Bly?”

“We want them to meet the new Mayor and Council,” someone shouted from the platform.

“Speech! Speech!” the crowd cried. “Where is Mayor Whepley? Speech! Speech! We want to hear from our new Mayor.”

“What’s his platform? What is he going to do?” An angry voice came from the distance. “Who’s he going to hire and fire?”

“Chief Whepley can speak for himself.” Lieutenant Edmund’s clear voice could be heard above the din of the happy throng.

“When are we going to have the wedding?” a voice called from the crowd.

“Let’s go to the Municipal Auditorium,” another shouted.

“It’s midnight—”

“Never mind the hour; open the Auditorium. We want to hear from our new Mayor.” The crowd was wild with enthusiasm.

The band played a lively tune and marched around the block. The shouting crowd followed the truck to the Auditorium. Lights flickered in the building. The massive doors swung open and the band marched in, followed by electees, campaign workers and citizens.

Kingpin shoved Mayor Friese through the crowd to the platform.

“We want to be the first to congratulate Chief Whepley and our two new Commissioners upon their spectacular election,” Kingpin began. “Central City has never witnessed anything like it. Let us hope that it is not just a wave of hysteria for which we may be sorry.” He paused and surveyed the crowd, wondering how to continue. “However, you are to be commended for the fine spirit of citizenship exhibited in this election. The campaign has been clean and honest and, moreover, a big surprise—a surprise that still mystifies us. When I say ‘surprise,’ I want to emphasize it with a capital S. I think that Miss Whepley and her handsome attendant in the marine uniform should escort the victorious candidates to the platform.”

Mayor Friese stepped to the center of the platform and cleared his throat.

“As the retiring Mayor, I want to voice the sentiments of our local editor and welcome each of you to this platform.” He again cleared his throat. “There are, no doubt, citizens in our midst who would like to have some things clear in their minds concerning the future policy of our victorious electees. Chief Whepley, let me be the first to greet you as a friend and congratulate you. You have a fine record of service behind you. If it is true that you intend to qualify as Mayor, I can only say that you have my best and sincerest wishes. What I say to you I also express in behalf of your daughter to whom you owe this election, to your two colleagues and to the marines.” There was a motive behind the Mayor’s eloquence.

“We want to know what kind of political promises our new Mayor has to fulfill. What’s the pay-off?” one of the opposing radicals shouted. “Every politician has his price.”

“Maybe the Chief would like to answer that question personally,” said Mayor Friese slyly.

“I promised the marines that a certain Lieutenant could have my campaign manager.” The Chief’s face glowed with smiles. “I have no other political obligations.”

Dee blushed happily.

“I’m a sticker candidate, too. It’s the biggest job I ever undertook; I had to elect a mayor in order to draft a father-in-law, but a campaign promise is

a campaign promise with me.” Lieutenant Edmund took Dee’s arm and said emphatically, “The next time she is kidnapped there’s going to be a public ceremony.”

Cheers rang through the auditorium. The crowd was captivated by the happy young couple. Dee and the handsome marine at her side had won their hearts. Their good will assured Chief Whepley’s election as a drafted sticker candidate. The novelty of the campaign fascinated them. It was unusual, reasonable and, moreover, desperately needed to effect a political reform in Central City—a political reform that had been often discussed but never attempted.

“Speech! Speech!” The crowd was carried away by their enthusiasm.

Chief Whepley stood beside his daughter. “Inspired by this young lady’s faith in me, I assure you that I shall not fail to give Central City the type of administration of which you may all be proud. They say that a new broom sweeps clean; it should, but I shall attempt to do no extreme housecleaning. I shall insist only upon legal enforcement of the law. I shall not resort to political enforcement. No one shall have occasion to worry about being dismissed for political reasons. I have no axe to grind. I did not seek the office of Mayor. I refused to run in the primaries for obvious reasons. I have made no effort to seek the office of Mayor. The idea of presenting my name to the electorate as a sticker candidate was my daughter’s. I do not question her ability as a campaign manager.” The Chief’s smile was eloquent.

He waited several minutes to acknowledge the applause.

“I feel that I have been elected fairly to the office of Mayor. I may be only a one-term Mayor, but Central City will have to recognize that during my term they were represented by a Mayor who served in his own right. Notwithstanding, I appreciate the trust and confidence that the good people of this city have placed in me. I am going to be the Mayor of the good people. Those who transgress the law belong in jail, but we will follow the course that the law prescribes to place them there. There will be no political short-cuts to gain revenge for the sins of the past. However, I shall allow law to take the course which justice demands. If some should lose their positions with the city, they will lose them only after trial and conviction in a court of law or because of gross malfeasance or misfeasance in office.

“I realize that I have been chosen to fill the office of Mayor in what might be termed a spectacular manner. I shall not capitalize upon that fact, but in a spirit of humility assume the duties of the office with malice toward

none and charity for all. The same Police Commission will direct the affairs of the Police Department until such time as vacancies occur and new appointments are in order. It would be cowardly to seek revenge in retaliation for my forced retirement as Chief of Police. If the members of the Police Commission desire to appoint Captain Underwood as Chief of Police, that shall be their privilege. The man they appoint will find no opposition from the Mayor's office. Central City's new Chief of Police will find that he is to be unhampered by political interference. He is to be responsible only for law and order and exemplary conduct. The same may be said of other promotions in the Department. The public is entitled to service, honesty, integrity and strict conformity to the rules and regulations prescribed in their oath of office. Political conniving on the part of any employee will not be tolerated. Therefore, I shall refrain from violating that rule myself. When I assume office I shall turn the other cheek to the past. The sins of yesterday are to be forgotten by those who shall escape the sieve of justice in the aftermath of the grand jury.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

"It is a known fact that there are those who have transgressed God's laws in managing the political affairs of this city. Sin is no respecter of persons. They shall reap as they have sown. God shall be their judge, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against that which has been wrought among men."

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

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Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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Essential Lutheran Library

- The Augsburg Confession with Saxon Visitation Articles
- Luther's Small Catechism
- Luther's Large Catechism
- Melancthon's Apology
- The Formula of Concord

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