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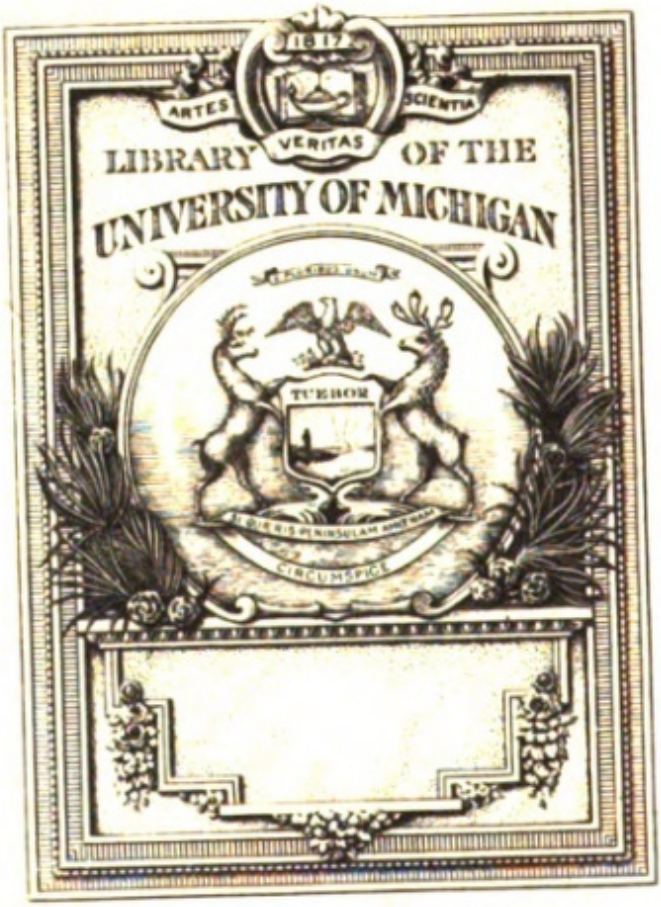

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A CASE FOR MR. PAUL SAVOY

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BY JACKSON GREGORY

A CASE FOR MR. PAUL SAVOY

THE HOUSE OF THE OPAL

EMERALD TRAILS

CAPTAIN CAVALIER

THE DESERT THOROUGHBRED

THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAIN

TIMBER-WOLF

THE EVERLASTING WHISPER

DESERT VALLEY

MAN TO MAN

LADYFINGERS

THE BELLS OF SAN JUAN

JUDITH OF BLUE LAKE RANCH

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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A Case for Mr. Paul Savoy

By

JACKSON GREGORY

Author of

The House of the Opal

Being the first case of Mr. Paul Savoy

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1933

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TO

LOTUS

My dear Critic on the Hearth and co-worker upon this book, who has joined hands with me in so many Delectable Enterprises of which the Major One was launched Twenty-Two Years ago today.

December 20, 1932.

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A CASE FOR MR. PAUL SAVOY

CHAPTER I

1

PAUL SAVOY's yacht, the *Sapphire Lady,* returning to American waters after several months' cruising among the South Sea Islands, slipped through the Golden Gate in the early night, nosing through the shipping in the harbor. With Savoy at the starboard rail stood his old friend Amos Laufer-Hirth, the eyes of both turned shoreward. The city's lights gleamed a welcome to them through the pearly-white streamers and clouds of fog drifting in from the ocean.

From Laufer-Hirth came a tremendous sigh as a sort of sentimental prelude to the words:

"It's true enough that East is East and West is West, my boy. But here's the one place where the twain did meet. Mated, too, and of their union was the loveliest lady sprung, this goddess-city of the Golden Gate!"

The younger man, knowing how ardently the stout jewel-merchant loved the city of the Argonauts, smiled and listened to his guest's outpourings: Those lights yonder, reflecting themselves in the bay! (You'd think there were nowhere else on earth such lights!) See how

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they lay glimmering in long glories across the dark water; jewelled lights, reds and greens and yellows.

"San Francisco! Ah!"

Like a lovely, seductive and most alluringly mysterious lady, maintained Laufer-Hirth. Look at her enwrapping herself in the white veilings of her misty cloak, provocatively assuming her little fleecy mask, her laughing bright eyes shining through, her gems gleaming softly. Barbaric she was yet splendid, adorned with emeralds and diamonds and rubies and topazes, alternately revealing herself and hiding, enigmatic and silent or whispering secret things. The Lady of Adventure, of Romance, of Mystery he called her, vowing that in all things she was like a beautiful woman at the most interesting and appealing age, young enough to promise all that her sex connotes, old enough to wear a Mona Lisa smile.

Paul Savoy laughed lightly at his friend's rhapsodizings.

"The Siren of the West, eh, Amos? So be it. But those flashes of warm colors are not from the jewels she wears, though you in your trade could make nothing else of them! Your Siren is merely making ready the banquet table for the unwary guests who are forever coming, and you see the reflected hues from the vintages she sets out in crystal glasses, the green of crême de menthes, the red of sparkling burgundies, the yellow of chartreuse and apricot brandies, the white glitter of frothing champagne."

Laufer-Hirth laughed too.

"Even you can't deny her domino and her eyes laughing through the mask, nor yet her seduction and lure and promise; certainly not her mystery."

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2

The Embarcadero extended like a broad moat between the wharves and the line of shops which remained reminiscent of those vanished saloons wherein sailor men of another day quaffed their tall schooners of steam beer. Already the incoming white fog invaded it, eddying about housetops like swirls of smoke, here and there taking on a milky, opalescent sheen where the street lights shone through. Accompanying the two friends were their two secretaries taking care of the several bags, while the four awaited the approach of the big car already coming to meet them.

From among the shadows on the pier behind them a figure moved unostentatiously toward them, that of a short, stocky man with the collar of a gray raglan coat pulled up about his ears and with a gray slouch hat drawn forward so as to hide most of his face. He advanced within a dozen paces of them, glanced in their direction, swerved abruptly and went on his way toward the line of taxicabs in front of the Ferry Building. For only an instant the diffused light had revealed something of his face.

"It's Gateway!" exclaimed one of the four, a thin, wiry, dark man, Paul Savoy's secretary.

He spoke sharply as though startled by something unpleasant, and the others turned to stare after the departing figure until it was lost in the crowd just now hurrying ashore from an Oakland boat. Andregg, the man who had spoken, kept on staring even after the individual who had startled him was swallowed up in the throng. Savoy looked at his secretary curiously, and said as he groped with blurred memory:

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"Gateway? The name sounds familiar but— Oh, good Lord! That fellow?"

"Gateway?" demanded Laufer-Hirth, all at sea and asking to be taken aboard.

His secretary, Will Little, a supersensitive little chap, shivered. He for one would never forget any detail, great or small, in any way related to a certain series of grim occurrences in a spooky old house on Lake Tahoe only last winter, events in which he himself, his employer Laufer-Hirth, Savoy and Andregg and Gateway had played their various parts.

"Detective Gateway he means, sir," he now said uneasily, and added with an apprehensive glance over his shoulder: "I'd rather it had been any other man we saw first on getting back. It's like an omen. He recalls a time we'd best all forget!"

Laufer-Hirth clapped him on the shoulder and laughed his big jovial laugh which was as good as a strong north wind to blow all cobwebs away.

"That affair is over and done with, thank God," he said as the four piled into the car. "Our voyage with Savoy should have cleared our heads of all that stuff." He sank deep down in the cushion with a vastly comfortable sigh. "Just the same, Paul," he felt forced to concede, "it's a queer sort of coincidence, eh?"

"Coincidence, Amos?" Savoy was smiling at him through the gloom. "You're a funny old boy; always bent on explaining things and half the time falling back on explanations which require still other explanations to bolster them up! Just what do you think that you mean by coincidence?"

Laufer-Hirth was like a big boy getting home for the holidays and not to be drawn into such discussions as Paul Savoy had a flair for jumping up.

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"Breathe deep, man!" he exclaimed, and filled his own lungs with a long breath. "Ah, that's good! We've sniffed tropical islands and ocean spume, but there's nothing like the whiffs you get along the water-front here. With my eyes shut I'd know where I was. There's only one San Francisco, my boy—and you can plank your last dollar down on the bet that until the world's end there'll never be another to hold a candle to her!"

"Have I taken a snake to my bosom?" grinned Savoy. "Here I thought myself safe with a friend, the very prince of jewel-merchants, and he emits sounds like a California real estate agent! And besides, you haven't told me what you mean by a coincidence."

"Shut up!" rumbled Laufer-Hirth good-humoredly. "Listen and you'll hear the voice of the city. Look how the fog curls in and sweeps along Market Street; look at the lights reflected on the wet sidewalks. Do you happen to realize that one of the most wonderful sights in the world is the shimmer of wet sidewalks in a city at night? Here we swing into the traffic— Man alive, I even love the taxis in this town!"

"A greater love hath no man than that," chuckled Savoy.

3

Upon the topmost of the marble steps of one of those old four-story "mansions" which gave Nob Hill its vaunted exclusiveness of the late '60's and '70's, Laufer-Hirth jerked off his hat and made Paul Savoy one of his funny fat little bows, as he exclaimed heartily:

"It is here, my boy, on the doorstep of my home, that I want to thank you for two things: For having

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permitted me to be your guest during some of the happiest months of my life; now for allowing me to play host. Our rôles change as we step across the threshold. That is fine! It was right that you should lead me among pleasant places in the South Seas; it is also right that I should be the one to present you to our San Francisco."

The old home occupying so commanding a position on the hilltop had been built by Amos Laufer-Hirth's father, a gold and silversmith from Alsace-Lorraine who had been drawn westward by tall tales of gold in 1853, who had amassed a fortune and had expressed himself extravagantly here on Nob Hill. Here the present Laufer-Hirth was born, and here, because of a rich vein of sentiment in him, he had dwelt on through changing times and had left things as they were. Stoutly intrenched in his strategic position of a bachelor at sixty-five, he occupied the big house alone save for his Chinese cook, his two Chinese house-boys and his American chauffeur.

"Here an atmosphere of other days makes its last stand," he sighed as the door opened to them. "It is as good as a little island itself, Paul. And now we are at home."

Savoy had glimpsed in the small yard an enormous fountain and an oversized antlered deer that might have been either bronze or cast iron and which looked wet and shiny-black and cheerlessly philosophical. Now, with the door open, he passed into a large hall softly lighted and saw a truly noble old staircase with darkly glistening handrail and newel posts of carved mahogany winding upward. Doors on the ground floor stood closed on both sides of the hall; the brightest light

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came from above and was gaily invitational. Laufer-Hirth slipped his hand through his friend's arm, waved his crumpled hat genially at a grinning Chinese boy, sang out to him: "Hello, Taune! Home again!" and led the way up the broad stairway. Only then he remembered the two secretaries who had followed at his heels, and called down genially to them: "Come ahead, boys. Will, you don't need to be told you're at home again; Andregg, old fellow, put yourself into Will Little's hands and make your wants known."

The stairs brought them to a second spacious hallway, thickly carpeted in rich green, and to still another winding staircase leading upward. It was at the top of the house that its owner was at home to his most intimate friends. Far below, on the ground floor, was a dark and somewhat stuffy drawing-room where he at times permitted himself to be bored by acquaintances. He lived above and it was there that he was making haste, puffing with the climb, to bring his friend of friends.

The rooms were large with wide doors connecting them; the lights were very gay, the furniture, though prone to massiveness, was no less inviting to comfortable usage. Carrying his portly bulk lightly on small, shapely feet Laufer-Hirth hurried to a large plate-glass window and let the shade go up like an explosion.

"Out there, the bay—Taune!" he called over his shoulder. "Turn all but one of the lights out—and down below us, Paul, a good three hundred feet beneath the soles of your shoes, lies Chinatown sprawling over a dozen blocks with its temples and pagodas and what-not; a dozen blocks above ground and the Lord

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knows how many underground," he added with a chuckle. "Oh, the old mole-runs of before the Earthquake are still there, and there are new ones, too."

Savoy peered forth as directed but saw only a white ocean of fog ever thickening, with little blurry dim specks of light shining wanly through it.

Somewhere nearby a telephone rang. Will Little hastened to answer it. Neither Savoy nor Laufer-Hirth, busy getting out of their coats, paid either telephone or Little any attention.

"Speaking of coincidence—" said Savoy thoughtfully, and Laufer-Hirth cried, "Avast there! I know you and your speculations. And I'm not going to be switched off to Detective Gateway on a home-coming night. We're going to have a Scotch all 'round and——"

Will Little, trying to look unconcerned, came back from the telephone and Laufer-Hirth broke off short, saying, "Well? Whoever it is can't you tend to him?"

"I tried," said the secretary. "But——"

"Gateway?" exclaimed Savoy.

Little nodded.

"He's down at the corner cigar-store. He wanted to know if he could drop in for a minute. He asked particularly for you, Mr. Savoy."

Savoy brooded; his remarkably brilliant blue eyes dropped to the equally blue star sapphire which he always wore on the ring finger of his left hand, and during a brief silence which fell heavy in the big room he appeared unconscious of the other men who were watching him curiously. Not a man of them all had any very pleasant memories of Gateway.

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Suddenly Savoy jerked up his head and looked at his secretary, Andregg, and at last a queer smile flitted across his dark face.

"Would it be any satisfaction to you, Tony, old man," he said lightly, "to step to the phone and tell Gateway to go take a running jump into the bay?"

Andregg's large black eyes flashed and two pinkish spots of color came into his cheeks, but he answered quietly:

"After all, Mr. Savoy, Gateway had some reason for the attitude he took with me." His eyes became almost like those of a faithful dog as they clung to his employer's. "If you hadn't taken so kind an interest in me——"

"Nonsense. You were a sick man, that was all."

"A drug addict," said Andregg calmly, "as both Mr. Laufer-Hirth and Will Little know. If you hadn't taken me on this cruise and fought the fight out with me——"

"We licked the enemy, too, didn't we? Eh, Tony?" Savoy's smile grew warm; he knew that he had never done a better job in his life. "Well? Why shouldn't we see Gateway then? Will you tell him to come ahead, Tony?—All right, Amos?"

"Right as rain! And after all, we did meet up with Gateway under circumstances which had us all on edge. —Taune!"

Taune had loitered within earshot and knew what it was all about; here he came on silent feet bearing a tray on which glasses twinkled and jingled musically.

There was an enormous fireplace at a far end of the room with an oak fire blazing and crackling; Savoy stepped to it and stood warming his hands and looking

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at his host with the black lines of his brows cocked up quizzically.

"Since you won't discuss coincidences with me," he said with an odd gleam in his eyes, "you'll have to listen to Gateway's explanation."

"Coincidence, your foot," snorted the jeweller, and began pouring Scotch after his generous fashion. "I suppose Gateway heard we were expected, and went down to the pier to make sure."

"Exactly," nodded Savoy.

4

A very vital sort of young man was Paul Savoy, and just now in the lively, intelligent blue eyes wide-spaced in a fine, thin, intellectual face under a broad, high and thoughtful brow was a gleam of some secret thought or speculation which bespoke an eager and alert interest. Awaiting the arrival of the detective he stood with his glass forgotten in his hand as he stared out at the fog which was so rapidly obscuring the twinkling lights far below.

He was not long kept waiting. Taune ushered Gateway into the room, saw that there were chairs and vanished. Gateway, stepping through the doorway, stood a moment stone-still, his inordinately shrewd eyes speeding from face to face as he took in the four men in the room. Fresh-colored, sandy-haired, square-visaged, he was nattily dressed and yet managed to convey the impression of a well-groomed bulldog. There were times when that impression was accentuated; when, as had been remarked of him, he was less like a man who looked like a bulldog than a bulldog

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superficially resembling a human being. Just now however the wide mouth was smiling and the heavy jaw somewhat softened.

"Hello, Gateway," said Laufer-Hirth, the first to speak, and came forward to shake hands. "You're right on the dot; we were just having a drink."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Laufer-Hirth," said Gateway warmly. Still smiling he added: "Though I once made a mess of things you've got to give me some credit in my profession; knowing you as I do, I was pretty sure there might be something to drink to celebrate your getting home."

He stepped briskly to Savoy at the window, his hand outstretched.

"Once I tried to knock your block off and you put me down with a smash in the jaw," he said with a grin. "I hope you're not holding that against me?"

"We were a pretty raw-nerved crowd, if I remember rightly," laughed Savoy.

The detective turned next to Will Little with whom he shook hands somewhat casually, and only then faced Anthony Andregg.

"I say!" he exclaimed gruffly. "I wouldn't know you for the same man! You look fit as a fiddle and— Confound it, Andregg, I'm sorry for what happened. Haven't I already admitted that I made a mess of things? I'd like to apologize, you know."

Andregg, though he flushed up, bore himself well. Savoy, knowing how deep the man's shame was for his past, hastened to draw the detective's attention to himself. As all found chairs he said lightly:

"Who told you we were due to-night?"

"Even if you think I am a bum detective," laughed

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Gateway, straightening up after sniffing the bouquet of his glass, "you'll admit that I'm smart enough to read a newspaper. It was spread all over the front page a couple of days ago that the young millionaire yachtman, Mr. Paul Savoy, with San Francisco's foremost diamond-merchant, were on the way home. I guess it leaked out from Mr. Laufer-Hirth's office here."

"And so you made yourself a committee of one to welcome us at the pier and then decided we didn't need any welcoming?"

"Saw me, did you? Well, I wasn't hiding at that. And—" He broke off and hitched his chair back a little way so that he could have a better view of Savoy without turning his back on the others. "Do you believe in coincidences, Mr. Savoy?"

Laufer-Hirth jumped as though a bee had stung him.

"That's funny," he said.

"What's funny?" demanded Gateway, mystified.

"Never mind," laughed Savoy. "What's on your mind, Gateway?"

"Two-three things, Mr. Savoy." He sniffed his drink again, and the others, as though awaiting this signal, at last partook of Laufer-Hirth's sovereign remedy for all the lesser and most of the greater ills. "I wanted just to chin with you for ten minutes if I found you willing. You and I ain't friends exactly and I guess you'd say we never could be; just the same I'm a well-meaning, square-shooting guy, and I don't figure you as up-stage and stand-offish."

"By all means let's 'chin,'" agreed Savoy, all the while wondering what the man was up to.

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"Anything private?" asked Laufer-Hirth.

"About as private as last week's newspaper I was talking about," returned the detective. "That's the best Scotch I ever tasted, Mr. Laufer-Hirth.—It's this way, Mr. Savoy: You see I didn't do what I threatened to do when you made me look like a monkey; I didn't give up my line of business because I'd pulled a boner. I'm still at it. Right now I'm on the homicide squad here in town, and interesting things are always popping up. I got to thinking over the way you doped things out up yonder at that Madman's Mansion place; I've thought a whole lot of a certain theory of yours; I said at the time it was all moonshine and poppycock —but it brought home the bacon. That's what I've got in mind to-night; your way of figuring things out, and that's what I wanted to talk about."

Laufer-Hirth's laugh was at times, as now, a sort of chortling-chuckling noise which welled up in a low rumble.

"Paul Savoy's theories!" he exclaimed. "Why, Gateway, he's as full of theories as my shoes are full of feet; he makes himself new ones every morning before breakfast, spinning 'em out as fast as a spider makes a web and then forgetting all about them! I warn you to look out for him when he starts theorizing; nine chances out of ten he's just on a mental jag and doesn't believe a word he's saying."

"I know," said Gateway soberly. "But when a thing sticks in my head, it sticks. Something he said up there in the woods has been turning over in my mind ever since. You see," and only then he turned back to Savoy, "in my business all kinds of new cases keep popping up day after day, some with clues all over

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them, some with clues darned hard to find.—See what I'm getting at?" he asked sharply.

"Vaguely," smiled Savoy. "We didn't see eye to eye the value of 'clues,' did we?"

"I fall down on the job sometimes," continued Gateway woodenly. "All us boys do. There are cases right along that never get solved. I've been thinking them over; they're cases, Mr. Savoy, that didn't get solved because there weren't any clues to work on. That's a fact."

"Sounds reasonable," conceded Savoy, eyeing him narrowly. "But what has any theorizing of mine got to do with the matter?"

"You said—and I want to know if you were just spoofing, as Mr. Laufer-Hirth says you do a lot—that in what you called the 'little workshop of the mind' there were already the answers to all sorts of riddles, and you said too," and Gateway's bulldog expression became more decided, "that if a guy knew how to do him a good job of straight thinking he could say, 'Hell with the clues,' and go ahead just the same!"

Savoy shrugged. Andregg spoke up, saying quietly:

"In the case we all have in mind, Mr. Gateway, there were all kinds of clues and they did no one any good in getting the truth."

"That's what I'm talking about," said Gateway, and sounded eager. "The more clues, the harder to come at the truth; that's what Mr. Savoy said! Working that backward, would you say, Mr. Savoy, that the fewer clues, the easier the case?"

Savoy laughed, and said gaily: "Touché! You nail me there, eh, Gateway? You take my theorem and arrive at your conclusion by the good old *reductio ad*

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absurdam method.—Well, at that," and he grew grave on the instant, "I wouldn't say you aren't right. The trouble is that I'm very much afraid that in every case which comes up to your Homicide Bureau there are all sorts of clues; one without them would be singularly refreshing——"

"And possible of solution?" Gateway shot the question at him like a bullet.

Up went Savoy's brows.

"A challenge, eh? You're setting a trap for me, are you? You've got a case that has you stuck—and you're going to make me eat crow or you'll pin the jackass's ears on me this trip?"

"You said it," returned Gateway grimly. "I've got a case on my hands that's driving me nuts. It's a case with no answer. And me, being out on a limb, having tried everything that God gave me brains enough to think of— Well," and he sat back and jammed his fists into his pockets and looked downright surly and sullen and ugly, his jaw shoved out belligerently, "I'm doing to-night what they say a drowning man does; grabbing at a straw, any straw——"

"Or even cobweb," mused Savoy.

"Damn it, yes!" cried Gateway. Once he had given up beating about the bush he became his forthright self and travelled the whole road at a bound. "I said your theories were cock-eyed and all full of holes, didn't I? I said you were a nut and maybe worse—and you said there wasn't anything worse than being a fool. I called you all the things I could think of, and I meant every one of 'em. And now?" He laughed ruefully. "I'm beat and I tell you that I'm running around in circles in a case that hasn't got any answer—

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and so I take the long shot and say to you that if you were just bluffing with all that talk of yours, well that was your privilege; but that if you meant a single word of it I've got the one case on earth that will show whether you just played at beginner's luck in that affair up in the woods—or whether you can find the answer where I swear there ain't any answer!"

He reached for his hat and got to his feet.

"Am I to go now?" he demanded, still sounding truculent. "I admit at the start I wouldn't have come in the first place if this thing hadn't already driven me crazy.—Or," he half sneered, half pleaded, "will you listen to what I've on my mind?"

Laufer-Hirth snorted.

"Will a cat lap cream?" he demanded.

Savoy, after a long sharp glance at Gateway's suffused face, sank back in his chair and thrust his legs out to the blaze.

"You interest me strangely," he said with a purely devilish sort of grin. "Amos, old boy, are the cigars coming up? Let's get 'em going and harken to what Gateway calls a riddle without an answer! As though there could be a riddle if there wasn't an answer!"

Gateway sat down with a grunt. He meant it to be clear that he wasn't a fool who trusted to getting anything helpful from Paul Savoy—just a drowning man snatching at anything offering itself, whether straw, cobweb or moonbeam.

5

"A man gets bumped off," said Gateway. "Me, I want to know who croaked him."

"A thoroughly commendable curiosity, considering

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your vocation," nodded Savoy. "Who was this man that got bumped off?"

"Don't know," said Gateway gloomily.

"Where was he killed?"

"Don't know," said Gateway.

"When?"

"Don't know!"

A frown of intense concentration darkened Savoy's eyes then. Until now Gateway had hardly invaded the outer rim of his interest; all of a sudden he was enormously intrigued.

"Are you sure," he said sarcastically, "that some man actually was killed?"

"Yeah," growled Gateway. "And that's about all that I am sure of."

"A stranger done to death, and you don't know where, when, why, or by whom? Docketed in the Homicide Department as the Mystery of the Unknown Victim!—At least you know what sort of a man he was?"

"Average," grunted Gateway disgustedly. It was clear enough that he had played a part on first arriving, managing under severe restraint to appear urbane and affable whereas inwardly he was under stress; now he glared out of angry eyes and spoke almost savagely. "You couldn't find a more average man if you went out gunning for one; there are millions like him. Neither young nor old, neither fat nor skinny, not dark and not fair and neither tall nor short—damn him, he even had an average hair-cut and finger nails!"

"So you sat back on your haunches and howled, I suppose," said Savoy. "That done, you rifled his pockets and found—nothing?"

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A queer sort of grin stamped itself on Gateway's square visage; he opened his mouth to say one thing and quite obviously decided on another as he answered:

"I didn't find anything in his pockets."

"So then you sat back on your haunches again and did your best to size him up by the way he was dressed?"

"Guessed wrong for once!" jeered Gateway. "I didn't pay any particular attention to his clothes."

"You amaze me! You mean you didn't look for tailors' tags and laundry marks? For initialled cuff-buttons and handkerchiefs? For a certain kind of clay on his shoes and a lodge seal on his ring? If you started out to mystify me, you've done it! You of all men, didn't examine the man's clothes——"

"He didn't have any," said Gateway and his features relaxed only slightly for a fleeting, sombre smile.

Savoy lay back deeper and deeper in his big chair, his eyes unblinking on Gateway; Gateway's other listeners, Laufer-Hirth and Will Little and Andregg, sat on the edges of their chairs, leaning forward, tense. Savoy flicked the new ash off his cigar absent-mindedly.

"Sounds as though it had all the makings of a riddle," he said crisply. "And riddles do have answers! Let's have it, Gateway; I'll not interrupt again."

"It won't take me all night to tell all I know about it," said Gateway. "On the eighth of this same month, which is to say eleven days ago, a taxi pulls up in front of the Ferry Building at about 2:45 in the morning.

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The taxi driver stands and chins with another fellow until along comes a fare, some fellow who'd just crossed on the ferry. He jerks open the taxi door, starts to get in and jumps back, saying, 'Oh, my God!' Don't blame him much at that. What he'd seen sprawling on the floor, was the party you call the Unknown Victim. He'd been shot twice in the left side, close to the heart; he was as dead as a hammer; he didn't have a rag on him. And that," concluded Gateway as he bit viciously into the end of his cigar and explosively blew the clipping of tobacco into the fireplace, "is the story."

"As simple in its outline as a Greek temple," said Savoy dryly, "and therefore no doubt a perfect gem of a story!—Confound you, Gateway, all nonsense aside, why should you come barging in on me with a yarn like that? I'm not a policeman, you know."

"Why did I butt in on you with it? Does a crazy man have to give reasons for what he does?" jeered Gateway. "I've already admitted that this thing has driven me crazy, haven't I? By all methods known to me or to the Old Man who handed me this case, it's a washout!"

"You also said at the beginning," Savoy reminded him coolly, "that you and I are hardly friends——"

"I'm not asking help because of friendship! Not because I suppose you give a hang whether I make or break. It's only that being driven out on a limb I got to thinking of your line. You'd be just the guy to say that a case without a single clue as big as a dust-speck on the wheels of my watch would be dead easy! If all the things you have said on the subject was just so much moonshine— Well, I'll take my hat and go."

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"During the nearly two weeks which have followed the discovery of the thing," suggested Savoy thoughtfully, "what have you done, Gateway?"

"For a couple days I chased all over the map. Since then I've mostly sucked my thumb until it's raw."

"Waiting for Paul to get home?" put in Laufer-Hirth.

"That's what I meant by coincidence," muttered Gateway. "It did seem kind of funny, him popping up just when a case like this was pulled off."

"See any light, Paul?" asked the jeweller.

All the light which Savoy at the moment saw was in the fireplace on which his eyes were fixed moodily.

"I think that Gateway is fully justified in putting it up to me," he said slowly. "I did do a lot of talking and no doubt, quite as usual, said a lot of sheer nonsense. He has called my bluff, that's all."

"So it was only bluff then?" demanded Gateway, at once jeering and clearly disappointed.

"Oh, I suppose I was honest enough at the time. And I won't say that there aren't possibilities lying along the purely psychological lines I laid down."

Frowning, he fell to staring into the depths of his star sapphire; Gateway, hunched forward on the edge of his chair, eyed him with a queer anxious eagerness. From Savoy's face the detective's eyes shifted almost furtively to the gem in the ring, a glorious deep-blue sapphire which at an earlier time had come to have a strange fascination for him. It would be hard to find a more matter-of-fact man than Detective Gateway; show him the first hazy glimpse of the supernatural and, were it at midnight among yawning graves, he'd have the thing by the throat with those two hard hands

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of his. Common-sense was Gateway's god. Superstition he openly jeered at. And yet, in that furtive glance at the sapphire, there was something very much like awe thinly veiled.

No other precious stone like it had he ever seen—and there had been times in the past when the creepy feeling stole over this most matter-of-fact Gateway that "the damn' thing was alive!" and was actually the home, as ancient tales had it, of a living spirit. Now as Savoy's blue-veined hand stirred ever so slightly the star shone and throbbed and vanished in the sapphire; the blue depths changed in color in the lamplight and took on a rich violet hue; the jewel became amethystine; a little light seemed to flicker and move with a movement which was like breathing at the intersection of the three lines which, so Laufer-Hirth had once told him, stood for Faith, Hope and Destiny.—Gateway knew that Paul Savoy would as soon think of stirring abroad without his shoes as without his ring on his finger; he knew from those other days that there were those moments of silence and of abstraction when Savoy, his eyes upon the sapphire, seemed to commune with a spirit. All hooey and prunes and applesauce, in Gateway's homely way of speaking—but just the same when a man started out grabbing at straws he might as well grab full-handedly! And it was odd, the way that Paul Savoy, after a period of intense brooding caught glimpses of truths hidden from other men.

Now suddenly Savoy jerked his head up and his flashing eyes met Gateway's defiantly.

"Your case may present its difficulties, purely because it lies out of your ordinary experience," he said

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with an edge to his voice. "I'd say, however, that you're exaggerating when you call it impossible. Nothing is, you know."

Gateway promptly rendered his face blank, save for a hint of cynicism.

"Words!" he snorted.

"To be sure," retorted Savoy, and it seemed to the detective that his eyes grew brighter. "Amos here would tell you that in words there is power! But you, for your part, are a man of deeds! You'd be up and doing?"

"It might be a good idea to run down to Headquarters and ask for my time before the Old Man can fire me," said Gateway, ponderously humorous.

"Oh, don't do that yet; there's always time before a man jumps off a cliff.—How about Gateway staying to dine, Amos?"

"Fine," said their host. "You will, won't you, Gateway?"

Instead of looking at him Gateway kept his bright penetrating glance on Savoy's grave face. Savoy gave him no sign, but after a moment the detective said:

"Oh, all right. Sure I'll stay.—Thanks, Mr. Laufer-Hirth."

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CHAPTER II

1

"I've a notion," said Paul Savoy dreamily when after dining well and leisurely the five men returned to the fireplace and their big chairs, "that this case of Detective Gateway's should prove extremely interesting —and quite simple!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Gateway.

At table, due to Paul Savoy's insistent steering of conversation in any direction but one, it had appeared that he had dismissed the subject of the Unknown Victim utterly from his mind. Now it became manifest that he had been thinking of it pretty consistently. He lighted an after-dinner cigar with great care, nodded his approval of it to Laufer-Hirth, made himself extremely comfortable in his chair and observed:

"Eleven days ago a certain unidentified man was found in a taxi before the Ferry Building, shot to death. Detective Gateway was put on the case immediately. He gave himself up to it heart and soul, full of his characteristic vigor and determination. Knowing Gateway as we do we may be sure that he had the Unknown Victim photographed and measured and weighed and finger-printed. He encouraged the reporters to make a whale of a story of it. He gave the taxicab driver about two hours of agony. He even grilled the man who had elected to ride in that particular taxi, and found out all about him. He had a

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thorough investigation made of the two gunshot wounds by the proper expert at headquarters. He and the police surgeon went into session. He thereafter haunted the morgue, praying for identification. And then he began, as he has told us, sucking his thumb——"

"And cussing," amended Gateway. "If there are words with power, I used 'em, believe me!"

"From one thing and another," resumed Savoy, "you assured yourself it was a case of murder and not of suicide. The wounds themselves, the fact that there was no weapon in the taxi— Oh, you made that clear enough, didn't you?"

"It's murder, all right," said Gateway.

"We have then," ran on Savoy thoughtfully, "certain facts to start with, facts, my dear Gateway, and not silly-ass clues. That's one reason why I maintain that, once we use our wits, it ought to be straight sailing to the solution of the thing. The facts are that the murdered man was found in a taxi in front of the Ferry Building at forty-five minutes after two o'clock in the morning of the eighth day of the month, that he had been shot to death, that he was a certain type of individual, and that there wasn't as much blood as you expected to find in the taxi."

"He didn't say anything about blood," put in Laufer-Hirth.

"That's easy enough," Gateway hurried to explain. "He remembered that I did say we didn't know where this guy was murdered."

"Obvious," said Savoy. "Those are the facts to begin with, I think? Next comes the added fact that to date, eleven days or more since the crime, no one

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has stepped up to identify the victim. And this despite still another significant fact that the newspapers gave the thing wide publicity under screaming headlines."

"Obvious again," nodded the watchful and vaguely suspicious Gateway. "Sail on, Captain."

"Oh, we don't start sailing so soon, Matey! We've got to get our anchor up out of the ooze first, and clear harbor. And we need to set some point to steer for ahead." He nestled deeper down into his chair and was silent a moment, staring moodily into vacancy. "In a consideration of this kind there are so many conceivable points of departure," he said at last, "that a man doesn't know where to start! He's like the jackass among the piles of hay. Shall we concern ourselves with the victim first? Or with his slayer? Or with the taxi itself, and its peregrinations during the night? The taxi driver, of course, suggests a natural and tangible beginning for investigation; but of course Gateway has already found out all about him."

"I sure have," said Gateway. "His name is Pete Carpenter; he's steady enough; got a family and all that. He'd been 'way out by the Park; dropped a late passenger there and came back to town. Drove along Lincoln Way, turned into Stanyan, cut across to Seventeenth, into Market and down to the ferry. He stopped three times; to grab a cup of coffee at a little café out by the Park, to take on gas at a service station, to phone into the office on Market; I can tell you every stop he made and every word he said——"

"I know you can.—It just strikes me, Gateway," said Savoy with a glint of humor in his eyes, "that

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you and I would make a great team! One of us to do all the hard work chasing around and picking up information of all sorts, the other to sit at his ease and talk nonsense!—Well, let's forget your Mr. Peter Carpenter for the moment——"

"You can forget that bonehead for the rest of your life," said Gateway with conviction. "He don't know a thing about it all. And one thing is sure, he didn't do the killing."

"No? Sure of it? Well, that's a step in the right direction, isn't it? It's your pet method, I believe, to suspect everybody, then to eliminate one by one——"

"Yah! He's out. That leaves us only about a hundred million other people to suspect!"

"Surely you're unduly pessimistic, Gateway! Your police surgeon couldn't say definitely when the man was killed, but he must have made some sort of estimate? The murder happened within striking distance of San Francisco, didn't it? I don't know the exact population of this Siren of Cities," and he glanced smiling at Laufer-Hirth, "but I hazard that the various cities about the bay would aggregate only a million or so. Just think, my dear man; here's another enormous stride you've made! You've eliminated at one gesture some ninety-nine million suspects. Verily, you're making progress, narrowing down the field of investigation wonderfully!"

"And it ought to be dead easy with only about a million folks under suspicion to pick out the right one!" said Gateway caustically.

"To be sure.—Where'll we begin, Gateway? With the man we'll call, for want of his name, the Unknown Victim? Or with the man we'll distinguish for the moment as your Master Criminal?"

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"Are you guying me?" demanded Gateway.

"I am not guying you."

"I tell you I don't know a darned thing about either of them!"

"And I tell you that, if you only knew it, you know a lot about both!"

"All I've done is asked myself a thousand questions about both, and they've all been questions that didn't have any answers!"

"I wonder! I've a theory——"

"What did I tell you?" muttered Laufer-Hirth *sotto voce*.

"What I was going to say," continued Savoy, looking at Gateway abstractedly, "is that it is a funny thing that when a man wants to know something, he can't seem to realize that all he has to do is ask himself questions! That the answer to the question lies in actually putting that question into definite form! I have Scriptural assurance; 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—I'll put it this way: The sorts of questions we'd be apt to ask at a moment like this constitute a series of definite problems. Mathematical problems, if you like, in which the solutions are predicated upon whatever facts are taken as the bases of the problems themselves. Take a simple example: Say, if a car goes steadily at forty miles an hour, how long will it require to travel eighty miles? That's the question, and in that question itself lies the solution."

Gateway hunched still farther forward, his eyes narrowing and narrowing, bright and eager and very, very suspicious. Had he been the drowning man that he proclaimed himself he could not have been more alert for any faint promise of salvation.

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"Let's ask ourselves some questions, then," he said under his breath.

"Bravo, Gateway! And let's begin boldly. The Unknown Victim came all unasked into our midst; he is the one who brought us our riddle. So let's begin with him and ask, 'Who was he?' "

"Let's ask it!" said Gateway. "I've done so a time or two, but let's remember what we learned at school: If at first we don't succeed, let's try, try again!"

"Why, Gateway! That's the one and only slogan for us in a case like this! Good man. Here we go: 'Who was he?' "

"Don't know, unfortunately. Don't know a damn' thing about him."

"Don't make such sweeping assertions," said Savoy with the sigh of a man determined to be patient. "What do you want to do, help me or destroy all my confidence just as I'm trying to get it under steam? This is a purely mental exercise we're indulging in; let's get our brains to functioning like scientists in their laboratories, eager and alert and sure that in due course our continued patient investigation is going to lead us to the truth." A faint smile took some of the edge off his words as he concluded bluntly: "Either think with me, open your mind to the dim light and shut it to the outer darkness—or get the devil out of here and blunder along in your own way."

Gateway flushed and bit his lip. Then he said stonily: "I'm with you, Mr. Savoy. Let's go."

Savoy, whom Gateway had a knack of rubbing the wrong way, was silent for a time, but gradually he forgot the personal equation of Detective Gateway, and grew obsessed with his speculations.

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"You and I, Gateway, are so essentially different," he said soberly, "that we cannot hope possibly to get along together unless we walk warily from the outset. Therefore I am going to indicate to you the sort of method, as yet vague and tenuous in my mind, which suggests itself as having possibilities in the direction of a solution to your problem. It will then be up to you; you'll either make up your mind to travel along my road with me or to seek elsewhere for the light.—To begin with, we're very frankly going to indulge in sheer speculation."

"You mean—just guesswork?" asked Gateway hesitantly and almost timidly.

Savoy considered the point at length; for a long while he sat silent and frowning, so long in fact that Gateway began to regret having spoken, fearing that he had offended. At last Savoy rose from his chair and thrust a hand into his pocket.

"Maybe I can make it clear this way—I tell you," he exclaimed sharply, and again with a hint of irritation, "that I'm just groping as yet! Get that in mind; don't expect me to leap to any great conclusion at a single bound.—We'll start with these two coins." One was a dime, the other a ten-dollar goldpiece which Savoy, for some obscure whim, had carried for years. He showed them to Gateway, then stepped to the table and slipped one of the coins under a book. Turning again to the detective he said: "You saw the two coins; you saw me put one on the table. Question: Which one is under that book?"

Gateway, looking at him fixedly, his face curiously sober, pondered and shrugged and said:

"It's a fifty-fifty break. I'll guess the gold coin."

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Savoy removed the book; Gateway, leaning forward, saw that he had guessed right. It meant nothing to the detective—and, perhaps not very much to Savoy himself who was merely beginning to dally with a new theory!—and Gateway shrugged again, repeating:

"It was fifty-fifty——"

Savoy returned to his chair and sat jingling the two coins together.

"Yet you hit on the right answer," he said presently. "Now I'll advance to the statement that our speculation will carry all hazards of our making mistakes, but that it will not be entirely guesswork—just as your selection of the goldpiece was not altogether plain guesswork."

Gateway stared.

"I didn't see——"

"You knew, though perhaps only subconsciously, that I wanted to make a certain point; you knew, though subconsciously, that in order to persuade you to follow my line of reasoning, I wanted you to 'guess' right. The goldpiece emphasized itself over the dime in everything, in its value, brightness, beauty, rareness. A man would naturally select it in any experiment. I did. You spoke up to say the natural thing. It was not entire guesswork; it partook somewhat, if in ever so little, of what I am going to continue to call speculation.—And I'd say that instead of being a fifty-fifty proposition, it was at least fifty-one to forty-nine in your favor."

"Maybe," said Gateway. "Anyhow, I'm trying to follow you."

"Now," continued Savoy, like a lecturer in his laboratory, "if I had propounded another question, if I had

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said, 'Gateway, somewhere in the world right now a man is putting a coin under a book,' and then if I had demanded to know what the coin was, it would have been different. You'd have realized that it might be an Englishman with a shilling or a penny, a Frenchman with a franc—an Eskimo with whatever he uses for money—and you'd have had to make a wild guess. And you'd have missed the answer. There we have guessing as set against speculation."

"Blaze away," grunted the detective. "Got you so far."

"We're going to speculate, then, on the Unknown Victim. To get an answer to our question, 'Who was he?', we'll start this way: He lived in San Francisco—or he did not live in San Francisco? Which?"

"I'm trying to follow you, Mr. Savoy." There was no doubting Gateway's profound sincerity now; his face was puckered and earnest like an absorbed boy's. "Am I to follow blind? Or am I, when I got something to say, to speak up?"

"For the love of Heaven let's not have any blind faith!" cried Savoy. "Say what's on your mind?"

"This second question of yours is like the one of the two coins—there's just two things to choose between—it's a fifty-fifty bet, as I said. The difference is that in the case of the coins you could pick up the book and I could see whether I was right or wrong! In this case I make my guess, or we'll call it my speculation—and how the devil am I to know whether I hit a bull's-eye or missed it wide?"

"Fair enough," said Savoy equably. "Here's the answer: We'll set ourselves several questions of the type of the one I've just asked you. We'll form our

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answers. From them gradually we'll build up something, if it's only a gigantic structure of moonbeams and cobwebs! We'll get some kind of structure, and some kind of a theory to account for this, that and the other thing. Then, my dear fellow, we'll begin to check and verify, or to check and find errors. And before you're a day older than you are right now we'll find both verifications and blunders—and we'll hit the trail!"

Gateway started to shake his head vigorously but caught himself up in time and changed a quick negation to as vigorous a nodding. The one thing he was dead set on was seeing this thing through, whether its name be inspiration or nonsense.

"Let's spec," he said hastily.

2

Paul Savoy stared into his star sapphire like a man in a trance. Gateway craned his neck for a glimpse of the ring but subsided as Savoy began speaking.

"We start with facts and we go slowly: We say that the Unknown Victim lived in San Francisco or did not live in San Francisco. We have our choice with at least an even chance to be right and are not long in making up our minds: I'll hazard that he was what we might call a stranger in town. He arrived, by train, I think, some eleven or maybe twelve days ago. He was not a common laborer; you'd have seen your precious clues of that in his toil-begrimed hands and horny palms. He was not a common hobo, or you'd have told me. You looked at his skin and it was at least reasonably clean, and at his teeth and they were at least

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reasonably well cared for. He was not a sailor, a ditch-digger, a mechanic. He might have belonged to a profession, a doctor, lawyer, teacher, architect—what you like. A clerk, maybe, a detective even, a bonds salesman or a politician or a real estate agent. Am I right so far?"

"You're right, maybe, but you're covering a lot of territory! Right, that is, in your generalization. But when we get down to the definite point, and say he was a stranger in town—" He shook his head dubiously.

"It's at least eleven days since he was murdered," Savoy reminded him. "During that time, though you saw to it that his picture was published, and at least the more sensational papers made much of the story and its attendant mystery, no one has stepped up to identify him. Now, I'll remind you that every man, no matter what his status, leaves some brief gap when he is wiped out abruptly. No matter how gregarious or how solitary he is, his sudden elimination calls for comment. Even a perfect recluse draws attention to himself for that very fact; curious eyes watch him and miss him; idle tongues wag and comment. So if our Unknown Victim had lived here it's a fair supposition that some one would miss him. With the tabloids printing the picture and repeating the gruesome details, all sorts of people have fallen to speculating. Yet it remains that no one has spoken up. Is it a tenable assumption that the reason is that no one knew him? Ergo, that he did not live here?"

"Of course I'd thought of that," muttered Gateway.

"Of course. Had you also thought of this: It is just possible that he has not been identified not because no

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one knows who he is—but because those who do know have some reason for keeping still?"

"In that case," said Gateway sharply, "he might have lived here after all!"

"To be sure," said Savoy, unruffled. "It merely becomes logical for us to weigh two possibilities. In this matter-of-fact world, Gateway, which is the more reasonable supposition: That the lack of identification on the part of the public is due to ignorance or to some mysterious conspiracy to keep still?"

"I see what you mean. It would be a fair bet to say that he was unknown here. Just the same, the other things could be true——"

"Naturally. But mind you, this isn't the only question we are going to ask ourselves. We'll formulate others. We'll answer them as seems most logical. We'll make mistakes, as I've promised you, but my point is: Won't we be right part of the time? Possibly even fifty per cent of the time? And if we are right somewhere along the line, if even only ten per cent—yes, one per cent!—we'll have our chance for verification then! And if we establish a single fact about him, it will lead to something else, won't it?"

Gateway nodded tentatively; it was going to take a lot of verification to assure him that some of the cobwebs and moonbeams in Savoy's structure were affixed at one end or the other to tangible fact. But, doubting Thomas that he was, there was no gainsaying that Hope already had him by the hand.

"I maintain—purely to get started thinking, you know—that he came to town the day he was killed," said Savoy. "Knowing you as I do, I am sure that you went to every hotel in town, asking whether he

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had shown up there; you even went further, naturally, and asked whether some man had wired for reservations and hadn't appeared to claim them?"

"I did," said Gateway. "If you can show me a thing I missed along our regular line, I'll eat my hat."

"He came by train, we'll say, though he could have arrived by boat or even by plane— But of course you checked on the plane passengers?"

"A lot of people come by car——"

"You've checked at the regular auto-stage terminals; you've assured yourself that no private car has been left at any garage, unclaimed? Well, never mind how he got here: For the present we'll say by train, and let it go at that; most arrivals come that way. He came on a bit of private business——"

"I don't get that!" interrupted Gateway.

"I am going to repeat *ad nauseam*, so that you've got to get a prime essential planted in your skull," snapped Savoy, "that I am admitting at the outset that I am saying a lot of things that are wrong! I don't give a hoot. Get that in your head, too. It is quite likely that I am wrong in this last statement, but I repeat it also, and bolster it up: I say that he came on private business. For if he had represented some firm, wouldn't he have communicated with his headquarters within ten days? Wouldn't they have wondered about him? Wouldn't they have tried to reach him by wire? Wouldn't their letters to him have been accumulating at some hotel—and wouldn't you have learned of them before now? When they couldn't get any line on him wouldn't they have wondered still further? Wouldn't they have wired again and tried to get him on the long-distance phone? In the end wouldn't they have

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questioned the police? Eleven days it's been, you know."

"We-ll," conceded Gateway slowly, "it's a fair bet. Go ahead. Admitting that maybe we're wrong——"

"He came on private business, then. That business may have been merely vacation or may have been some quite serious affair. Which?"

"Where we take a chance of coming an awful spill," said Gateway, pulling at his lip and letting it go with a soft 'plop,' "is that we're building up questions based on our first guesswork that he did come from anywhere instead of being here already!"

"Can't you get it into your head that we're prepared to take a hundred awful spills?" demanded Savoy impatiently. "I'd think you'd prefer that to squatting and sucking your sore thumb!"

"So I do," admitted Gateway hastily. He squinted his shrewd eyes thoughtfully. "I'd say he didn't come just to loaf and have a good time—that is," he amended hastily, "if we're right in guessing that he didn't have friends here——"

"If he had friends he would probably have notified them he was coming and they'd have been on the lookout for him, remember. And by now they'd have dropped in on you to tell you who your Unknown was."

"Yes, that's so.—I'd say he came, as you put it, on his own private affairs."

"Serious, private affairs," amended Savoy emphatically. "Otherwise he wouldn't have come all that distance to a town where he knew no one——"

"All what distance? How do we know he didn't just drop down from Sacramento?"

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"Do people read the local papers in Sacramento?" asked Savoy sarcastically.

"All right, all right," growled Gateway, and it was entirely obvious that he was determined not to lose sight of the fact that it was at least an even bet that it was all wrong! "Let's call it that."

"He came on serious and private business," said Savoy, and glared at him. "That business was with some one, maybe? With whom?"

"There are only a million or so folks hereabout——"

"We establish that he doesn't know many people here. We establish that he had a run-in with one man who did know him. I mean the man who killed him. It was with that man that he had business."

"Maybe, maybe not," brooded Gateway. "Maybe some guy that never saw him before bumped him off. Maybe it was a case of robbery; maybe he was flashing a diamond ring worth——"

"You, clue-hound that you are, surely looked at his fingers with a microscope! You sought acid stains and just such marks as a ring would leave——"

"Well, he didn't wear a ring; that's a cinch. But he may have had a diamond in his necktie, and he may have flashed a roll of yellowbacks——"

"And did all that the first thing on arriving——"

"How do we know he was croaked so soon?"

"Where did he stay in the meantime, man? With friends? At a hotel? And still no one stepping up to identify him?"

"Just the same——"

"And your man," Savoy hurried on, "who killed him for robbery, went to work to steal his clothes, too? And then to stick him in a taxi? Or maybe shot him

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in a taxi, then scrubbed up the blood, stole his clothes and went off, carrying them nonchalantly over his arm!"

"Oh, I'm stumped," grumbled Gateway, and mopped his head and then looked in a dumb, beseeching way at Laufer-Hirth. That worthy, quick to read a sign of distress and unvarying in his treatment, sprang up and went to the table where Taune had left bottle and glasses. Gateway looked grateful.

"This Master Criminal that you always imagine lurking behind every crime," said Savoy when Gateway had gulped his drink, "isn't just a chance killer for loot. Crooks of that order aren't as meticulous and as original as this chap. Having got what they want, they don't linger on playing pranks. He polished his victim off, and then he coolly did the things he meant to do. He made a clean sweep of removing everything his victim had on him, even to his clothes.—*Why?*"

"Plain as the nose on your face!" Whether here came a question for which Gateway was prepared or whether Laufer-Hirth's sovereign remedy had done its work, he answered swiftly and with conviction. "To mystify, to throw off all scent, to do just what he has succeeded in doing. He had made it impossible for us to get started, since we haven't a single clue as to the murdered man's identity——"

"You're more helpful, my boy, than you know! The clothes, you say, were removed because they would give something away? (Mind you I am not agreeing with that yet, as another explanation hits one in the eye, so to speak!) But say for the moment that you're right; then, of what order were the garments that they'd tell so much?"

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"Something distinguishing," conceded Gateway warily. "Not the common, everyday run of duds. Maybe with a tailor's tag in them that would get us started——"

"Maybe the costume of a priest?"

"That fellow wasn't any priest— Oh, I don't know! He might have been, at that."

"Or a United States army officer?"

"*Quien sabe,*" muttered Gateway. "It's by me."

"Exactly. *Quien sabe?* He might have been either. Or something else we'll think of later that would be distinguished by a uniform of some sort? At any rate, here comes a little chance for an attempt at verification that you're so impatient for: If a man belonged to any organization such as is implied by a uniform, his connection with that organization would be close enough for you to hope to get some check on him. Am I right? Think that one over at your leisure. Now we'll step along to this suggestion: Your Master Criminal removed even the under-garments! What significance there?—Laundry marks!" he ran on hurriedly, to forestall Gateway. "Maybe." He drummed on the arm of his chair. "It would have been easier, I fancy, to cut any such marks out, and not have all the extra garments on his hands to dispose of! But no matter. Let's ask ourselves what desired result, beside the obvious one which you have suggested, could have prompted the removal of *all* the clothing. A result which has already been obtained."

Gateway frowned, trying to see what he was driving at.

"Men are found murdered now and then," Savoy reminded him. "But it is not a common occurrence

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for a man to be found murdered in a public place, a public vehicle, without a single rag to his name. It isn't done, you know. It's so confoundedly unusual that the Master Criminal must have been a far stupider ass than he appears to have been not to have foreseen that the daily press would make much of it. It's just possible that that was what he was up to, isn't it?"

"Anything's possible—but it doesn't seem to make sense! Why should he want any more publicity than he had to have?"

"No, it doesn't make sense. But here's as solid a fact as we are ever going to get under our feet: The murderer knew in advance that when this story broke it was going to be spread across the front page of every paper on the Coast. He knew that if an unidentified man had been found done to death in some lonely spot, some alley or back street, the papers would dispose of the fact in a short item, unemphasized. He knew also that the way he was conducting arrangements would be absolutely sure to cause wide and prominent publicity. Right?"

"He must have known that," said Gateway. "Any man would."

"It would appear then that he courted publicity? Perhaps even he went to some considerable personal danger to insure it?"

"But what earthly reason could he have had?" asked the detective blankly.

"We'll ponder that in due course; as I've said already I have an idea, but let's get on with sober fact-stuff——"

Gateway caught himself in time; he was about to gasp again, "Oh, my eye!" but strangled the words aborning.

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"We're covering a lot of ground," said Savoy lazily, "and covering it, I must confess, rather thinly! It's a pretty lacey sort of fabric we've spun thus far, more holes than thread—but mind you, we've been on the thing only half an hour! Willy-nilly, from starting with the Unknown Victim we're concerning ourselves with the Master Criminal. We're asking why he carried out his plans in this peculiar way; why not begin farther back and ask why he killed the poor devil? Aha! There's a gleam in your eye, Gateway. It becomes a question of motive, and gets us into the place you live! Speaking your own language, what motive did he have?"

"Motive? Good Lord! There's nothing to show—He may have been actuated by any one of a thousand motives——"

"Slow does it, my boy!" cried Savoy. "Man, vaunting himself on being strangely and wonderfully made, remains simple rather than complex. There are not a thousand possible motives at all; there are precious few that impel men to such crimes as this. The murderer killed his victim because he hated him; or, because he feared him; or, because he coyeted something the other had, which suggests your robbery motive; or, because he coveted something he feared his victim was going to prevent his getting; or, because he already had something he feared his victim was going to deprive him of. That pretty well disposes of your 'thousand motives,' eh?"

"The murderer might have been a crazy man, remember——"

"The case has certain earmarks, I'll grant you, of a purely pathological origin. But I think not. If it were rank insanity, the pervert would quite probably have

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left other marks of violence on the body; also, he would not have waited to single out an unidentifiable individual; further, he would in all likelihood have perpetrated similar crimes both before and after; and finally he'd probably have indulged in a note in red and blue ink, triangles and crosses and all that sort of thing, symbolical nonsense meant to mystify. Still, I concede you we may have to deal with a crazy man. We'll keep that in mind, but only as a remote possibility."

"Fair enough, for the moment. What about motive, then?"

"Let's dispose of them singly. Take hatred first. Not entirely convincing. Hatred thrives on proximity and some sort of incessant nagging; if we're right that our Criminal lives here and that the Victim came from afar, we dispose of the proximity and the likelihood that the hatred would have been a sufficiently strong motive. If it had been, it would also have been strong enough to send the murderer forth, hunting down his victim, instead of awaiting his coming.

"Next, let's say it was a case of fear. Sounds reasonable, doesn't it? A man who commits cold-blooded murder today has done other evil things before; fear comes most often from a situation in which a man who has perpetrated a criminal act lives in apprehension of its discovery. The Victim may have known something, may have come to dig the solid ground out from under the other man's feet.

"Or, let's say it was that the murderer coveted something the Victim had? Robbery, then. In that case our man of the taxi wore the diamond you thought of or carried the big roll. The trouble is that your average man doesn't do either. In all things, you have damned

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the poor unfortunate for being just an everyday, average man. Speculate, Gateway; don't guess. Think the fellow over and tell me— Do you see him wearing that diamond and flourishing his money?"

"Of course, there's no being sure," said Gateway cautiously. "But I'd say, offhand, no."

"So should I. That leaves us the final consideration: The murderer was about to get his hands on something, and the coming of the other fellow jeopardized his venture. He was dead set on getting whatever it was he was after, and it was a big thing to him—he killed for it."

"It might be—and some other explanation——"

"Oh, to be sure!"

"We're getting nowhere——"

Up shot Savoy's brows at that.

"I told you at the outset that before we started sailing we had to ship anchor and get out of the harbor! That's what we're doing, and don't you forget it. We're building up a theory——"

"Which may be wrong like you've said," muttered Gateway, "but which, as I'm a foot high, sounds like the goods to me!"

"Which you might say more forcefully is undoubtedly wrong, if not in its entirety then certainly in big black spots! But the essential general theory underlying the specific one is that we're going before long to be in a position to check for errors and verifications. If any section of our specific theory proves to be wrong, we cut it out of our structure and fill the gap anew. If any minute section should be right, we'll build on it."

"Ah!" said Gateway.

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"Still concerning ourselves with positive facts," Savoy continued serenely, "we know some interesting things about your Master Criminal. He has shown himself bold and original; he is a man of resource and initiative; he is without scruple; he has, in all likelihood, committed more than the single crime. He is out for big things. He is as cool a customer as you'll ever meet; he has physical courage; he is physically fit. He didn't kill his man in the taxi, as you have assured yourself; therefore he picked him up and carried him and put him there. He did so at some time during the night between the time that the taxi driver put his passenger down out near the Park and the time he arrived at the Ferry Building. You know the exact hours. Also you know the various places the taxi stopped. At the café out by the park or at the service-station or at the place where he phoned on Market Street—at one of these spots the body was placed in the taxi—or, if not at one of these spots, then during the drive itself. We get at least an insight into our Master Criminal's character, don't we?"

"But there might be a million like him——"

"Oh, not a million, surely! Let's not make it any worse than it is!"

"And I tell you I've checked and rechecked on every stop he made! At the first stop, the café, the driver sat by the front window with his taxi in plain sight, keeping an eye on it, hoping to pick up a fare. At the service-station he didn't get out of his buggy, and there were two boys at hand, one giving him the gas and the other wiping his windshield. And when he stopped to phone on Market Street he was out of sight of his car only a couple of minutes, and late as it was there were people on the street— Oh, my eye!" he groaned.

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"It was no doubt right there, on Market Street, that the body was put in the taxi!"

Savoy made his announcement as one who knew.

"If I even knew that much," muttered Gateway, and began pulling nervously at his fingers, "it might help. Dammit!" he exploded. "I don't care how hard a case is, if I can just get the littlest toe-hold anywhere along the line. If I was sure of that one point even——"

"Dead sure," nodded Savoy emphatically. "Accept as obvious by this time that the man you want has all his wits about him. Desperate he may be, but he's none the less cool in his desperation. He has made him a plan and he has hewed to the line.—I've not yet got around to asking you," he said sharply, "what the police surgeon had to say; how long the man had been dead."

"Several hours; that was the most I could get out of Doc Armiger. Maybe six or eight or ten hours."

Savoy brooded. Looking up abruptly he said:

"Your hardest job, Gateway, is going to be to pin this thing to the murderer after we run him down! He'll be all ready for you!"

Gateway shoved out a big hand and closed it slowly.

"And won't I be ready for him?" he muttered. "Won't I, though!"

5

Savoy nestled even deeper down into his big leather chair and from looking enigmatically at Gateway fell to regarding the star sapphire on his finger, turning the ring slowly. Presently he bestirred himself sufficiently to feel through his pockets, locate his cigarette case, open it and take out a cigarette; he even put it between his lips and no doubt supposed that he had lighted it; at any rate after he had begun speaking he several

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times brushed the end of the thing with his little finger, like a man knocking off an ash.

"Here is a matter which wants consideration," he said in that dreamy and aloof way with which Gateway and Laufer-Hirth were familiar, recognizing in it a sign that the man was entirely withdrawn from the concrete world of sticks and stones, to brood in a world apart. "We began with the obvious fact that the Unknown Victim either lived here or did not live here; we leaned with all due circumspection toward the belief that he was a stranger in San Francisco, only recently arrived. Fair enough, so far, but how did Mr. X learn so promptly that his Victim-to-be was in town?

"Mind you, we had further hazarded the wager that the Victim constituted some sort of a positive menace to Mr. X's plans or hopes or perhaps to his personal safety. Granting that—oh, only tentatively, my dear fellow!—it becomes axiomatic that the Victim realized that he did constitute this menace. That knowledge in itself would presume that he must have known what sort of man he was up against. So I beg you to tell me whether he would have gone straightway to Mr. X at some lonely spot, some spot ideally and excellently adapted to murder? Seems unlikely, doesn't it? Or, in this community of some million souls was it just by sheer chance that Mr. X so swiftly discovered his man? Hardly any more convincing than the first explanation, eh, Gateway?"

"No," said Gateway bluntly. "It ain't. Which," he added hurriedly, "isn't saying that it couldn't have been just luck. But the chances are against it.—I say! There could be a third party in on this! Some other guy

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could have tipped off the murderer." He spoke the last word with gusto: Savoy might use the more euphonious "Mr. X" all he pleased; Gateway would have none of it.

Savoy's keen blue eyes glinted. This was one of the times when he brushed off an imaginary ash.

"We broaden our practice canvas, then," he said. "We'll consider the likelihood of there being an entirely possible third man—whom we'll call the Tipper, because he gave the tip. Now: If this Tipper of ours did send word to Mr. X that the Victim was on the way, and if Mr. X got that word, he would have known when to expect the newcomer; he could have been on the watch for him; he could have had his trap set and baited; he could have had every single bit of preparation made well in advance. Let's pause here for an observation and a question or two: The Tipper, to be able to send that word, must have been wherever the Victim was, *id est,* not in San Francisco but at some considerable distance. If he did send such a message, I think that we can suppose the message was urgent? How would the Tipper then have sent that word? Telephone? Telegraph? Air mail? Ordinary mail? A messenger? Or would he have come himself?

"Just now there's no use trying to settle this point; it isn't even a good fifty-fifty bet and we let it go by—saying only that a telegram suggests itself and that later on, when we get a line on our Mr. X we'll interview the telegraph companies and ask whether he received such a message on the date we have in mind, eh? If we have any luck with it we'll have a chance of learning Tipper's other name, his home town and, along with it, the Victim's. All this for future refer-

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ence—or for us to forget all about, depending on what turns up."

"There might be something in it," conceded a cautious Gateway. "And of course——"

"Oh, of course! Always, of course! But, dreaming our dream, let's say he had some personal interest in what was going on; of course he may have been a purely altruistic sort of chap—in the matter of getting other chaps murdered!—but it remains that vastly more deals of one kind and another are set going by the personal equation than by pure altruism! If personally interested, he'd want to know, wouldn't he, the outcome? And after the accomplished fact what would a grateful Mr. X do? Write or wire or phone his pal, saying, 'O. K., kid; I've bumped him off!' Not in so many words, perhaps; but that would be the burden of his song. And now——"

He broke short off, staring into vacancy while Gateway on the edge of his chair watched him earnestly and waited for him to go on.

"Has it dawned on you," said Savoy curtly, "that our Mr. X is what I've heard you term a 'foxy guy'? Whatever his motives in the things he has done, he has left never a single minute connecting link between himself and his victim. Now he was just the man to know and ponder that records are kept of telegrams; that phone numbers are set down and long-distance calls can be traced; that letters have a way of not being burned as directed—especially as men have a way, crooked men, of holding on to anything which they consider gives them the goods on another man?—But isn't there still another way, a nice, safe, and innocent way of getting over that message of 'O. K., kid; I've

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bumped him off'?—Why, man, have it published on the front page of every paper in the neighborhood, copied in papers all over the country, referred to time after time as the days go by!

"And that's what you mean by this guy hunting publicity!" gasped Gateway, and began mopping his head.

Savoy tossed his unlighted cigarette away and selected a fresh one.

"A most intriguing as well as essential consideration logically suggests itself here," Savoy resumed presently. "We're in agreement, I think, that Mr. X foresaw, encountered and overcame difficulties in his task of getting the undraped body of the man he had murdered into Peter Carpenter's cab on Market Street? How are we to suppose that he accomplished this feat?"

Gateway, never more intent, observed swiftly:

"The body at that moment needn't have been 'undraped' as you call it, you know. Somehow I don't get the picture of the killer strolling down Market Street carrying the naked body of his victim in his arms, looking for a taxi to chuck him in!"

"Our thoughts move hand-in-hand," nodded Savoy. "The body at that moment was not undraped then? It was covered—with what?"

"It don't make any difference—clothes, I suppose."

"It makes all the difference! What kind of clothes?"

"There's no way of telling——"

"There's every way of telling! Man alive, do you suppose that our Unknown Victim's body was clothed in shoes and socks, in underclothes and trousers and shirt and vest and nicely fixed tie? All these things

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for Mr. X to take his time in removing after he had gotten his burden nicely into the taxi?"

"Of course not," returned Gateway. "It would be something that would cover the body, but that he could whip off in a hurry! Let's see——"

"Exactly," interrupted Savoy. "Something to be whipped off in a hurry. Just what? It could have been a sheet—but how any chance passer-by would have stared! Or a blanket or robe of some sort? Whose, in that case, and where obtained? Something belonging to Mr. X himself, that would perhaps have a blood-stain left on it or at least a tell-tale hair that a clue-hound like you would never miss? Is that the sort of man our Mr. X is? He who has been at all pains that there could not possibly be anything to connect him with the crime?—Now, let's move slowly here; let's ask ourselves what conceivable covering would be ideal —something that would not strike a wrong and arresting note on a city street and that could be snatched off with little time lost?"

"An overcoat!"

"Nothing else! It was a foggy cold night, wasn't it, with all other people on the street wearing topcoats with their collars up about their ears? A coat, of course. And now comes the question: Whose coat? In the first place Mr. X was wearing his own, wasn't he? In the second place, maybe he didn't have two overcoats. In the third place, he wasn't the man, as we've said already, to use his own coat at such a time. Whose coat then?"

"The murdered man's," said Gateway.

"Logical," admitted Savoy. "Logical enough, at any rate, at first thought, for us to ponder. Let us say

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that it is at least a good fifty-fifty bet that Mr. X did use his Victim's coat—provided the Victim had one!"

"And of course he had one; every man on the street——"

"If he didn't have a coat," said Savoy meditatively, "we can be sure that we were right in one of our original surmises, namely that the Unknown Victim wasn't a San Franciscan! We'd go on to the decision that he had come from some part of the country where a man simply doesn't think of overcoats in July.—Let us content ourselves with the surmise that Mr. X may have found it logical to use an overcoat—a hat, too, maybe. The body placed in the taxicab, these garments whipped off, Mr. X's one urgent desire was to be on his way. He climbed back into his car, drove on down Market perhaps as far as Third Street, made a right-hand turn to get off Market, swung into Mission or some good street south of Market, turned right again and streaked toward—oh, toward San Mateo or Burlingame, I suppose."

"Slow does it here," objected Gateway. "All this about the coat and hat is reasonable and may or may not be true. We can come back to that. But what's this about San Mateo or Burlingame?"

"Perhaps I'm wrong in naming those two towns," admitted Savoy. "That's a matter for you, since you know the local geography so much better than I do. So I'll merely indicate the line of thought and leave it to your thorough-going methods: Mr. X has all his wits about him. He planned carefully; he was at all pains to prevent the crime being brought home to him. But he said to himself that accidents have a way of happening; the unexpected might occur; the curiosity

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of the police might conceivably turn in his general direction. So, my dear Gateway, I now repeat something I told you a moment ago: Even after you fix your official eye on him you're going to have your real job on your hands getting any proof. The first thing you'll discover is that on the day the Unknown Victim was killed somewhere here in San Francisco, our Mr. X wasn't even in town!"

"Alibi?" grunted Gateway.

"I'm not surer of anything than that he will have an alibi," Savoy answered promptly. "For an alibi is the first line of defense for your criminal; he is absolutely sure to think of it. Already we see in Mr. X a man who has an eye to detail, and the cool nerve and shrewd ability to carry out any plan he has formulated. Yes, Gateway, I think we can take the alibi for granted."

"Well, admitting he might be fox enough to have a fake alibi all ready—why down the peninsula? Why not in Oakland, Berkeley, San Rafael, Alameda, Richmond, Sausalito——"

"For a very simple reason: Going back and forth, doing his work here and establishing his alibi elsewhere, he did not want to run any unnecessary risks of being seen by some one who might know and remember him. Travelling in his closed car——"

"You seem darned sure he's got one!"

"Oh, maybe not. Maybe, for example, when he brought the Unknown Victim from wherever the murder took place to the taxi on Market Street he swaggered along carrying him in his arms, or maybe he trundled him in a wheel-barrow, and——"

"All right, all right," Gateway cut in. "But why does he go to San Mateo or——"

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"Suppose instead that I tell you why he didn't go to Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda, Richmond, Sausalito or San Rafael? Because to have done so would have meant that he would have had to take a ferry, and thus he would have multiplied many times his risks of being seen and remembered. Am I right, Gateway?"

"Right!" cried Gateway and smote a clenched fist into an open palm.

Savoy turned to his secretary with the request:

"Tony, old man, how about bringing in the portable and some paper for a few notes?"

Andregg hurried for the little Corona which had accompanied them on their voyage, slipped it out of its case, inserted a sheet of paper and sat ready to take dictation. Savoy from the depths of his chair said:

"Gateway would be up and doing with a heart for any fate, provided only he could get hold of something solid to bite into. Andregg, will you set down these points? We're going to call them 'Contact Points,' and they are going to give our friend C. P. Gateway an outlet for his amazing energies. Ready?"

Andregg was ready. But for a moment or so Savoy sat silent, the old familiar far-away look in his eyes as he strove for a certain logical arrangement of ideas. When at last he spoke it was crisply and so rapidly that Andregg's fingers were hard beset to keep up. When his voice ended abruptly Andregg had typed:

CONTACT POINTS FOR GATEWAY:

1. Check arrivals by all trains, July 7-8. (Interview conductors, Pullman conductors, porters, red-caps.)
2. Ditto for all arrivals by steamers.

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3. Ditto for airplane passengers.
4. Keep in mind possible arrival by private automobile. (Check at garages for uncalled-for out-of-town cars, especially from a distance.)
5. Also keep in mind possible arrival by auto stage.
6. Check story of P. Carpenter, taxi driver, in all details, covering entire route he took on July 8, making him tell as far as possible every thing and incident he noted, even his odd thoughts.
7. Visit baggage rooms at R.R. stations for unclaimed baggage.
8. Ditto at all check stands.
9. Mem. Telegraph offices; this for later.
10. Ditto for Air Mail, special delivery and long-distance telephone messages.
11. Merely keep the following in mind as possible sources of information:
    a. News items in daily papers:
        1. Before discovery of body.
        2. After discovery.
    b. Personals in papers, both before and after.
    c. Lost and found Ads, ante and post.
    d. Want ads, ditto.
12. Bear in mind that both, either or neither of the two men, i.e., Mr. X and the Unknown, may have belonged to the criminal class.
13. Begin assembling list of San Franciscans who on the 7th and 8th inst. were in San Mateo or Burlingame—anywhere well out of S. F., somewhere down the Peninsula. (Never mind San Jose at present, being rather too far.)

Gateway, who had listened with profound attention, sprang to his feet.

"Mr. Savoy," he exclaimed, "let me have that list—and let me go. I'm on my way— Man, it's living again just to see the chance of a clue ahead!"

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Savoy laughed at the man's electric eagerness, but was scarcely less eager himself.

"Good hunting, Gateway! By the way, we'll want a copy of every paper for every day, beginning say a couple of days before the murder; you can get them for us right away?"

Gateway, already in the hall, called back:

"I'll have most of 'em here for you in twenty minutes, and the rest in the morning," and was gone with a rush.

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CHAPTER III

1

WILL LITTLE and Tony Andregg said their good-nights as Gateway left, and Laufer-Hirth came over to the fireplace where he stood leaning on the mantel and looking down at Savoy extended once more in the easy-chair.

"Paul, you rascal," said the elder man, rumpling the few gray hairs on an otherwise shiny dome, his face suggesting a mystified cherub's. "I'll stick by you because you're a friend of mine, but just in confidence I'll tell you the truth about yourself: You're a deep-dyed villain that ought to be tarred and feathered!"

Savoy glanced up at him and a faint smile twitched at the corners of his mobile lips. His slightly elevated brows asked, "Why?"

"You know darned well," grunted the jeweller, "that you've been talking what they used to call arrant nonsense—and I'll swear as I sat soaking it all in it sounded like sense. You've got that poor devil Gateway all stepped up with a big sample of your infernal theorizing, and when he wakes up dead sober in the morning the big hopes are going to gush out of him like gas out of a toy balloon, leaving him just as flat! What have you got to say for yourself?"

As Paul Savoy's eyes drifted back to the fire the shadowy smile slowly went the way of all smiles and tears, finding a home no doubt in the garden of all lost

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things where Villon has long since come up with his snows of Yester Year. He sighed and said in a queer, far-away fashion he had at times:

"I wouldn't be surprised if you were right, Amos! And, while I was letting myself go it did all sound as though there might be something in it! Funny how a man can let himself slide that way, spending his words like deflated currency, and before he's done getting caught in the avalanche and being swept clean off his feet. You're such a matter-of-fact old chap!"

"You really didn't mean a word you said then?" demanded Laufer-Hirth, and actually looked disappointed.

Savoy brooded. When at last he looked up it was with that rare flashing smile of his which brightened and enlivened his whole face exactly as does a sudden gleam of sunshine falling upon some dark oil painting.

"Words are bred of thoughts," he said lightly, "and thoughts in their turn are the offspring of words. Maybe, as you say, Gateway will sober up when once he shakes off my sinister influence, and we'll not hear any more from him."

2

But they were to hear from Gateway very soon. The detective on quitting the room, putting all his heart into what to himself he termed a long shot in the dark, meant to lose never a precious second in beginning the gambit moves in the new game. He went down the three flights of stairs, taking two or three steps at the time, and left far behind him the Chinese boy who had meant to precede him to the door. Gateway jerked the door open and hurried out, and thus came close to

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colliding with some one who was just lifting a hand to ring. Who that some one was or what that some one's business at this time of night he did not pause to discover; he merely carried with him an impression of costly black furs glittering with drops of moisture and of a breath of roses. He hurried on along the walk and did not even hear the door slam behind him. For this latter failure to record events two facts were responsible: First, the door did not slam, since the slim figure in the costly black furs caught it in time and slipped into the house, letting it close softly after her so that its sound made scarcely more noise than did her long sigh of relief. Second, nearly at the front gate in the iron picket fence, the sort of collision so nearly avoided on the steps took place. It was quite dark, the mist had thickened until it was like a curtain of white cotton and the light from the windows of the house failed to shine through it.

"Unk!" or something of that sort was jolted out of Gateway. He caught his breath and added, "Dammit get outa the way can't you?"

An eager hand closed on his arm, and an eager voice said:

"It's Detective Gateway, isn't it?"

"Well?" demanded Gateway, and shook the hand off. "What's it to you? I don't know who you are——"

"I'm Phil Stearns; you know me. Stearns of the *Morning Chron*——"

"Reporter, eh?" jeered Gateway. "Well, you get nothing out of me. Lemme go." For the eager hand was on his arm again.

Stearns tried to laugh in what might be called a knowing way. The laugh was intended to assure one

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that most things might be hid from most people, but that nothing escaped Phil Stearns of the press.

"Look here, Gateway! There's big doings and I'm horning in on the game. You've come here for a conference with Mr. Paul Savoy; Savoy is the man who made a lot of hot copy for us with his work in unravelling the Mystery of the old House of the Opal. You are on the case of the Unknown Gent found Dead in a Taxi!—Can I stick one and one together or can't I?"

"Lay off me," growled Gateway. "I don't want any publicity on this. I'll tell you if anything——"

Gateway fumed. Phil Stearns hung tight. Gateway lost his temper, a very simple proceeding for him at any time during the last ten days. Stearns, sensing a big news-story running out on him, made a third wild grab to stay his man and inadvertently stuck his thumb into Gateway's eye. Gateway required nothing more, in fact he did not require all that was given him; he lashed out with his fist, struck Stearns full in the face, sending him reeling, and the click of a gate and the sound of swiftly receding foosteps, sounding muffled in the fog, was the last heard of him.

3

"You know, Amos," Paul Savoy was saying by way of companionably doing a bit of thinking aloud, "there may be something in what I said after all. I mean when I remarked that in asking a question a man perforce summarizes his known data and it may be that the answer lies thinly veiled in what he knows. And mark this: If a fellow could manage to ask himself a

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lot of relevant questions to be answered Yes or No; could he word his questions like the first I put tonight; 'Did the Unknown Victim live in San Francisco? Or did he live elsewhere?' then, even if a man answered with both eyes shut and his ears plugged tight, still by the laws of chance he'd guess right a good half of the time! Think of that! Why, if a man hit right answers only a third of the time—a quarter of the time— What the devil are you looking at like that?" he broke off, and slewed about in his chair for the answer.

Laufer-Hirth, startled by so unexpected a vision, was staring with all his might. Paul Savoy promptly emulated him. There had been no sound of her approach, but there she stood in the doorway, a puzzled Taune looking in over her shoulder, and embraced both Laufer-Hirth and the younger man in a perfectly radiant smile. Savoy came to his feet with a bound. Laufer-Hirth continued to stare. And Taune merely held his place and awaited on events.

Looking at her Paul Savoy thought swiftly of his friend's rhapsodizings on the spirit of San Francisco, her seductive charm and mystery. This girl was like the spirit of the City of Mystery and Romance which Laufer-Hirth held San Francisco to be. Her modish jacket's black fur collar rose high about a piquant face, softly brushing her cheeks which caught the eye with their fresh *couleur de rose* complexion and nailed attention with a dimple. Her mouth was soft and exquisite, just now smiling; her eyes very bright and soft and very gray and very alluring. A young lady of superlatives, surely. Nestling in the black fur which twinkled with tiny drops like dew were some three or four

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fragrant pink roses. Her ear-pendants were of lustrous jet with a tiny diamond flashing in each.

She looked thrillingly alive; she brought as much zest into the room with its tobacco-smoke and faint aroma of Scotch whisky as an eager young March wind could have done.

"May I explain myself?" she asked almost breathlessly, sounding determined not to be afraid but frankly excited.

"My dear young lady!" gasped Laufer-Hirth.

"By no means!" exclaimed Paul Savoy, and made her an extravagant bow. "Marvels should not be explained away, but should be content to remain marvels, brightening a drab world and reminding us that fairy tales are true tales!"

She had a rarely delicious little laugh which made her big gray eyes crinkle adorably and which revealed two rows of teeth of such an order that Laufer-Hirth, somewhat old-fashioned and a jeweller besides, immediately compared them to matched and thereafter matchless pearls.

"You are Mr. Laufer-Hirth?" she asked when, having nodded brightly to Savoy, thus giving him a receipt in full for his compliment, she turned to his host.

Laufer-Hirth hastily made her his funny little fat bow.

"Entirely at your service, Miss——"

"You're an angel!" Then, with a faint whisk of skirts and a wisp of rose fragrance shaken into the air with her swift movement, she turned back to Savoy.

"And you are Mr. Paul Savoy." This time it was a rather gay announcement with no hint of question in it. She disengaged one of her roses from its fellows

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at her breast, a long beautiful pink bud on a slender stem, as graceful and pretty as herself. "It's nice to be recognized as a marvel!" she said, and her eyes were dancing as she came suddenly into the room, offering him the flower—and her feet were dancing feet, too, which carried her in her own inimitable way, lightly and eagerly as though she walked on her toes. "Since I am not permitted to explain myself, shall the rose do it, Mr. Paul Savoy?"

He looked curiously at the flower. Before he could speak she said swiftly:

"I've heard such wonders of you! How from a mere nothing at all you can pluck out the hearts of mysteries! But then I am versed in magic, too. Otherwise how could I at the first sight of you tell you what your favorite rose is?"

And then she presented the pink bud.

A thoughtful pucker came between his brows. From looking shrewdly at her he bent a thoughtful gaze upon the rose in his hand.

"Hm," he said gravely. "A *Glory of Persia,* eh? Yes, my favorite, peerless among roses." He lifted a clear, frankly meditative regard to her twinkling eyes while Laufer-Hirth stared at the two of them incredulously and Taune still awaited on events. For a moment or two of utter silence their eyes gazed straight into each other, hers with that queer teasing smile in them, his changeless in their profound gravity. At last he sighed and looked again at the bud slowly twirling in his hand. "I'll tell you a secret," he said without looking up, his voice become a drone and a monotone, "the *Glory of Persia* is my favorite because it is a help to me in my magic-business. Where others must poke

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among tea leaves or shuffle cards or peer into people's palms in order to read behind the veil, I have but to look deep among this flower's petals to see visions."

"Look here," snorted Laufer-Hirth, "if you two——"

"Ssh!" cried their visitor, laughing softly. "He is in a trance! 'Weave a circle round him thrice, and close your eyes with holy dread!' He is going to work a spell!"

"Silence!" commanded Savoy sepulchrally.

He clapped his hand dramatically to his forehead, breathed stertorously and finally declared:

"I see a tiny white scar—like a little crescent—on somebody's left knee!"

"Oh, so you remembered!" She seemed at once disappointed, since it had promised fun to mystify, and glad that he did remember. "And it was a good six years ago!"

"Amos," said Savoy, "this creature who, I assure you is part imp and part fairy, is the harum-scarum daughter of our old friend Mark Landreth! Janice Landreth, as sure as you're born."

The girl clapped her hands softly. "You even remembered my name! And I was only sixteen and very, very far beneath the notice of Mr. Paul Savoy who at that time must have been oh, I don't know how ancient!"

Janice Landreth explained herself over the coffee and sandwiches for which the most hospitable Laufer-Hirth sent Taune scurrying. Since that day six years ago when Paul Savoy had been a guest at Mark Landreth's home near Santa Barbara much water had run out of many stocks. Mark Landreth, she informed

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them brightly, had gone flat broke. Oh, it was no tragedy, she assured them; nothing to be ashamed of and not a thing for tears. Her mother was comfortably taken care of; her brothers were big enough to be out on their own anyway; her one sister was married and happy over brand-new twins. And Janice herself had buckled on her glittering armor and was as busy as you please tilting with dragons, generally adventuressing, and incidentally very precariously holding down a job!

"Mark is a glorious old trooper and doesn't care a hang really," she said while recklessly sugaring her coffee. "It helps him, I suppose, that he has been broke before."

"I remember you quite well," Savoy nodded at her. "And you did cut your knee that day on the beach, you know." He regarded her like an old friend; that's what she was, what any of Mark Landreth's true-blue, rollicking family must be. "And so you've grown up and become a young woman of business? Not a burglar or anything of that kind, I hope? Breaking into a wild young bachelor's home at this time of night——"

Somewhere in the big house a bell tinkled faintly; she must have been listening for it for she said quickly:

"That's Phil Stearns! You won't let him in, will you, Mr. Laufer-Hirth?"

Laufer-Hirth rubbed his head, using his knuckles as a sort of polishing stone.

"We just got home tonight, Miss Landreth," he told her. "During the months I've been away San Francisco, I think, has gone in for new customs. Now I don't know who Phil Stearns is or what he wants, but if you advise against it certainly I must refuse to have anything to do with him at this time."

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"I said at the first glimpse that you were an angel!" Janice dimpled at him, thereby making the romantic old chap feel warm and contented. "He is a reporter and one of my most deadly rivals——"

"You, a reporter?" exclaimed Savoy.

She reached out to her coat which lay on a chair close by and from an inner pocket produced a little memorandum book in Morocco covers with a red-enamelled pencil dangling, and flourished it as the sign of her office.

"And my excuse for breaking into wild young bachelors' homes at this time of night," she beamed at Laufer-Hirth.

"Taune," said the jeweller, "if it's Mr. Phil Stearns, a reporter, at the door, ask him please to excuse us tonight. I'll be glad to shake him by the hand some other time."

"Keep the chain on the door, Taune!" cried Janice gaily. "He is sure to worm in otherwise!" As Taune departed with a look of high resolution on his usually smiling face she continued her explanations: "He did snoop in on my taxi! And I served him right when I left him to pay while I made my very adroit entry. Poor Taune! He felt that he ought to throw me into the street, but somehow couldn't work himself up to it."

"Who could?" demanded Laufer-Hirth.

"You two dear old boys are going to save my life," said Janice, and reached for the jam.

"I'm not a dear old boy," said Savoy promptly. "Amos grows senile but I'm at the most dangerous and quite marriageable age."

"Oho! He grows sensitive! Look out, it's a bad sign——"

"He begins to dodder," chortled Laufer-Hirth. "As

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for me, I'm just as young as I feel. And since you came——"

"It's this way," she informed them. "This is my fourth job—or is it the fifth? And the stage is all set for me to get fired Saturday. You are free to watch me devour my food; I was sorely tempted to eat an ear-ring tonight! It's a hard, cold, cruel old world, isn't it?" she gurgled. "Presently we're going to chat and you are going to give me a big exclusive story and I'll hold my job and eat regular meals for one more week!"

"A story?" muttered Laufer-Hirth. "What story?"

"I'm perfectly willing to play fair," she conceded. "You can give me the inside dope on the new angle of the mystery of the man found in the cab—or you can tell me something thrilling and exclusive, if you prefer, about your voyage. You know how it goes: 'We sailed into a blue lagoon of the Island of Magnolias, and——' "

"Need it be true?" asked Savoy.

"Mercy, man, it's for a newspaper!" she told him.

4

Savoy was telling the story: Janice Landreth's pencil was very busy between being nibbled at and rushing across the pages; Laufer-Hirth sat back and smoked and chuckled and admired the pretty daughter of an old friend. Savoy had gotten as far as an expedition into the heart of a savage island, where it was rumored the native queen possessed a coronal diamond the size of a prize-winning potato; and explained that it was the unshakable determination of the well-known San

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Francisco jewel king to have a go at that diamond, hoping to bring it back to put on display at his élite Geary Street shop; and had led up to the point where the Queen of Magnolia Isle fell desperately in love with the handsome jewel-merchant—when Taune came in with a bundle of newspapers and a note from Gateway.

"How many m's in indomitable?" asked Janice.

"Two, I think," said Savoy, asked: "May I?" and opened the bundle.

"Try three," suggested Laufer-Hirth.

"There was one thing I liked about Phil Stearns," the girl sighed. "He was teaching me how to spell *alleged, alias, habeas corpus,* and a lot of perfectly lovely words."

Savoy had read Gateway's note; it said merely: "Here's a handful of papers I got from the corner cigar store. More in the morning." He began glancing through the newspapers.

Janice put away her notebook.

"I can work out the rest of the story now," she said. "And I can see that Mr. Savoy is deeply absorbed——"

"Don't go yet," expostulated Laufer-Hirth.

"But I wasn't thinking of such a thing! You're going to give me the other exclusive story after all, aren't you? Up and down Newspaper Alley tomorrow they'll be calling me Two Scoop Janice—and I'll be the hardest girl to fire in town!"

"And so little Janice Landreth turned out to be a scribe!" said Savoy and looked up at her in new appraisal. "What ever made you think that you could write either a——"

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"I can't," said Janice as much as to imply, "What could have put that idea into your head?" She ran on coolly: "I've never tried to write a story yet that it didn't make the city editor swear. So now when I dig up any nice bit of scandal one of the boys in the office puts it into words. I'm what we call a 'legs man,' you know."

"If you can't write——"

"And can't ever learn; it's quite beyond me," she smiled back at him.

"Then why do you suppose they gave you the job?"

"Oh, because I'm me! Because I know everybody. See how welcome I am here in the home of that wild young bachelor, Mr. Laufer-Hirth! Mark how patient and gentle and obliging the immensely wealthy Mr. Paul Savoy is with me. I can nose in places——"

"Admitted," he laughed back at her.

"And so you will give me my big exclusive? You'll tell me the true inwardness of the latest great coalition formed by Paul Savoy, spectacular gentleman of leisure, and Detective Gateway, bloodhound of the law?"

"Never a word, my dear," said Savoy. "For, mind you, there isn't any coalition——"

"It would be hard spelling," conceded Janice. "But one of the boys could do it, and I'm only a——"

"Never mind——"

"I'm with you, Paul," said Laufer-Hirth. "You start in identifying the young lady by her left knee, and she proclaims herself a leg man, and it's too damn indelicate, since it's a question of my friend Mark Landreth's daughter."

Savoy, now and then flipping over a page of his papers, continued his explanation:

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"Not speaking for publication, I'll admit that my old friend Gateway did pop in and we did chat on the case which has him very deeply interested. Whether I myself come to take any interest in it is yet to be seen. So never a word in the papers, eh?"

"And little Janice falls down on an assignment and gets fired Saturday."

"In all seriousness," he smiled back at her, "I'll do this: If I should chip in with Gateway, and if there should be a story to tell later on, well, we'll save it for you."

"Glorious! Only—only who knows I'll still be associated with the great molder of public opinion when all that happens? What am I going to do in the meantime? One has to nose out stories, you know, or they send you to the cashier and he hands you a little envelope and inside is a pittance and the snappy remark that you're not needed any more!"

"I've got an idea for you," he said carelessly. "Here, you see, is a handful of recent papers; Amos and I have been away from such things for so long that I sent out for a lot of the latest issues so as to bring ourselves up-to-date, you know. Merely glancing at them, a notion strikes me."

"For me?" asked Janice eagerly.

"Absolutely. I've been thinking that the very heart of a city pulses in its daily newspapers—but not in its news columns. Did you ever brood over the personals and lost and found ads?"

"I know," nodded Janice. "Like this: 'Archibald, all is forgiven. Meet me at moonrise by the lone ash can in Finnegan's Alley. Geraldine.'"

"Right," laughed Savoy. "Now there's a story under

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that, isn't there? You could hunt it out—leg it down, so to speak. You'd find out who Archibald really was, and——"

"And who," said Janice, hushing her gay voice, "were the cruel foster parents who abandoned Geraldine, a tiny babe, on the steps of the orphanage that blustery December night!"

"Exactly. All of that. You're going to create a new department for your paper and it's going to be a regular——"

"Wow!" nodded Janice helpfully.

"And you'll call it: 'Romances of the Lost and Found,' or 'Mysteries and Heart Throbs in the Personal Column.'"

"I'll make a shining name for myself!" cried Janice merrily. "Oh, it's really a lovely idea!"

She reached for one of his papers at random.

"Here's one that sounds inviting," said Savoy. He seemed as casual as herself in selecting a paper, and turned to the lost and found column of some several days ago. The eighth of the month, to be exact. He read:

"'Lost, lady's cloak, dark red fox fur trim. No doubt fell from car on Junipero Serra Blvd. Reward. No questions asked.'"

Janice, sipping coffee, looked at him curiously over the cup's brim.

"It gives a phone number or address?" she asked. And when Savoy nodded, she added lightly: "And you suggest, do you, that I take an ad like that at random——"

"Oh, quite at random," smiled Savoy, and handed her the paper.

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"I'll do it!" said Janice Landreth. "I'm really beginning to grow enthused over the idea: Real Romances of the Lost and Found!—And if I can keep myself from getting sacked for a few days it's a promise, Mr. Savoy, to let me in first on the Big Story?"

"It's a promise," he agreed.

When a few minutes later Miss Landreth said her smiling good-nights and went on her dancing way, Savoy looked at Laufer-Hirth and found his friend staring thoughtfully at him. Clearly the jeweller was already taking the problems of Mark Landreth to heart.

"Know who her boss is, Amos?" Savoy asked.

"Sure," said Laufer-Hirth. "There's not a city editor in town I don't know. He's Charlie Edwards and——"

"Why not get him on the phone and tell him not to fire her?" asked Savoy. "She's a cute kid and despite all her don't-give-a-hang, she's trying her bravest to make good."

"Sure," said Laufer-Hirth again and went gladly to the telephone.

Taune meantime let her out at the front door. Smiling at him by way of thanks, drawing on her gloves as she prepared to brave the misty night, Janice Landreth was asking herself curiously:

"Now what on earth does he think a lost cloak has to do with Gateway's taxicab murder?"

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CHAPTER IV

1

AMOS LAUFER-HIRTH was a jeweller primarily because he loved beauty. He was not too old nor too seasoned to thrill to a sunset, a rare Oriental rug, a pretty woman like Janice Landreth, a jewel or a strain of music or a fine deed. Beauty in whatever form brushed a resonant chord in the old fellow's breast. So, looking forward to bringing his best of good friends home with him, he had taken delight in having a certain suite of rooms in especial readiness for him; here many of the choicest pieces of his collection were assembled in order that Paul Savoy, likewise quick and sensitive to beauty's appeal, might be given this little token of his friend's affection. Prominent among these priceless items was a splendid old desk which Laufer-Hirth was fondly certain would draw a burst of admiration from his guest.

It was one of the world's show-pieces. Its duplicate, the famed *"Bureau du Roi,"* the two men had admired together in the Louvre, and Laufer-Hirth still recalled how Savoy had lingered and hovered about it, until the older man had laughed and called him as bad as Shelley with a Grecian Urn. The history of the piece in the Louvre was familiar to both: How a number of artists had labored upon it for nine years to make it worthy of the Fifteenth Louis, and how to bring their artistry

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to full perfection they had first constructed a miniature model, then a full-sized one, was common knowledge. It was that full-sized model from which King Louis' *bureau* had been copied that now stood in Savoy's sitting room awaiting the anticipated burst of admiration.

But so filled was Paul Savoy's mind with Gateway's puzzle of the unidentified man of the taxicab that, left alone in his quarters, he saw never a single one of the beauties with which his friend had surrounded him. He had said an absent-minded, "Ah, this is fine," when his host escorted him here, added an automatic sort of "Good-night, Amos," and slumped down into an easy-chair drawn up to a hearth on which a low fire burned.

The old house on Nob Hill grew silent. One after another the lighted windows which had made vague wan blurs through the steadily thickening fog were blotted out by the darkness until in only one room a flickering fire gave some faint and uncertain illumination. Engulfed in the big armchair Paul Savoy sat motionless, his brain teeming with ideas which he tried to make serve his will as a stern drill sergeant strives with raw recruits, determined on whipping them into shape and so on achieving out of chaos a condition of order. When a grandfather's clock chimed and struck he heard never a single one of the musical notes. Faint sounds penetrated from the streets below, but he was unaware of them.

2

Dimly conscious of a discreet tapping Savoy was about to demand who was there when the door opened and Laufer-Hirth stuck his head into the room.

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"I couldn't go to sleep, Paul," he said from the doorway. "I got to thinking and——"

Savoy laughed into the puckered face.

"Come ahead, old boy," he invited, and added with a chuckle: "Going to a masquerade ball? You're a glad sight for the eye!"

Laufer-Hirth, waving the enormous pipe which he had removed from his lips for his initial remark, advanced shamblingly into the room, closed the door and lowered his bulky form into a chair. He had prepared for bed, donning the most flamboyantly vivid pair of pajamas Savoy had ever seen; then, impelled to be up again for a last word with his friend, he had enshrouded himself in the full silken regalia of a Chinese mandarin, all purples and golds. His few white hairs on an otherwise rosily shiny dome stuck up in all directions.

"I knew you'd be awake," said Laufer-Hirth. "You'll be making a night of it, I suppose?" He took a pull at his big pipe, laid down a smoke screen between himself and Savoy's keen eyes, shifted in his chair very much as little Amos Laufer-Hirth, aged ten, might have squirmed before the penetrating gaze of a schoolteacher, and then burst out: "Damn it, Paul, I'm worried!"

"You look the part," said Savoy wonderingly. "But what on earth you've got to worry about——"

"It's that brave, bright little girl, Paul! She sticks in my mind with her dancing eyes and pink roses and eagerness."

"Naturally," grinned Savoy. "Of all the downright sentimental old stagers, Amos——"

"I don't know how much nonsense there is in all the

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stuff you filled Gateway with," continued the jeweller in a grumbling sort of voice, "but I do know that you've got an uncanny trick of seeing things other fellows miss. And now you've started Mark Landreth's girl out on an assignment that, as far as I can see, is harmless enough, but—" He rubbed his knuckles vigorously against his scalp. "I've got the crawly kind of feeling that keeps a man awake that you've sent her full tilt into some sort of danger."

"Danger?" snapped Savoy, and frowned. "Danger?" he demanded the second time, even more sharply. "Why should there be any danger for her?"

"I don't know," said Laufer-Hirth uneasily. "I didn't even dream of such a thing until after I'd gone to bed. Then I got to thinking about things—you know how a fellow does—and all of a sudden I just began to *feel* that maybe— Shucks, Paul," he concluded with a rather sheepish smile, "I suppose it was just the sort of nightmare-notion that rides a man when he's halfway between waking and sleeping, and his brain gets to flailing around like a driving-rod broken loose at one end."

Again Paul Savoy said: "Danger?" and fell to drumming on the arms of his chair. "Confound you, Amos," he said irritably. "I hadn't thought of that part of it! How do I know whether she's running some risk or not? The whole thing, that cloak-business, is just a long shot, you know. There's not likely to be a thing in it—but the devil of it is that a man can't tell! How often the 'sure-shots' go wrong for us! How very, very often the favorite doesn't even come in to the money! And have you ever noticed how the long shots do now and then come galloping home?"

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Laufer-Hirth had begun to relax and lose his vague fears on voicing them; now he blinked and stiffened as he muttered, taking the other side of the argument:

"Of course it was just that I was half asleep and——"

"In the very frame of mind," Savoy cut him short, "to be receptive to truths that the wide-awake mind of man has a way of shutting all doors against, turning in the locks, as he thinks, the very key of logic!"

"Then you do think she may be in danger?" gasped the other.

"In the midst of life—" began Savoy.

But a bell ringing in the hall stopped him.

"Telephone," explained Laufer-Hirth and heaved himself up eagerly. "Rings in the hall. There's an extension here." He took up the instrument from its teakwood stand behind a tall leather screen, and a moment later handed it to Savoy, saying in a disappointed tone—for the old fellow had at the moment fully expected to hear Janice Landreth's lilting voice—"Gateway. He wants you."

3

"I had a hunch you wouldn't be in bed yet," said Gateway over the telephone and Savoy thought the man sounded breathless.

"Your hunch was right," returned Savoy, and demanded: "What now? Don't tell me you've sunk your talons into a 'clue' already!"

"It's sure a funny thing," grunted Gateway.

"Life's a funny thing, you know," drawled Savoy.

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"But if you think you've found one of those 'clues' so dear to your heart, look out for all that goes with it, wrong turnings at every hand and all that. Just the same——"

Gateway's laugh with a hint of a jeer in it sounded for even Laufer-Hirth at Savoy's elbow to hear.

"Just the same you'd like to know, eh?"

"I plead guilty to being human," Savoy laughed back at him. "Fire away."

"It's a travelling bag," Gateway told him triumphantly, and again Savoy caught that breathlessness which told of ill suppressed excitement. "I've wasted no time for as I've said from the start all I've got to do is see an opening anywhere and you can bet your last dollar I'll hop to it like a fire engine on its red way! I've got a dozen men nosing about right now, making life tough for the guys that run the check stands all over the bay region. And what do you suppose? A girl that hasn't got any more sense than just enough to keep her chewing-gum out of her hair has busted out from an unexpected place with what looks like the biggest piece of news since the armistice! She punches the cash register in a cigar stand down on the Embarcadero, right near where the big liners dock from the Orient. Here's her yarn: A guy carrying two bags, a big one and a little one, pops in at her stand about a week or maybe ten days ago, to use the phone. He phones somebody; he pops out; he says he's in a hurry; he pitches her a dollar and says to hold his bag until he gets back; he beats it and never comes back. She understood that he was to come back for it in a couple of hours."

Savoy despite his habit of belittling all sorts of physical clues was as eager as Gateway when he asked:

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"The Unknown Victim's bag? The girl helped identify him?"

"That girl!" snorted Gateway. "I caught myself just in time and didn't choke her to death. She couldn't remember anything at first; after I bullyragged some sense into her she sort of remembered dimly that the man was a kind of 'foreign-looking' guy, although she couldn't explain what she meant by that! And in time the idea trickled into her skull that he must have come ashore with a crowd landing from the *Empress of China*. That steamer, Mr. Savoy, docked in the late afternoon on the day before the murdered man turned up in the taxi!"

Savoy's eyes narrowed. One must always be distrustful of coincidence. Yet the eagerness was still in his voice when he put the chief question:

"You found something definite in the bag?"

"Not all I could have asked," Gateway's voice sounding so grim that Savoy could fancy the squaring of the bulldog jaw. "But something that means a lot to me—though you'd turn up your nose at it, I suppose."

"Not cuff-links with initials on them?" cried Savoy in mock dismay. "Not—not laundry marks? Spare me that, Gateway!"

"'S all right," growled Gateway. "'S all right about that sort of thing; there's more than one man that has swung on account of a laundry mark. But in this case it happened to be two things: On a steamship folder was the only scrap of writing in the bag; a name scribbled in pencil. It was written twice, first, 'Charles A. Kemp,' the second time just 'Chas. Kemp.'—Now wait a shake! That ain't the two things, that's just one. The other is a suit of clothes——"

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"Lord love us!" said Savoy. "Not—not with the tailor's tag, Gateway!"

"I knew you'd guy me," muttered Gateway. "But just the same I've already got a wire off to Shanghai which is where the passenger hailed from as you can tell by the agent's stamp on the folder, and as you can tell from the tailor's tag. If the police are on the job there they'll be finding out things as soon as offices open up in the morning."

"One nice thing about Shanghai," Savoy reminded him, "is that while we're getting on to midnight here our upside-down Oriental brothers are calling it daytime!"

"And that's the first real break I've had on this case yet!" cried Gateway and hung up.

4

"When a gum-chewing cigar-stand girl has the impression of a man that was a 'foreign-looking guy,'" remarked Savoy when he had detailed Gateway's discovery to Laufer-Hirth. "she sets one pondering, eh, old boy?"

"It couldn't have been the man found in the taxi," Laufer-Hirth reminded him. "Nothing foreign about him from Gateway's description."

Savoy stared frowningly at him.

"Yet it's odd, isn't it, that some one left the bag down there just a few hours before this thing happened? Some one who rather obviously appears to have just arrived from Shanghai—and who hurried to telephone somebody, and then got such news that he left his bag where it was and hot-footed wherever it was

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that he did hot-foot—and never came back!—Look here, Amos, what do you suppose it was about this chap that made the girl think him foreign?"

"His speech, I suppose——"

"But Gateway said that she said foreign-*looking*."

Just then the telephone bell sounded again and Savoy, being nearest the instrument, took it up.

"Oh, hello!" he said briskly when he had heard the voice asking for Mr. Savoy, and Laufer-Hirth thought that he seemed glad and perhaps relieved. "Is that you, Miss Landreth?"

"With a tale to tell!" announced Janice's voice gaily. She, thought Savoy, like Gateway before her, was excited. "I've had all kinds of luck with my first assignment! I've found the mysterious lady who lost the cloak—though really she's not in the least mysterious as we supposed——"

"Did we suppose that?" he asked banteringly.

"Why, of course we did! One doesn't say, 'No questions asked' if the article referred to is merely *lost*, does one?"

"Oh!" said Savoy, and Janice laughed in her gay fashion and ran on hurriedly:

"But the cloak! A cloak really symbolizes mystery, doesn't it? I'll tell you all about it when I see you——"

"I don't like to wait until tomorrow. Couldn't you——"

"But it's really just the shank of the evening, you know. Only the witching hour—and I'm going to see you at a midnight supper! You're very especially invited; yes, Mr. Laufer-Hirth, too. And— Isn't it curious?—your friend Mr. Gateway!"

"What's all this?" demanded a perplexed Savoy.

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"Look here, Janice Landreth, if I could think of you as a drinking woman——"

"Never so sober!" cried Janice. "Surely you and Mr. Laufer-Hirth haven't gone to bed, have you? On such a night! Well, even if you have you'll have to jump into your clothes and come right down."

"Down?"

"Down Nob Hill and into the heart of Chinatown," Janice told him. "That's where I am this very minute, and that's where you and Mr. Laufer-Hirth and Mr. Gateway, if he'll come, are to join us at supper.—By the way, the morning papers are already on the street, and Phil Stearns did himself proud in the story he wrote about you and Detective Gateway getting together to make history in the ancient pastime of sleuthing."

"What on earth are you doing in Chinatown?" demanded Savoy, and Laufer-Hirth at his elbow muttered, "Chinatown! Good Lord!"

"Following the Trail of the Cloak!" said Janice, making the proper mystery of her tone. "It led me here and, incidentally, it brought the supper invitation—from a perfect stranger! Oh, my dear man, I'm sure your new assignments for little Janice are going to be life-savers. But are you coming? Don't say no. Please come!"

"This stranger?" he demurred. "Why should he be asking us to supper? And what's it all about?"

"To get the complete answer you'll have to come! I'll give you twenty minutes, no more. Mr. Laufer-Hirth will know the place: It's Chu Yung's. Everybody knows Chu Yung's. Also he'll know the name of our host though he does not happen to know him personally: Tell him the gentleman who is giving the little

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after-theatre party is Mr. Paradene. Just say, 'Sylvester Paradene' to him—and make him come!"

"Chu Yung's," Savoy repeated. "Sylvester Paradene?"

"What!" roared Laufer-Hirth and clutched him by the arm. "Sylvester Paradene!"

"Coming right along," Savoy promised Janice. "The name seems to register with Amos. Yes, I'll make him come."

"That's nice. Mr. Paradene wanted particularly to meet him. He's going to ask his opinion about a queer ring, something he picked up recently in the Orient. He has only recently returned from Shanghai and——"

"Returned from *where?*" Savoy cut in sharply.

"From Shanghai. But that isn't the important thing. The question is, shall I assure Mr. Paradene that you'll bring the others with you? We're giving the poor man none too much time for table arrangements, are we? By the way, it isn't necessary to dress formally; some of the guests won't be—I'm not, you know and——"

"Positively you can depend on Amos and me! As for Gateway, if I can get him on the phone and whisper a certain word into his ear, you can count on him also as on the surest thing you know."

"All's right with the world!" laughed Janice and hung up.

5

Laufer-Hirth, having emitted the one roar when he heard Sylvester Paradene's name, contained himself until he had listened to all that Savoy had to tell him, when he exploded the second time. To make himself clear he used words unbefitting a gentleman.

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"Whew!" was Savoy's sole comment. For though he had known Amos Laufer-Hirth intimately for many a year he had never heard him speak like this before.

Laufer-Hirth, somewhat quieter yet rumbling like a volcano ready to burst again into flame and hot lava at any moment, exclaimed,

"Come ahead, man! Not that I thought I'd ever put my feet under the same table with that man, not that even yet I'm at all sure I'll do any such thing, but because—Good God, Paul! That little girl in Chinatown and with a man like Paradene!" He started to the door in a shambling trot. "I'll be dressed in five minutes!"

"This oddly stirring Paradene is recently back from Shanghai," Savoy called after him.

"It would be all the better for the world if he'd been the man in the taxi," the jeweller paused to growl back at him. "I remember reading a Rider Haggard story wherein there was a man called 'The Thing That Never Should Have Been Born!' That's Sylvester Paradene!"

He hurried away to his room, his flamboyant dressing-gown flapping about his legs, his big pipe carried like a battle-ax.

Savoy put in a telephone call for Gateway.

6

The two friends walked the short distance, going steeply down Nob Hill and to Chu Yung's place in Chinatown. Street lights were but wan spots murkily glowing through the heavy white fog, and darkened buildings were quite blotted out or at best revealed themselves only vaguely like architectural ghosts harkening for the stroke of midnight to be off to their own

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pale limbo. Few figures were astir, and those few had a trick of looming up suddenly and unexpectedly and of fading away into nothingness. Footsteps sounded hollowly, swift footsteps, slinking, furtive footsteps, shuffling footsteps. On the outer fringe of the Oriental quarter queer spicy smells baffled their nostrils; aromatic, fishy, foreign smells. Somewhere a gong sounded; a pagoda-like building seemed to be encroaching upon a narrow sidewalk; lights of a sudden were mellower and though no less veiled, brighter. Scuffling feet came up out of a dark alley under an overhang of Eastern architecture. Here and there men in Chinese pantaloons and jackets and tasselled tight caps with shiny black nobs stood in doorways, their hands lost in the mystery of their wide sleeves. In the heart of the district a low babel of sing-song voices rose as a reminder that, though the residential parts of town might be going to sleep, here there was as much wakefulness as slumber. At a distance a street-car clanged; a limousine with a liveried chauffeur rolled slowly by and seemed oddly far from home; from an open door the clack of dominoes and rattle of an abacus rose above the low jargoning voices.

"Chu Yung's is what you please," explained Laufer-Hirth. "Chu Yung himself is a friend of mine—a friend, that is," he amended hastily, "as far as such a thing can be between products of East and West. I've known him twenty years and like him. He is an importer among other things, and I've had a few small deals with him, finding him scrupulously honest as is a racial characteristic. The Chu Yung building is one of the show-places of Chinatown. Yes, there's a restaurant but also there are other things: A shop of rare and beautiful Oriental importations; rooms each of which

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