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DEAD END STREET

by

LEE THAYER

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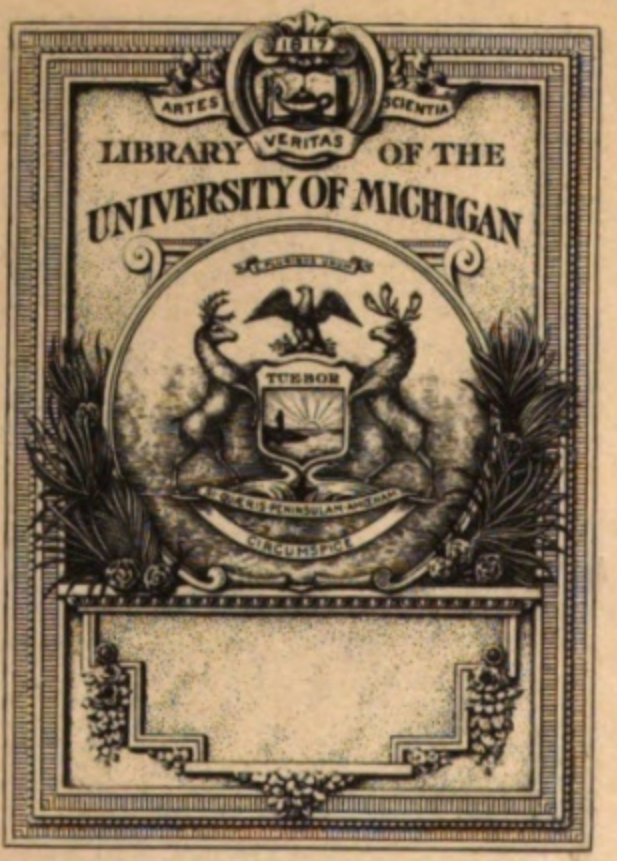

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DEAD END STREET

By Lee Thayer

Albert Madison picked up a queer valet in an even more peculiar way. But the haunted look on his face remained. Sally Howard's inordinate curiosity seemed harmless enough but it was to lead to something . . . Then Patrolman Duffy was found murdered by a knife, his body having been dragged some distance and dumped into Spuyten Duyvil Creek.

It was the cold-bloodedness of this crime and the total absence of clues that first aroused the suspicions of Peter Clancy. It was too slick, too harmless. The only conclusion was that poor Michael Duffy was "a pawn—that had to be taken—off the board."

Dead End Street is a thriller of the first water. In it the reader will find a twisting, complex plot, moving with lightning speed and gathering suspense as the astonishing dénouement draws closer . . . Peter Clancy is at his quick-witted best and the other characters, queer assortment though they be, are not likely to be soon forgotten.

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DEAD END STREET
NO OUTLET

by

LEE THAYER

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
NEW YORK 1936

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TO

JIMMIE HALL

WITH

MY LOVE

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C. F. BUTLER
BEQUEST
1/13/60

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CHAPTER I

THE BEACH AT WAIKIKI

"Hold up, sir! Steady now. Don't try to grab or I'll have to give you a sock in the— Oky-doke. That's better. Just relax and leave it to me. I swum the English Channel once. Whu-f-f—. Could a swum back again—whu—if they'd a let me. Turn over on your back. Let's float a minute. Then I'll tow you in. What's the matter? Cramp?"

"I—don't know." A gasp between the words. Arthur Madison's half submerged face was white. "It's gone now, though. I thought for a minute—"

"That you was going instead. Sure. I seen you was in trouble. The life-saver watches the pretty girls. But he's onto us now. Here he comes."

"Want any help?" A deeply tanned bronze young god came splashing alongside through the brilliant sun-lit water.

"If this here young gent had waited for you to breeze out there wouldn't have been nothing to do because it woulda been all done. See? He's OK now. You can go back to your knitting."

The life-guard grinned. "Don't mind if I join the party do you? You're pretty far out. And with your clothes on—"

"Don't you worry about me, buddy. I swum the East River from Blackwell's— Never mind. You

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wouldn't know. But there's some current just below Hell Gate, you can take it from—whu-u!" The man blew out a mouthful of sea water and turned his red face toward the boy whose head rested on his rescuer's outstretched arm. "If you're ready, sir, maybe we'd better be getting in. It might come on to rain and my mother never did like for me to get my feet wet."

Some minutes later, rescuer and rescued lay side by side on the warm sands beyond the laced palm shadows. For a time neither spoke. Then the boy said, somewhat abruptly, "What's your name?"

"My name, sir?" The man sat up. "My name is John. Yes, sir. John. And it might a been the Baptist for all of me. I could take that job for a life-work and never turn a hair."

The boy smiled faintly. "John—what?" he asked.

"Postlethwait." The man glanced sidewise out of merry little shifting eyes. "You'd hardly believe anyone could get stuck with a moniker like that but so it is. John Postlethwait, at your service. But the folks that it don't hurt their eyes to look at me calls me 'John.' Better lie still a little longer, sir. This hot sand is good for what ails you."

"Yes." The young man had raised himself on his elbow. "But how about you? You don't want to wait for those trousers to dry on you. You'd be sure to catch cold. Better go along and change. I'm all right now. By the way—" He hesitated.

"Yes, sir."

"Why do you keep calling me 'sir'?" Arthur Madison asked curiously.

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"Old John the baptizer can tell class when he sees it, even in nothing but a pair of trunks." The man's eye twinkled like a bit of bottle-glass in malleable red clay. "The minute I saw you, sir, I says to myself, 'John, old pal, there's a young gent as is a gent from back of beyond, and no kiddin'.' You see I've travelled in high society a good deal and I know what's what. I'm out of a job just now, but I've valeted some of the best dressers on Broadway, Park Avenue and points east. I'd be back in the old town now if my boss hadn't died on me out in China and left me stranded-like."

"What brought you so far west—or east? I don't know which this would be from your standpoint." Young Madison's glance had lost much of its listlessness.

"Well," said Postlethwait a trifle hesitant, "it was just this and that as you might say. One bit of hard luck after another. First off it was a mail-order job I got stung on, and stung a plenty. Never again, swelp me—" He held up his right hand in an easy, fluent gesture. "Face to face and no phony business is my motto, from now on, see? I got too trusting a nature, sir, and that's a fact. Think I'm a wise guy, and a babe in arms could hand me a lemon, if you get what I mean."

Arthur looked somewhat bewildered. "I think I follow you. It seems obvious that it's best to stick to one's own line, and a valet could hardly be expected to know much about regular commercial forms of enterprise."

"You've said it, sir." Postlethwait blinked. "And if I ever find out who the guy was that— But that's

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enough about me." He broke off suddenly and turning modestly aside, jumped to his feet with a flirt of sand to windward. Though his shirt and trousers clung wetly to him in shapeless wrinkles, oddly enough "dapper" was the word that came to Arthur's mind as he looked up into the other's sun-reddened face. Perhaps it was because Postlethwait had mastered the trick of going into the water and coming up with his hair parted in the middle. It was a smooth and glistening brown and by its neatness somehow added a final touch of comedy to the round face and figure below.

"Well, well, it's good to see you smile, sir." The man had already put on the shoes that he had left on the beach. Now he stooped to pick up a coat and somewhat damaged panama. "You'll be right as rain in a brace of shakes, I hope. Would you like I should look up your family or somebody? Maybe it'd be just as well—"

"I'm travelling—alone." A shadow crossed the young man's face. "I have no family—now—nearer than New York."

"Well, well, is that so?" Postlethwait spoke with an air of great surprise. He had thrust one wet arm into his coat sleeve. Now he drew it out again, folded the coat carefully and hung it over his arm. "In that case —would you maybe like to have me come along to the bath house with you, sir, and help you to dress? I've got no dates, myself, and if I could be of assistance . . . You still don't look like a heavyweight champ to me."

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"I— Why yes. I'll be glad to have you. I was wondering how I could—" A faint color came into the boy's cheeks as Postlethwait helped him to his feet and keeping hold of his arm led him along the beach.

"You're awfully good to take so much trouble," young Madison went on after a minute in a low voice. "I guess you saved my life just now and—"

"Oh, forget it, sir. Nothing to it! It was only just luck that I happened to have my eye on you at the minute. This way, sir."

"But I thought my bath house was over there." The boy stopped, confused, and pointed toward the left.

"No, sir. It's down that far end. Right by that bunch of palms."

"Why—what makes you think—"

"The number's on the key on the rubber ring around your neck," Postlethwait explained glibly. He must have had remarkable eyes for the number incised on the disc that dangled from the key was small and worn down with handling. "Look for yourself, sir. The hundreds are all over this side of the entrance."

"I must have been remembering yesterday," muttered Arthur. "I was bathing here yesterday afternoon."

"Yes, sir. I know. I mean I know just how easy it is to get balled up like that. Here you are, sir. If you'll give me the key. Thank you, sir."

With a swift and subtle change of manner, John Postlethwait now became the complete valet. Except that he talked too much and that his language left a

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great deal to be desired his service might have been found acceptable in quite exclusive circles. Arthur Madison, just recovering from an illness, lonely and heartsick, was not inclined to be critical. He found John's tendency to exaggeration amusing rather than annoying; the picturesque speech with its flavorful Americanisms fell pleasantly on unaccustomed ears. The boy, just turned twenty, had followed his father's fortunes all over the eastern hemisphere but had not been in the States since he was three years old. At the time of his grandfather's death he was in school in Shanghai, and his father, Grantland Madison, had gone home alone. A flying trip. Father and son had never been long separated until—

How much of his own story he told that evening as he and his self-constituted attendant paced the beach, Arthur did not realize at the time. It was the moment of reaction from the silence of crushed and dulled senses. Returning, obedient to his dying father's behest, to the land of his fathers, the first stage of the long journey had been spent in illness and isolation. The ship's doctor had recommended that he break the voyage at Honolulu and Arthur had acquiesced with a rudderless indifference.

He had been in Hawaii three—no, four days now. The gaiety and beauty, the sparkle and fragrance was beginning to lift his mind and heart out of the dull agony of bereavement. His physical condition had improved, though the seizure in the water should have warned him to go slow. The sudden coming of his rescuer at that tense minute had released something in

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the boy's consciousness. A will toward life. An awakened interest in unseen to-morrows, the sequence of which had been so rudely threatened.

"You make a whole lot too much of it, sir," John Postlethwait expostulated as he moved, silent footed, in the sand beside his young companion.

The long tiger-stripe of palms across the moonlighted beach cast its spell of beauty upon the boy's sensitive mind. "You saved my life," he repeated softly. "For what it's worth."

"What a way to talk, sir. And you only just, as the books say, coming into man's estate. Not more than twenty-four or five are you?" The deference was not much over done; the guess at age was calculated to be on the right side. The boy had been under private observation for only a couple of days but so far John Postlethwait felt he could congratulate himself on having made the most of his opportunities.

"Do I seem as old as that?" Arthur straightened his slender shoulders. "As a matter of fact I'm not—quite —twenty-one. And as to the estate, I don't know yet what it will amount to, but my father—" He stopped abruptly.

Followed several minutes of silence, then Postlethwait said: "Mr. Arthur— D'you mind my calling you that, sir? After all, I'm old enough. See what I mean? And if you could talk about your trouble, sir, 'twould go a long way to ease it. I'm an orphan myself. Long time ago, but I can give a guess at the way you're feeling. You and your father was pals, I'm thinking."

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"The best." The boy's voice was steady now.

"You're doing just what he told you to do. Maybe you'll find your folks in New York are like what he was."

"They couldn't be. No one is. And besides my Aunt Henrietta is old. Ten years older than my father. I was too little to remember her and I never saw her husband. He's younger."

"Well, maybe you'll like him. Nothing against him is there?" Postlethwait had the insatiable curiosity of a somewhat volatile nature. Also he wanted to lengthen out this evening stroll. He had not yet entirely made up his mind how to act or what course would be likely to prove most advisable and profitable.

"Oh no. Quite the contrary." The boy answered the question without hesitation. "But Uncle Leon isn't likely to be much of a companion for me, you know. He must be forty at least, I should think, and besides he's had some kind of a bad illness; sort of a stroke or something. Isn't able to go about much. But he must be clever and a wonderful manager. Dad always said the estate had been handled far better than he could have done it even if he'd been willing to stay in America. There's always been plenty of money from home whenever we needed it, though that wasn't so often. My father was pretty extravagant, I guess, but he was a great engineer."

"And that pays, I'll bet." Postlethwait cast on his young companion a slanting glance. "You sure look like a million dollars to me. But then you're the type

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that makes any kind of clothes sit up and take notice."

"You know how to wear clothes yourself." There was a smile on the young face as Arthur glanced down at the neat figure beside him.

"Yes, sir. Thanks to you, Mr. Arthur. It was a lot too much for what I done, but I'm not denying I did need a new suit. The most of my wardrobe was stole as I told you, and being temporarily out of a job—" Postlethwait broke off abruptly. "I wouldn't go any farther if I was you, Mr. Arthur. Along down below here it's awful lonely and that wallet of yours might be a temptation to some guy that wasn't brought up proper. I haven't got a gat on me and I suppose you ain't heeled either."

"You mean armed?" Arthur spoke absently. It was obvious that other thoughts were holding the fore-front of his attention, and he added, somewhat precipitately, "I say—er—look here, Mr. Postlethwait! I don't know why I didn't realize . . . I mean, you know, if you are free—and—and want to go back to the States . . . You said you wanted to get back. Didn't you?"

They had stopped. A thickened growth of vegetation shut out the wide wash of moonlight. The boy might have been puzzled by the expression that slowly dawned upon the face of his erstwhile rescuer, had there been light enough to see.

After a minute Postlethwait said thickly, "Go back to New York? You mean that? All the way back to little old New York?"

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"Why not?" The boy spoke impulsively. "We like each other. Come now. We do, don't we—John?"

Postlethwait drew a long breath. Something heavy slid out of the hand he held behind him and dropped noiselessly on the sand. Softly he exhaled the air from his lungs and said: "Why sure, Mr. Arthur. Sure. You betcha!"

"Well then, hurray, you're on." The boyish voice was light and eager. "We'll travel together. And if you wouldn't mind . . . I'm used only to oriental—er—servants. You're sure you—"

"Wouldn't mind going as valet to a young gentleman of your—like you—Mr. Arthur!" The man's voice surely sounded odd. "It's what I— Only I thought— Holy Moses! I couldn't of expected nothing better if I'd dealt myself. I'll serve you faithful, sir. You can betcher life on that. New York. Once more!" Stepping back he trod heavily on a hard lump of leather and lead, and executing a few gay improvised dance steps, buried it deep beneath the shifting sands.

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CHAPTER II

506 WEST TWO-HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH STREET

TIME—tide—and the affairs of men. Time flowing like an endless river, day after day, week after week. Tide surging, irrevocably, from farthest shore to farthest shore. And the affairs of men—from continent to continent interwoven. Off-scourings of Seven Seas washed up among the native flowers of strange lands. How brought together? How preserved? And for what end?

A far cry from the golden sands of Hawaii to the mud-crusted docks that thrust long fingers out into the waters of New York harbor, yet the same moon governs the tides that whisper secretly among them. In the deep, man-made cañons of the city streets the moon seems far away, but the pull of her is felt in all the encircling waterways down to the narrow creek that makes Manhattan in truth an island. Who would deny that every tiniest drop of water rises and falls in obedience to law? Yet in the affairs of men . . .

"He's there again, Mother." The girl did not turn as the door of the tiny apartment opened behind her.

"Yes, honey?" The woman who had entered spoke in a low, absent tone.

The girl at the window did not seem to notice. "Oh, dear, he does look so lonely and ill. I wish—I do wish we could do something for him, Mumsie."

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"Don't be absurd, Sally. He probably has every care in the world. Those people must be very wealthy. You haven't forgotten what Duffy told you."

"Of course not, darling. But he's only a policeman. What can he know of the circumstances, really."

"Why he's lived up here since this top end of Manhattan was just rocks and goats, he says, outside of the big estates. He knows all the traditions, and what was torn down to make room for what, and all the rest." Mrs. Howard moved a little nearer the window but she kept one hand behind her.

"Well, Duffy may know a lot of old stories, but I noticed he couldn't tell us a thing about that poor boy except he thought he must be a nephew of Mrs. Ross. I wish we knew her, Mummie. At home we would have called on her or she on us if—"

"It's different in a big city, especially in the North, my pet, as you well know. And when our circumstances are so— Good gracious, Sally, what are you doing?"

"Just snooping, ducky." The girl turned a brilliant laughing face but did not lower the opera glass that she had pulled out from under a pillow. "No one can see if I keep a bit behind the curtain. I can't help it, dear, really. You know how that wonderful queer old mansion has fascinated me from the minute we discovered it, and now—"

"It is a strange old place," Mrs. Howard murmured, looking thoughtfully down. "As out of character as an eagle's nest with these rows of cheap apartments that have sprung up all around it. They seem as imperti-

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nent as your opera glasses, Sally."

"That funny-looking servant brought him out a tea tray a little while ago," Sally remarked imperturbably, "but he doesn't seem to be eating a thing. Poor dear."

"What did they give him?" On impulse Mrs. Howard took the glasses from her daughter who giggled appreciatively. "Oh, dear, Sally, he is a very fine looking boy—but so thin and—and—I wonder what is the matter with him."

"Oh, it's none of our business and he must have everything money can buy," said Sally airily. She slipped her arm around her mother's waist and they both stood looking down. Looking down—and across—with an odd, ever-recurrent wonder at this evidence of the incongruity of the swift city's restless growth.

Like a great ship left by some stupendous tide stranded upon a rock, the old mansion stood out against the sky at the very edge of the cliff that rises so boldly along the upper end of Manhattan Island. Below the house a small park of grass and rocks, shrubs and worn but stately trees, sloped steeply down and was walled in from the north and west by a long angle of tall new half-baked modernistic apartments from one of which the two women studied its intriguing outlines. Withdrawn it seemed, like an old woman conscious of the heaviness of age and of the lack of distinction inherent in finer forms. An unhappy architectural era had furnished it in expensive fashion with gables, turrets, wings and porches. A porte-cochère of imposing size. A summer house be-

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hind a wall.

"He always seems to prefer being out of doors no matter what kind of weather it is," remarked Sally, watching as well as she could from that distance the movements of the slim figure that paced up and down the path before the old vine-covered shelter. "It must be nearly two weeks since we saw him first. . . . I've found out what I think his name is, Mummie."

"Why, Sally, how could you?"

"If you're no more interested than your voice implies, ducky, you might give me the opera glasses."

"Yes, yes. Of course I want to know who the boy is and how you found out—"

"If Miss Milly doesn't soon find me an old lady who wants to be read to I'm thinking of being a detective, Mother. I feel I have a flair for the work. Perhaps it wouldn't occur to you that Mrs. Ross is prominent enough to be in the Social Register and that the same may be consulted at a branch library by even a very impecunious damsel such as I. This afternoon I discovered many of the dark secrets of the Madison family of which Mrs. Ross—née Henrietta Madison is one of the few remaining. It was rather clever of me I think to sleuth back through the Madisons and spot her brother, Grantland Madison and his son Arthur. It really wasn't so very smart because old Ethan Madison was evidently as socially prominent as his descendants. Since the Social Register doesn't seem to know of any others, and since our nice old Duffy says this must be a nephew of Mrs. Ross, I put two and two together and hazard the opinion that the charming young man

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that occupies your distinguished attention is called Arthur by his friends and family and Mr. Madison by the world at large. . . . Are you listening, beautiful?"

"Yes, yes, honey. It sounds quite reasonable. Did you stop in to see Milly Langham when you were out?"

"I did, darling, but nobody wants a secretary or companion or what have you yet apparently. She's fussy about getting something suitable for us you know and says we'll have to be patient. The season isn't far enough advanced. I hope something will turn up soon."

"Something will have to, Sally." Mrs. Howard dropped her pretense of looking through the glasses and faced her daughter with unhappy determination. "Our funds are getting dangerously low as you know —"

"But Uncle Henry—we ought to get a reply to our letter any day," Sally faltered, then said hurriedly but with entire conviction. "You have an answer, Mother. Let me see."

"No, darling. It isn't necessary."

"Better let me read it, dear. No use trying to sidestep." The girl drew the letter from her mother's reluctant hand and read it through twice. "He might at least have put it a little more decently." Her young voice was husky with disappointment. "It isn't our fault if the depression ruined him too—if it has!"

"Don't be bitter, honey. It does no good." Mrs. Howard folded up the letter very carefully and laid it in the desk drawer as if she were burying something.

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For the minute she was staggered. Since her brother had failed her she felt there was no one left to whom she had the right to turn.

Sally threw her strong young arms around her mother's neck. "Never mind, honey-lamb," she cried. "We'll manage somehow. The rent's paid till the first of October, thank goodness. That gives us two weeks more. We still have ten dollars left in the savings bank and we can stretch that until it cries for mercy. Food costs so little and even Hamburger steak, prepared by your fine Italian hand has an element of the divine." She broke off to kiss the smile that was dawning on her mother's face. "And in the meantime dear Miss Milly will be sure to find one or both of us a job. Something's bound to turn up, Mrs. Micawber. I feels it in my bones. And, since we're not likely to have callers, ducky, let's have onion soup for dinner. I saw some marvellous onions down Seaman Avenue, ten pounds for a quarter. Tamed and untamed they'll last us goodness only knows how long. Shall I go get 'em?"

"Great minds run in the same channel, honey." Mrs. Howard held her close for an instant. The contact seemed to bring her courage surging back into her heart. "I laid in a gorgeous supply this afternoon and I'll give you the kind of soup old Mammy Chaney used to make. You wait!"

As her mother disappeared through the door of the tiny kitchen, Sally turned back to the window and absently picked up the glasses that lay upon the couch.

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The boy whom she already called in her mind "Arthur Madison" was still pacing back and forth through the slanting shadows. Rich, lonely, ill. Inevitably she began to weave about him the prismatic gossamer web of romance. A prince in an enchanted castle. The glasses brought him very near as he turned and looked up. Of course he could not distinguish anything at that distance, but Sally drew still farther back in the shelter of the thin curtain. She felt suddenly a little cold. His eyes haunted her. Presently she moved forward, dropping the glasses on the couch.

He had paused and was still looking in her direction. The window was four stories up. One of many—many, she told herself—and yet—

With a sudden movement she pushed up the screen and leaned out. The sun had dropped behind the Palisades on the far side of the great hidden river. Night was stealing in. She could see his face, a pale oval, and his slim body scarcely discernible against the dark wall of the house beyond. For how long she did not know, Sally stood there looking down. Whether he saw her or not he, too, remained immovable.

At last a woman dressed all in white like a nurse, appeared around the corner of the house and took him in. The worn, reticent old park seemed strangely still. The noises of the great city, spread out on every hand, sounded faintly in this oddly remote spot, as if the well-nigh vanished wealth and aristocracy that once informed it had left about it an intangible wall, im-

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pervious to commonness and noise. Against the eastern sky the house loomed dark and ever darker, the few lights on the lower floor showed like eyeless sockets, but lapped in fascinating imaginings the girl in the window dreamed on.

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CHAPTER III

ST. PETER'S CEMETERY

An early October mist drifted sadly across serried ranks of headstones. Around an open grave a group of men in uniform stood, uncovered. It was the solemn moment when, dust to dust, the body of a comrade, dead on his humble field of honor, was lowered to its last resting place. A priest intoned the beautiful tragic words. Across the sad-faced mound of flowers sounded clear and sweet the silver notes of a bugle. Taps.

The priest resumed his biretta and drew the folds of his great cape in to cover his vestments. The men in blue, who had passed Michael Duffy in rank but not in courage and kindliness, turned away with heavy hearts.

"He was one of the best," said Captain of Detectives Kerrigan half aloud as he moved away beside his tall, red-headed companion. "One of the finest and no mistake. You knew him over-seas, you said, Pete? I was surprised to see you here."

"We're almost the only persons out of uniform," said Peter Clancy glancing about. "Poor Mike had no family?"

"No. Only the police force. That's Mike Duffy's family and somebody's going to find it out—someday—if I live," said Captain Kerrigan bitterly. "I came up

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in a taxi, but if you're driving back, Pete—"

"Sure. Wiggar's waiting right over there."

"I'm mighty glad of a chance of a talk with you, Jake," Clancy continued as his car started forward. "Maybe you can tell me something that wasn't in the papers." He looked back at the pale mound of flowers that seemed to deliquesce in the mist. "Not to be able to do anything for a fine man like that but just—I don't believe in funerals but there didn't seem to be anything else."

"No," said Kerrigan, grimly. "Not—yet."

For a few minutes there was silence in the swiftly moving automobile. The ears of the wooden-faced person at the wheel were strained backward as far as their neat emplacement would allow, but the face and eyes were "front." Not for the world would Wiggar have shown as much as an eye-flash of interest, but his master's concerns were as always faithfully his. And when Mr. Peter and Captain Kerrigan got together their conversation was usually both interesting and instructive.

It was not until they had turned from Eastern Boulevard into One-hundred and seventy-seventh Street and were moving swiftly westward that Peter Clancy broke the heavy silence.

"I read the account in the *Meteor*," he said, as if there had been no hiatus in the conversation. "Was that pretty straight?"

"As far as it went. Yes." Kerrigan roused himself from a maze of unprofitable thoughts. "Mike's body was found in the water. In that kind of a back-water

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of Spuyten Duyvil Creek you know, alongside Inwood Park."

"About where it joins Isham Park?"

"No. West of there. Where Inwood runs north and south, between the Hudson and that place where Spuyten Duyvil broadens out."

"Duffy's beat was along there somewhere?"

"Yes. But on his trick of night duty, like he was, he'd have had no call to go away over there—especially at that hour of the night."

"The paper said the body was found about ten in the morning. How do you know what time—"

Kerrigan interrupted with the impatience of painful concentration. "He was alive and OK at twelve o'clock when he put in his report from the box on Seaman Avenue and Two-hundred and fourteenth Street. How soon after that—we can't be sure, but the medical examiner thought it couldn't have been more than an hour or so."

"He was stabbed."

"Yes. Straight through the left breast and 'way into the heart. He must have gone—like that." Kerrigan snapped his strong blunt fingers.

"Any other marks of violence?"

"None—while he was alive."

"You're sure about that?"

"I saw Dr. Stroud myself. Duffy was stabbed from in front—and apparently he hadn't put up any fight. We go well heeled at night these days—and his gun was still in its holster." Kerrigan turned slowly and looked sternly into the plain clever face of his friend.

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"And what does the noted private investigator, Mr. Peter Clancy, make of that?"

Peter returned the look. "He's just smart enough to get the same answer as the best detective on the police force. There's only one conclusion to be drawn there, Jake, I should think."

"Yeah? And what is that? See if I agree."

"Duffy knew the man that killed him. Had no suspicions. Maybe thought he was a friend."

"A friend." Kerrigan nodded. "But strolling around in that out of the way part of the city. After midnight. . . . What kind of a friend would that be?"

"Some crook on parole—that Duffy was interested in—caught out on first?"

Kerrigan's grizzled head moved slowly sidewise on his sturdy neck. "Mike Duffy was a patrolman, Pete, and not anything more—that is professionally. A fine soldier, see what I mean, but not capable of a thought beyond the ranks. Swell fellow for looking out for kids at crossings—directing traffic—seeing that the boys and girls in the parks came out before—too late. . . . Except for when he was over-seas at the time of the war he's spent all his years of service on that kind of jobs. There's nobody on the force, I'd say, that knew as little about gangsters and such as Mike Duffy. They've sort of come up since his time and he wasn't the kind to take on something new."

"You're right about that, of course, Jake. But still—" Peter spoke slowly—"it's possible that he had befriended somebody . . . not a professional criminal . . . some kid, perhaps—had done something

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desperate—and was sure Mike would find out. . . ."

"That sounds pretty near it to me, Pete. Only—It wasn't in any of the papers, but I'm sure Mike's body was dragged some little distance before he was dumped into the water."

"It was?" Peter spoke quickly. "How do you know that?"

"Well, to begin with, there aren't so many places along there where anyone would be likely to be walking close to the river. There's a lot of made land in that section, you know. Then there's the playground. And Isham and Inwood Parks. The roads and paths aren't right on the water. Near, but not right close."

"Yes," said Peter thoughtfully. "I've been over that locality. Quite lately. I see what you mean."

"Then, too," Kerrigan went on quickly, "his uniform was rubbed—what they call abraided—on the shoulders specially. Not from ordinary wear. Duffy was a smart officer. Always neat as a nursemaid, and proud of his looks. The body certainly had been dragged. Not so awfully far. But he was a tall, heavy man. No kid could have moved it—even for a short distance. Of course there might have been more than one person in it."

"If there'd been even as many as two wouldn't they have carried him?" Peter asked sharply. "It would be much quicker. . . . And a stabbing. . . . No. . . . I hardly see more than one man in that picture. . . . Someone tall enough to strike a direct blow—and strong enough to drive a knife clean through a man's heart."

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"But why, why, *why*?" insisted Kerrigan. "Michael Duffy couldn't have had an enemy in the world."

"But he did have many friends. Probably many acquaintances that you and I would never guess at. What do the closest of us know of each other's private lives? You and I have been associated on how many cases, Jake? And yet except that you're a widower and I'm a bachelor what do you really know of me—or I of you—outside the limits of our professions?"

"That's right," Kerrigan agreed heavily. "You and I sure do hit up with a different social set. You and your valet! Can you imagine me with a man to boss me around the way Wiggar does?" He raised his voice but the man at the wheel showed not the most remote reaction to the mention of his name.

"He does browbeat me," said Peter mournfully. "But look at me and say if the results aren't worth it."

"Humph," growled Kerrigan. "All the doors of Park Avenue would fly open at your approach all by themselves, Pete, you're that perfect. Kind of wasted in the Bronx though, even at a funeral, don't you think?"

"Well, I don't know, Jake," Peter responded with a grave half-smile. "All circles of society, all the queer sections of this old town we're sliding through, have many things in common. Foreign, native, Jew, Catholic—in every district and in every class—a common respect for courage and faithfulness. Different ways of trying to show it I grant you, but can you honestly say you don't see the same thing in Fifth Avenue and Mulberry Bend?"

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"You mean traffic-lights?" growled Kerrigan with a grim chuckle as they came to a sudden halt in response to the overhead flash of red. "They're the same, I grant you. And the law's the same, too. But, God! Pete, how're we going to enforce it when things happen like this? An officer—a clean guy like Michael Duffy—going his ways in the pursuance of his duty—bumped off—stabbed—to his face, as you might say! Where's the sense to it?"

"He—interfered—with somebody . . ." said Peter slowly.

"But who? Why? How?" Kerrigan pounded his broad knee. "What is there to go in a perfectly clueless job like this? After the heavy rain early that morning, any footprints anywhere along the edge of Spuyten Duyvil would have been washed out—supposing they had been there. The tide plays tricks through that narrow channel as you know, coming both ways like it does; in from the Hudson and up from the Harlem—washing either way—back and forth. Even if we knew the exact time the body went into the water we couldn't say for certain whether it was dropped east, west, north or south of the point where it was found. If I had a map I'd show you what I mean."

Peter's quick upward glance at the little mirror above the windshield caught one pale eye alertly regardant. An instant later they were held up by cross traffic. Wiggar leaned swiftly sidewise, plucked a folded map from the pocket on the opposite door, turned with a murmured "Pardon, Mr. Peter. Thank you, sir," and had the car in motion again as the traffic

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officer blew his whistle.

"Service, and then some," Kerrigan commented with a lifted eyebrow. "What kind of a map is this, Pete? Something special?"

"Something specially good," Peter replied absently. "Couldn't get what I wanted from an ordinary road map. Let's see."

Kerrigan leaned nearer. Though the car ran smoothly on it was not too easy to see the intricate network of lines and legends. "Humph. The whole Metropolitan area. Long Island, too and the Sound. . . . Hum-m-m— Say, Pete," he broke off curiously, "what are these little red dots you've put along the Connecticut shore and the north shore of Long Island . . . and these others up the river—as far as Poughkeepsie? What do they mean?"

"Just a game Wiggar and I've been playing. Maybe I'll tell you about it some day."

"A game, Pete?" Something in his friend's tone made Kerrigan look up curiously. "What kind of a game?"

"Button, button, who's got the button," Peter answered, but there was no smile on his clever intent face. "Some day I'll find out who it was that got that button. Nearly two years ago. A case I failed on, Jake—that is, up to date I've lost out—completely."

"In the bright Lexington Avenue of youth," Kerrigan wagged an admonitory finger, "there's no such word as fail, Mr. Clancy. And I don't seem to smell it on you—as yet. Sooner or later the Mountie gets his man. You've not given up this button—whatever said

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button may be."

"No," said Peter, gloomily. "Any day. He can't go on forever. Some day he'll make a slip—and then . . . Let's forget it for the time being, Jake. . . ." He pushed the map over a little way. "Here's Inwood Hill Park—and Isham. Where was it that—"

"Look." Kerrigan indicated with his finger. "Here's the Hudson, running north and south. Here's where Spuyten Duyvil and the Harlem do their bits to make Manhattan a right little, tight little island. Just where they break through into the Hudson we have that part of Inwood running north and south like I spoke about. In here's the wide part of Spuyten Duyvil. See? Well, just at the south-east corner, as you might say, there's a few pleasure-craft, launches and such, tied up. On the shore beyond, maybe an eighth of a mile toward the west—about in here . . . that's where a young fellow in a rowboat found poor Mike's body."

"Chap's name was—Tracy—if I remember." Peter had been following Kerrigan's exposition with keen concentration.

"Yes. Tom Tracy."

"Does he know anything?"

"Not anything at all and hardly that. A half-wit—or maybe not more than a quarter. Say a nit-wit. That's nearer. But perfectly harmless. Everybody around there knows him."

"Hum-m-m?" said Peter with an upward inflection.

"Yes. I know." Kerrigan replied to the implication of the tone. "Any abnormal person is a natural ob-

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