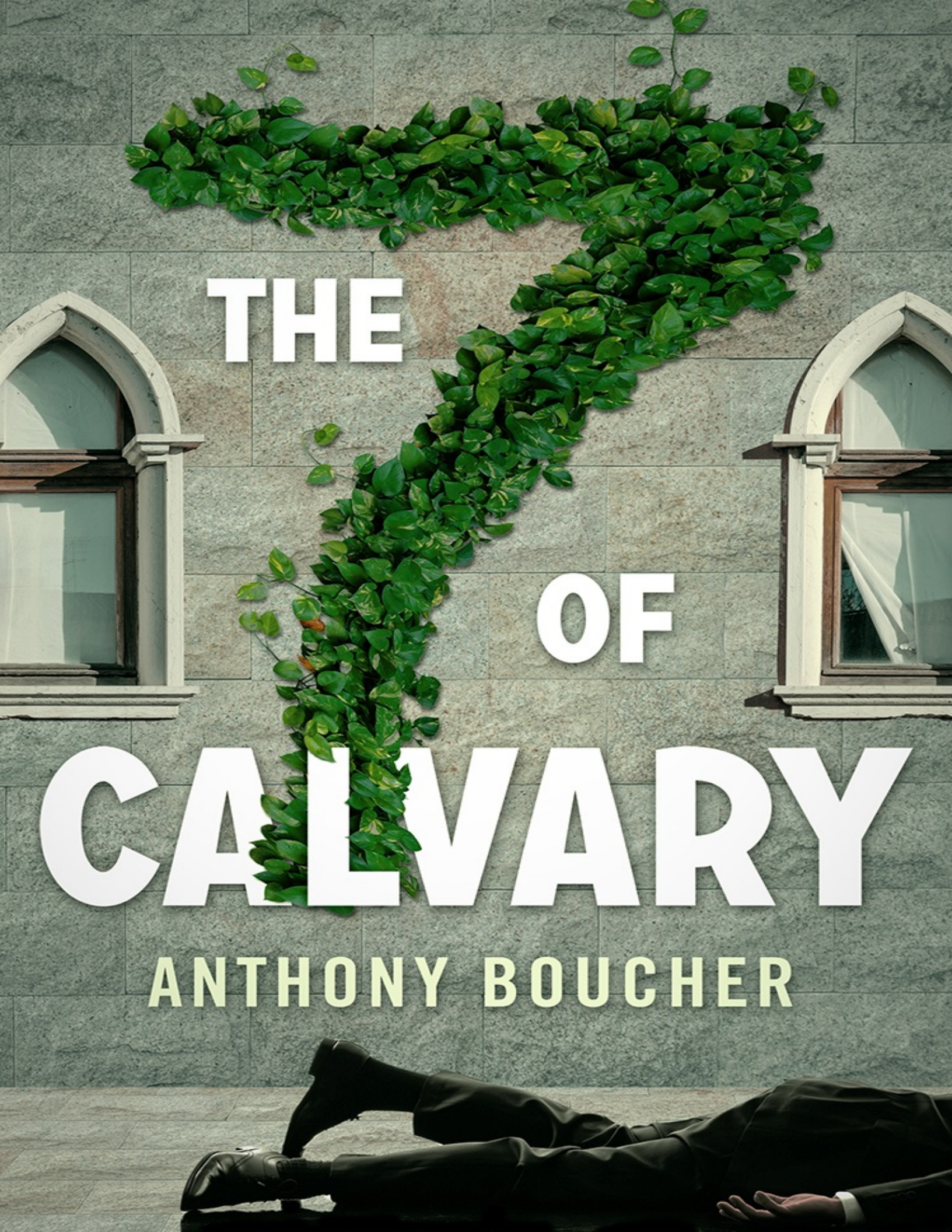

THE
OF
CALVARY
ANTHONY BOUCHER



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The Seven of Calvary

Anthony Boucher



Dedicated
to
DR. ASHWIN

The characters, institutions, and action of this novel are completely fictional, and have no reference to actual people or events—with one exception. That one is Dr. Ashwin, who is accurately reproduced from reality, and whose name in this book is a Sanskrit translation of his own.

ANTHONY BOUCHER

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About the Author

The People Involved

I. Students at the University of California
   A. Residents of International House
      * MARTIN LAMB, *research fellow in German*
      * ALEX BRUCE, *research fellow in chemistry*
      * KURT ROSS, *a Swiss*
        PAUL BORITSIN, *a White Russian*
        RICHARD WORTHING, *a Canadian*
        REMIGIO MORALES, *a Bolivian*
      * MONA, *his sister*
      * GUADALUPE SANCHEZ (LUPE), *a Mexican*
   B. Other students
      * CYNTHIA WOOD, *Bruce's fiancée*
        MARY ROBERTS
        CHUCK WITHERS

II. Faculty members of the University of California
      * JOHN ASHWIN, PH.D., *professor of Sanskrit*
      * PAUL LENNOX, M.A., *instructor in history*
      * IVAN LESHIN, PH.D., *exchange professor of Slavic history*
      * TATYANA (TANYA), *his wife*
      * JOSEPH GRISWOLD, PH.D., *professor of Spanish*
        LAWRENCE DREXEL, *director of the Little Theatre*

III. Others
      * SERGEANT CUTTING, *of the Berkeley police*
        DAVIS, *a policeman*
        WARREN BLAKELY, *head of International House*
        MORRIS, *a hospitable philologist*
        DR. EVANS, *of the Memorial Hospital A young interne*

An elderly clerk at Zolotoy's ("Theatrical Accessories")

* HUGO SCHAEDEL, PH.D., *Kurt Ross's uncle and unofficial ambassador of the Swiss Republic*

* The reader who approaches a mystery novel as a puzzle and a challenge is cautioned that he need keep his eye only on those characters marked by an asterisk; the rest are merely necessary extras.—A. B.

Prelude

An admirable crab cocktail and two bottles of beer had, I confess, made me more than usually argumentative. I had reached the point of maintaining, for the sheer pleasure of argument, an untenable position quite contrary to my own belief.

"The Watson," I expounded, "is an outworn device. In the early days of detective fiction he was essential. The unaccustomed reader would never have seen what the detective was driving at without him; hence the need of Dupin's unnamed friend and of Watson himself. But now the reader of mystery stories is so inoculated, like Better-edge, with detective fever that he needs—as you might say, Martin—no 'stooge' to act as interpreter to the master mind."

Martin Lamb summoned his attention from the fishing-boats outside the window and from the Japanese children who seemed in imminent danger of plunging from the pier. "Logical," he commented. "But writers still use them."

"Do they?" I asked. "Roger Sheringham, Reggie Fortune, Lord Peter Wimsey—these almost too bright young men don't seem to find a Watson necessary. Philo Vance's Van Dine is a figurehead who never utters a word, a phantom first person, as every producer has realized in omitting him on the screen. Can you conceive of any Holmes novel filmed with Watson omitted? Dr. Thorndyke has so many Watsons that he may be said to have none. Dr. Fell, that magnificently bawdy toper—"

"You see, Tony," Martin interrupted, "I'm a trifle prejudiced on this question of Watsons. I was one myself once, and I flatter myself that I was damned indispensable."

"And when was this?" I asked the question reluctantly, fully expecting a more or less elaborate bit of leg-pulling.

Martin had taken out his pencil and was drawing something on the back of the menu. "When? Were you in Berkeley when Dr. Schaedel was killed?"

Schaedel … The name was familiar. I seemed to remember fragments of some complicated and unsolved mystery. "Something about Switzerland, wasn't it?" I finally answered. "And an ice pick?"

“Switzerland and an ice pick …” Martin smiled. “That combination makes about as much sense as the whole problem seemed to at first. And as it still seems to the Berkeley police … Have you ever heard of the Seven of Calvary?” he aked abruptly, handing me the menu.

I looked at the curious figure for several moments. A sort of Italic F over three rectangles. I shook my head. “Now I see,” I said. “In order to disprove my own argument I am now to play Watson to you. Well, tell the story.”

“First,” said Martin, “we will have some more beer and some more crab. We’d be idiots to eat only a single crab cocktail apiece in one of the few places in the world which serve whole crab instead of shredded. Then I’ll begin the story and continue it over dinner at—shall we say La Favorite?”

I agreed gladly. The mixed smell of fish, fishing-boats, and salt water had roused an appetite not easily satisfied. But an equally strong appetite had been stirred by Martin’s casual reference to his playing Watson. More details of the Schaedel case returned to my mind. There had been another murder—or was it two?—in Berkeley around the same time. As best I could remember, the cases had seemed linked, but no solution had ever been found.

The crab and the beer arrived. Martin took a large swig, lifted one perfect crab-leg out of its sauce, and sat regarding the end of his fork. “I scarcely know what is the logical beginning of the story,” he said. “We should start, I suppose, with the fons et origo mali, *as Ashwin might say. You know Ashwin, of course?”*

“I met him once.” And who does not know the translations from the Sanskrit of John Ashwin? The Panchatantra, *the dramas of Kalidasa, the racy* Ten Princes, *the sublime* Bhagavad Gita—*a library would be poor indeed which contained no Ashwin.*

“Good,” Martin went on. “But where should I begin? With the day that Ashwin first read a mystery novel? That would be logical enough. Or the day that Dr. Schaedel discovered the delights of an evening walk? Or the day that I began my translation of José Maria Fonseca? Or—most logical of all perhaps—the day that the noted Eastbay business man, Robert R. Wood, decided to change his religion?”

“Please, Martin,” I begged, “stop being mystifying and tell the story. Remember you’re the Watson, not the Master Mind.”

Martin finished his cocktail deliberately. “All right,” he said. “I’ll begin with myself on the day of the murder. That should allow me to bring in everything. And this I promise you—nothing irrelevant and everything relevant. This shall be

a model of fair play." He took another draught of beer and offered me his cigarette case. And as we began to add tobacco smoke to the fish-laden air, he commenced the story of the murder of Dr. Hugo Schaedel, which is also the story of Dr. John Ashwin, scholar, poet, translator, and detective.

CHAPTER I

Preliminaries to a Murder

“atha nalopākhyānam. brhadaçva uvāca.”

“‘Here begins the episode of Nala. Brihadashva speaks,’” Martin translated almost automatically. The warm spring air entering through the open windows of the classroom was quite enough to distract his attention from the *Mahabharata.*

Dr. Ashwin rose somewhat heavily from behind the desk and began to pace the room as he recited the opening shloka. His voice took on a booming richness which fitted equally well his imposing figure and the magnificent Sanskrit verse.

Martin was sincerely eager to keep his attention fixed upon his translation. As the sole student of first year Sanskrit in the entire university, he had a reputation to maintain. But his thoughts insisted on wandering. Rehearsal that afternoon. Could he possibly persuade Drexel to make Paul change his reading of the death speech? Just what were the rights of a translator against those of a director? And that evening the reception for Dr. Schaedel. Why the devil had he let himself be roped in on a reception committee? As if he didn’t have enough … “‘Thus speaking, the king released the swan,’” he translated.

“‘Thus having spoken,’” Ashwin amended.

When half an hour of this had passed, Ashwin laid the text on the table and sat down. “You did very well, Mr. Lamb,” he commented. “How do you like your first contact with Sanskrit narrative verse?”

“Very much indeed,” Martin admitted honestly. “It has a splendid roll.”

“In all literature,” said Ashwin, “I have found only three verse meters which I can read indefinitely without tiring: English blank verse, the Latin and Greek hexameter, and the Sanskrit shloka.” Like all of Ashwin’s frequent *ex cathedra* statements, this came forth with an impression of superpontifical infallibility. And in the same manner, without a pause, he asked, “Have you found any interesting mystery novels of late?”

Dr. Ashwin's perturbingly catholic tastes rarely failed to startle Martin slightly. He was quite apt to turn from a stringent critique of Virgil to extravagant praise of Ogden Nash, who, in his estimation, held first place among American poet's. The unpredictable jump from metrical technique to mystery novels took Martin a little aback. "Interesting, possibly," he answered, "but not good. An atrocious modern solution to *Edwin Drood,* in which the Princess Puffer turns out to be Jasper's mother."

"The Princess Puffer," Ashwin began, "is to me the only mystery in the unfinished novel. The main points of the plot are entirely too obvious, which is, of course, exactly why there is so much discussion about them."

"But if it is so obvious why has it been a literary crux for years?"

"As I said, *because* it is obvious. It is the blatantly obvious that defies this muddle-headed world, which chooses what is quite possibly so in preference to what is obviously truth. This 'quite possibly so' is rarely entirely wrong; it is simply confused. And truth can issue far more readily from error than from confusion. Moha rules the world." A bell rang at this pronouncement, and Ashwin rose. "Should you care to lunch with me, Mr. Lamb?" he asked.

Gratefully free now from academic responsibilities, they lit cigarettes as they walked out onto the vernal campus. Martin nodded to several friends as they passed, noting on the face of each the expression of slight surprise always caused by his companionship with Dr. Ashwin. They did make a curious pair. A difference of thirty years in age, an utter contrariety in upbringing and attitude, and certain striking divergences in taste were more than balanced by an essential similarity in the way their minds worked and a common devotion to beer and whiskey.

It was beer that was on Martin's mind now as they passed through Sather Gate onto Telegraph Avenue. Ashwin paused a moment and looked at the entrance to the campus. "When I first came to this University," he observed, "there was a frieze of naked athletes on that gate. Since they were not only naked but somewhat ithyphallic, the pure people of Berkeley demanded the removal of the frieze. But what most rejoiced me was this: Underneath this group of males, apparently rearing for action, was the inscription: ERECTED BY JANE K. SATHER."

Happily sated with a good lunch and good talk, Martin entered the history classroom. Fortunately there was a vacant seat next to Cynthia Wood, and he took it. Seats near Cynthia were usually at something of a premium.

“Hello, Martin,” she smiled.

“Hello,” he answered. “How’s Alex?”

“How should I know?” Her tone was sharp.

“Sorry. I just thought you might have seen him at lunch.”

“Well, I didn’t.”

Despite Cynthia’s abruptness, Martin relaxed in the stiff wooden chair and looked at her with pleasure. She was enough to relieve the tedium of any class. In earliest adolescence Cynthia had decided to become exotic, and she had succeeded almost without trying. The natural development of her body had produced a more exotic result than any effort could have managed. She used no make-up, and as a consequence her black lashes, her white cheeks, and her full red lips were far more striking than the best Max Factor effects. Her breasts were the only living ones which had ever reminded Martin of the half-pomegranates which grace the chests of every maiden (in the widest sense) in the Arabian Nights; he fully expected that her navel, by analogy, would hold an ounce of ointment. He had, in fact, once expressed that idea in an imitation of Arabic verse, which had fortunately been lost long since in his infinite mess of papers.

“Tell me, Cyn,” he asked abstractedly, “how on earth did you come to be taking this course? Slavic History’s an odd bit of knowledge for a rich girl who is going to justify her existence by teaching English.”

Cynthia shrugged her round shoulders. “I don’t know. I had a free elective, and I thought Dr. Leshin ought to be interesting.”

“Well, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” she admitted reluctantly, “but I’m funny. I’d sooner get my grades on a sheet of paper than a sheet of linen.”

Martin nodded sympathetically. Dr. Ivan Leshin, half Russian and half Czech, was an attractive man, and resolutely determined to use that attractiveness for all it was worth. His private coaching lessons, despite his charming young Russian wife, had already become a byword during his brief sojourn in Berkeley as Exchange Professor of Slavic History.

“But why the devil do you always ask me where Alex is?” Cynthia broke out abruptly.

“You’re generally with him for lunch. I don’t see what there is to make a scene about, Cyn.”

“And don’t call me Cyn.”

“It was Paul’s gag. I think he started it so that he could say a picture was

pretty as Cyn."

"I don't like Paul's gags. In fact," Cynthia added in unconscious paraphrase of Groucho Marx, "I don't like Paul."

Of course, Martin thought, as the entrance of Dr. Leshin cut off the conversation, it was easy enough not to like Paul Lennox. His superficial cynicism and methodical carelessness could put one off all too easily. And Martin had special reason for dislike at present; there was Paul's atrocious reading of his last line, to say nothing of the absurdly unnatural way in which he crumpled into death in the big strangulation scene. But Martin knew Paul rather better than most of his acquaintances, and found in him something strangely fascinating. He really seemed more apt to appeal to Cynthia than the pleasant and undistinguished chemist Alex Bruce to whom she was engaged. Or was it an actual engagement? It is so difficult to make absolutely accurate statements concerning campus romances.

And Martin's mind continued to wander on subjects from romance to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* while the professor from the University of Prague, Dr. Leshin, lectured on the defenestration of 1618. Tantalizing word, defenestration. It should mean something far more glamorous than throwing royal secretaries out of windows—and onto dunghills at that. Dr. Leshin's mind was also evidently wandering. His sharp black eyes betrayed far more interest in the evening's coaching lesson (and what does Mrs. Leshin do with her evenings Martin wondered) than in the afternoon's lecture.

Martin was relieved when the lecture was over. There was now an hour's breathing space in the midst of a painfully busy day. He selected a sunny spot of lawn and lay in idle luxury, thinking vaguely about people.

"I should have been a Brantôme," he murmured, "or at least a Winchell. I always manage to know more things about people's complications, and I never have any of my own. Cyn and Alex … the Leshins … Kurt and Lupe … Paul in lonely splendor.…" It was his prophetic soul that soliloquized as he thus grouped all the principal figures of the coming tragedy—all, that is, save one, and that one already marked for death.

He was half asleep when the Campanile struck three. With a minor mental curse, he rose and walked into the auditorium. The rehearsal was late in starting. The cast wandered about with the futile look peculiar to amateur actors wondering if they know their lines. Martin was sure that they did not.

Paul Lennox sat alone in the middle of the hall, trying to light a particularly

recalcitrant pipe. It was almost unprecedented that an instructor in history should take part in campus dramatics; but Martin, as translator of the play, had persuaded the director to hear Paul read. In the stirring blank verse into which Martin had rendered Fonseca's tirades, there appeared a new Paul Lennox—a sixteenth-century, cloak-and-sword figure. His dramatic training was slight (hence the lapses that so annoyed Martin), but his feeling for the character of Don Juan was amazing.

Martin strolled up to him as a glow at last appeared in the large pipe-bowl. "Hello," said Paul, looking up. "Drexel's late again."

"I'm just as glad. I wish the rehearsal were called off. I've got to dress for dinner tonight."

"What do you mean, 'dress'? Tails and things?"

"Not quite." Martin was thankful. "Just tuxedo. It's the private dinner for that Swiss deputy or whatever—you know, Kurt Ross's uncle."

"I'd heard there was some sort of a grand panjandrum coming to International House, but I didn't know it had anything to do with Kurt. Maybe that's why he's so worried."

"Kurt?"

"Yes. Goes around looking as though he were ready to take the last great step or something. What's uncle's name? Ross?"

"No, Schaedel, I think. Dr. Hugo Schaedel."

And that was the first time that Paul Lennox ever heard the name of the man whose face he was never to see but whose fate was so tightly linked with his own.

Martin's hopes had been dashed. The rehearsal was not called off. It started late and lasted far beyond its usual limits. As a result, he was delayed in getting back to International House and was forced to dress at a most uncomfortable rate of speed. He had just succeeded, after Houdinesque efforts, in getting the third tricky stud into his dress shirt when he was interrupted by a knock on his door.

"Who is it?" he called.

"Kurt," came the answer. "Are you not dressed?"

"Will be in a minute. Come in."

Paul was right, Martin reflected as Kurt Ross entered. Something was wrong. The tall blond young Swiss looked somewhat like the Spartan boy just as the fox reached the juiciest tidbits. Martin almost expected to see a vulpine head rear

itself from behind the black waistcoat, just about where the Phi Beta Kappa key dangled.

"Sit down. I'll be ready in a second. Cigarettes are there by the typewriter."

"Thanks." Kurt sat in the one comfortable chair and lit a cigarette. Its smoke seemed slightly to allay the fox pains.

"How's Lupe?" Martin asked casually as he adjusted his suspenders.

"All right. Why?" Kurt snapped out the answer with sudden viciousness as though the fox had just discovered a new and more sensitive line of attack.

Oh damn, thought Martin, why *can't* I ask a harmless question without being barked at? First Cyn, now Kurt.… "I just thought I'd ask. After all—"

"I said that she is all right, did I not?" In his annoyance Kurt's accent, usually barely perceptible, became thicker.

"That's good." Martin continued dressing in silence. He scarcely knew what to say after being rebuffed on such an obvious conversational opening. He hoped nothing was really the matter with Lupe Sanchez. International House was a curious place with its incredible assortment of nationalities, leavened by a few ordinary Americans such as Paul Lennox, Alex Bruce, or Martin himself. And if the founder's high ideals of promoting international good feeling were not always fully realized, at least the house produced some strange interracial romances. Kurt and Lupe, Swiss and Mexican, formed one of the oddest of these mixed couples and, to Martin's mind, one of the most charming. It would be a pity if anything had happened.

After a careful brushing, Martin slipped on his coat and looked in the mirror. He would do, he decided. Possibly not exactly a model of the well-dressed reception committee, but good enough. As he turned from the mirror, Kurt spoke. "Aren't you going to wear your Phi Beta Kappa key?"

"Hell, no. Mind handing me those cigarettes? Thanks. No; I'd rather not decorate my stomach with a blatant atrocity like that. If they were some decent size, maybe yes, but as it is …" He finished filling his cigarette case.

"It would be a mark of courtesy to our distinguished visitor."

"Put on swank for Uncle Hugo? Show him what a brilliant reception committee it is?"

"It is not because he is my uncle. It is simply as a token of—"

"All right." It was less trouble to wear the damned thing than to argue with Kurt. Martin slipped the key on his watch chain and prepared to go. As Kurt rose, there was a slight clink on the floor. Martin laughed. "Serves you right,

Kurt. You would lecture me on wearing one."

Kurt's internal agony allowed him a shamefaced smile. "It often falls off," he admitted. "I must have the ring fixed."

Martin experienced a sense of growing discomfort as they went down to the small dining room to welcome Dr. Schaedel. The other members of the reception committee were there already—a quiet and bespectacled young Chinese; a White Russian aristocrat, who had never quite got over his visit to the National Students' League because he had heard that he would find other Russians there; a swarthy Bolivian, who had seriously threatened the peace of International House when appointed to a committee containing two Paraguayans; a Canadian, who had at first been so often thought an American that he had developed an astounding B. B. C. manner of speech; and a young French Jew who kept glancing nervously at Kurt, who managed, quite unconsciously, to look far too Aryan for M. Bernstein's peace of mind.

Martin exchanged cigarettes with Boritsin, who had equipped himself with long thin ones fitted with mouthpieces. On such occasions International House expects its members to be as distinctively national as possible.

"You look uncomfortably formal, Mr. Lamb," the Russian aristocrat remarked.

Martin admitted that he was.

"For my part," said Boritsin, "I am glad that the dinner is formal. For were it not so, I should doubtless be expected to wear a Russian blouse, which I never did before coming to this International House. I assure you that it was with great difficulty that my mother the Princess succeeded in securing one for me."

"Yes," observed the Bolivian, who had joined them, "I remember when Lupe Sanchez and my sister sang for a Sunday night supper. They had to search through every costumer in San Francisco to find dresses characteristic enough to please the committee."

"By the way," Martin, asked, "how is Miss Sanchez?"

"Unwell, my sister tells me. She has retired early to her room. My sister is worried."

"Damn it, stop worrying." Kurt stood behind the Bolivian and looked down on him in anger. "She's all right, I tell you, Morales. That is, she will be. After tonight."

At that moment Mr. Blakely, head of International House, entered, followed by Dr. Schaedel. Martin observed the unofficial Swiss representative with curiosity. If his tour was, as Kurt had said, in the interests of world peace, no

more fitting person could have been chosen, so far as appearance went. Utterly unlike his young-Siegfried nephew, he resembled a quiet monk with no interests beyond his garden, his breviary, and the poor. He was of average height, but the mild beneficence which radiated from him gave you the curious impression that he was small. His features were sharp, but his kind expression softened them. He acknowledged Mr. Blakely's Rotarian introductions with a smile, but no words beyond a polite repetition of the name. There followed an awkward pause, as though both honored guest and reception committee expected the first words to come from the other, and then a general movement, at a gesture from Blakely, toward the table.

The dinner was competent but dull, and of course unrelieved by wine. Martin sat between Boritsin and Worthing, listening alternately to the Russian's plaints against the Soviet and the Canadian's violent bursts of Anglophilia. At that, he felt, he was better off than Dr. Schaedel, who maintained a polite smile through a lengthy discourse on international brotherhood as exemplified by the House. It was fairly obvious that Dr. Schaedel's understanding of English was none too good, which was, Martin thought, just as well.

At last the dessert was cleared away, and Martin settled down to whole-hearted enjoyment of coffee and a cigarette. Mr. Blakely rose and launched forth into a speech, for which his monologue to Dr. Schaedel had evidently been in the nature of a rehearsal, ending with a peroration which served to introduce "that worthy scholar and gentleman who has devoted his life to furthering that cause which is, we may safely say, the cause of prime importance to all the world and above all, perhaps, in these troublous times, to we of America," (Martin winced) "the cause of World Peace." (Here came a five-minute digression and recapitulation.) "Friends of International House, my words cannot do justice to this man. In fact, the less said about him the better." (Martin repressed a snort at this typical Blakely infelicity.) "Gentlemen, Dr. Hugo Schaedel."

Dr. Schaedel spoke in a soft voice and with a strongly marked accent. "Gentlemen," he said, "it is with great difficulty that I in this language speak. My nephew tells me that already among you one is who can for me interpret. *Herr Lamb, möchten Sie vielleicht übersetzen was ich auf Deutsch sage?"*

"Sehr gerne, Herr Doktor," Martin answered.

"Besten Dank, mein Freund. Also …" Dr. Schaedel paused a moment, and then began his impromptu speech, pausing frequently for Martin's translations.

It was a simple, direct talk, an appeal to mankind, as exemplified by these

representatives of divers races, to forget its evil nature and allow itself to be won by the good. Warming to his topic, he grew slightly mystical and referred to the Black and White powers which rule the world. The Black, he said, reward evil, but their rewards are evil; the White reward good with good rewards. Therefore we should abstain from Evil, if only that we may win the rewards of Good. “I know that this is bad Christianity,” he added, “but it is meant for bad Christians.”

There was silence when he had finished. Some inherent goodness in his thought and character had communicated itself to the group. Then Mr. Blakely thanked Dr. Schaedel, and the spell was broken.

As the reception committee filed out of the dining room, Kurt approached Martin. “It was very good of you to interpret for my uncle,” he said. “He has many difficulties with the language, and I myself felt unable this evening …”

“I was glad to,” Martin answered. “It’s the devil’s own language anyway, and doubtless spoken exclusively in the seventh circle of Hell. Please tell your uncle that I’d be very glad to be of help to him whenever I could.”

“Thanks, Martin. I will.” Kurt moved away. Martin saw him pluck Dr. Schaedel by the sleeve and detach him for a moment from Mr. Blakely. *“Darf ich einen Augenblick mit dir sprechen?”*[1] he heard Kurt ask.

“Später, Kurt. Sagen wir um halb zehn bei mir,”[2] was the Herr Doktor’s reply.

Whether Kurt repeated his offer of assistance to Dr. Schaedel in their appointed interview at nine-thirty, Martin never learned. Surely neither the Swiss emissary nor Martin himself could then have imagined what form that assistance would take.

Relieved of his committee costume and comfortable again in a dressing robe, Martin spent a quiet evening brooding over a tremendously complicated alibi. By ten-thirty he had reached the point where the detective remarks to his stooge, “All the facts are now in your hands. Let us see if you reach the same conclusions as I.” Such challenges always stimulated Martin. He laid the book aside, lit a cigarette, and leaned back in his chair to destroy the alibi.

Martin broke off his cogitations in annoyance. Why the devil did authors always suppose that a man who has been on the stage, even in amateur dramatics at Oxford, must *ipso facto* be able to wander about the streets in a completely convincing false character? From what he knew of actors, especially amateurs, and even more from what he knew of make-up, the whole proposition seemed preposterous.

“Come in,” Martin called in answer to a knock on the door.

The visitor was Paul Lennox, whose room was next to Martin’s. Pipe, slippers, and all, he seemed a model of scholarly placidity. No eye could have discerned in this quiet man the flamboyant Spanish gallant of the afternoon’s rehearsal. “I got some new discs yesterday from the record library in San Francisco,” he began. “I thought you might like to hear them.”

“Good,” said Martin, rising. “I’ve been trying to break down an excellent alibi, and I’m tired.”

“You’ve been what?”

“Breaking down a murderer’s alibi. You’ve no idea how complex they can be. What are your records?”

“An album by the Hugo Wolf Society. Kipnis and Rethberg singing.”

“Fine.”

So Martin spent a pleasant half-hour in Paul’s room listening to Wolf *Lieder* with interpolated conversation. The phonograph was an electric model which bulked up large in the small room; but the excellence of its tone apparently compensated Paul for the inconvenience. After the last record Paul remarked, “You know, Martin, that play of yours has set me off on an interesting track of research. I’ve decided to do a paper on *Possible Historical Originals of the Don Juan Legend.* It should do for publication, and that always helps one’s academic standing here.”

“Have you found any new material?” Martin asked.

“A suggestion or two that may build into something. I say—would you like to see my tentative outline? I think you’d find it interesting. It’s rather rough, but if you’ll give me fifteen minutes I’ll type it out for you.”

“You needn’t bother.”

“No bother at all. Unless of course you’re sleepy. I always find music stimulating; I could spend the rest of the night talking.”

“All right,” Martin agreed. “I’ll dig out some bourbon that I carefully hid away from the chambermaid, and we’ll have an all-night discussion on Don Juan.”

“It’s fairly early yet anyway.” Paul glanced at his clock. “Eleven-fifteen.”

“You’re slow,” said Martin. “I have eleven-twenty.”

“Damn. Are you sure? That clock is one of my special prides. Well anyhow, I’ll get this thing finished in about twenty minutes and bring it over.”

“And bring your glass, unless you don’t mind the bottle.”

Paul was truly industrious when once he became interested in the matter in hand. No sooner had Martin returned to his own room than he could hear the click of the typewriter and the ping of its bell.

He dug the Bourbon out from under a pile of shorts. Most of the chambermaids were very decent, but there was no use risking a report for violation of the rule against liquor. He poured himself a sizable drink and decided to finish *The Boat Train Murders.* A quarter of an hour later he set the book aside in disgust.

In rhythm to the still clicking typewriter, Martin poured himself another drink and sat down at the desk. He had just had a lovely idea for a parody on "Gunga Din," but before he could get beyond the first line, Paul rapped on the door.

"There!" he said as he entered. "I think I did that in very nearly record time." And he waved a sizable outline.

"Twenty minutes," Martin checked on his watch. "Not bad at all. Did you bring a glass?"

"Just hand me the bottle." Martin did so. "I need a drink after a job like that."

Martin also dispensed with a glass this time. After a healthy swig, he sat on the bed and lit a cigarette. "Now," he said, "let's have your theory."

"First a match, please. I forgot mine. Thanks.… Now," Paul expounded in puffs as he lit his pipe, "you realize that the first appearance in literature of Don Juan is in Tirso's *El Burlador de Sevilla*—that is, in the early seventeenth century." Martin nodded. "Now I have here—" He broke off as another knock came on the door.

"Come in," Martin called.

"I heard voices so I thought I'd drop in. Hello, Paul—" and Alex Bruce interrupted his speech of greeting to make a grab for the whiskey bottle which Paul, in rising, had knocked from the desk.

"Sorry, Martin," Paul apologized. "I'm getting clumsy. How are you, Alex?"

"Fine. What are you fellows discussing?"

"A pint of bourbon," Martin answered. "Join us?"

"Of course."

"How's Cynthia?" Paul asked.

From his previous experiences on that day, Martin was a little afraid of what the answer might be. But Alex smiled, wiped a drop of whiskey from his lip, and replied, "Fine, I guess. I haven't seen her today."

"She said you were going over this evening." Something in Paul's tone

puzzled Martin. There was a slight touch of inconsistent emotion. Jealousy? he thought vaguely. Is that perhaps why Cyn dislikes Paul—because he is too interested in her?

"Come to think of it, I did say I might drop in," Alex was saying, "but I was tired after working at the lab—How about another drink, Martin?"

The bottle went the rounds, and there was a moment's silence. Martin took a cigarette and passed one to Alex, who accepted. Paul leisurely relit his pipe. The silence was not the oppressive emptiness of uncongeniality; it was simply the quiet that can be enjoyed by three men blessed with whiskey and tobacco.

Martin indulged in his frequent habit of unspoken soliloquy as he looked about the room, rapidly filling with smoke. They made a curious trio—Paul, instructor in history, amateur cynic, and scorner of emotional entanglements; Alex, research worker in chemistry, essentially earnest, and quite openly in love with the exotic Cynthia; and Martin himself, graduate fellow in German with writing ambitions and dabbler in all things including emotions.

Alex broke the silence. "It's funny your asking me about Cynthia, Paul. I had an idea that there was something I should do tonight and—"

"Damn!" Martin exclaimed. "Somebody else at the door. I seem to be keeping open house tonight."

The new arrival was Kurt Ross, and a very different Kurt from the self-contained, if internally anguished, member of the reception committee. His tie was askew and his movements were jerky. Martin noticed inconsequentially that the Phi Bete key had evidently fallen off again and this time gone unnoticed. Kurt's eye wandered from Martin to the whiskey bottle. "I thought so," he muttered. "Do you mind, Martin?"

"Of course not."

"There," Kurt gasped after a long drag at the bottle. "I thought you'd have something like that. I needed it."

"What the devil's the matter with you?" Paul asked.

"Oh, hello, Paul. Nothing. Nothing. I was just a little nervous, that is all."

"It's the most melodramatic entrance I've seen in years. You look as though __"

"Oh, let him be, Paul," Alex put in soothingly. "Who cares why he was nervous? He was, and he's had a shot of bourbon, and he'll soon have another, and that's that."

Martin held up the bottle for a sorrowful examination. "I'm not so sure he will

have another.”

“Wait a minute,” Alex suggested. “I’ve got about half a pint. Be back in a minute.”

As Alex left, Martin handed the bottle to Kurt. “Here,” he said. “Kill it, Kurt.”

Kurt obeyed gratefully. “Thank you, Martin. You don’t know what you’ve done for me.”

“Don’t worry, Kurt,” Paul interposed. “He will know. You see, Martin reads mystery novels. He breaks down alibis. In short, he’s a dangerous person to have around where there are secrets.”

The hour that passed after Alex returned with his whiskey, the quantity of which he had under-estimated grossly, was a little vague when Martin tried to recall it the next morning. The chief memory was that of a glorious glow, in which Paul lost his dignity, Alex his earnestness, and Kurt his nerves. On such occasions there was very little for Martin to lose; instead he found somewhere what seemed at the time to be a singing voice, and joined in lustily on “Blow the Man Down” and “The Bastard King of England.”

Kurt, whose English vocabulary was limited to printable words, got a little lost, but sought revenge with a song in Swiss dialect which was, he assured them seriously, the bawdiest song ever invented. None of them understood a word of it, but they believed Kurt implicitly and found it colossally panicking. Then Paul, who had, as a sign of general laxity, abandoned his pipe for Martin’s cigarettes, gave them the story of Anthony Claire, who was a notable conjurer of surprising articles. All three others joined in on the lusty chorus until a banging on the wall and on the ceiling led Martin to suggest adjournment of the session.

He stumbled into bed, leaving his clothes on odd portions of furniture, and reviewed the day’s events in his mind. He finally came to the conclusion, which seemed at the time to be of some subtle importance, that it had been a Full Day.

It was not until the next morning that he learned that the day (Friday, April sixth, to be precise) had included among its many events the murder of Dr. Hugo Schaedel, at approximately eleven-thirty P. M.

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[1] “May I speak with you a moment?”

[2] “Later, Kurt. Shall we say at nine-thirty in my room.”

CHAPTER II

The Observations of Dr. Ashwin

SAVANT SLAIN WITH STILETTO

Berkeley Murder By Unknown Fiend

Mystery Killer Leaves Cryptic Warning

An unknown hand dealt death last night to a man who has given his life to fighting death. Dr. Hugo Schaedel, unofficial ambassador of the Swiss Republic, who was scheduled to give several public addresses in the Bay Region on the subject of World Peace, was found dead last night in front of a private residence at 27 Panoramic Way, Berkeley. He had been stabbed from behind by some instrument with a long thin blade which had pierced the heart. Death must have been almost instantaneous, police surgeons report.

The body was discovered by Miss Cynthia Wood of 27 Panoramic Way, graduate student at the University of California and daughter of Robert R. Wood, prominent Eastbay financier. Miss Wood states that a man unknown to her called at her house at 11:28 last night. She is able to give the exact time because the stranger asked the time and also how to find his way to International House. Immediately after he had left, Miss Wood heard a cry and rushed outside, accompanied by Miss Mary Roberts. On the sidewalk in front of her house she found the body of the man she had just spoken with.

Miss Roberts called Dr. H. D. Calvert and the police, but the man was already dead. Because of his question to Miss Wood, Sergeant Cutting requested Warren Blakely, head of International House, to inspect the body. Blakely identified it as that of Dr. Schaedel.

Although Miss Wood rushed from the house immediately upon hearing the cry, she did not see the mysterious assailant. There is no clue to his identity beyond a piece of paper left beside the corpse on which a symbol is written, the meaning of which has not yet been discovered. Sergeant Cutting reports that the police have several indications which will not as yet he made public. An arrest is expected shortly.

Martin read this surprising account over a very late breakfast in the House cafeteria. The shock served to dissipate completely his random fears lest some stern disciplinarian might have reported last night’s binge to the House authorities. When a large glass of tomato juice and several cups of black coffee

had cleared away the haze of his hangover, he lit a cigarette and reread the article carefully.

It was impossible nonsense. No one could want to kill that inoffensive and charming little man. “An arrest is expected shortly.” That was obviously padding, partly to maintain official reputation, partly, perhaps, to frighten the murderer into a false move. There seemed to be no doubt that it was murder. Stabbing from behind could scarcely be accident or suicide, nor yet self-defense—as though anyone should need to defend himself against Dr. Schaedel. It seemed necessarily to be cold-blooded murder. But why?

Martin turned to the second page of the newspaper. Here there were many photographs; one of the exterior of 27 Panoramic Way, a little house familiar to Martin, with the conventional X marking a spot on the sidewalk just to the left of the path leading to the porch; one of the “cryptic warning” (Martin could scarcely see the element of warning involved in leaving a note beside a corpse—unless—and he suddenly paused—it were as a warning to the next victim); and one of Cynthia registering horror at the discovery of the body. It was a good picture of Cyn. Martin played momentarily with the thought of a Hollywood executive picking up this San Francisco paper and instantly wiring Cynthia to come at once.

The warning, or whatever one chose to call it, attracted Martin’s attention again. It was drawn, apparently in pencil, on what looked like half of an ordinary sheet of typing paper. Despite the scientific leanings of the Berkeley police, that would not be easy to trace, unless there were fingerprints. And fingerprints would be useless save as corroboration, unless the murderer were a professional criminal, which seemed unlikely.

The figure itself was a strange one. It consisted of what looked like a curious sort of italic *F,* mounted upon three rectangles shaped like steps. The arrangement, for some reason, brought a cross to Martin’s mind, although he could not see the connection. The symbol fascinated him. It brought the final touch of melodrama to the nonsensical story-book murder of this good man. He stared at it intently:



“Ah, I see that you interest yourself in our local murder, Mr. Lamb,” Boritsin remarked as he seated himself at Martin’s table.

“Yes. I’m trying vainly to make any sort of sense out of it.”

The Russian removed his coffee from the tray and shoved the latter onto an empty table. “You think it makes no sense?” he asked, lighting a cigarette.

“None at all. You met Dr. Schaedel last night. You know his reputation. Why should he be killed?”

“In the first place, Mr. Lamb,” Boritsin replied, “you assume too much. You assume that he was as blameless as you—and I, too, I admit—thought him.” Having thus, for variety, uttered two sensible sentences, the aristocrat reverted to a more characteristic type of reasoning. “But in the second place, may one not see in his very blamelessness a sufficient motive for killing him?”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“He was preaching Peace, was he not? And most sincerely and effectively. Well?”

“Yes?”

“He came here from New York and he was going on to China and to Russia. Well?”

“Well what?”

Boritsin was enjoying himself. He settled back in his chair and blew an admirable smoke ring before he answered. “Who is behind the movement for World Peace?” he asked.

“I wish that I could answer, ‘Everyone.’ But certainly a great many forces, from Francis Lederer to the Society against War and Fascism.”

“Aha!” Boritsin gleamed. “There you have it. The Society against War and Fascism. That is a Communist organization. Now you see it all!”

“Do I?”

“It is a Soviet plot. These Communists, they spread peace, peace, everywhere,

and why? So that there may be no more munitions, no more armies; and then these Communists will conquer all. They are happy to see Dr. Schaedel convert Europe, convert America to peace. But then he proposes to visit China, visit Russia itself. Suppose he converts the red soldiers of China to peace? Suppose he makes converts to the glory of peace in very St. Petersburg—I will not speak its accursed new name—what then? So, they say, we must kill him. And *voilà*—it is done!"

Martin was polite. He made some vague comment, looked impressed, gulped his coffee, and hurried out into the lounge where he could laugh to his heart's content. It was such a wonderful theory, and so superbly Boritsin. He expected that the Russian would soon discover that the *F* stood for Fascism, and that the three steps represented Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky—for the aristocrat's mind would doubtless lump them all together. And then the police would receive an anonymous letter advising them to search the National Students' League headquarters for the murderer of Dr. Schaedel.

"What are you laughing about, Lamb?"

There was no mistaking that pseudo-Oxonian accent. Martin controlled himself a little as he looked up at Worthing. "The … the murder," he spluttered.

"Really?" The Canadian raised his voice and his eyebrows. "I can't say that I find it so excruciatingly funny, old man."

"It's not that. It's Boritsin. He was just telling me how Dr. Schaedel was murdered by Moscow Gold."

"Oh, I say. That is a bit thick. Especially when the whole ruddy thing is so blasted simple." Worthing, having never visited the Mother Country which he so worshiped, had picked up his British colloquialisms chiefly from popular novels, and never bothered to notice the level of society at which they were used.

"So simple?"

"Oh, I've heard rumors. There's a lot more of that sort of thing goes on than one knows about, you know."

"What sort of thing?"

"You understand, old man, I'm not saying anything. But you know what one means." He lowered his voice, if not his eyebrows. "*Cherchez la femme!* What?" And he discarded his Oxford elegance to the extent of a broad wink.

As Worthing made his exit on this effective line, Martin began thinking. The Canadian's theory, if it could be called that, was as preposterous as Boritsin's. Lechery did, of course, crop up in unexpected places; a life in academic circles

had accustomed Martin to that phenomenon. But he could not associate it with Dr. Schaedel. It was wrong. There was in fact something damnably wrong about the whole thing. Martin picked up the paper again and read over the brief biography of Dr. Schaedel.

There was nothing there to help him. It simply gave the dates marking the doctor's slow rise to fame and a moderate fortune. Beginning as a humble private tutor, he had finally become Professor of Economics at the University of Berne. During the World War, he entered politics and was elected to the National Council on a platform of maintaining Switzerland's neutrality. Later he became a member of the Federal Council itself, finally retiring in order to devote his time as an unofficial envoy to the cause of world peace. His political life had been quiet. He had given active support to the expulsion of Hoffmann from the Federal Council; but surely no quarrel so old could have anything to do with the present. He was unmarried, and left no living relatives save his sister's son, Kurt Ross.

There was nothing in all this, Martin decided. If he were to carry out his sudden whim of evolving a theory of the murder, he must seek elsewhere. He put a cigarette in his mouth and struck a match, then paused suddenly and reread the last statement in the biography. He stared curiously at the paper until the forgotten match burned his finger.

"Have you seen Cyn today?" Martin asked Alex Bruce over lunch.

"I went over as soon as I'd seen the papers, but I couldn't see her. She's had a nervous collapse. Mary was with her and wouldn't let anyone in. There are policemen, uniformed and plain-clothes both, scattered all over Panoramic Way. They're trying to find the direction in which the murderer vanished."

"Cynthia didn't see him?"

"That's right. Neither did Mary."

"Neither did I what?" Mary Roberts stood beside the luncheon table, looking surprisingly fresh and sensible.

"Sit down, Mary," Martin said. "Three guesses what we're talking about."

"Is anybody on campus talking about anything else? If it keeps on much longer, I'll be having a breakdown like Cynthia." Mary paused to give her order, and went on. "I've been up there all morning—I stayed the night, of course—more to keep away from people than to help Cynthia. Sorry she couldn't see you this morning, Alex. I told her you were there, and it just seemed to make her

worse than ever."

"I think she's annoyed with me," Alex confessed. "I said I'd go over last night, and I worked so hard in the lab that I forgot all about it. While you were finding corpses, I was starting off on a fairish binge with Martin. My conscience hurts me a little."

"Maybe that's why she was so worried. She called me up, you know, about ten last night and said she was alone and would I please come over right away. She wanted to talk to me about something."

"What was it? Or ought you to tell me?"

"I don't know." Mary paused in her attack upon a lamb chop. "All evening it seemed as though she were just going to say something important. And then it all happened, and of course she hasn't said anything since."

Martin finished his pie and lit a cigarette. "Mind if I ask you a question, Mary?"

"I suppose I'll have to get used to it. Go ahead."

"This murderer seems to be a very elusive person. You rush right out—only a couple of yards—and there's not a soul in sight. Either he's the Invisible Man or he must have popped into one of the houses around."

"But we didn't rush right out. Rather, we did, but we didn't get there. Cynthia tripped on the porch and came a cropper. So what with me helping her to her feet and her testing her ankle, which wasn't sprained after all, the man had plenty of time to get away."

"Why is it people always say 'the man'?" Alex wondered. "It seems like a definite double standard."

"When in doubt, use the masculine," Martin replied. "Besides, this looks like a male crime."

"What do you mean by that?" Mary asked through a mouthful of jello.

"I'm not quite sure. But I think one may safely generalize—"

Martin's generalization, whatever it may have been, was interrupted by two new arrivals at the table—Remigio Morales, the Bolivian, and his sister Mona.

"Do you know where we seek the answer to this riddle?" Morales was asking almost immediately after the mutual greetings.

"In the Gran Chaco?" Martin ventured, tongue in cheek, mindful of Boritsin's ingenuity.

"But exactly," Morales replied seriously. "How did you guess it?" And he launched into an elaborate explanation of the dastardly Paraguayan plot which

had destroyed the inoffensive Dr. Schaedel.

Martin did not dare listen too closely, for fear of a return of the laughing attack which had so shocked Worthing. At last he interposed a cautious question. “Have you seen Kurt Ross this morning? What does he think of it all?”

“I have not seen him,” and Morales continued his exposition.

“But I have,” Mona interrupted. “I have forgotten to tell you, Remigio. I was sitting in the lounge after breakfast when Kurt came through with a tall man in an overcoat.”

“With a cigar?” Martin asked.

“No. Why?”

“The traditions are being shamefully neglected. Go on, Mona.”

“I had not yet heard of the death, and I said, ‘Where do you go so early?’ He said, ‘They want to ask me some questions,’ and went on. I think that it was the police.”

There was sudden silence at the luncheon table. Martin wondered if anyone else had been already struck by that sentence in the newspaper biography.

“Poor Lupe,” Mary sighed. “She must be dreadfully worried.”

“Had you not heard about Lupe Sanchez?” Mona, usually quiet, was enjoying to the full her possession of exclusive news. Her brother was becoming impatient; he had not yet fully explained about the Argentinian millionaires who were backing Paraguay in the Chaco.

“What about Lupe?”

“She is ill. She left this morning for a hospital in San Francisco.”

“What’s the matter with her?”

“Anything serious?”

“Why not the hospital here on campus?”

“That is a question which answers itself, I think.” Mona smiled cryptically and hoped that she would not be pressed for an explanation. In her black eyes Martin noticed the glint of a modest girl flirting pleasantly with an immodest topic.

He leaned back in his chair while Morales resumed his revelations. It all fitted together too nicely. Motive, opportunity, and, he supposed, means. It was disappointingly simple. There were only two things against it: one, that idiotic symbol; and two, the fact that he liked Kurt Ross.

Martin spent the afternoon in the library poring over old volumes of the *Jahrbuch der Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, trying to find if anyone had anticipated

his theory that Caspar Wilhelm von Borcke, first German translator of Shakespeare, had used the Theobald edition. It was a doubly useful afternoon. First it established beyond a doubt that his theory, well backed by internal evidence, was new and probably worth publishing; second it kept his mind off Dr. Schaedel and Kurt Ross.

But his worries returned to him during dinner. He brushed them away with the thought that the police would doubtless find whatever there was to discover; but this was small consolation. At last he decided that he must give way to the obvious.

As he left the dining room, he heard the sound of music from the Home Room upstairs. He thought he recognized the voice, and he was sure that he recognized the song, a plaintive Bolivian folktune.

Mona Morales looked up from the piano with a smile as Martin entered. *"Buenas tardes,"* she said.

"Don't let me bother you," Martin answered in Spanish. "Just go on singing. I like to listen."

"*Gracias, señor. Es muy amable."* Mona wandered from one folksong to another, in a clear and sweet, if untrained voice, while Martin smoked even more persistently than usual. Mona was as pleasant to look at as she was to hear. The light of the floor lamp gleamed on her black hair as softly as on the deep polish of the piano. Her simple white dress was a charming contrast to her dark skin. But try though he might to enjoy her voice and her appearance, Martin's mind kept returning to her remarks at lunch.

"You will forgive me if I pause?" she said at last. "I am tired and I think that I would sooner talk for a while. May I have a cigarette?"

"You know," Martin began, offering her a light, "I was wondering … that is … something you said at lunch today …"

"Yes?"

"I want to ask you a frank question, Mona."

"But of course."

"Why—"

And the omnipresent Boritsin wandered into the room. To find a piano not in use was joy enough, but to find a ready-made audience beside it was bliss overflowing. For ten minutes Martin listened to a disquisition on the musical superiority of the *ancien régime* in Russia. Lush Tschaikovsky was contrasted with badly played Shostakovich to make a point—Martin was not quite sure

what.

Finally he leaned over and whispered to Mona, “I have to go now. I hate to leave you at Boritsin’s mercy, but Dr. Ashwin’s expecting me. When can I see you again?”

“Am I not always here?”

“I know, but … There’s a Mexican film playing at a little house down on Broadway. It might be rather fun. Could you go?”

“When?”

“Tomorrow?”

“Remigio and I are going to San Francisco. There is a ball at the Bolivian embassy. I must go over early because—” She paused abruptly. “Monday?”

“Fine.”

“I am through at two. Shall we meet at Sather Gate?”

“Good.” And Martin slipped out unnoticed by Boritsin, who was at the moment explaining the musical degeneration of the Russian ballet.

Martin walked down Channing Way in a state of suspense—a suspense that must last for two more days at least. Mona was Lupe Sanchez’s best friend; she, if anyone, would know definitely. And suppose it did turn out to be a genuine illness? There went motive. And Martin knew that he would feel much better.

He climbed the twisting steps of the rooming house and knocked on Dr. Ashwin’s door. In a few moments he was comfortably settled in a chair by the desk while Ashwin produced a fifth of Teacher’s Highland Cream and excused himself to rinse a pair of glasses. Martin looked about the single room in which John Ashwin lived. In one corner stood a small bed, obviously made by male hands. Aside from a few chairs and a heater, the only other article of furniture was the huge roll-top desk with its swivel-chair, the throne from which Ashwin launched his best dicta. And the books—book-cases ran around two sides of the room, crammed with volumes, mostly old and well-worn. The very richness of Ashwin’s tastes resembled poverty in its quality of making strange bedfellows. The best available edition of Valmiki’s great epic, the *Ramayana,* leaned topheavily upon a cheap copy of Conan Doyle. The historical romances of the elder Dumas were scattered among bulky dictionaries of the classical languages. And Ashwin’s own translations from the Sanskrit rubbed figurative elbows with Rider Haggard’s epics of the Zulu dynasty. As the little round button on top of this heap of miscellany, Martin noticed an authoritative work on military tactics set beside *Alice in Wonderland.*

When the Scotch had been poured, tasted, and found good, Martin opened the conversation with his conventional gambit. “How is Elizabeth?” he asked.

Ashwin’s general aversion to women did not extend to those below the age of six. For many years he had been in the habit of selecting some female child of around three or four to whom he would act as unofficial godfather, abandoning her with the ruthlessness of a Schnitzler lieutenant when she reached the critical age of six. Elizabeth, however, seemed to possess some secret charm lacking in her predecessors; she was by now almost eight years old, and Ashwin was still devoted to her.

“She is well, thank you,” Dr. Ashwin replied. “I spent last night and this morning with her family in San Rafael. She thanks you very much for the toy which you sent her.”

“I’m glad she liked it. I do want to meet her some time.”

“She seemed impressed by your gift in the manner usual to womankind.”

“What do you mean?”

“She was asking after all the Berkeley people of whom she has heard me speak. ‘How is Dr. McIntyre?’ she asked. ‘Fine,’ I said. ‘How are the Revkins?’ and so forth. At last she asked, ‘How is Mr. Lamb?’ And when I said ‘Fine,’ she added ‘Give *him* my love.’”

Martin smiled. “I must remember. A wooden penguin is a simple means of conquest.”

“And Elizabeth is learning Sanskrit.”

“At the age of eight?”

“Yes. She asked me to say something Sanskrit for her. It is a confusing request, as I take it you know from similar experiences.”

Martin nodded. “There’s something tongue-tying about it. I imagine we’d be equally speechless if a man from Mars calmly asked us to ‘say something English.’ What did you do?”

“After some puzzling, I decided to recite that ingenious tongue-twister which consists entirely of n’s and vowels. You remember?—

> *na nonanunno nunnono*
> *na nā nānānanā nanu*
> *nunno ’nunno nununneno*
> *nānenā nunnanunnanut.*[1]

She was so delighted with it that nothing would do but I must spend hours

reciting it. At last she knew it almost as well as I, and will probably amaze her playmates with her classical knowledge."

Thus the conversation passed from Elizabeth to the extraordinary ingenuities of the Sanskrit language, its amazing tongue-twisters, and especially the incredible feat of Dandin in the twelfth chapter of *The Ten Princes,* wherein Mantragupta relates a sizable narrative without employing any labial sounds because his lips "twitched with the soreness left by a charming mistress' kisses." "I lacked character for this achievement in my translation," Ashwin confessed ruefully, "and was forced to adopt the shabby substitute of a somewhat more highfalutin style."

After that came a discussion of the perfections and imperfections of Haggard's *Finished,* and a gradual divergence to the topic of Conan Doyle, which brought Martin, around the end of the third glass of Scotch, to the subject which had been on his mind all evening. He finished his glass and poured another—Ashwin being the ideal host who allows his guest to serve himself. Then, settling down comfortably with a fresh cigarette, he began, "We're both very much interested in murder—that is, from an historical or fictional viewpoint. How do you feel about our sudden contact with it here on campus?"

"I know almost nothing of it," Ashwin admitted. "As you know, I was in San Rafael, and I barely glanced at the morning paper save to read the comics to Elizabeth."

Martin smiled at the picture of the translator of Kalidasa reading out the exploits of Buck Rogers. "You should have read the newspaper accounts," he said. "But I thought you mightn't have, so I brought them along." He fished from his pocket the articles in the morning paper and handed them over.

Ashwin winced slightly at SAVANT SLAIN WITH STILETTO, and glanced at Martin as though to say, "Must I?" Instead he asked, "Have you any especial reason to be interested in this murder?"

"Yes. I met Dr. Schaedel shortly before his death and liked him very much. Besides, I think I know the murderer."

Martin was pleased with the effect of this melodramatic sentence. Ashwin said nothing, but began to read the clipping carefully. He reread it, then turned to the photographs and the biography. "Did not this young lady join us at lunch a week or two ago?" he asked.

Martin nodded.

“Yes,” Ashwin thought back, “I remember it was a Friday, and she took a peculiar relish in eating meat—a silly gesture of defiance against her home life. And she swore stupidly.” He frowned. Enough of Dr. Ashwin’s New England upbringing persisted to make him disapprove strongly of girls who swore even when they were as attractive as Cynthia Wood. “The picture almost does her justice,” he resumed. “I begin to see the reason for your unusual interest.”

He went over the group of clippings again and laid them on the table. “Now,” he said, “is there anything more? That is this morning’s paper. Was there anything in this evening’s news?”

“Only one thing of importance. They’ve found the weapon.”

“Was it a stiletto?”

“No. An ice pick.”

“How unfortunate for the alliterative caption writer. Where was it found?”

“A few yards up Panoramic Way away from Cynthia’s toward the hills. Which doesn’t mean that the murderer went that way. It could have been thrown from where the body was found. It was caked with blood and regrettably free from fingerprints.”

“That is all, then, from the newspapers. And have you any news of your own? How many of these people do you know, aside from Miss Wood?”

“I know Mary Roberts fairly well, and Kurt Ross.”

“That is the nephew?”

“Yes.”

Ashwin leaned back in the swivel-chair. “Now just what is it you want me to do? Play detective with you?”

“I simply thought that if we discussed all the points of the case we might make it clear in our own minds and possibly discover something so obvious that it had been overlooked.”

This reference to his own pet contention pleased Dr. Ashwin. “It should at least be an interesting mental exercise,” he said. “So tell me all that you have heard from your friends.”

Martin began with his minor binge of the preceding evening, so that he might be able to include the surprising entrance of Kurt Ross. He then told of the luncheon-table remarks of Mary and of Mona, and closed, by way of comedy relief, with the theories of Boritsin, Worthing, and Morales, at which Ashwin smiled.

“That is all your information?” he asked.

Martin assented.

“And you have already satisfied yourself as to the murderer? In that case you should hardly have any need of my observations. But let us begin, in the conventional manner of detective fiction, with that immortal trinity: Motive, Means, and Opportunity.” Dr. Ashwin filled his glass and opened a fresh pack of cigarettes, which he offered to Martin. After the business of lighting, he resumed. “I think we may begin by discarding Means as unlikely to be of any aid to us. An ice pick is a decidedly uncharacteristic and unidentifiable weapon, if nonetheless deadly. Even the organized forces of Scotland Yard could hardly hope to capture a murderer by enquiring into all suspicious purchases of ice picks during the last fortnight. Holmes, of course, would begin by deducing from the ice pick that the murderer was a cuckold; but I think that a bit far-fetched.”

“A cuckold? Just how—?”

“Because his household still employs an icebox in these days of electric refrigeration, a fact most probably occasioned by his wife’s intrigue with the proverbial iceman. Elementary, my dear Lamb; but we file this hint away, thinking it more likely that the ice pick was bought with its deadly nature in mind. One might, with somewhat more justice, observe that the murderer probably possesses an elementary knowledge of surgery, since a slight error in locating the heart would make the wound merely dangerous and not fatal. This is not, however, too helpful a point; the requisite knowledge could have been acquired for the occasion by a layman. Now since, as you say, the handle reveals no fingerprints—M. Bertillon’s refinement of the science of fingerprinting must have been a great boon to the glove industry—we have, I believe, exhausted the possibilities of Means. Next we come to—”

“Motive?”

“Let us save that for the last. Next, I say, we come to Opportunity, to ill-annexèd Opportunity, that foul abettor, that notorious bawd. There is much justice, if little poetry, in Lucrece’s famous rant against Opportunity, but in this case, I fear, it does not apply. This crime is not one in which a sudden opportunity presented itself for a murder which might not otherwise have occurred. People do not wander innocently about Panoramic Way carrying a handy ice pick. By the way, Mr. Lamb, and how did Dr. Schaedel himself happen to be wandering about there?”

“Kurt mentioned to me,” Martin replied, “that his uncle was fond of walking at night. He probably had been strolling about the hills, and lost his way coming

home.”

“Then how did the murderer know where he would be—unless, of course, the murderer were following him? There is a point under Opportunity. But it is not a limiting point. The scene of the crime is one to which anyone in Berkeley could have ready access. A perfect—or, perhaps preferably, not quite perfect—alibi for eleven-thirty would be the only possible elimination under Opportunity. What can you tell me about that?”

“Well, I am suspect myself then. I have no alibi for that hour. I was simply drinking and reading *The Boat Train Murders.* Of the people I know, Mary Roberts and Cynthia provide each other with alibis. Kurt Ross, so far as I know, has none. It was around a quarter or ten minutes of twelve when he came to my room.”

“Mr. Lamb,” said Dr. Ashwin reproachfully, “please do not indulge in the smartalecky ingenuity of proving yourself a likely suspect. For your other information, I thank you. I believe that we have extracted most of the juice from Opportunity.”

“And now we come to Motive?”

“Yes.” Ashwin rose ponderously and moved about the room. “It is, I believe, Miss Tennyson Jesse who conveniently classified the motives for murder under six heads. I cannot remember her order, but the heads are these: Jealousy, Revenge, Elimination, Gain, Conviction, and Lust for Killing. Of these the last is of no use to the reasoning of a self-appointed detective. The most unlikely murderer may kill the most unlikely victim from sheer homicidal madness. The murderer may be, as it was insinuated that Jack the Ripper was, a respected individual completely normal in all other respects. If Dr. Schaedel was killed by a maniac, all our further reasoning is absurd and futile. Let us remember that possibility and continue.”

“Jealousy,” Martin suggested, “is what I suppose Worthing meant to imply. But to judge, not only from my impression of Dr. Schaedel, but from all Kurt’s references to his uncle in the past, it is a ridiculous suggestion.”

“Quite aside from that,” Ashwin added, “if it be sexual jealousy—Dr. Schaedel arrived in California yesterday for the first time in his life. Either the jealousy must date back to some remote Swiss affair, or the old gentleman must, with all due reverence, have been a very fast worker. Somewhat the same objection applies to revenge. A revenge which chases its victim across two continents and an ocean is a trifle too early Doyle for my taste. I admit that it is

possible, but I prefer not to consider it as yet. What have we left now?”

“Murder from conviction?”

“In other words, assassination. Yes. But Dr. Schaedel’s political career seems to have been placid enough, and, as a matter of fact, he holds no official position at present. His assassination would seem to be a very empty gesture. There is obviously no need of considering seriously Mr. Boritsin’s theory, although one might, if one leaned leftward, evolve a very pretty counter-theory to the effect that Dr. Schaedel was murdered by a conspiracy between the House of Morgan and the sage of San Simeon.”

Martin laughed.

“Let us fill our glasses on that,” Dr. Ashwin suggested. The suggestion obeyed, he continued. “That leaves us, I believe, two motives, Elimination and Gain. The motive of elimination is generally the result of fear, as in the case of the murder of a blackmailer, the device to which all novelists resort when they wish their murderer to be sympathetic. From what you tell me, I can hardly imagine anyone fearing Dr. Schaedel. We now have left the motive which you have set your heart on—Gain.”

Martin acquiesced.

“You believe that Kurt Ross needed a sum of money for an urgent purpose whose existence, it seems to me, you have deduced from flimsy and largely hearsay evidence.”

“I expect to find confirmation on Monday,” Martin added.

“Very well. You think further that Kurt Ross approached his uncle for the money after the dinner—”

“At nine-thirty,” Martin put in. “I heard the arrangement.”

“—at nine-thirty, and that his uncle refused, possibly upon learning the cause of the need for money. Here is your first snag. Granting Dr. Schaedel the character which you give him, such a refusal seems to me most unlikely, unless occasioned by religious scruples. But let that go. Allow a half hour for this stormy scene. At ten Uncle Hugo sets off for a walk in the hills. Does Kurt then accompany him or shadow him? If the former, what has become of Kurt when Dr. Schaedel is lost and asks his way of Miss Wood? And in either case where does Kurt acquire the ice pick? And, if Kurt has just committed a cold-blooded murder—I say cold-blooded advisedly because of the careful wound in the back, something that could scarcely occur in an ordinary fight—why does he come dashing into your room to beg for whiskey? Why is he perfectly willing to let

three men know that he has just been through some harrowing experience? The theory does not hold water, Mr. Lamb."

"I could add one more point against my own theory," Martin admitted. "I can conceive of Kurt killing someone, even his own uncle, in the heat of a moment. But I cannot conceive of him lurking around dark corners with an ice pick. Still you cannot deny that his motive is obvious—the one obvious thing in this whole case."

Ashwin abruptly ceased his pacing and seated himself. There was a worried look in his eyes. "The more we discuss this affair, Mr. Lamb," he said, "the more I realize that one thing, and only one, is obvious. And that one thing frightens me."

He was silent for so long a time that Martin began to wonder if, for the first time, he was seeing Dr. Ashwin affected by whiskey. At last Ashwin moved to reach for his cigarettes. He lit the match with a gesture as though he hoped by its light to dispel the gloom that had descended. When he finally spoke, it was in a fresher tone of voice.

"Let us now consider that symbol," he said.

Martin looked again at the curious device. "I can't make any sense out of it," he offered at last. "I've thought of all the words, printable and unprintable, for which the *F* could stand, and they're not in the least helpful."

Ashwin contemplated the photograph for a moment. "And small wonder that they are not. Although I cannot offhand give a meaning to the symbol, I can at least offer one suggestion. I do not believe that it is an *F.*"

"Then what is it?"

"A seven."

Martin looked blank.[1] "A seven? I can't quite see …"

"Surely, Mr. Lamb, you are acquainted with the continental habit of crossing a seven to distinguish it from a one? The head of the one in European calligraphy, to dignify it by a flattering name, is so far extended as to make it resemble our seven. The seven, therefore, is adorned with this crossbar as a distinguishing mark." He drew several examples on a scrap of paper and passed it to Martin, who nodded after a moment's study.

"Yes," he admitted, "I think you may be right. And I admit that a seven, with all its strange associations, is more apt to figure in such a symbol than an *F.* But we still don't know what the symbol means."

“Let us disregard for the moment the meaning of the symbol, and see what conclusions we can draw merely from the fact that a symbol was left by the murderer. There are several possible reasons for such an act.”

“We seem to be returning to early Doyle,” Martin commented. “One’s first thoughts are of dastardly secret societies and tremendously elaborate vengeances.”

“There is of course that possibility, distasteful though it may be. The nature of the seven and the circumstances of Dr. Schaedel’s life both lead one to conclude that the society is a European one. And why then should they wait until he is in Berkeley to murder him? What else does the use of a symbol suggest to you, Mr. Lamb?”

“The act, perhaps, of an inherently melodramatic person, who wishes to embellish his crime with a colourful touch of bright bravado.”

“Plausible,” Ashwin smiled. “I can imagine you, for instance, feeling the need of some such theatrical device. And in that case the symbol might have no meaning whatsoever, but be a creation of the murderer’s. What else?”

“Suppose …” Martin found this idea a little difficult to express. “Suppose that you wanted to kill several people for identical or similar reasons. You kill the first and leave a symbol beside the body which will mean nothing to the investigators, but will be too intelligible to the rest of your proposed victims. To them it will mean either, ‘Prepare to die!’ or, ‘Mend your ways, lest you too die!’”

“Ingenious, although I fail to see how a seven mounted on a flight of steps could convey either of those meanings. But then, you specified that the symbol should be unintelligible to an investigator. According to that idea, Mr. Lamb, you expect more murders in Berkeley?”

“Not necessarily. I was just suggesting—”

“Perhaps you were right. Perhaps we should expect more murders—one more at least. But have you any further suggestions as to the use of the symbol?”

“Not at the moment.”

“Then allow me to offer one. The symbol might have been used as a blind, so that the police or any other investigating agency might attribute its use to one of the reasons which we have just discussed. That is, a murderer killing from strictly private reasons might use a symbol to suggest the work of a society. A quiet, unmelodramatic, efficient murderer might leave a symbol simply because he reasons that its use is, to use one of your theatrical terms, out of character for

him, and therefore likely to create a false scent."

"Ingenious," Martin smiled in mimicry of Ashwin. "But I somehow distrust these intricacies. Next I could reason that the murderer really was flamboyantly melodramatic, and left the symbol so that a detective might be deluded into thinking that a quiet person had left it in order to delude him (the detective) into thinking that he (the murderer)—"

Dr. Ashwin held up his hand. "Mercy, Mr. Lamb, mercy! Forgive me my ingenuities and fill your glass in token of peace."

"This will be the last," Martin said as he complied. "I got to bed terribly late last night, what with Kurt and the others."

"I understand now your intense desire to prove poor Herr Ross guilty. It is simply so that you may one day boast of how you caroused with a murderer whose hands still reeked of figurative blood."

It was now Martin's turn to cry mercy. "I admit that I still think Kurt is a possible suspect, but I certainly can't fit him in with any of our ideas of the symbol. He is neither flamboyant nor subtle, and he surely is not the emissary of that fatal secret society, the Stepping Seven—which sounds like a vaudeville team. But I can't get away from the fact that he seems to have such a good motive—need of immediate money—sole heir to a moderately good sum—"

Dr. Ashwin interrupted. "I think you will find before long, Mr. Lamb," he said, "that no one had a possible motive for killing Dr. Schaedel."

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[1] Literally:
He is not a man who is struck by an inferior:
He by whom an inferior is struck is no man, by the gods!
He who is struck is not struck if his master is not struck.
He is not sinless who strikes one struck again and again.

[1]This is the reader's opportunity to feel triumphant, since he will already have guessed as much from the title of the novel.—*A. B.*

CHAPTER III

The Seven of Calvary

On his way to a reasonably early breakfast the following morning, Martin bought a Sunday newspaper. Despite his keen interest in the matter in hand, his loyalty to his lower tastes made him read first of all the comics. These lasted him well through the cereal and poached eggs; it was not until he had lighted the day's first cigarette to accompany his second cup of coffee that he turned to the news section.

But although a feature writer had spread the Ice Pick Murder over a long front page double column, there were no new facts of interest. Martin read carefully how Sergeant Cutting had deduced from the cash and jewelry present on the corpse that robbery had not been the motive for the crime, how the Swiss Consul in San Francisco was berating the laxity of American justice and insinuating that international complications might result, how the radio program of World Peaceways had resolved to make its next half-hour a memorial to Dr. Schaedel, and how an appeal to come forward with their information was being broadcast to all who might know the meaning of the cryptic symbol. There was no reference to the questioning of Kurt Ross by the police—in fact no mention of Kurt whatsoever.

Through Martin's mind kept coursing, like a striking musical theme, Dr. Ashwin's words: *"No one had a possible motive for killing Dr. Schaedel."* And again: *"Perhaps we should expect more murders—one at least."* Could this mean that Ashwin believed in the existence of a homicidal maniac running loose in Berkeley? But why should such a maniac rest content with one more murder? And why the symbol?

Martin finished his coffee, extinguished his cigarette, and left the paper for a later breakfaster to find. Then he set out on a leisurely stroll across the campus to Newman Hall. Many of Martin's friends, and among them Dr. Ashwin, had

never quite made up their minds as to the sincerity of Martin's religious devotion; but none had been able to suggest any alternative motive for his constant attendance at Mass. Surely it was not for the sake of Father O'Moore's oleaginous sermons, nor yet for the too hearty goodfellowship of the Newman Club.

Quite aside from any question of religion, it was fortunate that Martin went to Mass on that particular Sunday morning, for there he saw Cynthia Wood. It was after Mass, as he descended the stairs from the chapel, that he felt a light hand on his shoulder and looked up into Cynthia's face.

"Hello, Cyn," he smiled. "I didn't think you were up and around yet."

"Had to be," she answered. "Going back to the House now?"

"Yes."

"I'll walk over with you."

As they left the church, Martin caught a glimpse of the Morales entering Remigio's car. Mona turned, saw him, and waved gaily. *"Mañana a las dos,"* she called, and smiled. Such a smile, Martin foresaw, would make the matter of questioning her extremely difficult.

He turned as the car drove off to see Cynthia regarding him with amusement. "So you're going in for Latins, Martin?" she queried with raised eyebrows. "Naughty-naughty!"

"What did you mean by 'had to be up and around'?" Martin asked, chiefly to change the subject. He had suddenly realized that such ribbing, which he would ordinarily have answered lightly in kind, was decidedly not to his taste when Mona Morales was concerned.

"Dad again," Cynthia replied shortly. "He and Father O'Moore are just like *that*— It was the darling Father, damn him, who converted Dad to the Church. And if Father doesn't see me after Mass, he passes the word on to Dad—oh, ever so casually—and damned if he doesn't cut my allowance. I even have to make little weekly reports on the sermon to prove I got in early."

"I must confess," said Martin, "you're in a devil of a fix if you have to tell every week what Father O'Moore's sermons are about. I'm sure I never know even while they're going on."

"So I had to come to church today. A mere thing like nerves wouldn't be an excuse for Dad." She was lighting a cigarette with jerky fingers.

"It must have been an awful shock," Martin faltered.

"Shock? For once, darling, your fine vocabulary is pitifully weak. Shock? To

have a nice sweet little old man drop in to ask his way, and then two minutes later to see him lying dead on the sidewalk … Shock?" Cynthia laughed jarringly. "And it all seems so damned impossible this morning. The campus is green and bright and lovely. The sun is warm, and there's a nice breeze from the bay. It's Spring, and everything's wonderful. And somewhere that sweet old man is lying on a slab … maybe they're putting things in him now to keep him from rotting … rotting away like a—"

"Don't be a damned fool, Cyn." Martin was surprisingly abrupt. "You're just talking yourself into a state of nerves. It's not your fault you got mixed up in his death. And thinking about it won't do you or him any good."

"All right." Cynthia sighed. "It's such a surprise to hear you talking like a sensible person, Martin, that I'll have to try acting like one." They walked on in silence a bit, and then she spoke again. "Be a sweet child, Martin, and drop in for tea this afternoon. There's a lamb—sorry, didn't mean the pun, but with a name like yours … Pop around and cheer me up. Bring anybody I know. I'll ask Alex and Mary, and we'll just sit around and talk. It'll do me good."

"A swell idea, Cyn. About what time?"

"Oh, around three. Shall I ask your Latin?"

"She's going to San Francisco this afternoon," Martin began quickly, and stopped to see Cynthia smiling at him in a most annoying manner.

"Well, bring anyone. And be prepared to talk and talk and talk and talk. I've got to listen to people or I'll go mad—very literally."

Martin left her at International House and watched her light a fresh cigarette from the old one as she started up toward Panoramic Way. He was sorry for Cynthia, but not surprised to see how quickly her superficial brightness had faded at an unpleasant contact with reality. He looked after her for a moment, and then suddenly realized that he wanted lunch.

A little before three Martin left his room, where he had been working industriously on his Borcke-Shakespeare-Theobald paper, and descended to the main hall, remembering Cynthia's injunction to bring someone along with him. He dodged behind a pillar for a moment to escape Boritsin, and then stepped forward to survey the possibilities.

He nodded to the serious young Chinese who had attended the reception dinner and who was now frowning over an economics text; he exchanged a few words with the tall girl at the reception desk; and he was rather abrupt to one of

the leading æsthetes of the House.

He had practically given up finding a possible tea-guest when he saw Paul Lennox reclining in a comfortable chair puffing unconcernedly at a curved pipe which had gone out some time before.

“Hello,” said Martin, sitting down beside him. “The Hall’s almost deserted today.”

“Everybody’s out in the hills reveling in the Spring. I suppose I should be too, but I found this new book on the Albigensians too interesting.” He paused to relight his pipe. “And where are you off to?”

“Cynthia’s for tea. Like to come along?”

Paul shrugged his shoulders. “I doubt if Cynthia would be exactly wild about seeing me.”

“She told me to ask you,” Martin said, with courageous disregard for accuracy. After all, if there were some slight animosity between Cynthia and Paul, that very friction might serve to take her mind off the murder and the state of her nerves.

“All right,” Paul agreed indifferently. “A cup of tea would be rather pleasant.” His pipe was satisfactorily alight now. Slipping the Albigensian volume under his arm, he started off with Martin.

Martin paused on the steps to light a cigarette. “By the bye, Paul,” he said, annoyedly tossing away a match which had gone out too soon, “there’s one little thing—don’t say anything about Dr. Schaedel or ice picks or anything. Cyn’s nerves are in a hell of a state. Just keep up a running fire of stuff—you know, your present research—that Don Juan business—anything.”

“Right.” Paul nodded sympathetically.

At that moment, just as Martin finally lit his cigarette, Worthing bounded up the stairs. “Ah there, old man,” he chirped, “and where might you be headed?”

“Going out to tea,” Martin admitted.

“It’s so good to see anyone in the States who really appreciates that custom, what? I was just going to have a spot myself in here.”

Martin was rash. He said, “Why don’t you come along with us?” Worthing’s inanities, he thought, might be a possible diversion. And poor Richard Worthing leaped at the invitation, little suspecting what strange mental anguish and physical fear he was later to reap in consequence of that eager acceptance.

Throughout the short stroll to Cynthia’s house Worthing talked, while Paul cast reproachful glances at Martin. It was very blithe talk, liberally larded with I

say's and What?'s, with an occasional blasted just to show that Worthing was a Man among Men.

As they reached the house, Worthing paused and looked at the sidewalk in fascinated horror. "The poor old chap," he moaned. "Think of him lying there! And that spot … I say, old man, do you think that's blood?"

Martin remarked that he thought it was more likely canine excrement, but he couched his remark in solid Anglo-Saxon words which caused Worthing to wince slightly.

"I say, really now, old man! I feel gooseflesh all over. Could you let me have a fag, what?"

Martin took out his cigarette case. At the moment that he was offering it to Worthing, Cynthia appeared on the porch and called, "Aren't you ever coming in?" Turning to look at her, he dropped the case and saw it fall under a bush by the sidewalk. "Go on in," he said to the others. "I'll get this damned thing."

It was several minutes later that Martin entered the living room. Mary Roberts was trying vainly to stem Worthing's reminiscences of Rugby games in Canada, and his entrance was more than welcome. It was a good entrance. There was dirt on the knees of his otherwise spotless flannels, and bits of twigs and leaves stuck out of his hair. But his cigarette case was safe in his pocket, and even safer in another pocket was something which he had seen dangling from an inner branch of the bush, something easily enough overlooked in a police search concentrated on stilettos. Martin had discovered where Kurt Ross had lost his Phi Beta Kappa key.

"Twenty minutes of," Mary Roberts observed in the midst of a sudden silence. There followed the usual ritual comparison of watches and several comments on how strange it was that silences always came at twenty of or twenty after the hour. And then the silence descended again.

"You know, Martin," Alex began, in a brave effort to keep things going, "I've been wondering just what sort of a play of yours that Little Theatre's doing."

"I wouldn't exactly say of mine. I just translated it. It's a Spanish play by José María Fonseca. Last of the early nineteenth century romanticists. Very colorful, fairly bawdy. He called it *Don Juan Redivivo.* That's a swell title, but I couldn't translate it; so I called it *Don Juan Returns*, and let it go at that."

"And Paul's your star?" Cynthia's tone was sceptical.

"Yes, but he's still the scholarly historian. He's started doing a paper on the

Don Juan legend."

"Oh, do tell us about it, Paul." Mary was not particularly interested in the Don Juan legend, but her pet superstition demanded that there should not be another dead pause until twenty after.

Paul told them all about it, briefly and interestingly. As he finished and poured himself a fresh cup of tea, the thing happened that everyone had been waiting for.

"I say, Paul old man, you've so much information and rot on strange things—perhaps you could tell us something about that symbol." It was Worthing, of course. Martin remembered now, too late, that he had not warned him.

"What symbol?" Paul's carelessness was a little too studied.

"What symbol! Why dash it all, you know—the blasted symbol that was beside Dr. Schaedel's body."

That's done it! thought Martin. Cynthia's lips seemed to grow thin while she clenched her teacup as though she would crush it. Alex and Paul glared at Worthing with concentrated dislike. Silence took possession of the group with fine disregard of the fact that it was only five minutes after.

At last Mary spoke. "For heaven's sake," she said forcibly, "let's not all be such ninnies. We all know that the poor dear old man is dead, and we all know how Cynthia and I feel about finding him. So why not be open?"

A feeling of relief passed over them all. Cynthia set down her cup and reached for a cigarette. She even managed a smile. "Well," she asked evenly, tapping the cigarette, "well, Paul, do you?"

"Do I what?"

"Know anything about that symbol?"

"It's very strange that you should ask me that. I think that I am quite possibly the only man in Berkeley who does know."

The calm statement produced all the sensation which Paul could conceivably have desired. After a moment Martin amended, "The only other man, you mean. There is, of course, the person who left it."

"I don't know, Martin. I think it quite possible that he himself did not know the full meaning of the Seven of Calvary."

At the word *Calvary,* Martin suddenly knew why the symbol had at first made him think of a cross. He saw in his mind the heraldic device of a cross mounted upon three steps. "The Cross Calvary," he murmured.

"Exactly," Paul agreed. "I was keeping quiet because, as Mary correctly put it,

I was a ninny. But since we've broached the subject now, should you like to hear the story of that symbol?"

There was a general assent, and a momentary pause for the lighting of cigarettes and pipes, during which Martin fingered reflectively the gold key in his pocket. Then Paul began his narrative.

"I warn you," he said, "it's a long story—good for the rest of the afternoon. Anyone not feeling up to that can walk, or preferably run, to the nearest exit. No one? Then here goes:

"I found out all this business when I was at the University of Chicago last summer doing some research work. Some of you know how much I've always been interested in the heresies of the early Church, to give them their usual name—although I must say that some of my studies almost lead me to call the Church itself the Pauline heresy."

"Bless you, Paul Lennox," Cynthia interrupted, grimacing at Martin as the sole available representative of the Church. "For that I'm going to ask you home to dinner some time. If Dad heard that, he'd have piebald kittens right at the table."

"Thanks, Cyn. Well, one evening in Chicago I was sitting up late over various bottles of beer with a young fellow named Jean Stauffacher. He was a Swiss from somewhere around Lausanne, an exchange student. And heresies were something of a hobby of his, too. We had been wandering along in our discussion from Neminians to Mandaeans, from Manichaeans to Catharists. I think it was in connection with the Neminians that he suddenly asked, 'and have you ever heard of the Vignards?'

"It is a confusing name spoken aloud. Most of you probably think I said *Vineyards*, and that is exactly what I thought when Stauffacher spoke. 'Whose vineyards?' I asked. 'Naboth's?'

"'No, no, no,' he reproached me. 'Not vineyards—Vignards. It is a curious Swiss sect, named after Anton Vigna.' And he proceeded to tell me a little about them, most of which he had learned from his grandfather, who had been a member of the sect and had later died as a result of his apostasy. He also referred me to a couple of rare books in the University library, where I found more corroborative details."

"Grandfather died, you say?" Martin asked.

"Yes. It was in 1920, at the time of the plebiscite on the League of Nations. The Vignards—for they are active politically as well as in religion, as you shall

shortly hear—the Vignards were conducting a secret campaign against the League. Grandfather Stauffacher, who had renounced his membership many years before, threatened to make certain revelations concerning the *sub rosa* activities of the Vignards. So Grandfather Stauffacher died."

"How?" asked Alex.

Paul hesitated a moment and looked at Cynthia.

"Go on," said Mary. "I suppose he was stabbed in the back with an ice pick."

"Not with an ice pick, Mary, but he was stabbed, and in the back. Beside him was found the Seven of Calvary. His murderer was never apprehended."

Worthing had been silent long enough. "I say, Lennox old man," he burst in, "just where is all this getting us? You go on talking about Vignards and Seven of Calvary's and grandfathers and you don't tell us anything."

"Be patient, Worthing," Martin remarked. "Paul's simply building it dramatically—my Machiavellian influence. Let him go on. You say, Paul, you found two rare books on the subject in the University library?"

"Yes. Werner Kurbrand's *Volksmythologie der Schweiz* and Ludwig Urmayer's *Nachgeschichte des gnostischen Glaubens.* Both published in Germany in the late eighties and long since out of print."

"Pardon me, Paul," Alex interrupted. "These rolling German titles are all very well for you and Martin, but let the rest of us in on it."

Paul smiled. "All right. Kurbrand's *Folk-mythology of Switzerland*, and Urmayer's *Later History of Gnostic Belief.* It was by piecing together bits from these books—just minor references—with what Jean Stauffacher had told me, that I arrived at some knowledge of the Vignards. I made a great many notes—force of academic habit—and naturally, when I recognized the Seven of Calvary in yesterday's papers, I refreshed my memory. Damn this pipe; it always goes out."

Such was the curiosity of the group that no one spoke—not even Richard Worthing—while Paul carefully relit his pipe, lingering over the process a little longer than was strictly necessary.

"Swiss history, you know," he said at last, "is not nearly such a calm matter as you might perhaps imagine from its present uneventfulness. Both religiously and politically, things have been pretty complicated. This particular complication dates back to the early fourth century, when Christianity was first established in Switzerland.

"Those early bishops had a pretty hard time of things. Not only did they have

to combat the pagan worship, but they also had the devil's own time with the Gnostic heretics inside their flocks. Then the barbarians came, and Christianity in Switzerland was fairly well wiped out—on the surface, that is—until St. Columbanus came on missionary work in the late sixth century.

"But during all this period of apparently successful barbarian domination, Christianity survived in secret, kept up by a few priests and the families of faithful early converts. And since Christianity itself kept alive, it was only natural that in certain places Gnosticism too was cherished."

"Just a moment, Paul." It was Alex again, whose scientific mind wanted to keep things straight and clear. "I'm a little vague on heresies and things. Just what is Gnosticism?"

"My dear Alex, it is going to take me the best, or at least the largest part of an afternoon to explain Vignardism. If I start to explain Gnosticism too, you'd best ask Cyn to put us up for the night. But I can say briefly that Gnosticism—with a G—was once a noble philosophy, based largely on the works of the mystic Valentinus, which rapidly degenerated into an elaborate mythology, half Christian, half pagan, and finally became mere magical hocuspocus."

Alex nodded satisfied. "Thanks. Go on."

"Now the doctrine of the Seven of Calvary originated apparently in a small community near Altdorf, in the Canton of Uri. Here there was strong mental and physical inbreeding of a small and isolated group which had come under the influence of some early Gnostic. They had not fully understood his teachings—possibly he himself was none too clear—and as the centuries passed they built up what might almost be called their own religion.

"It was technically Christian, though heretical—but then the Mandaeans are technically heretical Christians, even though they call Christ *Nbu* and think him an evil spirit. This Urian sect (they were not called Vignards yet) did not go quite so far as that, but they did relegate Christ to a comparatively unimportant post in their septenity."

"Septenity?" This time it was Martin who was puzzled.

Paul shrugged deprecatingly. "I admit I coined the word myself, in order to translate the *Siebenfältigkeit* of my sources. A septenity is to a trinity as seven to three—in other words, there are seven persons in their godhead."

"And the symbol denotes that?"

"Yes. Most of you must have realized by now that the mark is a continental seven and not the italic *F* which the papers have called it. The three steps have

two possible meanings—Urmayer and Kurbrand disagree there. Urmayer claims that it denotes seven triumphing over three—that is, their septenity over the Christian trinity. Kurbrand claims that it is a reminiscence of the Cross Calvary mounted on three steps. The former seems more likely, in view of the sect's history, but its name, the Seven of Calvary, inclines one toward the latter."

"Is that its official name in the sect?" Martin asked.

"So Jean Stauffacher called it."

"And who are the seven persons?" Mary was becoming more interested.

"This is their mythical cosmogony. You have a smattering of such knowledge, Martin; you will notice the very definite Gnostic touches. In the beginning there was Something—the Allfather, what Valentinus calls the Deep. This sect, being too naïve to elaborate such terms as Cosmos or *Urmacht,* called this primordial Something simply God. This God, apparently, did nothing but think. He had no desire to create. But one day, if we can speak of days in such a connection, he had a thought which displeased him—what we should call an evil thought. He cast it from him, and it assumed independent existence and powers.

"This was the *Unholy Spirit,* corresponding roughly to the Satan of the Christians. The Unholy Spirit felt the creative impulse lacking in its contemplative parent, and created the World. Moreover, through some strange parthenogenesis, it had a child. That child was *Jehovah,* the god of the Hebrews, who seemed to these simple folk, as he must indeed to many of us, a very evil and unholy sort of god."

"Two dinner invitations …" Cynthia murmured.

"Now God—the Ur-God, that is—looked on the World and saw that it displeased him. So he cast out another thought, this time a good one, to save the World. This second thought was the *Holy Spirit.* After a period of warring with the Unholy One, it also had a child, *Jesus Christ.* Now the Holy Spirit, for all its goodness, was cunning. It made a bargain with the Unholy One—'I will let my child die if you will do the same for yours.' The bargain was made, and ratified before the Ur-God, who foresaw the duplicity of his Holy Offspring and approved. Then the Holy Spirit made its child flesh, so that he could die as a man but still live as a god. Jehovah, who was not made flesh, had to die as a god, although, in some manner which I do not follow, he remained a member of the septenity."

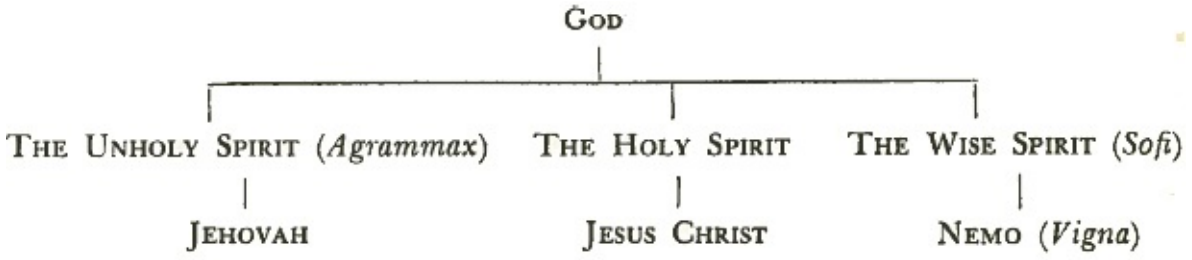
"But that's only five," Mary objected as Paul paused.

"We now come to the most important pair. Seeing that the conflict of good and

evil was wrecking the world, the Ur-God had another thought. This third thought was neither good nor evil, but wise, and her name was *Sofi.* She is, of course, the Sophia of Valentinus and the heroine of the *Pistis Sophia,* which accounts for her being definitely feminine while the other thought-emanations, especially the Holy Spirit, are vaguely neuter.

"Sofi, naturally, carrying on the traditions of the Ur-God's family, also had a child, named *Nemo.* In this name, the sect anticipated Rodulphus and his Neminians by many centuries, basing its ideas on the same passages of scripture *(No man hath ascended into heaven—No man hath seen God*—and so forth), in which, they claim, *Nemo* does not mean *no man,* but is a proper name. Sofi's child Nemo, then, was to reconcile good and evil and to prepare the world for its end.

"Centuries passed after the idea and possibly, in some earlier shape, the symbol were once formulated. Villagers moved from Uri to other parts of Switzerland and took their strange faith with them. People waited for the coming of Sofi's child, and meanwhile sought to placate equally the children of the Holy and the Unholy Spirits. The Unholy Spirit was at first supposed to have some name which could never be spoken or written (even as his son Jehovah had the unpronounceable tetragrammaton), and was thence called *Agrammatos,* the Unwritten One. With the years this became *Agrammax,* and was looked upon as a proper name. The final *x,* of course, reminds one of Gnostic magic formulæ.



THE SEVEN OF CALVARY

(diagram prepared by Martin Lamb after the researches of Paul Lennox)

"Now since the Holy and the Unholy Spirits were apparently of equal power, this dualistic concept gave rise to a sort of devil worship, for which authority was found in a misunderstanding of the parable in Luke—you know, the one

about *Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness."*

"I have yet to hear a sermon by a priest who understands that parable," Martin observed.

"But you've probably never heard it twisted so beautifully as they did. They took it as a direct injunction to devil-worship, with all its concommitants of necromancy, anthropomancy, and whatever other mancies you can think of. So the sect went on, worshipping Agrammax and awaiting Nemo, until the end of the thirteenth century. Some time around then, some thirty years before the supposed episode of William Tell, Anton Vigna was born.

"That period is perhaps the darkest in all of Swiss history—that is, darkest in the sense of most obscure. We shall probably never know definitely whether or not there was a William Tell or a meeting on the Rütli, and Anton Vigna belongs in the same quasi-legendary category. He was born near Altdorf and lived a quiet life until he was twenty-seven. He then calmly proclaimed that he was Nemo.

"Then everything proceeded to happen that should happen when one-seventh of God comes to earth. There were miracles and conversions and sermons and parables and disciples. He had studied his New Testament well, and patterned his life carefully on that of Christ, even to the forty days' retirement—using an Alp for lack of an available desert. But martyrdom in his thirtieth year was a resemblance which he had probably not foreseen. The Austrian bailiff, aided by a group of monks, stirred up the people against him, and he was stoned to death. As he lay dying, the mob continued to pelt him with stones, only to realize suddenly that some unseen force was pelting them. Some providential hailstorm had occurred just at the right time to be a Vignard miracle. A particularly large stone struck the bailiff on the forehead with such force as to kill him outright. And on all the stones which fell could be seen, as though carefully graven, a small seven.

"Vigna was dead, but, largely because of this miracle, the Vignards lived on. In revenge for the death of their God, they swore toward the Christians the same hatred which the early Christians felt for the Jews. Some even pledged themselves to Agrammax if he would help them against the Holy Spirit and his son Christ. They bound themselves to destruction, and from this vow results their political importance.

"They have survived through the years, a small group, gaining few converts outside of their hereditary ranks, but they have fomented, or at least fostered, most of the dissensions which have torn Switzerland. Vigna's brother Leopold is

reported to have been present at the Rütli. Those strange burgomasters of Zürich—Brun, Stüssi, Waldmann—are said to have been Vignards. That heroic and quixotic madman, Major Davel, was an apostate who had refused allegiance to Agrammax, and therefore failed.

"Especially have the Vignards rejoiced in causing religious disturbances. They hated Catholic and Protestant equally, and have supported movements as various as the expulsion of the Jesuits and the formation of the Sonderbund simply for the sake of setting two kinds of Christians at each other's throats.

"No …" he summed up, "definitely the Vignards are not nice people. So you see, I don't like the Seven of Calvary in Berkeley."

In the pause that followed, Paul Lennox calmly refilled his pipe. The others sat in silence. It was not a pretty picture, this story of the Vignards. Sofi and Nemo and Agrammax were ludicrous enough, as was the hailstone marked with a seven which had killed the Austrian bailiff. But Dr. Schaedel was dead, and Grandfather Stauffacher, and God knows how many others had lain dead, with the Seven of Calvary beside them. And how many more were yet to die?

Martin shuddered slightly and reached for a cigarette. In his pocket his fingers touched once more the gold key. He was reassured. There could be no mad sectarian loose in Berkeley. As Dr. Ashwin would say, it was too early Doyle. Someone who knew of the existence of the Seven of Calvary had planted it to create a false track. And who would know? Someone from Switzerland.…

"You know, Paul," Alex was saying, "you really should go to the police with all that information. They're begging for someone who can to explain the symbol."

"No, no, Alex. I'm in no mood for suicide. If the Vignards thought that I knew too much—No, really, Alex. Besides, the police may find out anyway. The Swiss Consul might possibly know, or some other research worker—although I could never have pieced together those bits out of Urmayer and Kurbrand if it hadn't been for my talk with Jean Stauffacher. I think that they were a little afraid too."

"Dash it all, old man," Worthing exploded, "you've a public duty as a citizen."

"Have I?" Paul smiled.

"Don't you want this blasted murderer-chappie hanged?"

"Not if it should cost me my own life."

"Why, it's … it's …" The Canadian spluttered with indignation and ended lamely, "Well, hang it all, old man, it *is!"* And he reluctantly subsided again, but Martin could see that he was thinking very concentratedly.

Martin and Paul took a long walk through the hills together after supper that evening. It was a pleasantly silent walk, but through it all one thought kept recurring to Martin's mind. When, around ten o'clock, they were seated in the White Tavern with coffee and hamburgers, Martin at last spoke it out.

"Paul …" he began.

"I ordered black coffee," Paul remarked on a tangent, looking in annoyance at the milk-defiled contents of his mug. "Oh, well … What is it, Martin?"

"That business you were telling us this afternoon—I can understand your reluctance to broadcast the fact that you know so much about it, but there is one person who would like very much to hear it."

"Who?" Paul asked between bites of hamburger.

"Dr. Ashwin."

"And why not? Yes, I suppose a brand-new heresy like that might appeal to him—bit of variety from the Vedas. All right—I'll give him the full story."

"Should you like to drop over there now? He's probably still up."

"Very well—just a few minutes."

The few minutes, it is almost needless to say, became an hour and a half. Dr. Ashwin welcomed them cordially—he had met Paul two or three times before—and produced a bottle of his never-failing Scotch. He listened to the story with great interest, and made a few notes from time to time. He smoked a multitude of cigarettes, but made no comment until Paul had quite finished.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Lennox," he said then. "That was a fascinating story. It should explain a great deal. I had thought myself reasonably well-versed on the subject of heretical folklore, but this strange narrative shakes my belief in my near omniscience. I can scarcely understand how so curious a legend could have escaped me. Still, I repeat, fascinating."

Paul smiled wryly. "I'm afraid it's a little more than a fascinating story, Dr. Ashwin. You forget that death is a leading character."

"I have not forgotten that." Dr. Ashwin lit a fresh cigarette, and started to refill all three glasses.

"No thanks." Paul placed his hand over his glass. "I have to stop in at Finch's before it's too late."

"Finch's?" Dr. Ashwin queried.

"Finch Ralton," Martin answered, "has a good phonograph and reputedly the most beautiful male stomach in Berkeley. But that doesn't explain, Paul, why on

earth you should go out of your way to listen to him."

Paul shrugged his shoulders. "I promised to return his record-repeater and forgot it."

"Oh." Martin was satisfied. "As long as it isn't for the sheer masochistic pleasure of hearing him misquote Macleish.… I think I'll stay a bit, if you don't mind, Dr. Ashwin. See you tomorrow evening at rehearsal, Paul."

Paul nodded, thanked Ashwin for his attention and his whiskey, and left for the apartment of Finch Ralton, who will probably be quite surprised, if ever he reads this, to learn that he figured, even so indirectly, in the investigation of the Schaedel murder.

Ashwin revolved slightly in his chair. "Mr. Lennox has a great many phonograph records?"

"A fine collection of his own," Martin explained, "and then he rents a good many from the disc library in San Francisco. His phonograph's really quite a consolation to me."

Ashwin nodded. "And what sort of records interest him?"

"Mostly symphonies and chamber music—a few *Lieder*—on the whole practically nothing but album sets."

"No dance records?"

"No. I'm afraid Paul is a trifle austere in his tastes."

Dr. Ashwin leaned back in his swivel chair and drained his whiskey glass. "That austerity, Mr. Lamb," he said, "is in my opinion the most curious portion of the narrative of Mr. Lennox."

CHAPTER IV

Martin Accuses

Mona smiled.

Martin's premonitions were fully justified. That smile did make the impartial attitude of an investigator damnably difficult. He began to wonder why he had ever decided to play detective in this murder, which was, after all, no concern of his.

To be sure, if he had not had his investigations as a basis for rationalizing, he might never have taken Mona to see the Mexican film when he really should have been conventionally studious in the stacks of the library, and should have missed thereby two pleasures. One was the picture itself, a concoction of subtle horror such as only the Mexicans seem able to create; the other, of course, was Mona.

Ordinarily so quiet and reserved, she had changed amazingly in the theatre. She shuddered quite unrepressedly at the more shuddersome moments, and clutched Martin's arm when the black letters of an evil book changed to crawling death-worms. With the strange closing line of the film still sounding in his mind, still possessed of the curious sense of unreality which the mad plot had instilled in him, Martin had suddenly awakened to the fact that Mona's hand lay in his. Her hand was warm and very real.

Mona smiled and consented to another glass of sherry. For his part, Martin ordered more beer.

They were seated in a booth at a cheap beer joint near the little theatre, refreshing themselves after the horrors of the picture and fortifying themselves for the long street-car ride back to the campus.

"One does not know what to believe," Mona murmured. "It leaves a strange mood, that picture. It is as the husband said, 'Perhaps those dead monks came to life, or perhaps we three died for one night. Who knows?'"

“Death in itself is strange,” Martin observed. “Perhaps a strange death is less so—the two strangenesses canceling each other.…”

The drinks arrived—which was perhaps just as well, since Martin’s conceit of death threatened to become painfully muddled. Mona sipped her sherry silently, then said, “I saw Kurt Ross at noon. He is sad because of his uncle.”

The death of Dr. Schaedel was something which Martin did not wish to discuss directly at the moment. Instead he asked, “And Lupe Sanchez? How is she?”

“I saw her on Sunday afternoon. That is why I went to San Francisco early. She is much better, thank you, Martin.”

“Was her illness serious?”

“N … no.” Mona appeared to be about to say more, but changed her mind. Martin waited a moment, and then, deciding that that approach was closed, offered Mona a cigarette, took one himself, and returned to the subject of the picture.

But even as he elaborated his theories of the horror film Martin was watching Mona closely. She obviously wished to say something. Finally, thinking the moment right, he paused in his dissertation and drained his glass of beer.

“Martin …” Mona began hesitantly.

“Yes?” He did not wish to seem eager.

“You are a friend of Kurt’s?”

“Of course,” Martin replied evenly, despite a slight twinge of conscience.

“Then please be nice to him.”

“I always am.” Martin was a little puzzled by this approach. “Should you care for another drop of sherry?”

“Please.” Martin pantomimed the order as Mona falteringly continued. “But I mean … very nice … comforting. He is unhappy, and he has so few friends. You and Remigio and one or two others. And Remigio is not of much help,” she added with true sisterly scepticism.

“I can understand,” Martin nodded sympathetically. “His uncle dead … Lupe in the hospital …” Inwardly he cursed himself for a trebly damned hypocrite.

Mona was not smiling now, but the serious expression of her mobile face seemed almost sweeter. “He needs someone, Martin. And he does not dare to go to visit Lupe for fear that someone might suspect—”

The arrival of the sherry and beer cut off the sentence, to Martin’s irritation. “Suspect what?” he asked with apparent indifference, when the waiter was gone.

Mona took a large drink of her sherry as though to strengthen herself. “Another cigarette, please, Martin,” she asked. The sherry had combined with the fact that they were speaking Spanish to make her unusually confidential. She blew a cloud of smoke and began. “It is perhaps better that I tell you all. Only Kurt and Lupe and I know, but if you too know it may help you with Kurt. It is no illness that Lupe has.”

Martin nodded. “I had thought as much.”

“I am sorry for her. I know that it is wrong, but she and Kurt—they love each other so. They were so happy.… And then she discovered this. There was only this way out. One of Lupe’s friends had told her of this doctor in San Francisco—I will not tell you the friend’s name, but she had been to him twice. He was sure and safe. And then—they had no money.”

Mona fell silent and returned to her sherry. Martin continued looking as much like a father confessor as possible.

“You said that death is strange, Martin,” she resumed suddenly. “To me love is quite as strange, and far more terrifying. I think of Lupe, and I do not want to love. Not ever. If such a thing were to happen to me—Remigio would—I do not know what he would do. And if the General were to learn of this …”

“The General?”

“Lupe’s father.”

Then Martin remembered. General Pompilio Sánchez y Lárreda, once a famous and daring Mexican rebel, now led a life of painful enforced quiet in Los Angeles. A proud man, claiming that in his veins flowed the blood of Conquistador and Aztec alike, the vigor of the conqueror and the nobility of the conquered.

“Why did they not marry?” Martin asked.

“Lupe is engaged to the son of an old aide of the General’s. Him she must some day marry, and return with him to Mexico. It would kill her father else.”

“But if they had no money, how does it happen that she’s in San Francisco now?”

“That I do not know. Saturday morning Lupe tells me that all is well, she can go to the doctor. That is all I know.”

It was almost too perfect, Martin thought. Everything dovetailed together. Everything but the fact that Kurt Ross was such a decent, likable fellow.

“And you will be nice to Kurt, and try to help him?” Mona was asking. Martin suddenly noticed with surprise that somewhere in their confidential talk she had

abandoned the formality of *usted* and was addressing him familiarly as *tú*.

"If only for your sake," he answered gallantly in the same form.

She shook her head. "Not for my sake, Martin. For his."

"I shall go to see him as soon as we get back to International House." That at least, Martin thought ruefully, was the truth.

"That is good. I like you, Martin." And he was rewarded with another smile and a light pressure of his hand as they rose from the table.

The serious mood dispelled, they chatted so gaily on the streetcar in an irresponsible mixture of Spanish and English, that Martin quite forgot his twinges of conscience. But the key still lay in his pocket.

"I'll go right up to Kurt," Martin had promised Mona as they parted in the hall of International House. But the stimulating effects of her smile wore off quickly, and instead he went to his own room.

Sitting disconsolate on the bed, he held a lengthy silent soliloquy. What was he to do? He had no desire to give his evidence, such as it was—the key, Kurt's wild entrance Friday evening, Lupe's abortion—to the police without allowing Kurt a chance to explain things. But he could hardly walk in upon the young Swiss and say, "Look here. I'm pretty certain that you murdered your uncle, and I'd just like to hear what you have to say about it."

If only he were dead certain that Kurt was the murderer. He could write out his evidence in an impressive document, leave it for Kurt with a note saying, "Tomorrow I deliver this to the police," and wait for Kurt to complete the conventional gambit by committing suicide. But he was not certain.

Damn it, one didn't know murderers. He had once played with a pet theory that every person, in the course of a lifetime, knows at least one murderer. He remembered once shocking a girl's parents at the dinner table with this pronouncement. They were incredulous until the girl's mother suddenly recalled some curious facts concerning a onetime neighbor and revealed to Martin the most ingenious case of unprovable faked suicide that he had ever heard.

But this was different. A congenial, relatively intimate friend … It was as though Paul or Alex or he himself should be a murderer. And it was—this was what bothered him the most—it was out of character. It was a subtle murder from an open person.

He began to wish that some of the bourbon were left from Friday's binge. Three beers are very little to fortify you for an accusation of murder.

And then another thought struck him. Was he himself safe? His mind, filled with mystery novels, recalled that the man who, in the conventional phrase, Knew Too Much was always the victim of the second murder. If he hinted his knowledge to Kurt, might not he himself be killed before he could inform the police? He saw a pretty picture of himself lying on a sidewalk—probably with the Seven of Calvary beside him—and wondered just how an ice pick felt.

Suddenly he rose, extinguished his cigarette, and hurried down the corridor. He did not even bother to knock on Kurt's door. He opened it, and walked to the dresser before which Kurt was combing his hair. He laid the gold Phi Beta Kappa key on the table and said, "I found this. I thought you might want it." Then he turned to leave the room.

Martin himself did not know why he had done this. It merely seemed the simplest way of washing one's hands of the whole business. Relief was already on his face when Kurt's hand stopped him at the door. The thought of the second victim flashed absurdly across his mind; but the expression on Kurt's face was puzzlement rather than anger.

"Don't rush off like that, Martin," the tall Swiss was saying. "Stay and talk while I finish dressing. Then we might dine together."

Martin smiled. "*Dine* is a queer word for the usual food here," he said. "But we might eat together."

Kurt nodded. "Sit down, then." Martin obeyed, wondering what the next move was. "Where," Kurt asked, with an unsuccessful attempt at nonchalance, "where did you find that key?"

"Under a bush."

"What bush? Where?"

"The bush beside which they found the Seven of Calvary."

The puzzlement on Kurt's face grew deeper. The name seemed entirely strange to him. "The Seven of Calvary?" he repeated slowly. "What has that to do with my key?"

If this were mere acting, Martin decided, the Little Theatre had lost a brilliant star. "You don't know the Seven of Calvary?" he asked, penciling idly on a scrap of paper.

"No." Kurt's voice sounded completely sincere. Then he started back as he saw what Martin was sketching. "That!" he gasped. "That is what you mean?" Martin nodded. "I see … I see …" Kurt sank into a chair. "So that is it. You too, Martin … You think …"

“Yes?”

“You think that I murdered my uncle.”

This was all wrong, Martin thought. Nothing in his previous calculations had come out quite like this. The accusation was proceeding from the suspect himself, not from the brilliant young amateur investigator. He swallowed with a good deal of effort and finally blurted forth, “Yes.” He was surprised by his own voice.

Kurt spoke softly, but his tone was sorrowful. “I was not surprised by the police,” he said. “To them I was just a possibility, not a person—just something that had to be investigated. But you, Martin—I had thought that you were a friend.”

Martin tried to summon up the logical attitude of the righteous accuser. It was no go. He could only feel sorry for Kurt. The tall blond youth no longer resembled Young Siegfried. Rather he looked like an older Siegfried, at the moment wherein he realizes that Hagen has struck him through. And Martin did not like to be Hagen. He sought for words that would be comforting, and thought of Mona’s request, and of her smile.

“Why?” Kurt was asking. “Why could you think that of me?”

Martin forgot the phrases that he was hunting for and spoke straight out. “I didn’t want to,” he said. “But I simply couldn’t help it. Everything pointed that way. Your terrified entrance to my room Friday evening—I noticed then that you’d lost your key—then finding the key in the bush in front of Cynthia’s … And the symbol was Swiss—that pointed to you. Besides, I knew about Lupe—”

“You knew?” Kurt interrupted.

“That is,” Martin hurried to make clear, “I guessed. From various little references that people made.” He had quickly realized that Kurt would not appreciate Mona’s confidences.

Kurt rose slowly. “I suppose I cannot blame you,” he said. “If you knew all that. That is more than the police knew. But you, Martin, you knew *me.*”

“That was what worried me so much. The whole thing wasn’t like you. I couldn’t feel sure. That is why I told nothing to the police.”

“Thank you, Martin.” Kurt was looking more nearly happy. “I spoke too soon. I should have known that you were kind when you returned to me the key. And to be grateful now I shall tell it all to you.”

“Tell it all?” Martin wondered what fresh revelation was forthcoming.

“But first of all—Why do you speak of this symbol as the Seven of—was it

Calvary? Yes. The Seven of Calvary. I have not seen that name in any newspaper."

"Haven't you ever heard of the Vignards?"

"No."

So Martin gave a highly condensed version of Paul Lennox's narrative. When he had finished, Kurt shook his head reflectively.

"It might be," he said doubtfully. "History I know little of, and of heresies nothing. It might be. But never in Switzerland have I heard of these—what do you call them?—Vignards, nor of their Seven. And I do not think that Uncle Hugo had ever a political enemy.

"But now I shall tell you my story. You say you know about Lupe. You are clever, Martin, to have put little things together so. She is well, Mona tells me. I wish that I could myself see her. I need her—ah, terribly. But if someone were to suspect, and the General ever to learn—You will be secret, Martin?"

"You can trust me."

"Good. You know perhaps that I have loved Lupe for many months—almost since I met her in the last Autumn. We have been …" He paused and groped for a word. Finding none and reassured by Martin's sympathetic glance, he resumed. "… since the Christmas holidays. It happened just before she went to Los Angeles for Christmas. We have loved each other in that way ever since." He paused again. Kurt was not a man who talked freely of his love life—which was one reason why Martin liked him—and he found this confession extremely painful.

"It was a month ago that she knew what had happened. We were both frightened. We thought that we had been so careful. And now—if it were learned, the General would go mad. And there would be a *Skandal,* and all would be terrible. We did not know what to do.

"We needed a doctor, and we did not know one who would do—what we needed. Lupe feared to ask anyone, because it might be suspected what had happened. Then one night she heard one girl—I do not think that she was sober—telling another of the luck that she had had two times, and Lupe learned the name of the doctor. We knew he would be good but expensive, because the girl was wealthy.

"In the meantime, I had written to my uncle, who was just arrived in New York, telling him that I needed some money badly and asking him for a loan. I will show you his answer." Kurt rose and opened the drawer of his desk. Martin

waited expectantly. On this letter depended, apparently, the entire question of motive.

"Here it is," Kurt said, handing it to him.

"Lieber Kurt," Martin read silently, deciphering with some difficulty the outmoded German script, *"Du kannst ja garnicht wissen, wie es mich freut, zum erstenmale in Amerika anzukommen. Die frische Luft dieses freien, friedlichen Landes …"* Martin smiled ironically and skipped hurriedly through three paragraphs of rejoicing in the peaceful freedom of America. Dr. Schaedel seemed to have been a curious combination of wisdom and innocence. *"In Bezug auf Deinen letzten Brief …"* he read at last, and concentrated his attention. His eyes opened wide as he read on.

"In regard to your last letter," (thus Dr. Schaedel said, freely translated) "I realize that I have long been remiss toward my only living relation. While I have enjoyed to the full your letters and your company, I have never thought how I might aid you in any way. I am not a wealthy man, but I am of comfortable means. As I believe I have told you, my fortune (if I may dignify it by such a word) goes at my death to several Swiss universities and charitable organizations, in addition to a fund to provide a Schaedel Chair of World Peace at my own university (a selfish whim to immortalize my name perhaps, but certainly a worthy immortality). Even in view of my previous remissness, I cannot see my way clear to altering my will and depriving any of these institutions of their allotments; but I am resolved to do what I can for you during my life. I shall be in Berkeley within two weeks, and you can then explain to me your need if you desire, or keep it secret if that seem necessary. In either case, please consider my aid as a gift, not as a loan. If your need be too urgent to wait the two weeks, wire me here."

At this point the letter went off into a discussion of Dr. Schaedel's plans for his lecture tour, and Martin laid it aside. "You have shown this to the police?" he asked.

"Yes. They secured other documents of my uncle and gave them to an expert of handwriting, who did me the honor of deciding that this letter was genuine. It was then that they told me to return home."

"Of course," Martin muttered. This letter removed any possible motive that Kurt might have had. With Dr. Schaedel alive, he could expect financial aid whenever he needed it. With Dr. Schaedel dead, he would have no claim whatsoever upon any of his uncle's money.

Kurt roused himself from silence and said, “I had best tell you the rest, too, even as I told it to Sergeant Cutting.”

“Is there more?”

“You still do not know why you found my key, Martin,” Kurt reminded him.

Martin nodded. His sympathy for Kurt had for the moment dispelled his detective fever.

“Very well,” Kurt resumed. “It is now Friday evening. After the dinner I speak to my uncle, and he tells me that he will see me at half after nine.”

“I know. I heard you.”

“So? You knew that too? Martin, I am surprised that you have not by now hanged me.” Kurt’s laughter was forced. “I went to his room at that hour. We talked a little and then he said,

“‘Kurt, take this.’

“He seemed awkward and unhappy, as though he were embarrassed by his gift. I took it. It was twenty-five twenty-dollar bills.

“‘I do not want to know your trouble,’ he said. ‘I have decided that it is better that I only give you this. If it is enough,’ he added.

“I said, ‘More than enough,’ and then I was telling to him all the story. Martin, he was a kind man. Things let themselves be told to him.…

“When I had finished, he said, ‘I do not like death, even of one not yet truly alive. But it is perhaps wise if it saves the happiness of those living.’ And he smiled and got up and said, ‘Now I am going for my evening walk. Send your Lupe to the hospital tomorrow, and bring me to see her when she is better. She must be a charming girl, Kurt.’

“I could not say anything. I took his hand and … and kissed it, like a peasant kissing the hand of his emperor. I felt like that. He was so good, and I was …

“That was the last time that I spoke to him alive.”

Kurt, deeply moved, ceased to speak, while Martin, moved almost as deeply, could find nothing to say that would not sound intolerably stupid. He was surprised to hear Kurt, after a short pause, continue his story.

“That was some time after ten o’clock. I hurried from his room to mine and there … there I wept. Then I hid the money deep back in a drawer and went for a walk myself. I walked about an hour in the hills, and then was coming back along Panoramic Way. I had just looked at my watch about five minutes earlier; it must have been around eleven-thirty.

“I saw a man who might have been my uncle go into Cynthia Wood’s house. I

was not sure. You know he was of ordinary height, but looked so small because he stooped. On his evening walks, he kept very straight. And he was in an ordinary gray suit. It might have been anyone, and since he went into Cynthia's I thought for a minute it might be Alex. He has a suit like that. But I waited for a moment, and saw him come out again. I was about ten meters away, and I started forward, and then …" Kurt broke off. His emotion was too great.

"You mean—you saw him killed?" Martin exclaimed.

"Yes!" Kurt burst out. "Yes! I saw that good man killed. It was someone who was behind that bush where you found my key. He rushed out and seized my uncle. Then my uncle fell. It was all over before I could even move. I hurried and seized the man. I was not afraid, only for my uncle. He did not try to stab me. He only slipped away and vanished. I bent over my uncle. He was dead. Then I heard people coming out of the house, and then … now this I do not like to tell, no, not even to you, Martin. I am not proud of it. But … I was afraid. There was my uncle, dead—there was nothing that I could do for him. But those who were coming—what might they not think on finding me? It was foolish, that I know—but it was … hysteria almost. I ran. I left that dear dead man and ran away from a fear that did not exist. For ten, fifteen minutes I do not know what I did. I wandered helpless, hopeless, mad.… And then I forced myself to come back among people. I came to your room. And the rest you know.…" He paused with something almost a sob.

"And it was while you were struggling with the murderer that you lost your key?"

"I think so."

"You told this to the police too?"

"Just as to you, Martin."

"What was he like, this man?"

"That I cannot tell you. He wore a rough mask from a handkerchief. He was smaller than I—about my uncle's height, and wore a gray suit much like his. It was dark; you could not recognize people."

"And how did this keep out of the papers?"

"Sergeant Cutting said: 'If I say through the papers that you saw the murderer and could not identify him, he will feel too safe. If I say a lie that you could identify him, perhaps you will not be safe yourself. It is best I say nothing. He may become worried and make a mistake.'"

Martin mentally noted that Sergeant Cutting was a much shrewder man than

his statements to the newspapers might lead one to believe.

“Now that is all that I know,” Kurt concluded. “I do not quite know why I have told you so much, Martin. Sergeant Cutting wished that I should say nothing of it. But you were very kind to me—” he glanced at the gold key—“and I wished to thank you.”

“I should thank you, Kurt. It was most interesting,” Martin said lamely. It was so much more than interesting, and still it led nowhere that he could see.

Kurt picked up the key and adjusted it on his watch-chain. “I must have this repaired,” he said. “God knows where I might lose it next.”

“I only hope that I’ll find it again, and not—” Martin broke off, realizing that the remark was tactless.

“Shall we now dine—pardon me, Martin—eat?” Kurt asked.

Martin glanced at his watch. “I’m sorry,” he replied. “It’s late and I’ve got to get to rehearsal. I’ll just have time for a hamburger at the White Tavern.” He paused embarrassedly, and finally held out his hand—an uncommon gesture for Martin. “Well,” he said, “good luck, Kurt. And I hope Lupe gets on all right.”

“I am sure that she will. I have much trust in a doctor recommended by Cynthia.”

“Cynthia!”

“I am sorry. I had not meant to let the name slip. Good-bye, Martin, and thank you.”

So that was that, thought Martin on his way to rehearsal. His beautifully built-up case had collapsed completely. With all trace of motive ripped out, the other details explained themselves readily enough.

And he was glad—terrifically glad that his feelings had been right and his reasoning wrong. But if Kurt was innocent, who was the murderer? Kurt’s description might fit anyone—a masked man of medium height—it meant nothing. There seemed to remain only the two possibilities—the homicidal maniac and the emissary of the Vignards. Martin admitted that both ideas, however possible, or even plausible, were distasteful to him. He had certain aesthetic ideals of murder, in which neither madness nor secret societies played any part.

Irrelevant though it was to the murder, his thoughts recurred to Kurt’s involuntary mention of Cynthia. He could hardly believe the staid Alex responsible for Cynthia’s visits to the abortionist. And what then would Alex think if he knew of them? It was an amusingly bawdy topic for wonder, and a

relief from the murder. Some day he should write a mystery novel in which the entire mystery should consist of such a question as paternity. Better yet, a mysterious rape. There could be a wonderful scene in which the crime was reconstructed, with the detective, as is conventional, performing the actions of the criminal.

Martin reached Wheeler Hall a little late, despite the speed with which he had gulped his hamburger. Rehearsal was already in progress, and Drexel greeted him with anything but the proper respect due to a translator-actor. Paul was on the stage, looking, as always, slightly annoyed that he was not allowed to go through the part with a pipe in his mouth.

“Come on, Lamb,” Drexel called petulantly. “After all, it is *your* play, you know, and you’ve got to snap into it.”

Martin snapped obediently, and so effectively that in his preoccupation over *Don Juan Returns* he quite forgot his preoccupation over the Seven of Calvary. He had little notion how soon those two preoccupations were to become one.

CHAPTER V

Watson as Lothario

“Arthur Machen, in his brief study of the Islington mystery,” Dr. Ashwin pronounced, “has stated that the public taste in murders is undependable and vagarious. Surely we have here a case in point.”

It was late on Friday evening, a week, almost to the hour, after the murder of Dr. Hugo Schaedel. Martin, wearied by a strenuous rehearsal, had encountered Alex, almost equally weary from long hours of experimenting in the laboratory; and together they had decided to pay a brief visit to Dr. Ashwin.

Inevitably the conversation, which had first lingered upon such topics as the recent amusing remarks of Elizabeth or Dr. Ashwin’s eminently sound reasons for not translating the masterpieces of Bravabhuti, had come round to murder and the Seven of Calvary. Ashwin, who had begun to take an almost personal pride in the intricacies of the local murder, was now venting his grievance against the newspaper-reading public.

“The murder of Dr. Schaedel,” he continued, “was a skillful and fascinating crime. The character of the victim, the lack of motive, the curious symbol left beside the corpse—all these combined to make it a puzzle of unusual interest. By the way, Mr. Lamb, how did it happen that the newspapers secured the story of the Seven of Calvary? Mr. Lennox seemed firmly resolved not to make it public.”

“I suspect Worthing,” Martin said. “There was a fierce light of resolution in his eyes when Paul announced that he respected his life more than his public duty. You remember, Alex?”

Alex nodded silently.

“Besides,” Martin added, “he probably got space rates.”

“That does seem likely,” Ashwin admitted. “Was Mr. Lennox much perturbed by the publication of his dangerous knowledge?”

“I was with him when he read it,” said Alex. “When he saw that his name wasn’t mentioned he was relieved. But he did seem puzzled when the Swiss Consul said he’d never heard of the Vignards.”

Martin smiled. “I think he suspects the Swiss Consul of being a Vignard himself. The Seven of Calvary is approaching the proportions of a monomania with Paul.”

“So.” Ashwin settled farther into the swivel-chair. “And yet even that wildly romantic revelation failed to keep the newspaper public interested. Over the last week end, the Ice Pick Murder was spread on the front pages of every Bay Region newspaper. It is still unsolved, and yet, within a week—”

“Yes,” Martin agreed regretfully, “all that the papers are interested in now is the Twin Peaks murder.”

“And what is there in that for a connoisseur of murder? A common, brutal *crime passionel,* utterly deficient in mystery or subtleties of psychology.” Ashwin sighed. “A naked female body is found in a parked car on Twin Peaks. The woman has been shot. Five yards down the road, the gun is found. The car and the gun are both traced to a married man who is known to have been the woman’s lover. His fingerprints are on the gun—that such negligence should be possible in this age of mystery-novel readers!—and he confesses to the crime. There is your Twin Peaks Murder, and it absorbs every copywriter to the entire exclusion of the Seven of Calvary.” Ashwin sighed again and shifted about in discomfort. “Gentlemen,” he announced, “only another glass of Scotch can keep me from tears at the thought of this shameful decadence of modern taste. Will you join me?”

Martin and Alex joined him, with suitably doleful countenances.

“I can see but one explanation,” Dr. Ashwin reflected aloud. “In view of the naked female body involved in the Twin Peaks Murder, the public must suppose the *twin peaks* to have a physiological, rather than a geographical, reference. Lubricity is indeed the lubricant of social thought.” He relapsed into mournful silence.

“Dr. Ashwin …” Alex began tentatively.

“Yes, Mr. Bruce?”

“Martin tells me that you were rather interested in poor Dr. Schaedel’s death. I wonder if you have any new ideas on it by now?”

“I have no ideas on it, Mr. Bruce, beyond the perception of certain obvious facts. That these have not been perceived by the authorities is doubtless

unfortunate; for that means that this first murder will in all likelihood remain unsolved."

"This first murder …?" Alex sounded a little frightened.

"Consider the facts as they stand, Mr. Bruce. Mr. Lamb will remember that he and I ran through a little list of possible motives. We eliminated Jealousy, Revenge, and Elimination because of the character of the victim. Gain we considered for a time—at least, Mr. Lamb did—thinking that Kurt Ross stood to gain by his uncle's death. But Mr. Lamb spent the greater part of a recent class period, which might better have been devoted to the *Mahabharata,"* (Ashwin's look of stern reproof was not a complete success) "in explaining to me why Mr. Ross could have no motive. We can hardly suspect the emissaries of Swiss charities of having committed this murder; and they alone stood to gain by it.

"Thus we are left with Conviction and Lust for Killing as motives. Conviction could result only in the case of the Vignards, and I begin to feel that there Mr. Lennox's imagination and zeal for research have twisted a too elaborate explanation from probably simple sources. I deeply regret that those works of Urmayer's and Kurbrand's are not available here. There remains, of course, the last possibility—the crime of a homicidal maniac. But that a maniac who has never struck before in Berkeley should kill a Swiss emissary just arrived in the city and leave beside him a symbol connected with Swiss history—to believe this is to stretch the laws of chance too far." Ashwin paused to find a cigarette.

"Then what is there left?" Alex asked not illogically.

"What is there left, Mr. Bruce? The fact—the glaring, horrifying fact—the fact, indeed, in the Elizabethan sense—the deepest of deep damnations of this taking-off—the fact that the wrong man was murdered."

Alex's mouth fell open, and was not closed until he had finished off his glass of Scotch. Martin, who had half-expected the idea, felt nonetheless the need of whiskey.

"The wrong man?" Alex mumbled.

"Dr. Schaedel was of ordinary height and ordinarily attired. It was a dark night, and a dozen men in Berkeley must have looked exactly as he did. The murderer simply made the trifling error of killing the wrong person. That accounts completely for the absence of motive, and that is why I spoke of Dr. Schaedel's death as the first murder."

"You mean …?"

"I mean, Mr. Bruce, that the murderer will, in all probability, still carry out his

original intention, and kill his planned victim. Whatever his motive may have been, Dr. Schaedel's death has certainly not satisfied it. The fact that his accidental murder has been a complete success, insofar as his personal safety is concerned, will merely be a stimulus to him in his second effort.

"I have never put much stock," Ashwin continued, "in the oft stated theory that murder breeds murder—that is, that a once successful murderer is more apt to kill than any other man. Most people pass through life without having a real reason for killing more than one or two people. The necessary killing once accomplished, they are, in my opinion, if anything less apt than a nonmurderer to kill again. Your Landrus and Smiths, men to whom killing became more or less a profession, or at least a hobby, are of course in a class apart.

"But in this case the necessary murder was not accomplished. Someone still lives who, in the mind of the gentleman who left the Seven of Calvary, needs killing. It will surprise me very much if another strange death in Berkeley does not in its turn supersede the Twin Peaks Murder."

"You know," said Alex to Martin as they walked home together, "I think he's right."

Saturday, Martin, with no rehearsal to worry him, spent the day with Mona. They lunched together—for the third time that week—and boated on Lake Merrit in the afternoon. Martin rowed over the sunny lake while Mona sang plaintive South American folksongs from time to time, and grew every moment more charming to him.

They dined—and on this occasion, Martin thought, the word was properly used—at the Capri, with a bottle of Chianti to aid digestion and other things. When they had reached the stage of coffee, liqueurs, and cigarettes—Martin had rather wanted a cigar, but realized in time that he looked somewhat ludicrous smoking one—Mona asked, "And what sort of a party is it that you're taking me to tonight?"

"A Morris party," Martin replied.

"Is that an idiom?" Mona looked delightfully puzzled.

"It's a Berkeley idiom," he explained; "or perhaps an idiotism, as you call it in Spanish. Haven't I mentioned Mr. Morris before?"

"I do not think so. Who is he?"

"I'm none too sure myself. I don't even know his first name. He's moderately wealthy and thinks he's a philologist. He lives in a pleasant house in the hills and

does pseudophilological research at the University. His hobby is parties."

"Does he give so many?"

"He practically never gives any. The rest of us do at his house. You call him up and say, 'Mr. Morris? Martin speaking. Will you be home Saturday evening?' He says, 'Yes. Why don't you get together some friends and have a party?' So you give a Morris party."

Mona laughed. "That should be fun."

And it was fun. About a dozen people were there when Martin and Mona arrived, and a dozen or so more dropped in in the course of the evening—during which time some of the original dozen vanished. It was a kaleidoscopic gathering. There were Cynthia and Alex, Mary Roberts and a boy named Chuck Withers (who never liked any of Mary's friends, but insisted on coming to their parties to assert his own superiority), Paul in his usual celibate loneliness, and various assorted couples, among them Dr. Ivan Leshin and his attractive wife Tanya. Kurt had been invited, but had stayed at home with his worries. (Lupe, Mona had confided to Martin, was getting on as well as could be expected.) Boritsin had not been invited, but had come anyway.

No one noticed especially the entrance of Mona and Martin. The phonograph was playing and Boritsin was attempting a tango with Cynthia. The spectacle was quite enough to distract anyone from new arrivals.

Martin nodded random greetings here and there and struggled through to the host, who, oblivious to the dance, was explaining to an extremely uninterested Chuck Withers how the golf term *stymie* was derived from the Greek *stigma* in the sense of *fault* or *blame.* Martin interrupted long enough to introduce Mona, and Morris, with a glance of approval and the question "Wine or whiskey?" slipped off to the kitchen.

He returned with whiskey for Martin and Angelica for Mona, and relapsed almost instantly into his discussion. This derivation, he was apparently maintaining, clearly proved that golf was known to the Greeks.

Martin drew Mona after him through the crowd and found a large cushion on the floor by a welcome open window. There they sat, with more comfort than grace, as the ballet number ended and applause broke out. Someone changed the record and substituted Strauss's *Wienerblut.* Martin finished his whiskey, stretched out almost his full length, and looked up at Mona. She smiled down on him, and he began mentally to quote "The Blessèd Damozel."

But his pre-Raphaelite musings were interrupted by a voice which gave him

good evening with a harsh Slavic accent. He looked up to see Dr. Leshin, who was smiling condescendingly at Martin's pose of sprawling devotion.

"Hello," he responded, with something less than a proper attitude of respect for an Exchange Professor. "Having a good time?"

"Ah, yes." Dr. Leshin's white teeth glittered. "It is an amusing party, is it not?"

"These parties usually are. Nobody tries to make people enjoy themselves, and as a result they generally do. Oh, pardon me. Miss Morales—Dr. Leshin."

The Slav bowed gracefully, with no attempt at hiding the gleam in his eyes. Martin realized with some annoyance why the visitor from Prague had singled him out of the party. Mona smiled in slight confusion.

"How is Mrs. Leshin?" Martin asked unfairly.

"Very well." Dr. Leshin's gaze wandered across the room. "She seems to be enjoying herself."

Martin followed Leshin's glance and saw Tanya Leshin, slim and striking in a flaming gown, dancing the Strauss waltz with a seemingly reluctant Paul Lennox. The inflection of Dr. Leshin's last sentence amused him. It showed that a consummate rake was perfectly capable of jealousy where his wife was concerned—jealousy even of Paul, or more probably merely of Strauss.

"Have you seen the current Soviet film in San Francisco, Mr. Lamb?" Dr. Leshin asked, forcibly removing his gaze from the dancers. On Martin's negative reply, he proceeded into a long, but keen analysis of its merits, interrupted by the arrival of Boritsin.

"Of what is it that you speak, Dr. Leshin?" the exiled aristocrat asked.

"The newest Soviet film—to my mind perhaps the most—"

"Dr. Leshin!" Boritsin seemed wounded. "Can it be that a man of your intellectual attainments can be intaken by the pseudo-art of propaganda which they of the Soviet seek to foister upon us? To me—"

"Martin …" Mona whispered.

"Yes?"

"If they are going on for long like this … I think I need more wine."

Quite unnoticed by the Russian disputants, who were fast reaching such a heat that English words no longer sufficed to express their feelings, Martin slipped away with Mona's glass and his own. Cynthia, he noted in passing, was the current unwilling victim of Mr. Morris's philological vagaries.

He entered the kitchen, looked about, and finally found the bottles. As he was filling the glasses, he felt a tap on his shoulder and looked around to find

Cynthia.

"Got a cigarette, Martin? Like an idiot, I've run out." He obliged her gladly. "And while you're pouring, you might pour me one too."

"Angelica?"

"Hell, no. Is that what your little Latin's drinking?" She shuddered, and added, "Bourbon. Straight."

The glasses filled, Cynthia lifted hers, exclaimed, "Here's to philology!" and gulped the whiskey down. Martin joined her. "Ouf!" she gasped. "For ten minutes by anybody's clock and ten hours by my feeling I've been listening to how *bosom* is originally the same word as *besom* because the peasants of Swabia were flat-chested and filled out their bosoms with broom-straw. Thank God I'm not a peasant of Swabia!" She looked down with not unjustified satisfaction at her own full breasts.

"You are not alone in being thankful for that," Martin ventured awkwardly.

"Sweet of you, Martin. I didn't think you noticed such things. And to think that this man actually believes all this rot about words …! Tell me, Martin," she switched abruptly, "do you like Mrs. Leshin?"

"I scarcely know her. I've been to their house once or twice. She's a pleasant hostess—seems intelligent—"

"You know that's not what I mean. I mean do you think she's—well, attractive?"

"That's a matter of taste. To my mind, she's a trifle slim—"

"Slim? Martin, you're always too damned betwixt-and-between to please everybody. Slim …? She's thin—she's scrawny—she's—she's—a peasant of Swabia, that's what she is!" Cynthia had poured another drink, and downed it triumphantly at this *mot juste.*

Martin was puzzled by the violence of Cynthia's outburst. "I don't quite see …" he began.

"Martin darling, do you ever quite see anything? Run along and take your Latin her Angelica. Auntie Cynthia's staying right here for a while with the Bourbon."

Precariously bearing the two filled glasses, Martin re-entered the main room. Some kind soul, in the midst of the general confusion, was keeping the phonograph in action, holding its repertory fairly steadily to Strauss, Lehar, and Kalman. Seeing that the cushion by the window was vacant, Martin looked over the dancers until he spied Mona waltzing with Dr. Leshin. He felt annoyed, and

then annoyed with himself for being annoyed.

“What do you think, Martin?” he heard Alex’s voice at his side.

It was on the tip of his tongue to say, “I think you’d better go out to the kitchen and keep Cyn from making a fool of herself,” but he controlled his impulse—it was none of his business—and merely asked, “What do I think about what?”

“This absurd theory of your Dr. Ashwin’s,” Paul replied.

“I was telling Paul,” Alex explained, “about the ideas that Dr. Ashwin was expounding last night.”

“They seem reasonable enough,” said Martin.

“Reasonable?” Paul puffed on his pipe with extra vigor. “My dear Martin, this isn’t a detective novel. You can’t reason things out in actual life with such absolute precision. If a thing is reasonable and yet fantastic, it’s not worth considering.”

“And still I think he may be right,” Alex said quietly.

“Our opinion can make very little difference to the murderer,” Paul observed conclusively. “It’s a futile discussion.”

That was the only mention of the murder in the course of the evening, and yet Martin felt that this brief snatch of dialogue contained some important meaning which he was unable to grasp. Perhaps, he consoled himself, it was only the bourbon.

The music stopped momentarily, and he saw Mona coming toward him. Dr. Leshin, after a polite adieu to his partner, had hurried off to rescue his wife from Boritsin, who seemed, to judge from his gestures, engaged in another of his periodic dissertations on the decadence of the Russian ballet.

“Thanks, Martin,” Mona smiled as he handed her the glass. “Let’s sit down.”

Their window cushion was now occupied by Chuck and Mary, but they finally found sitting space on the floor behind the piano.

“Please, Martin,” Mona begged earnestly as she sipped her wine, “don’t leave me alone with him again, not even if I want another glass.”

“Was he so dull?”

“No, no. Not dull.” She paused. “I only do not like to dance with him. He … he is not a nice dancer.…”

Martin nodded. He had heard that commentary on Dr. Leshin before, and reproached himself for deserting Mona, even at her own request.

They sat in silence for a while, smoking and sipping and listening to the

waltzes. Somehow Mona's hand had slipped into Martin's. Suddenly she spoke.

"Please, Martin, dance with me."

"I'm an atrocious dancer, I warn you—"

"That is no matter. I see your Russian doctor coming this way, and I think—"

Dr. Leshin looked a trifle disconcerted. He arrived from across the room just in time to see Martin waltz off with Mona. The music was Kalman's magnificent *Sari* waltz, and its surging rhythm brought to Martin a sense of surprising abandon. Paul, he noticed, was dancing again with Tanya Leshin, and her husband had been trapped by the host for a little give-and-take on Slavic philology. Dr. Leshin's dark glances wandered appealingly around the room, resting in turn on each attractive girl, while he vainly tried to correct Mr. Morris's fixed impression that Finnish was a Russian dialect. Martin laughed and swung joyously in the rhythmic compulsion of the music. He reveled in international joy—a joy compounded of American bourbon, Hungarian music, and a Bolivian smile.

"Martin," Mona whispered, brushing her cheek lightly against his, "you were right. You are atrocious."

The joy collapsed. Martin stopped dancing and stood still with a comically rueful countenance.

Mona laughed softly. "I am sorry. But you are, you know." And then, as though to make amends, "Where is it that we might find fresh air?"

Fresh air, indeed, was sorely needed. No amount of open windows can prevent partial suffocation in a room of a dozen constant smokers. Taking her hand, Martin led her up the stairs, through an unused room, and out onto a small balcony. The night was cool. There was no moon; but here, high in the hills, far from disturbing street lights, the light of the stars was bright. Over on the bay the ferryboats crawled, and beyond them glowed the lights of San Francisco. From the party below came a faint sound of waltzes.

Mona sighed deeply. "It is beautiful. It is of the beauty that is ever sadness.…"

Martin looked at her face. Her olive skin seemed ivory in the starlight and her hair jet. "And your beauty … is that sadness too, Mona?"

"Please do not talk."

As they sat silently on the balustrade, watching the glimmer of distant lights, Mona began softly to sing. Her song was *Las Cuatro Milpas,* the Mexican lament—the saddest, Martin had often thought, of all the world's folksongs. To the beat of a slow waltz of tragedy, its sadness seemed to envelop them both.

… toditito se acabó. ¡Ay! …

Martin took her hand as she sang. It was cold and lifeless.

… ni hiedras, ni flores. Todito murió …

Her voice rose in the impassioned appeal of the second part.

… Me prestaras tus ojos, morena,
en el alma los llevo que miren allá …

Her parted lips were black in the starlight. Her small breasts trembled.

… los despojos de aquella casita
tan linda y bonita.…

Martin felt her hand grow warm in his.

… lo triste que está.…

Martin kissed her.

It was a surprising kiss. For one moment her lips were pressed warmly against his, as though the strong emotion of the song had continued into the kiss. The next moment she was sitting on the balustrade a foot away from him and gazing at him reproachfully.

“Martin …” was all she said. But when he tried to approach her she waved him away. “You do not love me, Martin,” she said after an unhappy pause.

“No,” Martin admitted frankly, “I don’t.” He had always been rather sceptical as to the possibility of his ever falling in love. “But is that all that matters? I like you. I think that you are sweet, charming, lovely—”

“Nor do I love you,” she continued as though he had not spoken. “Martin, one does not kiss without love.”

To Martin this seemed an indefensibly exaggerated statement, but he said nothing.

“It was better that Lupe did … what she did with love, than that I do only this without love.” She paused again, and finally added, “Martin, are we friends?”

“Of course, Mona.”

“Let us go in.”

She held out her hand.

By common consent, Mona and Martin separated when they returned to the party. While Mona danced with Chuck, Martin wandered into the kitchen.

Paul was sitting there, in pipe-equipped placidity, listening to a long tirade from Cynthia, who had given up by now any pretense to sobriety. The tirade broke off as Martin entered, but he gathered that it still concerned the boyish

figure of Tanya Leshin, a subject that seemed to agitate Cynthia quite disproportionately.

Paul rose and sauntered back to the main room. “You’re in for it, Martin,” he observed. “She’s got to tell her troubles to somebody.”

Without a word, Martin crossed to the whiskey bottle, filled with a childish resolve to get good and plastered just to prove that scenes on balconies didn’t bother him one little bit.

“What’s the matter, Martin?” Cynthia inquired in practically one syllable, as he resolutely swallowed a large dose of bourbon.

“Nothing.”

“Something’s the matter. Tell Cynthia.”

“Nothing, damn it.”

“Mm. He’s angry. Nice quiet Martin’s angry. Is it the little Latin? I thought she looked like a nice girl, Martin. And were you naughty? Should have fed her bourbon; you’ll never get any place with Angelica.”

Martin poured himself another drink.

“That’s the idea, Martin. We’ll have another drink. One for you and one for me and one for—No. Just you and me. Here’s to—here’s—well, anyway, here’s!”

They drank in unison. Martin produced an amazing glurping noise as aftermath; it was really pretty bad bourbon.

“Don’t make faces, Martin. Isn’t nice. Are we downhearted? No! No! A thousand times no!” And Cynthia was singing in a loud voice to no apparent tune that she’d rather diiiiiiie than say yes.

Martin began to feel better. The immortal spirit of Mehitabel was permeating him. “Wotthell, Archie!” he exclaimed. *“Toujours gai*, kid, *toujours gai!”*

“Once a lady, always a lady,” Cynthia responded duly. “How’s about maybe another drink maybe?”

From that point on, with one strongly marked exception, the entire evening became rather vague in Martin’s memory. How long he and Cynthia were in the kitchen God only knew. The time could be calculated only approximately from the size of the whiskey bottle which they resolutely depleted.

It was when the bottle was about empty that Mona appeared in the doorway. Martin thought it was at the moment when Cynthia was teaching him to tango, a process which resulted in their both collapsing on the floor in hysterics.

“I’m going home now, Martin,” Mona said. She was not smiling.

Martin rose with extreme dignity. “In an instant,” he announced, “I shall have secured my cat and hoat. Then I shall escort you, Mona.”

“Martin,” Cynthia shrieked, “you said ‘cat and hoat’!”

“What is so amusing about that?”

“‘Cat and hoat’!”

“Ah, I see. It was silly of me. I never wear a cat. Very diverting error, Mona. Now if you will await me here till I get my hoat and—”

“Do not mind,” Mona said calmly. “Mr. Boritsin has a car and will drive me home. If you wish to come with us, you may; but I do not want to spoil your fun.”

And she left the room.

The next thing that Martin remembered at all distinctly, as he attempted the next morning to review events, was a very loud chorus of *Tavern in the Town,* with Mary at the piano. Then there was a shadowy recollection of Alex looking pained and unhappy, and a picture of the terrific blush on the face of a girl Martin had never seen before as she came down from a session on the balcony with Dr. Leshin.

Then, too, there was the astounding moment when Martin and Cynthia, stumbling into a passage off the main room, saw Mrs. Leshin being kissed with unmistakable vigor. Dr. Leshin’s roving black eyes had by now discovered an object which interested him more than his jealousy of his own wife; and she had apparently decided to have a little fun on her own. At first Cynthia sniffed, seemingly in disgust at anyone who could find amorous pleasure in a peasant of Swabia; and then she gasped, as did Martin, to recognize in Tanya’s partner the ordinarily staid Paul Lennox. His pipe was nowhere to be seen, and he was quite evidently entering whole-heartedly into the spirit of the occasion.

It was some indefinite time after this vision that Martin found himself on the balcony with Cynthia. It was a very different matter from his first balcony scene of the evening. This time there was no abstract discussion of love; there was nothing but lusty kisses and warm caresses. Martin’s head was swimming through an uncertain ocean of bourbon; but he realized that he was discovering a marked taste for decidedly un-Swabian pomegranates.

As Martin’s caresses grew even more intimate, Cynthia sighed luxuriously. “Darling …” she moaned, running her fingers through his rumpled hair. “Paul darling … Paul.…”

For one instant Martin was, in his astonishment, completely sober. Paul.… Paul’s name was Cynthia’s unconscious and automatic response to the warmest love-making. Martin’s hands ceased to wander and his lips grew unresponsive as he tried to piece this together with other things. Dozens of other things. Cynthia’s tirades against Tanya Leshin … the brief conversation earlier in the evening between Paul and Alex … Cynthia’s two visits to the doctor in San Francisco. Cynthia, finding herself suddenly quite uncaressed, began to express her chagrin in purest Billingsgate.

Alex was standing at the entrance to the balcony and saying something about time to go home now. Martin was glad. He was frightened and could no longer remember why.

It was Chuck Withers, he discovered later, who drove them all home, and Alex who helped him to bed. And no one realized, least of all Martin, that he had established a new precedent by showing how drunkenness and its consequent lechery may prove invaluable to the incipient Watson.

CHAPTER VI

The Superfluous Alibi

All this was on Saturday. Sunday was, as a natural result, as dismal a day as Martin had ever passed. He awoke in the early afternoon with a head of fabulous proportions. His alarm-clock, he discovered, had run down completely without in the least disturbing his sleep. He had missed Mass, and his mouth—none of the conventional similes involving birdcages or motormen's gloves were in the least adequate to describe his mouth.

Things were very confused in his mind as he dressed. The one clear idea was that he owed Mona an apology. He rehearsed several possible openings while he steadied himself with vast quantities of black coffee and tomato juice (with Worcestershire sauce), only to find that Mona had left for San Francisco—probably to see Lupe, he thought—and would be gone all day.

On his way to the library he ran into Paul, who looked almost equally low, and Alex, who made unpleasant remarks about people who had to be put to bed. At last, in absolute desperation, he lost himself in the stacks and read a complete novel by Gutzkow at one sitting.

Since he had gone that far, he determined to cap the wretchedness of the day by attending the Sunday Supper at International House. He even sat through the speeches, and then hurried to bed and a mercifully quick sleep.

He felt better on Monday. Even the dullness of Hagemann's course on Young Germany, for which he had gobbled the Gutzkow, did not particularly disturb him, and by the time he had reached Dr. Ashwin's class he was his own bright self.

When the translation from the *Mahabharata* had been concluded (and none too successfully, for he had not prepared it well), he entered into a spirited discussion concerning the relative merits of the imperishable Master of Baker Street in novels and in short stories, and decided to look upon Saturday night and

Sunday as simply not having been.

As the hour drew to a close, Dr. Ashwin glanced at his watch and said, “I regret that I have an appointment, Mr. Lamb, or I should ask you to lunch with me. I wish, frankly, to pick your brains for certain specialized information. Could you come to see me this evening?”

“I’ll be rehearsing. The show goes on Friday, you know, and I’ll be busy as the devil all week.”

“Come after rehearsal for a half hour or an hour.”

“It’ll be late.”

“That is all right. If it will not be too inconvenient for you?”

“Oh, no.”

“Good. And please, Mr. Lamb—come alone.”

Martin nodded, a trifle puzzled.

The rest of the day was a busy one. Dr. Leshin’s class—wherein the doctor cast at Martin several knowing and reminiscent glances, of the one-man-of-the-world-to-another sort, which were rather embarrassing—then most of the afternoon in conference with Drexel and his costume designer; a hurried dinner hour, mostly spent in a vain search for Mona; and then the rehearsal. It was the first rehearsal with sets and props, and as confusing as such occasions usually are. Its one redeeming feature was the fact that Paul Lennox at last was good in his death scene.

Dog tired but persistent, Martin climbed the stairs to Dr. Ashwin’s room. He sank into a chair without a word and gratefully accepted the whiskey glass which Ashwin had already filled for him.

“You look tired,” Dr. Ashwin observed.

Martin emptied the glass at a gulp. “I know you love to enunciate the obvious,” he said, “but that’s even a little too much so.” He lit a cigarette and half-closed his eyes.

“I am sorry to bother you when you are so busy,” Ashwin continued, “but my mind has kept itself too much occupied with this problem of murder. Your presenting me with that problem, Mr. Lamb, was as though I should offer a glass of this Scotch to a teetotaler who had within him the potentialities of an extreme dipsomaniac. You have corrupted me.”

“*Mea culpa* …” Martin murmured.

“I have no work to do at present, beyond my familiar teaching routine, which

is light. I am working on no translation, as I have generally been in the past, for there is nothing left in Sanskrit at once worthy of translation and suited to my abilities and limitations. Thus this problem of murder has furnished me with something to work at, and I cannot stop."

Martin made a wearily inarticulate questioning noise as Ashwin paused.

"You wonder then why I have insisted on your visiting me tonight? It is because I need facts concerning people, and I think that you can give them to me."

"'Who's Who in Berkeley, or, The Traveler's Compendium of Fascinating Facts.' Go on." Martin settled himself more comfortably.

"You must also forgive me," Ashwin resumed, "if I employ you as an accessory to my reasoning, in the Socratic method. I feel the need of—shall we say, a Watson?"

"A stooge," Martin emended.

"Your alternations, Mr. Lamb, between the diction of the eighteenth century and that of the theatrical periodical, *Variety,* which you once showed me, never cease to astound me. But to continue: We agreed, I believe, on the occasion of your last visit, that the murdered Dr. Schaedel was in all likelihood a mere innocent bystander. Do you still think that plausible?"

"Quite. So does Alex. He was very much impressed, and got into quite an argument with Paul about your theory."

Dr. Ashwin was markedly interested. "So? Mr. Lennox does not think my theory tenable?"

"Not in the least."

"Now that, Mr. Lamb, is an example of the sort of fact which I hope to elicit from you. But to resume the logical course of discussion—If Dr. Schaedel was indeed the wrong man, the next step would be to decide who was the right man. It should be far simpler to find who the murderer was once we know who was the intended victim.

"There are, in this murder, three separate possibilities in explaining the confusion of victims. Let us be methodical and letter them. A: The murderer, having long since resolved to kill his victim, accidentally encounters Dr. Schaedel coming from Miss Wood's door and does the deed then and there. B: The murderer is deliberately shadowing his victim with murder in mind; but the victim's evening wanderings cross those of Dr. Schaedel and the murderer follows the wrong man. C: The murderer is lying in wait for his victim in front

of Miss Wood's home. Can you suggest any further possibilities?"

"No," Martin admitted. "But I can make objections to those, which is, I suppose, what you want me to do."

"Go on," Ashwin prompted.

"Well … As to A, it's too damned improbable. I grant Dr. Schaedel looked very ordinary at night and might be taken for anyone, but only if you had a definite reason for thinking he was someone else—such a reason as knowing that your intended victim would be in that place at that time. Just a chance encounter won't do."

Ashwin nodded. "And you see, of course, that something the same objection applies to B. If the murderer had lost the trail unwittingly, he would not have killed at that precise moment unless Dr. Schaedel was doing something which the real victim would have done."

"In other words," Martin interposed, "what you're getting at is this: Whoever the intended victim was, he was someone whom the murderer might expect to see coming out of Cynthia's house at that hour."

"Exactly. And now you see, Mr. Lamb, why I wish to question you. Who would fulfill that condition and at the same time resemble Dr. Schaedel sufficiently?"

Martin pondered. "Let's see … Of course, the most frequent male visitor to Cynthia's is Alex Bruce. And he's about the right height. In fact, Kurt told me that he thought for a moment his uncle was Alex, seeing him go into Cynthia's." Dr. Ashwin noted down the name. "No one else goes there regularly, but lots of us drop in, even at late hours. Paul Lennox, if I remember aright, is even closer Dr. Schaedel's height than Alex. He and Cynthia aren't exactly friendly, but—" He stopped abruptly. Cynthia's unconscious revelation on the balcony he had forgotten completely up to that moment. Now it leaped suddenly and dominatingly into his mind.

"Go on." Dr. Ashwin held his pencil ready. "Who else?"

"Several other men—but all the wrong build. Worthing's too small; anyway he scarcely knows Cyn. Kurt and Chuck are both tall and heavy. Boritsin is tall and thin. Of course there's me."

"Mr. Lamb," said Ashwin reprovingly, "I am not such a purist as to object to your grammar, but I do object, and strongly, to your habit of dragging yourself into every discussion. Nonetheless, I suppose that I should write down your name." He did so reluctantly.

“One thing, though,” Martin went on undaunted, “it couldn’t very well have been me—I—whatever—because I never wear a hat. Dr. Schaedel did. Paul and Alex both wear one about half the time.”

“A good point, Mr. Lamb, and one which spares me the necessity of asking why anyone should bother to kill you. Can you think of any other likely candidates?”

“Cyn’s father comes to see her once in a while. He’s about the right height, but much heavier. Anyway, I don’t think he’d ever come at that hour of the night or on foot.”

“The list, then, seems to consist solely of Alex Bruce and Paul Lennox. I am glad that they are both men whom I have met. Now, Mr. Lamb, please tell me everything you can about these two.”

Martin paused and refilled his glass. “Well,” he began, “first we have, in this corner, Alex Bruce. Age: twenty-six. Nationality: American of Scotch descent. Political affiliation, if that means anything in these days: Democrat. Religion: Presbyterian, but never does anything about it. Profession: research fellow in chemistry, University of California. Degrees: B.S., M.S. Character: quiet, but determined. Sports: swimming, tennis. Rumored engaged to Cynthia Wood. Satisfactory?”

“Not precisely helpful,” Ashwin commented, “but continue.”

“Next, Paul Lennox. Age: twenty-eight. Nationality: American, of vague antecedents. Political affiliation: none. Religion: none. Profession: instructor in history, University of California. Degrees: B.A., M.A. Character: sardonic, reserved, a little cryptic. Sports: hiking, chess.”

“For statements of succinct fact, Mr. Lamb,” Dr. Ashwin observed, “these brief biographies are no doubt admirable, but they scarcely aid in determining why either man should be killed. Have they money?”

“None so far as I know, beyond their respective salaries.”

“No marked enmities, I take it, or you would have mentioned them. Once more we seem forced back upon Miss Wood as a starting point. Tell me something about their relations with her.”

“As I said, Alex is with her a great deal and there seems to be some sort of an understanding. In public, she and Paul don’t get on at all well.”

“In public?”

Martin hesitated a moment, and then told the story of Saturday evening—as much, that is, as seemed pertinent and he could remember.

“From that, then,” Dr. Ashwin mused, when he had finished, “we may conclude with some certainty that Miss Wood is deceiving Bruce with Lennox, and that Lennox in turn is carrying on some slight affair with this professor’s wife—you were doubtless right, Mr. Lamb, to withhold the professor’s name.”

“That seems to sum it up,” Martin agreed.

“And there we have a plentiful supply of motives. Sexual jealousy dictates so many crimes—even the Twin Peaks Murder,” Ashwin admitted regretfully. “Either Bruce or your nameless professor might wish to kill Lennox out of jealousy, as might also Miss Wood herself.”

“But Mary Roberts was with Cynthia at the time of the killing,” Martin objected.

“True. If I remember correctly, Miss Wood herself summoned Miss Roberts to her home that evening for reasons which were never fully explained. Is that not true?”

“Yes.”

“There we have the first example of what might be termed the Incident of the Supererogatory Alibi. But I shall return to that later. The set of facts which you have just given me suggests also that Mr. Lennox may have had his reasons for killing Mr. Bruce.”

“Paul kill Alex? Why? If Paul is enjoying Cynthia’s favors and at the same time carrying on an affair with a married woman, why should he want to kill Cynthia’s public lover? Alex is too good and useful a blind for him to dispense with.”

“There, Mr. Lamb, I am tempted to toy with a theory unsupported by any known facts, and yet logically enough arrived at. I am, unfortunately, possessed of sufficient natural vanity to desire not to appear ridiculous, but not enough to make me feel omniscient and infallible as a detective. For that reason, I do not care as yet to state the theory, for fear that the facts may prove it absurd. But let me direct your attention to two facts concerning Miss Wood’s father: He is extremely rich, and he is a fanatically strict converted Catholic.”

Martin nodded with an appearance of intelligent comprehension, although the two facts conveyed no theory to his mind.

“I have evolved this theory,” Dr. Ashwin continued, “because to me it seems almost inevitable that Mr. Lennox is the criminal and Mr. Bruce the intended victim. For one thing, you will remember telling me that Alex Bruce expected to be at Miss Wood’s on that Friday evening, but forgot the appointment because of

his laboratory work. Anyone knowing of that engagement, as you said that Paul Lennox knew, would naturally expect him to be leaving the house somewhere around the hour of the crime."

"But look," Martin broke in. "If you're casting Paul for the murderer, it simply won't do. I can give him a perfect alibi."

"That, Mr. Lamb, is why I suspect Mr. Lennox."

"What do you mean?"

Dr. Ashwin, despite his occasional sarcastic references to Martin's love of the theatre, fully appreciated the value of dramatic pause. Before he answered the question, he emptied his glass, refilled it, and lit a cigarette. Then he said, "An alibi, Mr. Lamb, is in ordinary existence an extremely rare event. We are generally quite unable to prove where we were at a particular hour. Let us take, for an example, the exact moment of Dr. Schaedel's murder—eleven-thirty P. M., Friday, April sixth.

"I shall not use your shoddy device of personal reference, for it chances that I do have a relatively satisfactory alibi. At ten o'clock, I left Elizabeth's home to go to my hotel; to have reached Berkeley from San Rafael in an hour and a half, unable as I am to drive either an automobile or an aeroplane, would have been little short of a miracle. But observe that even that is not an alibi to the minute. Now let us take the other persons involved:

"You, Mr. Lamb, were sitting alone in your room, drinking bourbon (I have never been able to understand your strange preference for that liquor) and finishing *The Boat Train Murders.* You are utterly unalibied. Kurt Ross was wandering alone in the hills. Alex Bruce was walking across campus from the chemistry laboratories to International House. Any one of you might have been at Panoramic Way (Mr. Ross, indeed, was there) for all that you can prove to the contrary.

"But one person is accounted for, to the very minute, and that person is Paul Lennox. When you first told me of that evening, I jotted down the times and have them here. Are you sure of your watch on that occasion?"

"I set it by the radio after dinner. It never loses more than a minute or so a week. And Mary Roberts told me that she and Cynthia had set the clock—also by radio—at ten-thirty that night."

"Good. Now here are the times:

10:45 (*approximately*) Lamb goes to Lennox's room.
11:20 (*exactly*) Lamb leaves Lennox's room. Lennox calls direct attention to clock, which Lamb corrects from his watch.
11:28 (*exactly)* Dr. Schaedel asks Miss Wood his way and the time.
11:30 (*approximately)* Dr. Schaedel leaves Miss Wood and is instantly killed. (This time is also checked by Kurt Ross's narrative.)
11:40 (*exactly)* Lennox reënters Lamb's room. He calls attention to the time by commenting on his speed in typing.
11:42 (*approximately)* Bruce enters Lamb's room. Lennox is surprised that he is not at Miss Wood's.
11:45 (*approximately)* Kurt Ross enters Lamb's room in a terrific state of nerves."

Dr. Ashwin handed the paper to Martin. "Is that roughly correct?"

Martin nodded. "I know that leaves Paul the time between eleven-twenty and eleven-forty. That's plenty of time to get to Cynthia's and back again. But that would mean he'd have to know exactly when Alex would leave Cynthia's. After all, lovers don't say goodnight by clockwork."

"True. But not an insuperable objection."

"You think not? But this is. All that time, from eleven-twenty to eleven-forty, I could hear Paul typing away like the devil. The walls are thin, you know; there's no doubt that the sound came from Paul's room. And if you're going to suggest that he had an accomplice come in and type for him—that's too damned much. Whoever it was would realize what it was about as soon as a murder occurred during that exact time."

"I am not suggesting an accomplice, Mr. Lamb. I am simply suggesting that the alibi is not a perfect one. Again I have a theory, which I shall ask you later to substantiate for me. Meanwhile, you have all the facts upon which I have based my two theories. Indeed, your specialized interest in the theatre should predispose you to this second one."

Martin sat silent for a moment. "In short," he said at last, "what you believe is this: That Paul Lennox sought to kill Alex Bruce for a motive which I cannot guess and by means of a faked alibi to which I am the deceived witness. And how about the Seven of Calvary? You think Paul made up the whole story?"

"Yes. As a red herring. The symbol was probably left originally, as I suggested in our first discussion, to hint at some strange motive and at a different type of

murderer. When Lennox learned who his victim really was, he invented this fantastic tale, the truth of which could not readily be checked."

"Then why didn't he go to the police with it?"

"He was far more subtle. If he seemed anxious to have it known, its truth might be doubted. Instead, he told it to a group of five people, enjoining them to secrecy after the police had broadcast a request for information. The chances were certainly in favor of the secret's betrayal by at least one of those people."

"And you expect him still to carry out his original intention?"

"Of course. And what can I do about it? I have no certain evidence with which to satisfy the police. I cannot even warn Mr. Bruce on such grounds of theoretical reasoning. All that I can do …"

"Yes?"

"All that I can do, Mr. Lamb, is to request you to keep an eye upon these two gentlemen and to see if you can discover anything further. Be with them even more than you ordinarily are."

"Keeping an eye on Paul will be easy enough for me this week. We'll be at rehearsal together every night, and probably eat together too. I'll be with him every evening from about six until we go to bed. And Alex is in the chem lab all afternoon."

Ashwin smiled. "I feel like Jehovah setting a guardian angel to watch over potential malefactors and victims. You make a curious angel, Mr. Lamb."

"I wonder if guardian angels drink Scotch?" Martin asked.

Martin left Dr. Ashwin's room a half-hour later in a state of sore bewilderment. Ashwin's case against Paul as murderer was certainly plausible, even cogent; and Paul was surely far better cast as a subtle murderer than Kurt had been. Still Martin felt the same instinctive reaction against believing that he numbered a murderer among his intimates. It was idiotic and yet … Nonetheless he resolved to be most vigilant in his new rôle as guardian angel.

As he reached the entrance to International House, he was relieved to see a sound and healthy Alex Bruce approaching him.

"Hello. Been to Cynthia's?" he asked.

"Yes," Alex answered somewhat abruptly.

"A scene? You look it."

"A little. Partly your fault, Martin. We were fighting about Saturday night."

"I am sorry, Alex. It was stupid of me to—"

“That’s all right. I don’t blame you for that balcony scene. Why shouldn’t you make love to Cynthia? You might as well join the crowd.”

They entered the elevator and rode to their floor without another word. Martin felt too embarrassed to say anything; a guardian angel is not generally rebuked for his accidental amorousness.

As Martin went to his room after a curt goodnight, he thought back over Ashwin’s new theory and found it good, if disquieting. Thus for the second time Martin found himself possessed of a relatively satisfactory explanation of Dr. Schaedel’s death; and this time he was not nearly so afflicted with instinctive qualms against his own belief.

But this, of course, was before the second murder.

Interlude

Martin timed the sentence with which I have concluded the last chapter so that it came just as we descended from the streetcar.

"I thought you were holding a second murder up your sleeve, Martin," I observed. "Are we then to wait until enough characters have been killed and the list of suspects narrowed down to one?"

"I don't quite know whether that method would work here, Tony," he answered me. "Wait and see. Besides, remember I'm not trying to tell a technically perfect story; all this really happened to me. Now let's not say anything for a while; I'm out of breath after all that narration."

To be sure, I too was a little weary, and not sorry for a momentary pause. We walked along in silence, gazing at the fascinatingly crowded windows of Italian importers' shops, and dodging occasionally to avoid the rapid career of a youthful fascist on skates.

When we were comfortably settled in a booth at La Favorite and had ordered cocktails while we examined the menu, I asked, "Have you got your breath back yet?"

"Tony, you're positively avid!"

"It's simply natural curiosity—my first meeting with a Watson." I did not bother to state that I was already considering the novelistic possibilities of Martin's narrative.

"And how do you like me as Watson?"

I reflected judiciously. "Hmm … A little unconventional. It's disconcerting to have a rather ponderous Holmes and a decidedly erratic Watson."

The drinks arrived, and we returned to our study of the menu. Our orders given, Martin resumed:

"And Ashwin?"

"A little too good to be true, if I hadn't met him once when I was at Berkeley. Such a pity he wasn't born in the eighteenth century. You expect him to include a 'sir' in every sentence."

Martin looked up quizzically. "Are you laying any wagers on the murderer?"

“I don’t trust you, Martin.”

“Now, now, Tony. I’m being perfectly fair. I’m telling you everything—everything, that is, that Ashwin and I knew. I don’t think I’m even using much false emphasis. Now, who’s the murderer?”

I shook my head. “I have such a weakness for the formula of the least suspected person—short of detectives, doctors, and butlers, who are beyond the pale—and I don’t see how you can use it here. There isn’t any unsuspected person save you and Ashwin. Of course, Kurt and Paul are innocent; you’ve laid so much stress on them. Then there’s Alex … Dr. Leshin. … Martin, if the murderer turns out to be anyone like Worthing or Boritsin, I’ll make you pay for dinner even though you are my guest.”

“I told you I was playing fair,” said Martin.

The waiter brought the hors d’œuvres and a steaming tureen of soup, and stood in expectancy. Martin caught the meaning of his attitude and looked at me.

“Should we?” he asked.

“Should we what?”

“Order wine after all our beer?”

I shrugged my shoulders. I never can remember the technicalities of precedence.

“Bier auf Wein

Ist nicht fein …” *Martin was murmuring.*

“Wein auf Bier

Rat’ ich Dir … *A bottle of Chablis, waiter.—It’s the only way to remember,” he added turning to me.*

When the wine had been brought and poured, I lifted my glass. “To the Unknown Murderer!” I declaimed. After the toast was drunk, “Now go on, Martin,” I said. “I should like to know whom I was toasting.”

“Excellent soup,” Martin remarked irrelevantly. “Well … that was on Monday. Nothing particular happened after that until dress rehearsal.…”

CHAPTER VII

Strangulation Scene

Dress rehearsal was scheduled for Thursday evening, which meant that Martin calmly cut all of his Thursday classes and spent the entire day in Wheeler Auditorium with Drexel. There were last-minute alterations in the sets, questions as to the proper shades of grease-paint for different characters, minor problems of costuming and hand-props; and in all these matters Drexel wished his decision to bear the authoritative *cachet* of the translator. Martin found this attitude flattering but wearisome, and breathed intense relief when Drexel finally called it a day at four o'clock.

This preoccupation with details had caused Martin quite to neglect his post as guardian angel; but he was far too weary to feel any pangs of conscience. As he came out of the auditorium, however, he found himself confronted with another problem which he had been neglecting for *Don Juan Returns.* On the sunlit stone steps sat Mona Morales.

She was alone, and studying intently. She was not aware of Martin's presence until he stood beside her and spoke her name. Then she stood up, a trifle awkwardly, and looked disconcerted for the first time in Martin's knowledge of her. There followed a pause which threatened to be of indefinite length. Martin sought for the perfect phrase which would put everything right again. It was not to be found, but fortunately it was not needed. Suddenly Mona smiled and extended her hand.

"It's nice to see you again, Martin," she said.

Martin took her hand gratefully. That smile had sufficed to set the times perfectly in joint again. "I've been working with Drexel all day," he said, "and I'm half dead. Won't you have tea with me? Sorry I can't offer anything more stimulating near campus."

"I'd love to. Do you like the Black Sheep?"

“Very much.” They started off, and stopped in sudden embarrassment. Martin reluctantly freed her hand, which had remained so naturally in his.

The tea was good, and so were the cinnamon rolls which Martin had ordered in preference to cinnamon toast. “No restaurant,” he expounded in a manner which he noticed with surprise was almost Ashwinian, “no restaurant knows how to make cinnamon toast. The secret is to use a broiling rack, not a toaster, and to toast only one side of the bread before spreading the butter, sugar, and cinnamon. That gives you the perfect glaze. It’s my own invention.…” he added in a faltering echo of the White Knight. His pontifical manner was rapidly fading before the steady, cool gaze of Mona. He looked down at the cinnamon rolls with an intentness which even the admirable presence of pecans did not justify.

Mona spoke. Her voice was as cool and steady as her gaze. “I know what you want to say, Martin, and that you seek some way that you may come to it. Do not say it, Martin. It is no need.”

Martin looked up in surprise. “I don’t know.…”

“Yes, you do. You wish to say, ‘Mona, I was a fool. Please forgive me,’ or something as silly as that. Why should one forgive people? If one likes them not, why to bother? And if one does like them … it is no need.”

Martin was at a loss for words—a rare state indeed for him. He finished a cinnamon roll, took a gulp of tea which was much hotter than he had expected, and produced his cigarettes, offering one to Mona. “You’re very kind,” he said.

“Thank you. That is, for the cigarette—not for the compliment. I am not kind, Martin; I am sensible. I like you, and I tell you so to keep you from worry. Thank you,” she said again as he offered her a match-flame. “I admit that I was a little … irritated. Perhaps if I had seen you Sunday morning, I should not have spoken as now I speak. That is why I avoided you. I knew that I too can be silly—oh, very silly. Now I am not.”

Martin drank his tea in silence. He was intensely grateful for having been spared an apologetic scene, and he was unable to express his gratitude.

“Besides,” Mona continued with a light smile, “I have not forgotten the balcony. No, no,” she added quickly as Martin looked up. “I do not mean that as perhaps it sounds. I mean—you stopped when I told you. That does not always happen. I remember two months ago—it was a great unpleasantness, Martin, a young man who would not stop …” Her voice trailed off. “I speak too much, Martin,” she resumed. “That is a long story and not a nice one. You shall not hear it until you know me much better.”

“Then assuredly I shall hear it,” Martin said with a determination which surprised himself.

Tea did not keep Martin from eating a hearty dinner. He knew that he had a strenuous evening before him, and he resolved to fortify himself as best he could. But his concentration on food made him a little late, and he was hurrying through the Great Hall as Alex called to him.

“Why the terrific rush, Martin?”

“It’s almost quarter of, and I’ve got to be in costume and make-up by seven. Not that we’ll start on time of course. Hello, Cyn,” he added a little shortly.

“I do wish you luck with the play, Martin,” Cynthia said. “I’m terribly sorry I shan’t be able to see it. I’m dreadfully loaded with engagements this weekend.”

“So am I,” Alex added. “That is, not engagements exactly, but a few social appointments with test-tubes and retorts. What we were wondering was—do you think you could sneak us in to the dress-rehearsal?”

“I don’t see why not. Drexel may give you hell and throw you out, and he may be glad to have some sort of an audience to give reactions. Nothing guaranteed. As a matter of fact, I asked Mona to drop in tonight; she can’t make the performance either.”

“And you want your little Latin to see your great triumph?” Cynthia smiled maliciously.

“Yes,” Martin answered simply. It was easier than an exchange of sarcasm. “You can just slip in at the back of the auditorium. We’ll probably get things started some time between seven-thirty and eight.” With a nod of farewell, he set off for the auditorium.

Martin fingered his beard doubtfully. The make-up mirror assured him that it was convincing, but it felt so damned artificial. With the scissors he snipped a bit of hair from one side and regarded it again. As Paul Lennox came into the little classroom which had been forced into theatrical service, he looked up. “Do you think that’s any better?” he asked.

“I couldn’t tell.” Paul sank into a one-armed class chair and produced a briar pipe from somewhere in his sixteenth-century doublet. “You know, Martin,” he went on during the process of filling and lighting, “I think I’ve got stage fright. I’ve lectured before huge classes, I’ve read a paper before a learned association, and never a quiver. I know this play’s just fun, nothing that really matters—”

“Thanks,” Martin interrupted.

“I mean nothing that really matters so far as I’m concerned—my career and what not—and yet somehow I feel as though tonight were the most important night in my life.”

“Stage fright’s a good sign,” said Martin. “Only lousy actors are ever quite free from it.” He lit a cigarette after a last regretful glance at the reflection of his beard. “But if you’re jittery tonight, what will you be tomorrow with an audience out front?”

“There’s enough of an audience tonight. People have kept dribbling in at the back of the auditorium. Drexel began to blow up, and then suddenly decided that their reactions might be valuable. I think he said it with capital letters.”

They smoked in silence for a minute of so. “By the way,” Martin said, “you were swell in the death scene last night. Keep it up.”

“Thanks.” Paul smiled quietly. “You’ve no idea how strange you look, Martin. The cigarette itself goes queerly enough with your costume and your beard, but when the tip of the cigarette is stained with lip-rouge …”

Martin was glaring at the results of make-up when a head popped in at the door, called “Places!” and vanished. Paul rose leisurely and knocked the ashes out of his pipe. His hand was none too steady.

“Well, good luck, Paul. I’ve got to the end of the first scene to enjoy my own private jitters. You’ll knock ’em dead with that first curtain.”

Paul nodded a little dubiously and left. Martin had finished his cigarette and was again considering the beard question when a tap came on the door. “Come in,” he said.

It was Mona. “I did not think I was supposed to come behind the stage,” she began. “But I do want to wish you luck. It has begun. The setting looks lovely. Paul is a little frightened.…” She paused.

“Thank you, Mona,” Martin said, and pressed her hand.

“¡Buena suerte, amigo!” she exclaimed, kissed him impulsively, and hurried away. For once it was the girl and not the man who carried off telltale traces of make-up.

For the remainder of his off-stage wait, Martin forgot his beard, his rôle, his play, and his status as guardian angel; and thought only of Mona until the detached head appeared once more to call “Places for scene two!”

He was still in something of a daze as he began what was to prove the most momentous stage appearance of his life.

“Watch your next entrance-cue, Elvira. You miss it nine times out of ten.”

“Tell Harold to check your make-up, Paul. We can’t see your eyes at all under that spot.”

“Now by the Mass, Don Juan, this time you lie!”

“If it were but to lie with thee, my chick …”

“Even money we have to cut that line the second night …”

“Check that green spot for the statue’s entrance. It’s not center stage, it’s right center.”

“Then let blood flow, Don Félix. What care I, Be it from sword-pierced hearts or shattered maidenheads?”

“It’s a classic. I guess you can get by with any kind of a line in a classic.…”

“Maybe someday we’ll have an honest-to-god theatre in this university. I’m so goddamned sick of horsing around on a lousy lecture platform—”

“Did you see the notice in the Daily *Cal.?”*

“Did I? They got my name wrong and they forgot to say I played in *Death Takes a Holiday.”*

“Maybe they were just being charitable, darling.…”

“God’s doom has hung ere this so close o’er me That I could feel Jehovah’s awful breath Searing my cheeks. …”

“My God, he’s cut five pages of the script!”

“How can I make my entrance?”

“Ad-lib. Do anything. But get on there!”

“You were wonderful in the love scene, Laurel.”

“Thanks loads.”

“I’ve never seen anyone look so completely seduced. Drexel’s marvelous at casting.…”

“I thought I’d blow for sure when Nathan said, *‘And is this puny wench the side of Preville?’”*

“He’s muffed that line at every rehearsal. There’s always one hitch like that in every show.”

“I don’t give a good god damn if your mother and your grand-mother and your grand-mother’s illegitimate great-aunt are going to be out front. You can *not* wear a brassiere with that low-necked second-act bodice!”

“Two blades I bear, Don Sancho; one is victor In death—in love, the other …”

“Has anybody got a drink for God’s sake?”

“What I want to know is, how did Don Juan ever get anywhere in clothes like these?”

“That’s a quick black-out on the convent scene, Roy. If you dim, you kill the whole effect.”

“I’m damned if I see why Drexel dragged in this Lennox person. Just because he’s a friend of Lamb’s—I’ve been in ten shows here on this stage, and if I haven’t earned a good lead by now …”

“I don’t know what happened. My mind just went blank. I’ll have that speech cold tomorrow.”

“Lights!”

“Snap up your cues there!”

“Places!”

“That last scene drags like hell in the middle. Speed it up tomorrow!”

“Check that!”

“Stand by to help Elvira on that quick change!”

“If you’re prompting this show, Miss Davis, for God’s sake prompt it!”

“Speed up that change!”

“Mark that cross!”

“Places!”

“Fix that spot!”

“Okay?”

“Check!”

In short, a dress rehearsal, as such undistinguishable from any other. Undistinguishable, that is, up to eleven-thirty.

The second act was finished a little before eleven, which was not half bad. Martin had had nightmares of rehearsing till three or four—a not unheard-of occurrence. The cast was still fairly chipper, but Drexel nonetheless advised a fifteen-minute rest before taking up the third act, which was short but strenuous in the extreme.

The house lights went on, and Martin, standing beside a table of third-act props, looked out into the auditorium. Alex and Cynthia had apparently come over with Mona. At least, the three were sitting together and talking excitedly. All of the small audience, in fact, seemed to be deeply interested in the play, which, despite its great and lasting popularity in Spain and Latin America, had hitherto been completely unknown to English-speaking audiences.

Some of the audience began drifting backstage during this informal pause. Among them Martin noticed Dr. Griswold of the Spanish Department and with him, to Martin's surprise, the Leshins. It was the first time that he had ever seen them apparently satisfied with each other's company.

Dr. Griswold peered through the backstage mob, looking more than ever like Don Quixote in modern dress, until he caught sight of Martin.

"I like it," he said, as he slipped between a pair of Sevillian gallants, nearly tripping over their clumsily adjusted swords. "I don't think much of the play, as you may remember from the seminar, but I like your translation."

"Thanks," Martin answered. "That means something from you. And I still think it's a swell piece of theatre, even if it isn't Literature for seminars."

Dr. Griswold blinked an appreciative smile.

"It is very interesting, Mr. Lamb," Dr. Leshin added. "I know next to nothing of the Spanish theatre, but I find this piece fascinating."

"And you, Mrs. Leshin?"

"Chiefly I am surprised that Mr. Lennox can act so well."

Martin repressed several comments at once.

"So am I," Dr. Griswold agreed. "The only chance for acting that I had as an instructor was in controlling myself at faculty meetings."

Cynthia, Alex, and Mona now joined the group at the prop-table. Cynthia was gushing with excitement, and even Alex was interested. "I think it's too damned thrilling for words, Martin!" Cynthia was exclaiming. "And Paul is simply swelegant. Don't you think so, Mrs. Leshin?" she added in a markedly uncalm voice.

"Mr. Lennox has indeed greatly surprised me," the doctor's wife replied.

"Now *you* surprise *me,* Mrs. Leshin," said Cynthia a little too sweetly.

Martin was uncomfortable. As the little group around him shifted to allow for the flowings of the rest of the crowd, he felt that they all moved around one axis —the direct line of antagonism between these two women. He was glad that Paul had remained in the dressing-room for the brief rest.

Dr. Griswold's dry voice broke the tension. "I've been telling Martin," he was saying to Dr. Leshin, "that he ought to try his hand at something of Lope de Vega's. *Fuenteovejuna* has been sorely neglected in view of its sociological interest to—"

There was a tinkle of breaking glass. Martin turned and saw one of the two glasses that had stood on the prop-table now lying in fragments on the floor.

“God damn it!” he exclaimed. “Who the devil knocked that down?”

“Mr. Lamb …!” Mrs. Leshin was regarding him with raised eyebrows.

“Sorry. You can scarcely help barking at people in a hubbub like this. Oh, well, it doesn’t much matter. Only one glass is really used in this scene, so the one that’s left will be enough. The other’s just for looks—not a real hand-prop. But these little things are so damned annoying at a rehearsal.”

“Places for act three!”

The helterskelter backstage wanderings began to assume obedient order to the disembodied voice.

Dr. Griswold, the Leshins, Cynthia, Alex,—all slipped back into the auditorium with murmured congratulations and good wishes. Mona, who had not spoken a word, remained behind for an instant.

“You do bring luck, Mona,” said Martin, touching her hand lightly.

“I’m glad,” and she was gone.

Martin’s gaze returned to the fragments of glass lying on the floor, and the little pool of colored water which the audience had been supposed to take for sherry. He had turned around the instant he heard the crash, but no one had been standing near the table. Or was there one—? For some reason at the moment obscure to him, he was very badly puzzled by this trifling incident, possibly simply because it freed his mind for an instant of the major worries of the evening.

But there was no need for such worrying. Martin’s statement had been perfectly true. The glass that was left was quite enough.

The brief first scene of the third act, in which Martin, as Don Félix, hears the confession of his sister Elvira and swears vengeance upon her betrayer, went off with admirable tension. The audience lost all pretense of informality and indifference; they were enjoying Theatre in its most exciting aspect, and thrilled to the chill of imminent death which pervaded the auditorium.

As the lights dimmed and Martin left the stage, there was even a brief patter of applause. Paul, waiting in the wings, seized his hand. “Grand work, Martin.”

“I surprised myself,” Martin admitted. “If we can only keep it up for the strangulation scene.…”

“I’ve never been so moved in my life as tonight. If this is the theatre, even amateur, I’m damned if I’ll ever teach history again.”

The lights slowly went up on the stage—act three, scene two, a room in the

ancestral home of Don Juan. The low comedian who was playing Don Juan's manservant got a sizable laugh on his opening business.

"Well," said Paul, "here goes." He shook Martin's hand firmly and strode onto the stage. Martin looked after him with warm admiration. Ashwin's reasonings had vanished completely from his mind.

Dialogue between Don Juan and the manservant. Fairly bawdy, but it got the laughs. The stage-manager rapped loudly on a wooden board, and the servant exited. Don Juan's soliloquy—an inspired moment, which evoked almost involuntary applause. The servant re-entered, ushering in Don Félix (Martin), and exited again. The big scene of the play began.

The brief stichomythy between Don Juan and Don Félix moved well; but then came an awkward moment.

"Though, as you say, you come to murder me," spoke Paul-Don Juan,

"Let us rejoice our gullets ere we die.

Sherry's the life-blood of your true Sevillian.

Honor my cellar, sir, if not my soul."

After which speech, he was supposed to take one glass from the center table, offering the other with a gesture to Don Félix. Paul carelessly took the one glass which stood there, then gestured hospitably at the empty table. A mild titter rippled over the audience.

"Ay, if I knew it to be only sherry," Martin replied regardless,

"But death has hid in greater wines than yours."

The momentary amusement of the audience passed off, and the scene continued. Paul drained the pseudo-sherry at one vicious gulp, and launched into his big speech, a magnificent tirade in which, facing instant death at the hands of Don Félix, he still rails at virtue and glorifies impenitence. Despite the vigor with which he delivered the speech, Paul's stage-fright, Martin noticed, was becoming curiously obvious. His pupils were dilated, and his arms were twitched by odd jerks and shudders.

At last the long speech, which ran fully four minutes, was ended, and Martin, with a raging snarl, tossed aside his sword.

"With fœtid blood I will not stain my steel,

But rather wrest life from thy lying throat!" With a leap, he seized Paul by the throat.

Now a strangulation scene is a difficult piece of theatrical business. The strangler must give the effect of great effort while exerting none at all, and the

victim must preserve the appearance of passivity in the midst of extravagant contortions. Martin was accustomed in this scene simply to set his face in an expression of great and virulent hatred, and to let Paul do all the work.

Tonight Paul was superb. His limbs jerked briefly, then suddenly stretched out stiff. His head fell back, and his very face seemed to change. It might, thought Martin, be just the lighting; but his cheeks grew dusky and congested, his eyes threatened to pop from their sockets.

Martin released the body to speak his curtainline of vengeance accomplished, and Paul fell into a curious position which he had not used at any rehearsal. It was at once grotesque and terrifying. His body seemed rod-stiff and arched, resting on the head and the heels. It was an oddly convincing and yet slightly shocking death-pose.

Martin stepped backstage from the body, pantomiming the awful reaction of the justified murderer after his accomplished crime. The lights dimmed, but the scene remained sharp in his mind. He saw the terrible stiffness of the corpse and the macabre fixed smile on its face—another new touch of Paul's which blended the satirically unreal with ghastly actuality. He felt for an instant the truth of the whole scene. The feeling of full identification with a character came upon him as he had never known it before. He *was* Don Félix, the killer. And he noticed two discordant and irrelevant details. Paul's modern briar pipe had fallen from his costume in the struggle and lay beneath the arched back, and on the table, where the glass had stood, was a small scrap of paper unspecified in any prop list.

The lights had dimmed to complete darkness. There was an instant of perfect silence, and then a burst of the loudest applause that had ever come from such a miniature audience. So gradual had been the dimming that Martin could still see vaguely. He could see that Paul had relaxed from his amazing rigidity, but still lay on the stage. Martin was puzzled and stepped forward. Behind him he could hear the stagehands rapidly striking the set. He bent over Paul, scarcely knowing what he expected.

Paul Lennox lay very still. He was breathing heavily as though in utter physical exhaustion. Martin touched his face lightly. His skin was covered with sweat and his lips trembled.

"Lights!" Martin did not remember rising, nor could he recognize the voice as his own. "Lights for God's sake!" The anguished shriek poured into silence and dissipated it. The auditorium began to fill with murmurs. Suddenly the lights came on, a blinding flood of brightness. Gazing at him with terrified fixity,

Martin saw Paul's limbs begin to twitch again, his head to jerk. A groan of agony came from him.

"Martin!" he cried. "Rub my arms! They're … Oh Christ! Hold me! Hold me! I can't …" The twitching grew worse. Martin knew what would follow. That unhuman arch again. The fixed smile was returning to Paul's face.

People were crowding onto the little stage. Drexel was trying desperately to assert his authority, without the slightest idea of what to do with it when once asserted. Martin shuddered and turned away, bumping into a stagehand who, himself caught up in the general confusion, had decided simply to disregard it and go on about his business. He was carrying the table which had stood center stage. The bit of paper was still on it.

Martin seized the stagehand by the arm. "For God's sake, Mac," he cried, "leave that table here!"

"What the hell's biting you?"

For answer Martin pointed to the piece of paper. The stagehand set the table down suddenly and moved to a respectful distance. Even he had read of the Seven of Calvary.

Paul Lennox died in convulsions at the University hospital at six minutes after one on the morning of Friday, April twentieth, thirteen days and an hour or so after the murder of Dr. Hugo Schaedel.

It was the retiring scholar, Dr. Joseph Griswold, who had taken charge of the confusion in the auditorium and, aided by Mac and another stagehand, had himself driven Paul to the hospital. Martin followed on foot, accompanied by Alex, Cynthia, and Mona. He was glad to leave the auditorium. Everyone there seemed to take for granted that Paul was simply suffering some queer sudden seizure brought on by Martin's rough handling in the strangulation scene; and all looked on him with a mixture of reproach and wonder.

Martin all but wished that the general opinion were indeed correct. He himself, he thought, as they walked across the campus, might be wrong; but there were the symptoms, recognized by him too late, there was that strange business of the glasses, and above all there was that piece of paper with the dreadful mark of the Vignards.

None of the four spoke a word until they had reached the hospital. In the hall Dr. Griswold and a young interne were awaiting them. Dr. Griswold spoke first.

"It is no use," he said, "to hold out false hopes. Dr. Evans cannot give him

more than an hour or two."

"Where is he?" in anguish from Cynthia, all pretense of indifference or animosity to Paul now vanished.

"Dr. Evans is with him now," the interne answered. "It would be better if you waited out here."

Then Cynthia broke down. It was the most complete and honest expression of emotion that Martin had ever seen from her. She sank on a bench in the hallway, abandoned to her grief. Alex sat beside her and let her head fall on his shoulder. Suppressing whatever jealousy he might naturally have felt, he tried to comfort her.

Dr. Griswold drew Martin aside. "I know the things that they had begun to say in the auditorium," he began. "There seemed to be a feeling that you had … carried realism a bit too far."

Martin nodded.

"You do not need to fear any responsibility, Martin. Mr. Lennox is dying from no such simple cause."

"I know," Martin broke in.

Dr. Griswold questioned him in silence.

"Strychnine," said Martin.

"True." Dr. Griswold touched his Quixotic beard in slight confusion. "On the advice of Dr. Evans, I have telephoned to the police. Sergeant Cutting will be here shortly."

By that time the auditorium was almost empty. Drexel and a couple of the crew had cleared the stage at last.

"This probably means no performance tomorrow," Drexel was complaining. "It's a damnable disappointment after all these weeks. I simply can't understand it from Lamb. I can't imagine him doing a thing like that. I suppose it just goes to show that there's a little of the beast in all of us."

He stood back and surveyed the stage. "There," he said, "I guess that'll do for a lecture platform for tomorrow's eight o'clock … Joe! What's that scrap of paper over there? Get rid of it."

And Joe, who never read a newspaper, picked up the scrap, glanced uncuriously at the funny sort of *F* on it, and stuck it in the wastebasket.

CHAPTER VIII

Tempest in a Wineglass

Sergeamt Cutting looked like a policeman and talked like a gentleman. He arrived at the hospital about ten minutes before Paul's death and closeted himself almost at once with Dr. Evans and Dr. Griswold.

The two policemen who had accompanied him remained in the hall. "You'd better all stick around," one of them said. "The Sergeant's got a lot of questions to ask." With which he relapsed into silence.

It was a grotesque group that waited in the mercilessly white hall. The young interne and the policemen in the uniforms of their respective professions … Martin looking strangely helpless and forlorn for all the bravado of his sixteenth-century doublet, hose, and beard … Cynthia weak from crying, her eyes swollen and all her claims to exoticism vanished for the moment.… Only Alex and Mona looked quietly ordinary, and even they showed manifest signs of sorrow and discomfort.

Sergeant Cutting had been gone five minutes when the young interne had his inspiration. "Officer," he suggested, "would it be all right if I offered these people a drink of whiskey? They've been through an awful shock, you know, and I think it would really help when it comes around to the Sergeant's questioning."

The two policemen looked at each other dubiously, and finally the more loquacious of the pair (the one who had actually spoken once before) said, "I guess it'll be okay."

Martin was grateful for the whiskey. The hospital's stock (for medicinal use only) was fine bonded bourbon, far better than he was accustomed to, and his twisted nerves began to straighten themselves out. Everyone, even the policemen, seemed to feel the same beneficial effect; and when the interne topped his hospitality by producing cigarettes, there was a general unbending.

The group was still relatively silent, but when Sergeant Cutting returned, the heavy atmosphere of dread had been largely dispelled.

His first words sufficed to restore it. “Mr. Lennox is dead,” he told them quietly. Martin could see that he was watching their faces closely. The announcement was received in silence, save for a choked gasp from Cynthia. They had known that Paul must die; the exact news of his death meant little.

“Poor fellow …” said Alex softly.

Sergeant Cutting turned to one of his men. “You know where Wheeler Auditorium is, Davis?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, get on over there right away. I’ve phoned the station; they’re sending three more men out. See that nothing’s disturbed, and hold anybody that’s still there for questioning.”

“Yes, sir.” And Davis left.

“I’ll have to ask the rest of you to stay here a while,” Sergeant Cutting continued in the same calm and pleasing voice; “I’ll want to ask you a few questions. Dr. Evans is letting me use his office; I’ll see you in there one at a time. First of all, I’m going to tell you this: According to Dr. Griswold, the idea seemed to get around that Mr. Lennox’s death was accidental. I warn you now, it was murder.”

Again Sergeant Cutting was disappointed, if he had expected any spectacular and informative reactions. To Martin the fact was no news; and the other three, knowing Martin as well as they did, could never for a moment have entertained the accident theory.

“I’ll talk to you first, Mr. Lamb,” added the Sergeant after a brief pause. “You must have been with him when he was poisoned.” He led the way into a little office, and Martin began to wish that the interne had suggested a second round of whiskey.

The Sergeant seated himself at Dr. Evans’ desk and waved Martin to a chair. Their respective positions reminded Martin curiously of his sessions with Dr. Ashwin.

“You were a close friend of Mr. Lennox?” Sergeant Cutting began, after the formalities of name and address.

“As close as anyone was.”

“Mm … Will you please tell me, Mr. Lamb, just what happened on the stage of Wheeler Auditorium?”

Martin described the scene, the drinking of the pseudo-sherry, and Paul's delivery of his big speech. "It is a long speech," he said. "It must have been about five minutes after he took the drink that I noticed the beginning of the strychnine convulsions." And he continued to describe, as best he could, the rest of that terrible scene, reserving for the moment any mention of the Seven of Calvary.

"Mr. Lamb …" Sergeant Cutting paused. "You said 'strychnine convulsions.' I told you only that Mr. Lennox had been poisoned."

"Sorry to disappoint you, but it's nothing suspicious. As I looked back, I recognized the symptoms, and Dr. Griswold confirmed my recognition."

"And how do you happen to be so familiar with the symptoms of strychnine poisoning?"

"Harmless again. I'm a devoted reader of mystery novels and dabble a bit in criminology and toxicology."

"You've read too many mystery novels, Mr. Lamb," Sergeant Cutting smiled, "if you think that I'm trying to trap you or jump to conclusions. Now, have you any idea when that poison could have been administered?"

"I think in that glass of stage sherry. I don't know how else. It couldn't have been more than an hour or so before the convulsions. The water we drink backstage is from drinking fountains, and Paul wasn't taking any liquor—he was afraid it might make him muff his performance."

"Mr. Lennox did not leave the auditorium?"

"Not since eight o'clock. He couldn't have. The time he wasn't on the stage—and it's a prominent starring part—he had costume changes that took every minute of it."

"Good. That's a helpful point." Sergeant Cutting lit a cigarette and passed one to Martin. "This glass—what was supposed to be in it?"

"Colored water—not very tasty. Drexel spent almost an hour doctoring a solution to the color he thought was right for sherry."

"Drexel?"

"Lawrence Drexel. Little Theatre Director. He tried iced tea first, but its color struck him as aesthetically wrong."

"Damn Mr. Drexel's aesthetic sensibilities, if you will forgive me, Mr. Lamb. You realize of course that tannic acid is an antidote for strychnine, and that Mr. Lennox might be alive now if Drexel had used iced tea. Where was this solution kept?"

“You’ll have to ask the prop-man. I don’t know. The glasses were filled and set on a table back-stage before the third act began.”

“The glasses?”

“There was supposed to be another one. It was broken by accident.”

Sergeant Cutting looked a trifle quizzical as he made his notes. “Who could have put the poison in that glass?”

“Anyone. Dozens of people were backstage before the third act. I was near that table myself most of the time, but I wouldn’t necessarily have noticed it.”

“Whom did you see particularly near that table?”

Martin blinked slightly at the *whom* (“Only in the Berkeley police force …” he thought), but answered, “A group of my friends. The four people outside—Dr. Griswold, Mr. Bruce, Miss Wood, and Miss Morales—and Dr. Leshin of the History department and his wife.”

“What connection did any of these people have with Mr. Lennox?”

Martin paused imperceptibly. “We all knew him,” he said, “except possibly Dr. Griswold. He and Mr. Bruce and I have been boon companions at various times. Miss Wood is Mr. Bruce’s fiancée and knew Paul only through him, so far as I know. Dr. Leshin is in the same department—History—that Paul teaches … taught in. Miss Morales and Mrs. Leshin have met him at parties and things.”

Sergeant Cutting looked up from his notes. “You described yourself as a devoted reader of mystery novels, Mr. Lamb. Doubtless you’ve been waiting on tenterhooks for this question, so I’d better ask it. Do you know any reason for which anyone would kill Mr. Lennox?”

“Sergeant Cutting,” Martin replied, “first I want to tell you one more thing about this evening. After Paul had fallen and people were rushing around, I saw a piece of paper on the table where the glass had been. It had the same mark on it as you and your men found beside Dr. Schaedel’s body.”

The Sergeant looked up with an expression of frank surprise and interest, which suddenly turned into a laugh. “Mr. Lamb,” he said, “that’s absurd. Utterly absurd. You’ve confessed yourself to a mystery-novel mind; it’s simply run away with you. What possible connection could there be between Mr. Lennox and a Swiss secret society—if such a society ever existed in the first place?”

“Just this,” Martin answered quietly. He was not surprised by the Sergeant’s reaction. “It was Paul Lennox who furnished indirectly all the information that was printed about the Seven of Calvary. And he told us that his life would not be safe if the Vignards knew he had revealed their secrets.”

“Of course you can substantiate that?”

“Five or six of us heard him.”

“We’ll check it.… But do you know of any other—I shan’t say more plausible, but any more personal motive that anyone could have for killing Paul Lennox?”

“No,” said Martin.

Martin awoke about eleven the next morning. His first thought, after a glance at the unset alarm clock, was regret that he was missing Ashwin’s class for the first time. Then all the memories of the past night came over him. He sat up in bed, shuddered slightly, and reached for a cigarette.

After his questioning by the Sergeant, he had waited in the hall, under the watchful eye of the remaining policeman, to see Mona home. Her interrogation had been the last and the briefest. He remembered Alex walking in and out of Dr. Evans’ office with an imperturbable calm almost worthy of Paul himself. He remembered half-stifled sobs from the office during Cynthia’s interview, and wondered just what Sergeant Cutting had learned from her. The young interne had obligingly produced cold cream and alcohol, and Martin had spent most of the time during the others’ sessions in removing beard, spirit gum, and grease-paint from his face. When at last he escorted Mona home, he looked an ordinary twentieth-century young man again, despite doublet and hose. And to crown this evening of Spanish melodrama, sudden death, and suspicion, he remembered kissing Mona goodnight, quite as though it were the most natural thing on earth to do (as indeed it was), and remembered her cool voice whispering, “Much nicer without the beard.”

But even at such a sweet memory as this, the prickings of his conscience returned to bother him. Should he have told Sergeant Cutting what he knew of the complex emotional relations of Paul Lennox with Cynthia, Alex, and the Leshins? It was obviously of the greatest importance, and yet … what evidence did he have for it? A few words of Cynthia’s while drunk and amorous, an embrace in a dark hallway, an atmosphere of tenseness under the casual speeches of two women—the Sergeant would probably have found the idea only a trifle less amusing than the appearance of the Seven of Calvary.

And as to the carefully evolved Ashwinian theory that Dr. Hugo Schaedel had been killed (as was now apparent) in error for Paul Lennox—what would that amount to in a police court? It was so completely obvious, and yet what proof

was there? It was, Martin thought, like the rabbit which the Hindus see in the moon. It is next to impossible to make people see it; but once they have recognized it, they will never see a face or a man or a woman there again. It is obvious that there is a rabbit in the moon; but obviousness seems too often unsusceptible of proof.

As Martin was thus easing his conscience, he heard a sound which for a moment terrified him. Someone was moving around in the room next to his—the room which had once been that of Paul Lennox. It was not the maid; those were a man's footsteps—or was it two men? Martin's first instinctive fear passed almost instantly into curiosity. He threw on his bathrobe, slipped his feet into a pair of slippers, and tiptoed into the hall. He paused a moment before the door to which Paul's card was still affixed. The footsteps were in there definitely—two pairs of male feet. As Martin stood wavering, the door opened and he was face to face with Sergeant Cutting.

"Good morning, Mr. Lamb. I was just going to knock on your door again. You seem a heavy sleeper."

Martin was too surprised to reply at first, and then suddenly realized how natural it was that the police should search Paul's quarters.

"Come in," Sergeant Cutting continued. "I have several things to tell and to ask you."

Martin obeyed, seating himself reluctantly on the edge of the bed. The room was in a topsyturvy state of search. Davis, the more voluble policeman, was at the moment silently examining the record albums—with what hopes, Martin had no idea. Neither, it may be added, had Davis.

"You will be pleased to know, Mr. Lamb," Sergeant Cutting began, "that everyone seems to agree with you. No one can suggest any reason for killing Paul Lennox. I wouldn't say that he was well-liked—people seem to have disliked him for any cause from his sarcasm to his pipe—but men aren't murdered from simple dislike. But there is no support for your Vignard idea. Not that I disbelieve you, but only that I think you unconsciously exaggerated."

"Didn't you find anything at the auditorium?"

Sergeant Cutting shook his head. "Davis here got there too late. The stage crew had been all too efficient, and the whole place was clean as a whistle. They'd swept the stage, emptied the waste baskets—even, damn them, washed the glass that must have held the poison. Your Mr. Drexel was the only person still there, and Davis followed my instructions. He held him for three solid hours

while I was at the hospital."

The picture of the mercurial Drexel sitting beside the stolid Davis for three hours was too much for Martin.

"I can't quite blame you for laughing, Mr. Lamb. Myself, I think it served Drexel damned well right for being so officiously active. He might have suspected something was wrong—but he didn't, and any hopes we might have had for facts from the auditorium have gone up in smoke. You will notice I say 'facts,' Mr. Lamb; you would say 'clues.'"

Martin rose somewhat excited. "But surely, Sergeant, this doesn't disprove my seeing that paper. Some idiot of a stagehand probably chucked it away. It was no imagination. Mac saw it too—Don MacKinley, he's on the crew—ask him. And God knows I of all people ought to recognize the Seven of Calvary—"

"Just what do you mean by that, Mr. Lamb?"

Martin told the partial truth. "I knew Dr. Schaedel and I liked him," he said. "Naturally I was particularly interested in the circumstances of his murder. And I was one of the group to which Paul Lennox told the story of the Vignards before it got into the papers. I've been quite fascinated by that strange symbol."

"I'm afraid you just have the unhappy faculty of making incriminating remarks." Sergeant Cutting smiled, while Davis snorted half audibly. He never had liked the way the Sarge talked to them college mugs. The Sergeant continued, disregarding the snort, "But now to the question: Mr. Lamb, why were you coming into this room just now?"

"I heard sounds in here. First I was a little scared; it seemed as though Paul … but that's nonsense. Then I thought it might be someone who … who had no business here …"

"You mean …?"

"The murderer. Yes. I never thought of the police. I simply thought I ought to investigate."

"And had you heard any noises in here earlier this morning?"

"No. I was sound asleep. As you know, Sergeant, I got home late."

"I know. I've knocked on your door three times in the past hour. But the point I'm making is this, Mr. Lamb—Davis and I were not the first people to search this room."

Martin looked up in surprise.

"The maid came in here at nine-thirty to make up the room. She's a stolid soul, and hadn't even heard that Paul Lennox was dead. She found the door

unlocked, which surprised her, and the bed unslept in. The whole room was in perfect order, excepting the papers on the lowest shelf of the bookcase. Those were scattered all over the floor. She said Mr. Lennox never left them that way."

"That's true," Martin observed. "Paul went in for the strictest order. His room and mine were models for the study of contrast. To be sure, he was excited last night, but even at that—" Martin paused abruptly.

"Yes, Mr. Lamb?"

"I wonder if I might see those papers. I know something about his work; I might be able—"

"Certainly. As a matter of fact, that's why I tried to wake you up. I thought you might give us a line on why anyone should want to rummage through those things."

Davis finished the last phonograph album and relinquished the floor to Martin, who squatted in a corner by the bookcase and began to examine the papers on the first shelf, where they had been replaced.

They were a curious assortment of stuff—seminar papers, notes for seminar papers, papers read before societies, outlines of projected papers (among these the well-remembered outline on *Possible Historical Originals for the Don Juan Legend)*, notebooks, and all the mess of stuff that an academic man keeps because he never knows when he might need it. Anything could have been in this assorted pile—anything, that is, of scholastic interest, but nothing remotely connected with a murder.

Then Martin noticed that several of the notebooks bore the imprint of the students' store at the University of Chicago. The first two contained vague random jottings on books not available elsewhere, including some curious bits of information concerning the Mandaeans and the Neminians over which Martin would gladly have lingered, had not the constant glances of the two policemen kept his search purposeful.

The third University of Chicago notebook began with a title-page. *The History of the City of Lausanne*, it read; *notes from conversation with Jean Stauffacher.* Martin gave an involuntary cry of triumph, and read on. The next four pages contained various facts and dates, with an occasional anecdote apparently from the Stauffacher family legends. The fifth page ended with the words: *Far more interesting, however, than this historical material is the information which I have obtained from Jean concern—*

The remaining pages of the notebook had been torn out.

It was with something of exultation that Martin showed this notebook to Sergeant Cutting. “You see, Sergeant,” he explained, “this must be what they were after. Stauffacher is the man he told us about who put him on the track of the Vignards. This notebook must have been where he kept his material. I remember he spoke of refreshing his memory from his notes. And there are no notes on the Vignards anywhere in all this pile of stuff.”

“Thanks, Mr. Lamb.” The Sergeant took the notebook. “You may be right. But if you are, it’s damned funny your Swiss emissary tore out those sheets. Why didn’t he just lift the notebook? And besides, how did he get in?”

“I can help you there. These doors have Yale locks, as you’ve noticed, but there’s no catch to make them lock automatically. You have to remember to lock them with your key. Paul was in no state to remember such trifles last night, and the door was probably left unlocked.”

“Thanks again. Well, Mr. Lamb, I expect I’ll see you at the inquest Monday, and maybe before that. But if I were you, I wouldn’t say anything about this Seven of Calvary business at the inquest. It’ll just confuse the jury. Myself, I’ll keep it in mind; but I won’t be able to act on it as I would if there were surer evidence.”

Davis suddenly spoke for the first time since Martin had come in. “I think this Swiss business is a lot of bull,” he said.

Sergeant Cutting grinned at Martin. “For once I think Davis is right. At least I hope so. It’ll be a lot easier for me if he is.”

Martin took the Sergeant’s proffered hand, smiled in reply, and returned to his room. He dressed rapidly, for he was by now painfully hungry, and wondered just what he himself thought about this Vignard business. Thoughts and theories tumbled through his mind.…

“I must see Dr. Ashwin tonight,” he finally decided.

“Good evening, Mr. Lamb,” Dr. Ashwin welcomed him. “I was not surprised by your absence from class this morning; I thought that you would sleep well after life’s particularly fitful fever last night.”

“I hate to object,” Martin replied, “but the quotation seems to me as inappropriate as it is ominous. I hope it will be a long time before I sleep the sleep of Duncan.”

Dr. Ashwin smiled. “Well,” he said, “let me make amends for my infelicity. Sit down, and I shall rinse the glasses.”

When the ceremony of the first drink was concluded, Ashwin spoke. “Tonight, I think, we need indulge in none of our customary beating-around-the-bush. Doubtless you’ve come to talk about last night; and for my part, I postponed a trip to visit Elizabeth simply because I felt sure that you would come. I have read the newspaper accounts of Mr. Lennox’s death and have gathered little more than that he was poisoned by strychnine during the dress-rehearsal of your play. Now tell me all the details.”

Martin told his entire narrative, from the meeting with Alex and Cynthia in the Great Hall up to his interview that morning with Sergeant Cutting. Ashwin followed it all with intense interest, interrupting only when Martin described the appearance of the Seven of Calvary.

“I cannot understand it,” Dr. Ashwin exclaimed with surprise. “How could so glaring a piece of sensation be omitted from the newspapers?”

“Because Sergeant Cutting thinks I was seeing things,” Martin answered, and went on to a fuller explanation. When he had finished the whole story, Ashwin sat for a while in silence.

“I like your Sergeant Cutting,” he said finally. “To be sure, his own too strict logic makes him muddle-headed, but I like him. He saw the point of the notebook.”

“You mean the Stauffacher notebook?” Martin asked. “That’s one of a lot of things that worry me. You said you thought that Paul invented that whole story, but of course that was when you believed him the agent and not the victim. We’ll have to rearrange all our ideas now.”

“I know.” Dr. Ashwin shook his head sadly. “It is most inconsiderate of a mere murderer to upset so completely my applecart of obvious conclusions. But let us say this: before, we were reasoning only from a partial set of facts. Now that the real murder has at last taken place, we have a more nearly complete set, and our conclusions will therefore be so much nearer the truth. Now let us see what we make of the new points.”

He settled back in the swivel-chair and waved to Martin to fill the glasses. “First,” he began didactically, “we know that Dr. Schaedel was killed in error for Paul Lennox, who was, you will remember, one of the only two people for whom the Herr Doktor could have been mistaken. We concluded before that four persons had possible motives for killing Mr. Lennox—the four being, of course, Mr. Bruce, Miss Wood, and (now that you have finally revealed their names to me) the Leshins, all these motives springing from varying forms of jealousy.

And all four of these people, according to you, had equal opportunities of slipping strychnine into the false sherry. As to whether they had an opportunity to secure the strychnine, that is the sort of question which only formal police investigation can cover adequately."

"Alex undoubtedly had," Martin interposed. "As a research fellow in chemistry, he could probably lay his hands on whatever he wanted."

"Very well then. On motive and opportunity, our four possible suspects run neck and neck; Mr. Bruce has a slight, but by no means conclusive, edge in the matter of means. Another point: whoever committed this crime must have known your play, known that Don Juan drinks a glass of sherry in act three, scene two. To whom would that condition apply?"

"Both Alex and Cynthia read the play while I was working on it. I don't know about the Leshins. They could, of course, have borrowed a script from Drexel or from Paul. He had a complete script instead of just sides, since his part was so long. Or they could have read the original in the library; they're both rather talented linguists, like most Slavs, and I've made practically no changes in that particular scene."

"One more question concerning this glass of pseudo-sherry, Mr. Lamb. Does any one of these four people possess theatrical experience—professional or amateur?"

Martin pondered briefly. "I know Alex doesn't. I can't say about the Leshins, but I doubt it extremely. Cynthia doesn't act, but she has done props and back-stage work for Thalian—that's sort of the Women's Auxiliary to Little Theatre."

"And would it have been quite usual if Drexel had, as you say he once intended, used cold tea to represent the sherry?"

"Quite."

"Then we have a small point to aid in clearing Miss Wood of suspicion. She alone of our quartet would know that the sherry was apt to be really tea, and that therefore it would be an impossible vehicle in which to administer strychnine. The point is indicative rather than conclusive; her knowledge of toxicology might be so slight as to cause her to make an error which succeeded in spite of itself. And now this matter of the Seven of Calvary—the most damnably confusing point of all. First tell me, Mr. Lamb, just what do you think of it?"

"Chiefly that it just doesn't make sense."

"I agree with you in the main, but go on."

Martin found the confusion of his thoughts difficult to sort into words. "In the

first place …” he began, and paused.

“A sound beginning,” Dr. Ashwin observed.

“In the first place,” Martin went on, with growing confidence, “it seems that there really must be such a society as the Vignards. Paul would scarcely have concocted a fable to aid a murderer whose intended victim he himself unwittingly was.”

“A somewhat Teutonic sentence, but the idea is plausible.”

“Then, if our idea of the murder-by-mistake is correct, it follows that the murderer also knew about the Vignards, unless you choose the improbable alternative of his lighting by chance on their symbol.”

“Let me interpose a point,” said Dr. Ashwin. “He might know the symbol without knowing anything about the Vignards *qua* Vignards. A European might have seen the Seven in connection with some Vignard assassination years ago and have remembered the symbol although he never learned the story behind the killing.”

“Possible,” Martin admitted. “But again we run up against a coincidence—that the accidental victim of the first murder should be a man whom the Vignards would have a possible reason for assassinating.”

“Allow me to hypothesize again.” Ashwin emptied his glass. “Suppose that the murderer recognized Dr. Schaedel when it was too late, suddenly remembered the symbol and its Swiss associations, and hurriedly drew it and left it there.”

Martin moved as though to speak, and Ashwin continued. “No … I see your objection, Mr. Lamb. There was neither time nor light for such an action. And besides, why should he then leave the symbol beside the body of Mr. Lennox, who was quite unconnected with Switzerland?”

“Unless he knew that it was Paul from whom, indirectly, the newspaper stories came. Alex and Cynthia both knew that; I doubt as to the Leshins, but Paul himself might have told one or both of them of the incident.”

“We are going around in circles, Mr. Lamb,” murmured Dr. Ashwin regretfully. “Calvary seems, to mix both history and geography, our Waterloo. …”

After a short silence, Martin began on a fresh tack. “You know,” he suggested, “it almost seems to me that we’re disregarding an entirely obvious solution. Why shouldn’t the whole affair be a pair of genuine Vignard assassinations? Dr. Schaedel was killed because he was spreading the gospel of peace, displeasing to

Agrammax, and possibly for older reasons of Swiss politics; and Paul was killed because he knew too much about the sect. I know your ethical objections to such melodrama, but that doesn't prevent the occurrence of melodramatic happenings."

Ashwin shook his head. "No, Mr. Lamb," he said, "my objection to an emissary of the Vignards is no simple matter of taste now, as it was when we first discussed Dr. Schaedel's death. The affair of the notebook has proved conclusively that the murderer was not a Vignard."

"But how? I should think that if anything—"

"Please. Sergeant Cutting was absolutely right in saying that the thief should have carried off the whole notebook. A Vignard could have only one motive for rifling Mr. Lennox's papers—the desire to make it appear that the whole story of the sect had no foundation in fact and that no such notes as Mr. Lennox had described were actually among his effects. To do that, he would simply have taken the book, leaving the remaining papers in perfect order."

Martin nodded agreement.

"But what does our thief do? First he leaves the papers in terrific disorder, so that no one can fail to observe that the room has been searched. Second, he tears from the notebook those leaves dealing with the Vignards, while there remains on the preceding page an incomplete sentence making perfectly clear the content of the missing leaves. In brief, the purpose of a true Vignard would have been to make the world believe the story of the society false; the actual thief did his best to make it appear true."

Martin admitted regretfully that he was convinced. "I'm afraid," he said, "that washes up the Vignards."

"I am afraid that it does, as you say, wash them up. But there is another point in that notebook. The fact that it dealt with the Vignards would be clear, from what remains of it, only to someone who knew that Paul Lennox received his information from one Jean Stauffacher, a fact which the thief could easily expect you, as Mr. Lennox's neighbor and closest friend, to explain to the police. That fact could not be gathered from the newspaper accounts."

"Then that comes back again to the group of us that heard Paul's story—Alex, Cynthia, and me. Mary Roberts and Worthing are irrelevant, of course. Excepting," and Martin began to smile reflectively, "that if it really were the Vignards, Worthing should be the next victim. It must have been he who gave Paul's story to the papers. And I wouldn't be surprised if he were suffering from

a very nice bunch of jitters right now."

Dr. Ashwin rose—an unusual action on his part and one which marked considerable stress. "Mr. Lamb," he announced, "I am at times almost shocked by the flippancy with which you and I look on these murders. To us they seem only parts of an entertaining intellectual game. And yet two men have been cruelly killed, the second one in the very face of my reasoning from the obvious. If we could force certainty out of this tangle of facts, if we could make our intellectual puzzle a weapon of justice—"

"Paul was my friend," Martin said. He suddenly realized, not exactly a thirst for vengeance, but a simple desire for retribution.

"Let us for the time being," Ashwin proposed, "forget all this complex business of symbols and sects. The notebook has shown us that it is assuredly a blind, if we cannot understand its exact purpose. Let us concentrate on the people, and above all on the poisoning. Mr. Lamb, do you have a good visual memory?"

"Fair. Why?"

"I want you to make me a chart of the relative positions of the people around that—'prop-table' I believe you called it—at the moment when the glass broke. Ask Miss Morales to do the same, and bring me the charts after lunch tomorrow. Then you and I shall call on Dr. Griswold, and ask him the same question. His will probably be the sharpest observation. After that, we can really begin to reason."

"Lupe will be back this afternoon," Mona remarked at lunch.

"She's all right now?" Martin asked.

"Perfectly. It will be nice to see her with Kurt again. But now that she is once more well, she hears from Los Angeles that her father the General is perhaps gravely ill. It is an unhappy compensation."

"I haven't seen Kurt in ages."

"No?" Mona refilled her teacup. "Then you did not see him backstage Thursday night?"

Martin almost dropped a forkful of good apple pie. "Kurt, too? Was everybody I know backstage that night?"

"Is it all not natural? We are your friends; we like to see your work."

"When did you see him?"

"He was in all that crowd behind the stage. I spoke to him when he passed the

table where we stood. I thought that you too saw him."

"No …" Martin was rebuking himself for his sudden excitement. Whatever imaginary motive Kurt Ross might have had for desiring his uncle's death, surely he could have no earthly interest in that of Paul Lennox. It was just a coincidence. Martin collected his thoughts and turned again to his companion. "Which reminds me, Mona," he said. "You may have gathered that I've been taking a lot of interest in these deaths. Well, I'm that worst abortion of nature, an amateur detective—and besides, I liked Paul.…"

Mona finished her tea and looked up curiously. "Yes?"

"The police think" (it gave Martin an odd sense of satisfaction to quote Sergeant Cutting so authoritatively) "that Paul must have taken the poison in that glass of stage sherry. Now someone—I know I can trust you to be quiet about this, Mona—someone probably put the poison there when that other glass was knocked over. You remember?"

"Yes …" There was hesitation in Mona's voice.

"I want you, Mona, to draw me a chart of how the people were standing around the prop-table at that moment. Do you think you could do that?"

"You must know better than I do, Martin."

"Possibly I do. I just want to check my own memory."

"Ask Dr. Griswold then."

"I intend to."

"Then is not that enough?" Mona's sweet voice was trembling slightly.

"Yes, but … What is the matter, Mona?"

"Please give me a cigarette, Martin."

He obeyed, took another for himself, and lit them both. There was a pause while Mona seemed to grope blindly for words.

"I think that I know, Martin," she began at last, "why you ask me and Dr. Griswold instead of Alex or Cynthia or even the Leshins. It is because you think that we two could not have any possible connection with Paul in life or in death."

"Yes," Martin admitted.

"*Pues bien* … ask Dr. Griswold."

"Mona … What do you mean?"

"On Thursday—oh, such years ago—when we had tea, Martin, I told you a little about a man who … would not stop." Martin nodded encouragement as Mona faltered, then resumed. "It was at a very stupid party in the hills where

everyone drank and was like the animals. They were friends of Remigio's; I never went again. I do not know if he was drunk or not; I think it was only that he was with people who did not know him too well. The house is very lonely. This was in the garden. I do not know what could have happened had not Remigio come. Remigio did not see him to know him, I thank God; he fled when he heard my brother's footsteps.… It was just like the Marines in the pictures." She smiled a very pale un-Mona like smile, but her voice dropped to almost inaudible silence as she added, "I think that I hated Paul Lennox."

And Martin realized that he was not nearly so anxious to bring Paul's murderer to justice.

They sat in silence, an understanding silence as comforting as the touch of hand to hand, until suddenly the loud accents of the British Broadcasting Company rang through the dining room.

"Lamb! I say, Lamb, old boy, I've been looking everywhere for you. Hang it all, you know more about this blasted thing than anyone else."

Martin looked up at Worthing with an aversion even greater than usual. "What is it?" he asked restrainedly.

"It was pinned to my door when I went upstairs after lunch. Found it ten minutes ago. Might have been put there any time all forenoon. Been looking for you everywhere. I say, old man, can't you help me? I mean, should I ask the bobbies for a spot of protection, what? Do you think I'm in danger of my ruddy neck?"

"I do not understand," Mona murmured, lost in the maze of Worthingesque Britishisms.

"Just what did you find?" Martin asked quietly, nobly suppressing an intense desire to wring that ruddy neck then and there.

"This." And Worthing laid on the luncheon table the third exemplar of the Seven of Calvary.

CHAPTER IX

The Last Seven

Dr. Griswold was at the piano, playing excerpts of Gilbert and Sullivan for his own delectation, when Martin and Dr. Ashwin arrived that afternoon. While they waited on the porch for the housekeeper to answer their ring, Ashwin beamed with joy. Sullivan's tunes were the only ones that appealed to his anti-musical tastes, only because he remembered the accompanying lyrics.

As the housekeeper opened the door, the scholar-pianist modulated abruptly from an *Iolanthe* chorus into the Mikado's solo, and the two amateur detectives entered the living room to the notes of

> *My object all sublime*
> *I shall achieve in time:*
> *To let the punishment fit the crime,*
> *The punishment fit the crime …*

Dr. Griswold broke off and rose from the piano. "This is a pleasant surprise visit," he blinked. "Very glad to see you both." And he gestured them to chairs.

Ashwin plunged into the middle of things with unaccustomed abruptness. "You've no idea, Griswold, what appropriate music you provided for our entrance."

Dr. Griswold stroked his beard in quiet amusement. "I see Martin's corrupting you already, Ashwin; you speak in terms of the theatre just like him. By the way," he added, turning to Martin, "I came across a curious little squib in *La abeja* last night—a theatrical reviewer speaking of Fonseca's *Don Juan Redivivo* as '*un drama maldito,*' an accursed play—I suppose you would say 'a jinx show?"

"So?" Martin asked curiously. "When was this notice?"

"1848, I think. I jotted down the reference; I thought you might want it." He handed Martin one of those small bits of paper (known among the scholastic,

Heaven knows why, as P-slips) with which his pockets always bulged. “The reviewer told various incidents of deaths, accidents, and other catastrophes in connection with revivals of the play—something the same legend as is told of the opera, *La Forza del destino.”*

Ashwin was becoming a little impatient. “It is precisely in connection with *Don Juan Returns* that we’ve come to see you, Griswold.”

“You sound sternly official. What can I do for you?”

“I’m quite sure that the Dean and the President and several other worthies would not approve of what I am doing; but I’ve worked with you on committees, and I know that you are no hidebound academician.”

“Thank you.” Dr. Griswold blinked mildly and placed his fingers together, wondering what on earth was coming of all this.

“The fact is, Griswold,” (and for once Dr. Ashwin’s aplomb very nearly deserted him) “the fact is I’ve turned detective.”

Dr. Griswold turned a rebuking smile on Martin. “You’ve corrupted him quite thoroughly, haven’t you?”

“I’m afraid I have,” Martin answered, “but it’s really not a gag. It’s serious, and it may be damned important.”

“You see,” Dr. Ashwin resumed, “Mr. Lamb has come across several things in connection with these deaths here which are not straightforward, acceptable, police-court evidence, but which have set me thinking along some peculiar lines. If we can learn just a little bit more, I think that we can know the whole thing.”

“And then do your duties as citizens?” Dr. Griswold suggested. “Well, whatever information I can furnish you, you may have.”

“Thank you.” Ashwin was visibly relieved at having completed the confession of his new hobby. “All that we want of you is this: a diagram of how people were standing around that little table back-stage when the glass was broken.”

Dr. Griswold looked at them with a quizzical expression, and Martin hastened to explain the business of the stage sherry. When he had finished, Dr. Griswold removed his glasses and polished them absently.

“Why, yes …” he said at last. “I think I could do that.” He found a pencil and paper and began his chart, making it slowly with many pauses for a careful check of his memory.

When the sketch was almost complete, Dr. Ashwin broke the silence with another question. “Do you know how the Leshins happened to attend the dress-rehearsal?”

“Let me see … I ran into Leshin in the library. He said he was meeting his wife at the auditorium to see the play, and I decided to go along, even though I had tickets for tonight. Fortunate that I did.”

“You helped us through a bad time,” Martin said warmly.

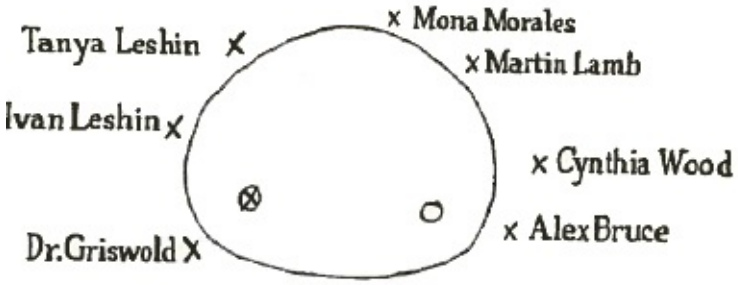
“I didn’t mean that.” Dr. Griswold was thoroughly embarrassed. “Simply that I should not have seen your play otherwise.”

“But why were the Leshins going to the dress-rehearsal, rather than one of the performances?” Ashwin asked.

“I don’t know. It wasn’t mentioned. We spoke very little. I scarcely know Mrs. Leshin, and there seemed to be some coolness between her and her husband. In fact, unless I am quite mistaken, she seemed surprised to see him there. Although he had told me that he was supposed to meet her.”

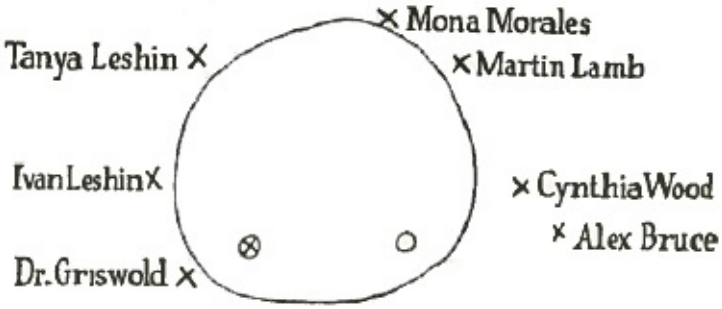
Martin and Ashwin exchanged a glance of understanding. The obvious meaning was that Tanya Leshin had come alone, planning to meet Paul afterwards, if for no more sinister reason, and that Ivan Leshin had suspected and followed her, bringing Dr. Griswold possibly to avoid a scene.

Dr. Griswold laid down the pencil. “There,” he said, “I think that is correct. I have as a rule an excellent visual memory.” He handed his chart to Ashwin, who produced from his pocket the one which Martin had previously drawn for him.



MARTIN LAMB'S DIAGRAM OF THE TABLE

○ = BROKEN GLASS
⊗ = POISONED GLASS



DR. JOSEPH GRISWOLD'S DIAGRAM OF THE TABLE

The three men sat on the couch by the window, the bright April sunlight shining on the two charts of death. Dr. Griswold was the first to speak.

"We seem to agree well enough, Martin. I believe we can conclude that both diagrams are approximately accurate."

"'Approximately,'" Ashwin repeated with noticeable irritation.

"If you want to discuss them with your Watson," said Dr. Griswold, "go right ahead. I promise discretion."

"How far across would you say that table was?" Dr. Ashwin asked.

"About three or four feet. Do you agree, Martin?"

"Right."

"Then anyone reaching across the table would have been conspicuous. To be sure, you might not have noticed it; but it would have meant running a needless risk. That means that only Miss Wood or Mr. Bruce could have knocked that glass off the table."

"I thought Mr. Bruce was rather far from the table for that," Dr. Griswold objected.

“To my mind he seemed close enough,” Martin countered.

“Then that … Ah!” Ashwin looked up with something of satisfaction. “You, Mr. Lamb, were facing toward Mr. Bruce and would have seen him the instant the glass fell. But you, Dr. Griswold, were faced toward Leshin, and had to turn a bit toward the sound before you could see Bruce. He had moved back in that moment.”

“But just a minute!” Dr. Griswold had another objection. “You say you think that the other glass received the poison at the same time that this one was knocked over. But the poisoned glass was on the other side of the table from Bruce, nearer to Leshin and me.”

“Of course!” Ashwin’s face bore a look of strong self-reproach. “The obvious has been staring me in the face and I have disregarded it. Breaking this glass was no accident. It had to be broken, deliberately.”

“Why?” asked Martin. “Breaking it seems to me merely to draw unnecessary attention to the glasses.”

“It had to be broken to make absolutely certain that Mr. Lennox would drink the strychnine-filled glass.”

“Couldn’t both glasses have been poisoned?”

“Then there would be the bare possibility of some harmless third person’s drinking off the second glass of poison. Our murderer was discriminating.”

Martin nodded. “Then you think the other glass was poisoned earlier?”

“Yes. Probably when people were milling about before you assumed these fairly fixed positions indicated on your diagrams. Possibly even after the glass was broken.”

Dr. Griswold blinked several times. “You have no idea how I enjoy watching a deductive detective at work—or is this induction?—especially when I have seen him apply not dissimilar principles to scholarship applications in committee—among them yours, Martin. But would you mind telling me exactly what conclusions you reach from all this?”

“Just this,” Ashwin replied deliberately, “and I’m afraid it is only a matter of probabilities. It is probable that Alex Bruce knocked over that glass. (It is almost certain that either he or Miss Wood did so.) Since destroying that glass must have been an essential part of the poisoner’s plot, it is therefore probable that Alex Bruce was the poisoner. But this is no matter of obvious certainty. It is barely possible that Mr. Bruce or Miss Wood may have knocked over that glass by accident, simply forestalling the poisoner’s intent. We need more facts, and I

don’t see where to find them.”

“Since there is no immediate hurry in securing those facts,” said Dr. Griswold, “(or at least I hope that there is none), why don’t you and Martin stay for tea and rest your minds of this problem? My daughter Marjorie should be home at any moment and—”

Dr. Ashwin rose ponderously. It was not merely the presence of a quiet young girl for tea that was sending him away; he wanted to be alone, free even of his loyal Watson, and struggle through this problem again. “I’m sorry,” he said; “I think I must be going. You stay, Mr. Lamb. I shall see you on Monday.” And after brief farewells, he left.

“Ashwin needed an interest like this,” Dr. Griswold observed. “He seemed to be going a little stale after he stopped translating. He gave up chess, gave up billiards—he used to be quite a champion at the Faculty Club, you know—and lost interest in most things aside from the little girl—Elizabeth or whatever her name is. I’m glad you’ve corrupted him.”

“I’m a little worried about him,” Martin replied. “He seems suddenly to be much more serious about the whole thing. And that abrupt, ‘I shall see you on Monday, Mr. Lamb.…’ Things have come to a pretty pass when Holmes dismisses Watson as peremptorily as that.”

At this point Marjorie Griswold came home. The tea was good; Dr. Griswold resumed his piano-playing; and Marjorie had various anecdotes, not unmalicious, concerning her instructors, which amused both Martin and her father.

“And Dr. Leshin wasn’t at class this morning,” she mentioned. “Not that I blame him because lots of times I’m not at a Saturday morning nine o’clock myself, but they say it’s because his wife is having a nervous breakdown and needs him with her or something.”

Aside from the sudden little shock he felt on hearing that piece of news, Martin spent a pleasant and quiet afternoon, unperturbed by thoughts of strychnine, symbols, or sudden death. The subject was not recalled to his mind until, returning home, he chanced to see Worthing sitting in the Great Hall. Beside him on the sofa sat Davis, the corporeal result of Worthing’s request for police protection. It had taken a call to the British Consulate in San Francisco to persuade Sergeant Cutting to give him a guard; and the more he looked at the stolid policeman, the less Worthing thought it worth the effort.

His request and an inadvertent reference by the Sergeant to what Martin had

seen had caused the evening papers to blossom out in headlines.

SWISS SECT STRIKES AGAIN
SCHAEDEL SLAYER ELUDES POLICE

"Despite efforts of the police," Martin read, "to disregard or suppress this important fact, it has been ascertained that the symbol of the Seven of Calvary was found beside the body of Paul Lennox, poisoned on the stage of Wheeler Auditorium at the University of California Thursday night. Lennox, it is now learned, was the original source of the information published exclusively in this paper concerning the Seven of Calvary and the activities of the Swiss sect known as the Vignards."

Here followed a rewrite of the original story, ending, "Richard Worthing, a close friend of Lennox," (Martin was a little dazed by this statement) "who supplied the information to this paper, has received the symbol of death and only with great difficulty could secure police protection."

Guessing what he might find, Martin turned to the editorial page. Yes, there it was: a half-column of scathing denunciation of the police, together with certain remarks which would probably work the Swiss Consulate into a beautiful lather of indignation.

The whole idea of the Vignards seemed damnably plausible—far more plausible, certainly, than the idea that Alex had committed two cold-blooded murders out of jealousy. To be sure, you never know how sexual rage will affect anyone, but still it seemed an insufficient motive for a person of Alex's sympathetic quietness. And then there was the new symbol delivered to Worthing—a blind, or …?

Martin wondered.

Sunday afternoon Martin went for a walk in the hills with Mona, Lupe Sanchez, and Kurt Ross. Lupe seemed in the best of health again, although worried by her father's illness and expecting at any moment an urgent call to Los Angeles. As the two girls chatted together in rapid Spanish, Kurt took Martin's arm and held him back a moment.

"Martin," he began hesitantly, "is it true what is in the papers?"

"Practically never."

"No, no. I mean, what is in the papers of what you saw—that symbol?"

"Yes. I saw it right enough, and Mac will back me up on it, no matter what

Sergeant Cutting thinks about my imagination running away with me."

"It was exactly the same as the one beside my uncle?"

"As to exactly, I can't say. I got only a brief glimpse of it at a very confused moment. But it was certainly the same symbol."

Kurt was worried. "Martin," he said at last, "I cannot understand it. I am Swiss; surely I should know if such a sect there were. And what connection could Paul have with my uncle, unless all this be true?"

"Mona said you were backstage that night." Martin's inflection was halfway between statement and question.

"Yes, but I saw nothing. How could I in that mass of people?"

"You were near the table?"

"Where the glasses were? Yes. I did not speak to you because you seemed to be so surrounded; I could not catch your eye."

"Didn't you see anything unusual?"

"No."

"Come on!" Mona's clear voice sounded from twenty yards ahead of them. In puzzled silence they quickened their steps.

Suddenly Kurt paused again. "Unusual …! Yes, Martin. One little thing. It returns suddenly. As I passed the table I heard the lady in red say, 'Where is there a drinking fountain?' I noticed because I too was seeking one. And the small dark man—that is Dr. Leshin, is it not?—said, 'Why do you not drink of this?' meaning the glass on the table."

"Which glass?" Martin interrupted eagerly.

"How should I know? I only thought it was strange to suggest drinking what stands about on stage tables. I was not noticing it much."

"And did she?"

"She said, 'I am not so thirsty as that,' or something like it—I do not know. I was only going by."

Martin was silent. Was this some significant new clue or the merest coincidence? Had Dr. Leshin had some mad idea of poisoning his wife as well as her lover? Was he aware of her plot and taunting her with it? Or was it simply a rather stupid conversation-making remark? And her refusal to drink—did it result from knowledge of what the glass contained or merely a quite natural disinclination to taste what passes for wine on the stage?

"Are not you ever coming, you two?" Lupe called.

"What do you believe of all this?" Kurt asked as they approached the girls.

“I don’t know what I believe,” Martin replied. And that at least was the truth.

After an hour of pleasant walking, Martin found himself stretched full length beneath a shady tree, with Mona sitting at his side. Kurt and Lupe had wandered off with the ostensible purpose of gathering wild flowers.

Mona broke a long contented silence by asking, “And how are you progressing as an amateur detective?”

“Lousily.”

“How so, ‘lousily’?” The word sounded strange indeed when spoken with a Bolivian accent.

“I can’t make sense out of anything.…” He plucked irritably at a blade of grass. “Besides, I’ve violated the first rule of a good detective story.”

“What do you mean, Martin?”

“Detectives don’t fall in love.” He kissed the palm of her hand tenderly.

Mona leaned over. *“Pero, ¡qué tonterías me dices!”* she murmured. *“¿Enamorado tú*?”

It was a subject best discussed in Spanish, Martin decided, and taking the cue from Mona he continued the discussion in that language until both simultaneously decided that no speech at all was even preferable. And Martin quite forgot that the inquest on Paul Lennox was to take place on the following day.

It would have mattered little if he had continued to forget the inquest, since it brought out no new facts of interest.

Martin himself, in the absence of any relatives, gave formal identification of the body. For some reason, he found this a peculiarly unpleasant task. Then followed questions concerning what had taken place on the stage of Wheeler Auditorium, covering practically the same ground as his first interview with Sergeant Cutting. At last he stood down, not entirely surprised that the Seven of Calvary had not once been mentioned in the questioning. The news-break caused by Worthing’s request for protection had, he imagined, so irritated Sergeant Cutting that he was more than ever determined to disregard the incongruous symbol.

The autopsy had revealed the size of the dose of poison administered—three grains, well over a toxic dose. No witnesses as to possible motives were called, and the jury brought in the inevitable verdict—that Paul Lennox had died of strychnine, given as wilful murder by person or persons unknown.

Not that this affected the case in the least, Martin realized. The verdict of the coroner's jury was a formality, with no defined legal standing as a finding of facts. Sergeant Cutting would continue his investigation, and perhaps … Looking up, Martin noticed among the few people in court Richard Worthing (still accompanied by the long-suffering Davis) and seeming woefully as though he expected to be the next protagonist in a coroner's inquest.

"Murder plays hell with Sanskrit," Martin remarked as he settled himself in the chair beside Ashwin's desk.

"Yes. It seems almost as though I should have to pass you more on your Watsonian abilities than on your knowledge of the *Mahabharata."*

"There's one consolation at least.…" Martin could see that Dr. Ashwin was not in the mood for a plunge into discussion; a brief period of light conversation seemed indicated. "Murder and Sanskrit make a unique combination."

"There, Mr. Lamb, you are guilty of a grievous error." Ashwin seemed glad of an opportunity to deliver a few *ex cathedra* dicta. "Do you not remember Eugene Aram? One of the world's most curiously solved murders, and surprisingly well celebrated by Thomas Hood."

"Curiously solved?" Martin repeated, "I remember that Aram was something of a philologist, but I thought his crime was revealed simply by someone's finding the skeleton of his victim."

"The case, Mr. Lamb, is a curious reversal of the situation which we have to deal with here in Berkeley. In the Aram affair, the right man was killed, but the wrong body was found. That is, the body of Aram's victim was discovered only after suspicion and a search had been provoked by the finding of a skeleton which was never identified and which had no connection with the crime. Ridiculously overestimated as a philologer simply because he happened to be also a murderer (even as your party-giving Mr. Morris, should he chance to commit a capital crime, would doubtless be ranked along with Aram and Edward Ruloff as a 'learned' man); still, Mr. Lamb, Aram invalidates your contention that murder and Sanskrit form a unique combination. And George Borrow, who knew at least a smattering of Sanskrit, whatever one may think of the uses to which he put it, describes in one of his books several meetings with John Thurtell."

"Thurtell?"

"I cannot remember in which book. You must ask Dr. Griswold—he is far more of a Borrovian than I, if indeed there be such a word as Borrovian."

“Borrowgove,” Martin suggested.

“Thurtell, the gigman, was a common enough murderer who would, today, be known principally from Borrow’s references had not he also inspired a poet by his crime. Less fortunate than Aram, Thurtell is not mentioned by name in the anonymous verse born of his action, but the stanza itself is to my mind of immortal succinctness.” And he recited:

They cut his throat from ear to ear,
His brains they batter’d in;
His name was Mr. William Weare,
He dwelt in Lyon’s Inn.

Pleased by Martin’s amused reception of the great quatrain, Ashwin relaxed in the swivel-chair and finished his drink. Then, in deliberate silence, he opened a fresh pack of cigarettes, took one, offered another to Martin, lit both, and exhaled a large cloud of smoke.

“I was worried,” he said at last, “when I left you at Dr. Griswold’s Saturday, and I am still no less worried. I have slept very little over the weekend. I have smoked far more than I should, and I have drunk near-Gargantuan quantities. And, as I have said, I am still worried. Have you anything new to tell me?”

Martin briefly described the uneventful inquest and added Kurt’s not particularly helpful account of the dialogue between the Leshins.

“Unless there is some peculiarly subtle point hidden in Mr. Ross’s story, Mr. Lamb, I fear that we are no further advanced than we were. You have suggested several interpretations of that episode—the most probable, of course, being that it means nothing. Another interpretation would be that Mr. Ross was lying.”

“But why?”

“I had expected that to be your first thought. After all, he was long your favored suspect.”

“But we disproved that motive completely.—Oh …!” Martin paused abruptly.

“Yes?”

“You mean that Kurt might have another motive? That he is, of all the people involved, the one most likely to be a Vignard?”

“I mean nothing of the sort, Mr. Lamb. I was just curious to see whether or not you would suggest the idea. As I said to you before, the notebook conclusively disposes of the Vignards—or rather, washes them up, to use the phrase for which you seem to have a preference. No, I give you Mr. Ross; but I think you have

bothered that harmless young man enough."

"But who do you think—?"

"Mr. Lamb, I am in a state where to me nothing seems obvious but the fact that things are wrong. Whether the Leshins, Miss Wood, or, as seems most likely, Mr. Bruce poisoned Paul Lennox, the killing of Dr. Schaedel is still a mystery. Why did Mr. Lennox establish so careful an alibi for the evening when he was scheduled to be a victim—an alibi, moreover, which could so easily have been faked? And why did he later tell an elaborate piece of unsubstantiated rigmarole about an obscure Swiss sect? There is no sense in it at all.

"But one question above all others—why did the murderer change his weapons? To carry on and commit the desired elimination after a murderous failure argues a strong criminal mind. And yet your true criminal … Cream was fond of strychnine and faithful to it. Jack the Ripper used a knife well, and continued to use it, despite the absurd theories of those who insist that he later became Dr. Cream.

"You will say, perhaps, that these are only deranged criminals following an *idée fixe*. But look on Brides-in-the-Bath Smith (more entitled, possibly, than the great Sidney to the appellation 'the Smith of Smiths'), look on Dr. Pritchard, look on Lydia Sherman, Sarah Jane Robinson, 'dear Aunt Jane' Toppan, even Mr. Pearson's beloved Lizzie Borden, whose only variance in method, according to the quatrain which ranks with Mr. William Weare's epitaph, was the difference between forty and forty-one whacks. What would cause a murderer to switch from an ice pick in one instance to strychnine in another?"

"Most of those people you mention," Martin suggested, "were caught exactly because they used the same method over and over. That's certainly true of Cream and Smith and Pritchard, even though Jack the Ripper got away with it. Perhaps our murderer wanted to avoid that danger."

"That won't wash, Mr. Lamb. He varies his method to conceal his identity and so leaves exactly the same symbol beside both corpses?"

Martin reflected. "If there were some particular reason why the murder had to take place at the rehearsal of my play, strychnine might have presented itself as the only possibility. You can't use an ice pick on a stage in full view of an audience. Or the murderer might suddenly have got access to a poison which he couldn't get hold of when he made his first attempt."

"Both suggestions are plausible enough, and yet … Will you bring me a copy of your play, Mr. Lamb? There might be something suggestive that we've

overlooked."

"God knows there's enough in it that's suggestive, but in a somewhat different sense than you mean. But I'll bring it anyway."

"Good. I wonder if it is true that murder goes to a murderer's head?"

"What do you mean?"

"Our X has committed one accidental murder and one (from his point of view) necessary one. So far he seems safe enough as regards both, unless Sergeant Cutting is concealing something exceptionally revealing (an oddly contradictory phrase). Now if this seeming security should tempt him into disposing neatly of anyone else who at all encumbers him …"

"It seems hardly likely."

Dr. Ashwin smiled an almost macabre smile. "Delusions of absolute safety could lead our X into a very curious crime. Even though I disbelieve entirely in the Vignards, or at least in their supposed activities in Berkeley, I nonetheless think Mr. Worthing justified in requesting police protection. To murder him would seem to everyone the surest proof of the existence of the sect, since no one else could possibly wish to kill such a harmless ass."

"Though God knows I've wanted to often enough," Martin murmured.

"Well, Mr. Lamb, I make hypotheses for my own amusement and to conceal my worry. I think we can feel certain that the Seven of Calvary has killed its last victim."

In which dictum Dr. Ashwin was approximately half right.

For four days after that Monday evening interview, nothing happened. Martin received one visit from Sergeant Cutting, liked him more than ever, and answered a great many questions, particularly concerning any possible connection between Paul Lennox and Dr. Hugo Schaedel; for evidently the Sergeant was beginning to take the Seven of Calvary a little more seriously. Twice Martin attended Sanskrit class and concluded with fair success the reading of the *Nala* episode; but his discussions with Ashwin at these sessions turned merely upon such subjects as the relative contributions of Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang to *The World's Desire*, or anecdotes of the pleasantly precocious Elizabeth. "She has been telling her schoolmates about Sanskrit," her mother had written. "I heard her say to one little girl, 'It goes "*nana nana nut,*" and it's a language!'"

"I have been writing letters myself," Dr. Ashwin remarked as he folded the

note from which he had read this excerpt. “You may be extremely interested in the reply which I expect from the University of Chicago library.”

After class on Wednesday afternoon, Martin approached Dr. Leshin. “Miss Griswold tells me that Mrs. Leshin is ill. I hope it is nothing serious.”

“Not at all, Mr. Lamb, I thank you. Nervous strain—the shock of seeing Mr. Lennox poisoned—it understands itself, I think. She is now at a rest home in Marin County.”

“Please offer her my condolence,” Martin said confusedly, and cursed himself the remainder of the afternoon for uttering such a stupid word.

On Friday morning Lupe Sanchez received a message that her father the General was much worse, and made her plans to leave for Los Angeles on Saturday.

Friday evening Martin and Mona went to the United Artists Theatre to see a film already being mentioned for the Academy award. It had three stars, ran a hundred and ten minutes, and bored them both to petrifaction. (In brief, the award was in the bag.)

“No, thank you,” Mona replied to Martin’s offer of refreshment as they left the theatre. “I need much fresh air after that film. Let us walk in the hills.”

They strolled quietly and pleasantly up Bancroft and past International House to Panoramic, while Martin praised Mexican films, so snootily scorned by American critics, in contrast to such arrant bosh as the super-production they had just seen. The lecture, which Mona received with admirable patience, was interrupted as they passed Cynthia’s house by the appearance of Alex Bruce.

“Hello,” he said. “Going for a walk in the hills even without moonlight?”

“It is not always necessary, the moonlight,” Mona whispered softly.

“No, I suppose not. And sometimes it just wouldn’t do any good. I’ve been talking with Cynthia,” he added to Martin.

“So?”

“I guess that’s over with. We sort of called each other by our real names tonight. Had a couple of drinks—just enough to loosen up our repressions—and started in saying all the things we’ve always meant to say. So if you ever had any idea, Martin, of my playing Maecenas to struggling young authors after I married into the Wood fortune-well, that’s out.”

“Too bad, Alex. But I guess it was just one of those things that don’t work out.”

Alex shrugged his shoulders. “And at that it’s no reason for me to bother other

people. *‘And all third parties who on spoiling tête-à-têtes insist …,’* you know. I need a walk in the hills to clear my brain, but I won’t inflict myself on you. Besides, I want to walk at a good stiff pace; I almost feel as though I were running away from something.…”

“‘*But at my back I always hear …*’” Martin quoted.

“Something like that. So long.” And Alex set off toward the hills at a nervous speed that brought to Martin’s mind yet another quotation, telling of

> *… one that on a lonesome road*
> *Doth walk in fear and dread,*
> *And having once turn’d round, walks on,*
> *And turns no more his head;*
> *Because he knows a fearful fiend*
> *Doth close behind him tread.*

But just then Martin and Mona were passing along a stretch of road where the street-lamp did not shine, and in the embrace which logically ensued they let pass them unnoticed whatever might have been treading close behind Alex Bruce.

In the absence of the moon, the hills were enfolded in dark quietude. It was in the same spot which had witnessed their discussion in Spanish on Sunday that Mona and Martin at last established themselves. They spoke now—when they spoke at all—in odd comminglings of English and Spanish, little fragments of whichever best suited the moment. And Martin, in disregarding what he had cited as the first rule of a fictional detective, was gloriously happy.

It all happened at once and broke with its suddenness into the very middle of a kiss. First there was the sound of footsteps coming down the path, then the appearance of the quickly walking figure, then the shot, the figure falling to the ground, and the tall shape moving abruptly on the other side of the path. It happened too quickly, too confusedly, for Martin to make any sense of it; but a sudden impulse sent him across the path to seize the tall shape, despite Mona’s restraining hand.

His reasoning mind, at the moment notably absent, should have been astounded and relieved that the shape neither fired nor fled. Instead it rushed at him and seized him with strong arms. Martin was neither an experienced fighter nor a strong one; the shape was both. Still Martin, with a fragmentary memory of jiu-jitsu and a dash of ingenuity, managed, after a long and heavy-breathed

struggle, to make at least some impression on the shape—enough, indeed, to set it swearing in fluent German with a marked Swiss accent.

“Kurt!” Martin exclaimed, and the amazed shape loosed its hold.

“Martin! *Du! Um Gottes willen …!”*

In the darkness they stared at each other. Suspicion … Disbelief … Fear … Kurt felt his aching thumb regretfully.

“The shot came from farther down, on your side of the path,” Kurt said at last.

“But who … what …?” With an unwarranted access of sense, Martin turned at last to the form lying on the path. Two girls knelt beside it.

“I heard footsteps running down the path,” Mona said as Kurt and Martin approached. He now indistinctly recognized the other girl as Lupe Sanchez.

“It’s no use trying to follow then,” Martin reflected. “Whoever it was could have vanished any place in these hills while Kurt and I were trying to catch each other.”

“And the shot was not all,” Mona added. “He threw this at the body before he ran.” She handed Martin a stone around which was wrapped a piece of paper, secured by a rubber band.

Martin did not need to be told what symbol he would find when he unwrapped the paper, nor did he need to light a match to know that the motionless body on the path was that of Alex Bruce.

Interlude

It is the vance method!" I exclaimed. "One by one you kill them off, and lo—!"

"I'm afraid," said Martin reflectively, "that I have just been guilty, for the first time in this narrative, of the undue sensationalism for which Holmes used to reproach Watson. You see, Alex Bruce was not dead."

"No?" I confess that I felt a trifle let down.

"No." Martin sipped his glass of liqueur Grand Marnier as the waiter cleared away the remains of dessert. "The bullet grazed his skull and laid him unconscious. But the fact that he was shot at is the important thing, not whether he lived or died. Important, of course, from the point of view of the mystery; I should have been very sorry to lose Alex as a friend."

"And what happened next?" I prompted.

"Nothing."

"What on earth do you mean, nothing?"

"Just that. Nothing more happened. Aside from two or three of what Ashwin might call corroborative minutiae, I have told you the whole case. When I was telling about the absurd novel on the boat-train murders, I mentioned the point in the story where the detective says to his stooge, 'You are now in possession of all the facts. Let us see if you reach the same conclusions as I.' Well, this is that point."

"For my part, Martin," I mumbled through the process of lighting a cigarette, "I don't reach any conclusions at all."

"You needn't feel bad about it, Tony. Neither did I. And yet Ashwin knew no more than I have just told you when he evolved his complete solution of the case."

"You've been quite fair in telling it?"

"Scrupulously. The facts were fortunately such that I was able to be fair; there were no startling last-minute disclosures. We knew everything; it just happened that Ashwin was the only man in Berkeley who could piece it together."

I finished my liqueur and sat disconsolate. Try as I might, the thing didn't make sense; I was as mystified as I dare hope that my reader may be now. Even

if one accepts Dr. Ashwin's explanation of the Schaedel killing as accidental, who could desire the lives of both Paul Lennox and Alex Bruce? Who, for that matter, his rival Lennox being dead, could conceivably want Bruce's life at all?

Martin roused me from my meditations. "Come on," he said. "We've talked enough about the Seven of Calvary for one night. Let's wander down to the Chinese Theatre—it's a pleasant short walk from here—and see an hour or so of their endless performance. I never like to visit San Francisco without seeing it; some day I may make sense of it."

"All right. But if you can puzzle out the plot of a Chinese play, you don't need a Dr. Ashwin to solve murders."

"Then, Tony, you can spend the night in lonely cogitation, and I'll drop around for breakfast and tell you all the fascinating facts. Right?"

"Fine."

Martin was a punctual breakfast guest. At the appointed eight-thirty, he arrived, to find me with the grapefruit juice squeezed, the coffee made, the bacon frying, and the French toast ready to go in the pan. He sniffed the bacon aroma appreciatively, and nodded at the French toast. "Breakfast promises well," he said. "And are you as good a deductionist as you are a cook, Tony?"

"Three more minutes of silence, Martin, or you'll have burned, French toast."

The threat silenced him, but he returned to the subject as soon as I had served the meal.

"I didn't do so well," I replied. "Like M. P. Shiel's nurse-detective, I dreamed a complete solution of the case, but unlike her, I haven't remembered even a punning symbol of what that solution might be. Besides, I rather think it was all mixed up with Chinese robes and long white beards. Now be a good lad, Martin, and Tell All."

"Very well," said Martin, as he poured maple syrup liberally over the toast. "First the corroborative minutiae—that phrase grows on me—and then the Ashwinian solution itself. Damned good French toast, by the way. Use flour? I thought not. Well, Alex, as I said last night, was not killed.…"

CHAPTER X

Truth Does a Strip-Tease

Martin had unwrapped the paper and was staring at it in bewilderment when he was roused by Lupe's voice.

"I think he is all right," she was saying. "I cannot find a wound."

Martin turned and knelt beside Alex. His heart was beating, and he was breathing reassuringly.

"Come on, Kurt. Give me a hand, and we'll get him down to the hospital."

The two men propped Alex up between them and, the girls following, started down the trail. After a few minutes of silent walking, they heard groans and unintelligible mutterings from the figure they were supporting.

"He's coming around," said Martin. "Let's stop a minute."

They lowered Alex into a relatively comfortable position at the foot of a tree, his head in Mona's lap. Martin, with vague memories of "What To Do in Emergencies," began chafing his wrists while Mona stroked his forehead. Kurt and Lupe stood apart, Kurt glancing now and then, with a slight shudder, at the Vignard-inscribed paper which Martin had handed to him.

Alex opened his eyes at last and rose unsteadily to a sitting posture. "What the hell …" he muttered.

"God bless you, Alex!" Martin exclaimed. "I was afraid you'd say, 'Where am I?'"

"Martin!"

"Yes."

Alex rubbed his aching head with the back of his hand. "I think I know where I am all right. Some place in the hills, isn't it?"

"Right."

"But just what in hell's happened to me? My head feels like a walnut that's quarreled with a steam roller. And what are you doing here and who are these

other people? I can't see very well, and to be honest, I don't much care." His head sank back in Mona's lap.

"I don't know myself just what happened. Mona and I were—well, that is, we were—and you came down the path. Suddenly there was a shot from some place a little farther down the path, and you fell. Kurt and Lupe were near there and heard and saw the same thing. Kurt and I each thought that the other was your assailant, and gaily tackled each other. During our mêlée, whoever it was got smoothly away."

Alex managed to rise a little, his hand still at his head. "Must have grazed me. There's a place here on my temple that hurts like a lot of words I won't use at the moment. Did you see who it was?"

"No."

"Man or a woman?"

"I don't know."

"I think," Lupe interrupted, "I think I saw it when it threw the stone. It was small, and I think—to this I will not swear—it was a woman."

"Threw the stone? What's this all about, Martin? It's bad enough to have people taking pot shots at you in the hills; but if they're going to throw stones at you to boot—"

"It was a stone with a paper wrapped around it," Martin explained.

"Paper?" Alex shook his dazed head worriedly. "Is this a gag?" Then a quick look of comprehension came, and with it something approaching terror. "Martin! That paper … It wasn't …" He choked, and left the sentence unfinished.

"I think it was. Kurt!"

Obediently Kurt advanced. He handed the Seven of Calvary to Alex and struck a match. In the light of the flickering flame, Martin saw on Alex's face an expression which might have denoted anything from utter fright to complete resignation. Then Alex's head fell back and he seemed for a moment to lose consciousness again.

Mona looked up at Martin with concern. "Had you not best take him to the hospital?"

"Right. Come on, Kurt."

But as they bent over Alex to raise him, he roused himself and struggled unaided to his feet. "No!" he cried. "Leave me alone. No hospital for me—thanks all the same. That means they'd recognize the bullet scratch, and that—God bless the laws—would mean the police. And that's out—out, to you hear?"

“But Alex—”

“I’m all right. Just a scratch. I can settle this.” He wavered a little, and caught Martin’s arm. “If you’ve just got to do something helpful, you can help me back to the House. My legs don’t seem to be quite themselves yet. And if you’ve got any whiskey lying around …”

It was a strange and silent procession that approached the south entrance of International House. The girls went on to the women’s entrance, and Martin and Kurt helped Alex into the elevator and on to his room. There he sat, still a trifle dazed, on the edge of the bed while Martin hurried to his own room for whiskey and Kurt fetched a cold damp towel from the washroom.

The whiskey braced Alex no end, and the cold towel helped in the transformation. In a few moments he looked almost normal again.

“Have you got a cigarette, Martin?” he asked. “That’s the worst of this whole damned episode—I lost a pack of cigarettes some place on the trail up there.”

Martin handed over his pack. For himself, he took a large swig from the bottle—he felt he needed it almost as much as Alex—and passed it on to Kurt.

“Thanks. That smoke feels good.” Alex leaned back on the bed. “And my head’s better now.”

“But Alex,” Martin insisted, “this must come to the police eventually.”

“And why?”

“Damn it all, Alex, how can you ask why? That paper—this isn’t something that involves just you. It concerns Dr. Schaedel and Paul Lennox. If we can check on the person who shot at you—”

“—you won’t find out one damned thing.”

“Martin is right, Alex,” Kurt put in.

“Martin is wrong, Kurt.” Alex sat up vigorously and reached again for the whiskey. “Martin is so damned wrong he’ll never even know how wrong he is. And meanwhile both of you are going to promise me here and now that you’ll never mention a word of this to anyone. Do you promise?”

But both hesitated.

“Come on! After all, it’s my cause, isn’t it? I’m the injured party. And if I know—as I do know—that I can settle it, just what the hell is it to you?”

“Alex,” said Martin, “I’m going to be frank with you. I’ll promise not to say a word to the police or to anyone else, but I make one exception.”

“Yes?”

“Dr. Ashwin.”

“The loyal Watson. My compliments, Martin, for your fidelity. All right. If your great Sanskrit amateur detective wants to know about this, let him. After all, I owe him a good turn. And much good may it do him. Now how about you, Kurt?”

“I shall be as the grave.”

“Not a very cheery comparison, but let it pass. All right, gentlemen. You give me your word not to whisper this to anyone at all—with Martin’s exception?”

“I give you my word,” said Martin, and Kurt echoed him.

It was the battlements of Elsinore Castle. *“This not to do, swear, so grace and mercy at your most need help you.”* Martin as Horatio, Kurt as Marcellus, Alex as an oddly colloquial Hamlet … all that was lacking was the Ghost in the cellarage. And Martin was not so sure that he was indeed lacking.

“That’s that.” Alex passed the whiskey back to his friends. “Now let’s be cheerful. We can’t go to sleep at once after that gay little scene. We’ll kill that bottle and tell stories.”

Reluctantly, Martin drank. Kurt hesitated. Martin knew what was in his mind. He was thinking of the night he had seen his uncle killed, and of how they had all sat in Martin’s room drinking and rollicking while the police carried off what had been a man of love and peace.

It had been a night just like this. The Seven had struck in the hills, and the blow had been followed by stag carousing in a room of International House. Martin and Alex and Kurt—but the group was smaller by one now. Paul Lennox was not there, to abandon his pipe for cigarettes and deliver the great saga of Anthony Claire.

There was a ghost in the cellarage.

Martin rose early the next morning and hurried down Channing Way to the rooming house where Dr. Ashwin lived, only to learn that his master had left for the week end, presumably to stay in San Rafael with Elizabeth and her mother. He would be back some time Sunday.

It proved an intolerable week end for Martin. He wanted to bring this newest factor of the case to Dr. Ashwin’s attention immediately, and he was helpless. He did not even know Elizabeth’s last name nor where to reach Ashwin in Marin County. Moreover, Mona had left, with Remigio, to spend the week end with friends in San Francisco—*attachés* of the Bolivian consulate or some such thing. Lupe had departed for Los Angeles early Saturday morning, and Kurt, as a

result, proved a moping and dull companion. And Martin felt an odd disinclination to see Alex.

There was only one thing left to do—work. And heaven knows it was necessary. Seminar papers had been piling up right and left while Martin had labored on *Don Juan Returns* or held conferences with Ashwin. So, for this last week end before the dénouement of the Schaedel case, Martin slaved alternately at Caspar Wilhelm von Borcke and at the influence of Saint-Simonianism on the *Jung Deutschland* movement, and heard or spoke scarcely a word upon the Seven of Calvary.

The one exception occurred after dinner on Saturday when he encountered Paul Boritsin in the Great Hall. It was too soon after food to settle down anew to the letters of Georg Büchner, and a chat with the Russian, Martin thought, might effectively drive him to industry.

After desultory remarks on the Tchernavins, Carveth Wells, and Mr. Hearst's latest starvation statistics, Martin could not resist a mild bit of ribbing. "You remember your extremely acute theory concerning the murder of Dr. Schaedel?" he asked. "Just how do you square that up with later developments?"

"Later developments, Mr. Lamb?"

"The poisoning of Paul Lennox. Why should the dirty Reds want to polish him off?"

"Mr. Lamb!" Boritsin smiled a smile of aristocratic superiority. "But it is of a simplicity which amazes me you do not comprehend."

Martin struggled his way through the sentence and finally prompted, "So?"

"But of course. It is notorious that Mr. Lennox was a Communist."

Martin gulped. "Paul a Communist?"

"Have I not seen him to emerge from a theatre at which was showing *Peasants?* Have I not heard him to whistle an air by Hanns Eisler while that he was shaving? Above all, have I not heard him to praise highly what is called the 'music' of Shostakovich? Mr. Lamb, I ask you, could anyone not a Communist do these things?"

Martin gulped doubly and said nothing.

"I see you doubt. Mr. Lamb, I will now contribute the clinching nail to my argument. I happen to know—mind you, Mr. Lamb, this is no vagrom calumny—I happen to *know* that Mr. Lennox was subscriber *to The Nation!"* Boritsin leaned back, blew out a great puff of smoke (which had been intended as a ring), and beamed complacently. "The rest follows of itself. He knew something of the

assassination. Perhaps he was not all bad, and threatened to make a revelation. So," the aristocrat concluded, adding a nice Nazi touch to his scheme, "he was purged."

Martin rose. "Today, Boritsin," he said sternly, "I bought a copy of *The Daily Worker."*

He walked off quietly. It may be added that Boritsin never spoke to him again.

Martin, nervously watching Dr. Ashwin's rooming house, saw him return about eight-thirty Sunday evening. Allowing a decent pause, he hurried up the stairs and knocked on the doctor's door.

Ashwin welcomed him with a broad smile which ill accorded with Martin's eager impatience. "Why are you so amused?" Martin could not help asking.

Ashwin settled himself comfortably and laughed. "Over the week end," he explained, "I have learned a profound secret. I have learned the invaluable quality of an inflatable rubber duck."

Without waiting for Martin's prompting, he continued his narrative. "Elizabeth's mother, as I believe I have told you, is a still young, attractive, and quite remarriagable woman. In fact, a sturdy young man is at present courting her. But he was not present at dinner last night; there were only Elizabeth, her mother, and I. A silence fell briefly in the midst of the dinnertable conversation; and of a sudden Elizabeth remarked, 'Dr. Ashwin, Mother thinks you're an awfully nice man. Why don't you marry her?'"

The remembrance of the painful situation brought renewed laughter to Dr. Ashwin, laughter in which Martin could not help joining as he pictured Elizabeth looking alternately at her mother and at her patron and wondering why so logical a question should affect them both so strangely.

"What on earth did you do?" Martin asked at last.

"In my pocket," Dr. Ashwin replied, "there reposed a rubber duck which I had bought that afternoon for Elizabeth. I had found it in a drugstore on the counter next the whiskey. While Elizabeth's mother blushed into her napkin, I extracted the rubber duck and gravely inflated it. So delighted was Elizabeth with this exhibition that the awkward subject was quite forgotten. I must remember never to travel again in perilous mixed company without an inflatable rubber duck."

Ashwin finally broke off his laughter to fetch out the whiskey. As he poured it, he asked, "And what has happened in Berkeley during my absence? My landlady tells me that you called yesterday at an hour surprisingly early for you,

and seemed very anxious to see me."

So Martin told the detailed story of Friday night. "And it leaves me," he concluded, "more confused than ever. Even with a Vignard theory, you can't account for anyone wanting to kill Alex. And don't get any wild ideas of its being a plant to ward off suspicion. If that were it, he certainly wouldn't have sworn Kurt and me to secrecy; and besides, that bullet was meant to kill. No one's a good enough shot to graze the head like that on purpose; it's mere accident that Alex is alive."

"True. But continue, Mr. Lamb. I want to see what other ideas this attack suggests to you."

"Well … It eliminates the Leshins pretty thoroughly, I should say, even aside from Mrs. Leshin's being in Marin County. Alex has only the slightest acquaintance with either of them. Unless he saw something backstage that night—but Alex in the rôle of secret blackmailer just doesn't make sense."

"And what else?"

"He quarreled violently with Cynthia that night. She might … But then she is the one person with a completely sound alibi for the murder of Dr. Schaedel."

"True."

"That lets out … Well, among them, the three killings—I count the attack on Alex as one because it certainly was so in intent—the three killings let out everyone. The first one lets out Cynthia; the second eliminates Paul, all too literally; and this third disposes of Alex, the Leshins, and the Vignards—even if your beloved notebook hadn't done that already. What we need, Dr. Ashwin, is a whole new set of suspects."

"Yes?"

"For God's sake don't be so omnisciently monosyllabic. Tell me what you think."

"I do not think, Mr. Lamb. Now I know."

"What?" Martin reached swiftly for the bottle.

"Yes, Mr. Lamb, I know. This attack on Mr. Bruce was the one thing needed to make the pattern complete, the one touch to render the whole series of crimes obvious."

"Then you know who the murderer is?"

"I might logically answer your question with another, but I shall not."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I need one or two facts before I can do anything. To be exact, I need three

facts. One I expect to receive tomorrow from the University of Chicago library. Since I wrote via airmail special delivery and enclosed an envelope for an answer of similar speed, I should hear from them tomorrow. The second fact you shall secure for me in San Francisco either tomorrow or Tuesday, if you will be so good as to perform an errand for me."

"Gladly. Tuesday would be better."

"Fine. And the third fact I shall learn from Mr. Bruce himself at the little conference which I propose to hold here on Wednesday evening."

"A conference?"

"Yes. I should like to expound my ideas to those interested before I make definite use of them. Not that I doubt myself; I think that, in my heart of hearts, it is simply a desire for an appreciative audience."

"Who is to be there?"

"Yourself, of course; you need not fear being cheated. Mr. Ross, as representing the interests of the first victim—his discretion can be trusted, can it not?"

"Of course."

"You may be considered as representing Mr. Lennox, and the third victim, Mr. Bruce, can of course represent himself. I shall also invite Dr. Griswold. His mind shows the most admirable combination of scholarship and intellect that I have ever encountered; he should be the ideal critical audience. You will doubtless remember the *Panchatantra:*

> *"'Scholarship is less than sense;*
> *Therefore seek intelligence.'"*

"But why won't you tell me what you know?"

Dr. Ashwin smiled. "Griswold observed very justly that you have corrupted me. I have now developed such a taste for the theatrical that my lips are sealed until Wednesday night."

Martin swore under his breath and consoled himself with another drink.

"You will of course see to inviting Mr. Ross and Mr. Bruce. I shall myself speak with Dr. Griswold. Now as to your errand on Tuesday …"

Martin jotted down his instructions and slipped them into his pocket. "I'm afraid I must go now," he said rising. "I've got to finish off Gutzkow tonight."

"You look quite ludicrous, Mr. Lamb, in your sheepish disappointment—your pardon, yours was a name born to create bad accidental puns. It is, I grant you,

cruel, the manner in which we detectives treat our Watsons."

"Oh, well, I can wait," Martin muttered with an assumed indifference.

"But let me be at least more helpfully cryptic, Mr. Lamb, and direct your attention to these points." Ashwin ticked them off on his fingers as he enumerated them.

"A: THE POINT OF THE FATHER'S RELIGION.[1]

B: THE POINT OF THE SUPERFLUOUS ALIBI *(which is two points).*[2]

C: THE POINT OF THE FORTUNATE STUMBLE.[3]

D: THE POINT OF THE DISPUTED THEORY.[4]

E: THE POINT OF THE VARYING WEAPONS.[5]

F: THE POINT OF THE SEVILLIAN TIRADE.[6]

G: THE POINT OF THE EYE AND THE TOOTH.[7]

And above all—

H: THE POINT OF THE SEVEN OF CALVARY.[8]

"You see," Dr. Ashwin concluded, "I am well conversant with my Stuart Palmer and my Earle Stanley Gardner, to say nothing of my never-to-be-sufficiently-praised John Dickson Carr."

"You are a help," added Martin disgruntledly, and left.[9]

The ferry ride to San Francisco Tuesday morning was, as it always is, a pleasant interval of quiet surcease. Martin had bought a copy of *Variety* to enjoy on the trip, but it lay neglected beside him as he sat on the front of the upper deck and watched the San Francisco skyline materialize into clarity. The morning was at once cold and warm; the sun was bright, and a chill breeze blew across the bay.

Martin left the Ferry Building, besieged by the usual swarm of newsboys and taxi drivers, and walked leisurely up Mission Street. At last he paused before a store bearing the inscription, "I. Goldfarb, Theatrical Accessories."

A little Jewish clerk beamed at Martin from behind a long glass counter containing everything from crepe hair to collapsible daggers. "Yes, sir? What can we do for you?"

"Do you carry sound-effect records—phonograph transcriptions for offstage noises?"

"Yes, sir. Just what would you be wanting?"

"Do you have a record of typing?"

“Yes, sir. A very good one. If you’ll just step this way, sir—”

He led Martin into a small room containing an electric phonograph, vanished a moment, and reappeared with a record. “Here you are, sir,” he announced. “Recorded in a genuine office, thirty typewriters going at once.”

Martin’s face fell. “You don’t have a record of just one typewriter?”

“Sorry, sir, we don’t. No call for it. For just one machine, it’s easier and cheaper to use a real typewriter. You want it for amateur theatricals, I suppose?”

“Yes.”

“Well, take my advice and have your prop man use a real typewriter offstage. If there was much professional demand out here, we might carry it—using a genuine typewriter would mean another union man—but you amateurs don’t have to worry about that.”

And the clerk continued a discourse on the troubles of union regulations in the theatre as he bowed Martin out. “You might try Zolotoy’s,” he concluded. “About two blocks west; they carry anything.”

Somewhat less hopefully, Martin approached the white-haired old man at Zolotoy’s with the same opening gambit. He was surprised by the result of his question; the old man smiled a very broad smile and seemed secretly pleased about something.

“I told him,” he chuckled. “Many’s the time I’ve told him. He wouldn’t believe me, but I’m right. He’ll see.” He continued muttering as he led Martin into another little room almost identical with that at Goldfarb’s. “You’re sure it’s *one* typewriter you want?”

“Yes. One.”

“Just a moment, young man, just a moment. I’ll have it right here for you.”

He returned promptly and started the record. It was an excellent transcription, sharp and clear, and the record was so unusually free from surface noises as to be completely convincing. Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-*ping!* Martin was again drinking his bourbon and reading *The Boat Train Murders.* The rate was the same—just a little better than Paul Lennox’s normal speed.…

Martin shuddered.

The old man stopped the record. “Would that be satisfactory now, young man?”

“Too damned satisfactory.”

“What?”

“Nothing. But I’d like to ask you a couple of questions.”

“All right.” The old man sat down and devoted himself to a venerable and oddly colored clay pipe. “What is it, young man?”

“You see,” Martin began, “I’m from the U. C. Experimental Theatre in Berkeley. We used a record just like that in our last show. Now somebody’s been playing around with the books of the theatre, doctoring up expense accounts and whatnot, and I’m trying to check up on things. Could you tell me if our record was rented here?”

“When was your show?”

“Friday, April sixth.”

“Just a minute, young man.” The stooped figure disappeared into an inner office and returned with a ledger marked *Sound Transcriptions, N—Z.* After a few moments’ search he announced, “Here we are: *No. T321. Single typewriter. Rented April* 5. *Returned April* 7. I guess that’s the one you want. Here, you can copy it down if you need it for your books.”

Martin jotted down the entry and noticed the renter’s name—Frank Hellmuth. Grudgingly, he applauded Paul for avoiding the usual obvious self-betrayals made by those who choose false names.

“Will that be all?” the old man was saying.

“One thing more. I’m not sure it was really Frank who rented this record; there’ve been some funny things happening in our theatre, and I just want to check.” He took up his briefcase and extracted a group of photographs—mostly snaps, but good ones. Several of them were blanks—people, that is, quite unconnected with the case—but among them Ashwin had insisted, for some strange reason, on including Alex Bruce as well as Paul Lennox.

The old man looked over the photos slowly, sucking on the clay. The first two he discarded instantly (one of them was Boritsin). Over the third, that of Alex, he paused, and thoughtfully laid it aside. The next three he skipped over without interest. Then he seized on Paul’s, and let fall two more that he had not even glanced at.

“This is the one,” he said definitely. “Is that your Frank, young man?”

“No,” said Martin truthfully. “There’s something funny here. How can you be so sure? How can you remember one rental weeks ago so clearly?”

“Ah.” A long puff on the clay. “Now you’re asking something. Well, young man, I’ll tell you.” A still longer puff. “Two years ago we got that record. I wanted to get it; I thought it’d be useful maybe. But the boss he was against it; he said people could use a typewriter if they wanted a typewriter. Well, I ordered

the record without telling him, see; and when it came he kicked up hell. And for two years we didn't rent it. Every time I gave him any advice about anything he'd say, 'Oh yeah? You knew about that typing record too, didn't you?' So you can see why I remembered it when I finally rented the record. I told that young man in the picture all about the boss and he laughed and we was what you might call chummy about it; so I remember him." He settled back to relight his pipe after so long a speech.

Martin picked up Alex's picture. "Then why did you set this one aside? It doesn't look anything like the other."

"Because I've seen him too, only not then. I couldn't think where, but now I remember. He come in here about a week after the other one, and did pretty much like you did. First he wanted to know did we have a record like that, and then had anybody rented it lately, and then what kind of a looking person it was. He didn't talk about no theatre, though."

"And you told him?"

"Just what I told you, young man, only no pictures."

"Thanks." Martin repacked his briefcase. "I'm afraid I won't want the record after all, but you needn't tell your boss that. Here—have a couple of beers on me and forget the boss."

The old man glowed contentedly and puffed firmly at the clay. "Thanks, young man," he grinned. "Any time I can do anything for you—"

Martin walked slowly down to the Embarcadero and over to Bernstein's for lunch. Today's discoveries seemed at first almost to make things more complicated. And then, as he attacked an excellent lobster louie, reinforced by beer, he remembered the seventh of Ashwin's cryptic points.

Things began to grow clearer.

Turning his swivel-chair away from the desk, Dr. Ashwin faced the little group assembled in his room on Wednesday evening. Martin was in his usual chair, and Alex Bruce sat in another and equally stiff one. Dr. Griswold had made himself fairly comfortable at the head of the couch, and Kurt Ross sat awkwardly at its foot. Ashtrays and glasses of Scotch were disposed hospitably beside each of them, save for the abstemious professor of Spanish.

"You all know," Ashwin began in his most rounded voice, "why we are gathered together here. Three sensational crimes have been committed on or near the campus of this University, and no plausible explanation of them has been

publicly advanced. I have, to my own satisfaction, evolved a complete solution of this series of crimes, and I have asked you gentlemen to hear and criticize my explanation.

"You, Dr. Griswold, I ask to serve as a check-and-balance to myself. You other three represent indirectly or, in one case, directly, the three victims, and as such representatives are entitled to know my construction of the facts. When you have heard that construction, we can, as a group, decide what use to make of it."

Martin looked around the group. It was an uneasy lot of people, realizing that they were assembled on a matter of life and death and worrying as to what decision it might fall to their lot to make.

Dr. Ashwin resumed his prefatory discourse. "The basic facts of these crimes are, I believe, known to all of you, at least since I spent the greater portion of the afternoon relating them to Dr. Griswold. Certain other less known facts will be brought out in my discussion, for many of which I am indebted to Mr. Lamb's sometimes purposeful but more often accidental researches. These will clarify themselves as the occasion arises.

"On Sunday last I told Mr. Lamb that my reconstruction of the case still needed the answers to three questions. The first answer I received Monday in an express package from the head librarian of the University of Chicago. In a way, it was anything but satisfactory. I had committed the grievous error of underestimating the astuteness of the murderer; I had hoped for a far simpler clue than he had left me. But that I shall explain further at the proper time."

"Never underestimate a murderer, Dr. Ashwin," Alex observed quietly.

"I assure you, Mr. Bruce, I shall avoid that fault in the future. The answer to my second question Mr. Lamb found in San Francisco on Tuesday; this too we shall take up in its proper place. This answer, I may add, serves strongly to corroborate my theory. There remains but one question before I can feel upon sure ground and continue my exposition; that question, Mr. Bruce, I must ask of you."

Alex lifted his glass and took a quick drink of the Scotch. "Yes?" he said.

"I think you will find it best to answer me truthfully, Mr. Bruce, although the question may seem a random shot." Dr. Ashwin paused. "Mr. Bruce, were you secretly married to Cynthia Wood?"

Alex dropped his glass to the floor and let the whiskey flow unheeded. For a moment he was silent, and then gasped, "How did you know?"

Kurt and Martin looked at each other in speechless amazement. Dr. Griswold

stroked his beard unmoved and seemed to wonder quietly what could happen next.

Dr. Ashwin settled back in the swivel-chair and again surveyed the group. “The third question is answered satisfactorily. Now, Mr. Bruce, with your permission, I shall proceed to explain why you poisoned Paul Lennox.”

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[1] P. 73.

[2] Pp. 158 ff.

[3] P. 45.

[4] P. 137.

[5] Pp. 246 f.

[6] P. 186.

[7] *Passim.*

[8] *Passim.*

[9] I feel that this brief list provides the proper place to issue a challenge to the reader, in the manner of the admirable Ellery Queen. To be sure, all the essential facts had been told when Martin challenged me after dinner to equal Ashwin’s solution; but it was not until I had, between mouthfuls of French toast, heard these eight points that I suddenly understood the tangled web of plot that lay behind the deaths of Dr. Hugo Schaedel and Paul Lennox. Here, then, I challenge my readers (in a confident plural), and urge them on to check their solutions against the obvious certainty of Dr. John Ashwin.—*A. B.*

CHAPTER XI

The Naked Truth

There was a moment of tense silence. Even Dr. Griswold leaned forward in surprise. Kurt started from the couch with clenched fists, then sank back, swearing beneath his breath. Martin watched Alex closely.

Whatever reaction he might have expected from a man suddenly accused of murder, he did not perceive the slightest discomposure. Ashwin's abrupt question had moved Alex far more than the subsequent accusation.

The young chemist leaned over and picked up his glass. "I shall be curious to hear your reasoning, Dr. Ashwin," he said softly. "When you have quite finished and the others of the group have made their comments, then I shall reply as I see fit. In the meanwhile, do you mind if I refill my glass?"

"Not at all." Dr. Ashwin handed him the bottle. "A mere accusation of murder, Mr. Bruce, should never stand in the way of hospitality."

Alex filled his glass, emptied it swiftly, refilled it, and returned the bottle. "Go on," he said.

"You gentlemen will understand," Ashwin began, "that whatever is said in this room tonight is to remain forever a secret among the five of us, unless we should jointly decide otherwise. Now, in order to explain how I reached this conclusion which has so startled three of you, I believe I shall find it best to rehearse the case from its very beginning, and explain what seemed obvious at every step. This matter of obviousness is, as Mr. Lamb well knows, my *idée fixe.* It was my belief in it that tempted me to theorize when your uncle, Mr. Ross, was found murdered; and it is my pursuit of this belief that has drawn me now so deeply into this strange series of crimes.

"Let us begin with the death of Dr. Schaedel. Here was a man, as Mr. Lamb has assured me and as you, Mr. Ross, are doubtless equally convinced—a man, I say, utterly free from guile, a noble, admirable, even lovable man, who had led a

clear, uncomplicated life. And this man was found foully murdered. As his letter to Mr. Ross fortunately proved, only certain worthy Swiss institutions stood to profit financially by his death. When I first approached this problem, I did so, as Mr. Lamb will remember, by means of a famous list of the possible motives for murder: Gain, Jealousy, Revenge, Elimination, Lust for Killing, and Conviction. Of these, the first four were obviously inapplicable in the case of Dr. Schaedel. Lust for Killing I frankly chose not to consider, for no amount of mental ingenuity can discover the obvious when dealing with a psychopathic criminal; if the murderer was a lust-killer, my reasoning efforts would then be clearly futile.

"There remained, to be sure, murder from conviction—a theory substantiated by the symbol found beside the body and by Mr. Lennox's later revelations concerning that symbol. But even from the first I was skeptical of the Vignards. That a man should live in Switzerland almost all of his life, and be slain by a Swiss sect only when he arrives in Berkeley is a concept to strain one's credulity; and the utter ignorance of Vignardism on the part of Mr. Ross and of the Swiss Consulate confirmed me in my disbelief. Later events, of course, eliminated the Vignards completely—to my great relief.

"The crime itself, you will remember, left no hint of the murderer's identity. The weapon bore no fingerprints and was itself unidentifiable; and Mr. Ross, the only eyewitness, gave such a vague description of his uncle's assailant that almost anyone short of my corpulence might have been suspect. The police were, in the classic phrase, baffled. Here we were with the corpse of a man whom no one could want to kill and with no trace of the identity of his killer.

"It was then that the first obvious point in this case occurred to me; and I simply asserted to Mr. Lamb and Mr. Bruce, whom the most melodramatic of the fates must have sent to my room that night, that the wrong man had been killed. The question then to be answered was, *'Who was the right man?'* We could make no guesses as to the identity of the murderer until we knew that of his intended victim.

"Now the requirements for the right man were these: He must be of average height and build. He must, at least frequently, wear a gray suit and hat. And, most essential, he must be a fairly regular visitor of Cynthia Wood's. Only if these conditions were fulfilled could Dr. Schaedel, so built, so garbed, and leaving Miss Wood's door at eleven-thirty, have been mistaken for him. Two men and only two answered all of these requirements. Those two were Alex

Bruce and Paul Lennox."

Dr. Ashwin paused for a drink and a fresh cigarette. "I fear," he smiled, "that this is becoming the longest monologue I have ever delivered or any of you have ever heard. How are you holding up?"

"Go on," said Kurt. "It is of great importance to me that I know how my uncle was killed." And he cast a glance of hate at Alex.

"I too find it intensely interesting. Do go on," from Alex.

Dr. Griswold smiled and blinked. "It reminds me very much of the method which I used in disproving the authenticity of certain plays supposedly by Lope de Vega. I shall continue to listen with great interest if only I may have a glass of water. Your admirable hospitality of whiskey and tobacco is of little use to me."

At a nod from Ashwin, Martin left the room and fetched a glass of water, which seemed almost sacrilege beneath the Ashwinian roof. When he returned, the exposition had already been resumed.

"Meanwhile," Ashwin was saying, "my attention had been strongly attracted by the very curious fact that two people entirely unconnected with Dr. Schaedel had perfect alibis for the time that he was killed, alibis, moreover, whose perfection had been quite needlessly emphasized. Miss Wood had urgently begged her friend Mary Roberts to visit her that evening. The extreme urgency of this request struck Miss Roberts as unusual, and was never explained. Also at the exact moment of the murder Paul Lennox was typing within earshot of Mr. Lamb. His excuse for this sudden spurt of industry seemed trumped-up, and he was very careful to call Mr. Lamb's attention to the clock immediately before and after the typing period.

"These alibis needed consideration. Miss Wood's was undoubtedly genuine, but her unneeded rush-call to Miss Roberts suggested that she knew that something was about to happen for which she would need an alibi. Mr. Lennox's alibi, however, did not have such a genuine ring, especially when I learned of his owning an electric phonograph and an automatic repeater for records—an attachment for which the serious music lover has very little use. The time that he was out of Mr. Lamb's sight would have been ample for him to reach Miss Wood's home, strike his blow, and return. He could simply place upon the phonograph a theatrical sound-effect record of a typewriter, adjust the repeater, and go calmly off—having, of course, previously typed the paper which he was later to show Mr. Lamb as the result of his twenty minutes' work.

"Two things more made me suspicious of Mr. Lennox. One was—a minor

detail—his unwarranted surprise when Mr. Bruce entered Mr. Lamb's room on the night of the murder. The other was his elaborate narrative of the Seven of Calvary, which, as I have already explained, I tended to consider fictitious.

"Now if I was inclined to believe Mr. Lennox the murderer, and he and Mr. Bruce had already been shown to be the only possible victims, it followed that Mr. Lennox had intended to murder Mr. Bruce. The one remaining question was: Why?"

Dr. Ashwin paused. The explanation so far was familiar ground to Martin; his chief interest lay in watching the expressions of the others. Kurt grew more intense with each moment; Martin had never realized how fond the young Swiss was of his dead uncle until he saw his reactions to this narrative of murder. Dr. Griswold nodded with scholarly appreciation at each fresh point which Ashwin made. Alex looked on impassive; he might have been the merest curious auditor, rather than a central figure in the story.

"Liquor," Dr. Ashwin resumed didactically, "is, in my opinion, man's greatest friend. A dog I have never thought comparable to a bottle of good Scotch. But dogs are at least faithful creatures, and liquor is notoriously treacherous, despite its many kindnesses. If it were not for the treachery of (if I remember aright) bad bourbon, I might never have been able to answer that question: *Why?* Even to those who knew them well, Paul Lennox and Cynthia Wood seemed only superficial, if mildly antagonistic, acquaintances. But Mr. Lamb, on the occasion of what he describes as a 'Morris party,' discovered and fortunately, despite his own condition, remembered the following facts: That Cynthia Wood was in love with Lennox and in all likelihood his mistress, and that Lennox was instituting an affair of sorts with the wife of a faculty member. This latter point seemed at times, in my consideration of the case, to offer a promising lead; but since it proved a blind alley, there is no need to provoke further scandal than necessary by naming names.

"But even knowing that Mr. Lennox was Miss Wood's lover, I was not much forrader. If he had attained her favors without interference from Mr. Bruce, the holder of a prior claim, and if, moreover, he was already casually unfaithful to Miss Wood, why in God's name should he wish to kill Mr. Bruce? And then I committed my one act of rash hypothesizing. Miss Wood, I remembered, was an heiress to no inconsiderable fortune. Let us suppose, I thought, that Mr. Lennox's true object is not Miss Wood's doubtless delectable exotic body, but rather her father's even more delectable money. Then he should marry her. Well, why

doesn’t he? Query: A previous marriage? Second query: To Mr. Bruce, the most likely candidate? Objection: But even so, couldn’t he persuade Miss Wood (or Mrs. Bruce, if you prefer), who is so obviously—from Mr. Lamb’s narrative—passionately enamoured of him, to divorce this unnecessary husband? Why kill him?

“And then I remembered the religion of Robert R. Wood. Not only is Mr. Wood a Roman Catholic; he is a convert to the faith, with all the rabid fanaticism which characterizes the convert. He is insistent that his daughter follow rigidly every precept of the Church. To eat ham on Friday delights her because it is a wild defiance of parental authority. She is forced to report to him each week on the subject of the sermon for the preceding Sunday. Obviously, if his daughter were to be guilty of divorce and remarriage, both she and her second husband would be disinherited forever from the Wood fortune.

“You will object that all this is mere hypothesis. But I have shown already the practical certainty that Paul Lennox killed Dr. Schaedel in error for Alex Bruce. And if there is no other possible explanation for such a killing, I feel, on the time-honored Holmesian principle, that I was justified in treating my hypothesis almost as a fact.

“The events of the night of April sixth now become clear. Miss Wood (it is simpler to continue to use her maiden name) invited Mr. Bruce to call on her that evening, and then sent a hurried request to Mary Roberts to come over, in order that she might have a witness to her innocence. If Mr. Bruce had called, she would have found some pretext for sending him home at exactly eleven-thirty; Miss Roberts’ presence would also help in avoiding a protracted farewell which might disrupt the time schedule. But Mr. Bruce, as I believe merely by chance, happened to forget the appointment and worked overtime at the laboratory, thereby saving his own life and, indirectly, causing the death of Dr. Schaedel.

“Paul Lennox had meanwhile invited Mr. Lamb to his room and brought the conversation, at the proper time, around to some notes which he wished to discuss, but which needed to be typed. Then, after calling attention to the time, he dismissed Mr. Lamb, set his phonograph alibi going, and slipped out of the room, with a new and quite unidentifiable ice pick. He lay in wait in front of Miss Wood’s house, having arrived just after the innocent Dr. Schaedel had stopped to ask the time and his way to International House. Seeing a man of ordinary height and build, dressed in a gray suit, come from the door at the time stipulated in the schedule, Lennox naturally took the man for Mr. Bruce. You

too, Mr. Ross, admitted to making the same mistake momentarily when you saw your uncle enter Miss Wood's house."

Kurt nodded silently.

"We shall pass over the next few moments quickly. They are not pleasant. Lennox stabbed his victim, dropped beside him a symbol (which was at that time absolutely meaningless and intended simply as a red herring), and suddenly felt himself seized by Mr. Ross. He slipped away, however, unrecognized, made his way quickly back to International House, and carried out the rest of his alibi procedure, without realizing as yet the terrible mistake that he had made.

"In the meantime, Miss Wood and Miss Roberts had heard the one brief cry of Dr. Schaedel, but had been prevented from reaching the scene of the crime quickly enough by reason of Miss Wood's fortunate stumble—a point which, together with the obvious necessity of a careful time schedule, helped make me positive of her complicity. The rest is for the newspapers.

"You have often told me, Mr. Lamb, how much impressed you were with Mr. Lennox as an actor-how he seemed, despite lack of training, to have that natural genius which makes for great acting. And surely few greater performances have ever been given than that of Mr. Lennox on the night of the murder. He had just finished establishing his alibi; everything was secure … when into your room walks the man whom he had just murdered. He did give way to one sudden start, which all but upset your precious bourbon; but from then on, to judge by your narrative, he was superb. I doubt if he drank much; in his place I should have been afraid to, for fear of accidental self-revelation. But he entered fully into the spirit of the binge, seemed as magnificently intoxicated as any of you, and sang one of the greatest bawdy ballads in the language, while all the time the question tormented him: *Whom have I killed?*

"When he did learn the identity of his victim, a brilliant idea occurred to him. The symbol had had no meaning when first he invented it; he had simply left it because it seemed to indicate the crime of a far more flamboyant person than he was thought to be. In actual fact, I believe Mr. Lennox to have been as intensely theatrical as the Fonseca drama in which he starred; but among his better acting performances was that of the quiet, sardonic, pipe-smoking young scholar. And this hidden theatrical flair, combined with a very practical desire to create a convincing false trail, led him to invent the Vignards.

"And this, gentlemen, is where I underestimated his ingenuity. When he rolled off such resounding authorities as Werner Kurbrand's *Volks-mythologie der*

Schweiz and Ludwig Urmayer's *Nachgeschichte des gnostischen Glaubens*—books of which I had never heard in any of my researches—I confidently expected them to prove fruits of his admirable imagination. I wrote to the University of Chicago library, where he claimed to have encountered them, and was amazed to receive, not a letter of disclaimer, but the books themselves. It was another touch worthy of the cautious Mr. Lennox. I read the volumes through carefully; and while they contain nothing definitely substantiating the Vignard legend, there are odd hints and unexplained references which probably would dovetail smoothly with the material in the destroyed notebook. Doubtless Mr. Lennox had come across these works in his researches at Chicago; and the memory of these ambiguous passages aided him when he came to concoct his mighty myth.

"It was a good piece of invention, and I admire him for it. He knew enough of similar curious sects to invent one which was just sufficiently fantastic to be completely plausible. He told his yarn under a pledge of utter secrecy, but with an inner conviction that at least one member of the group would feel it his duty to give the story to the police and to the newspapers. Richard Worthing was the perfect person to do so; and his resultant predicaments have been among the few glimpses of humor in this whole case.

"There, gentlemen, are my reasonings on the first murder; and allow me, before I proceed, to point out to you that all the facts upon which I base them were known to Mr. Bruce, as was also my theory of the erroneous murder." Dr. Ashwin paused.

"Why did not you do something?" Kurt cried. "My uncle was dead and you knew who had killed him; yet you do nothing. I cannot understand it."

"It seems to me," Dr. Griswold interposed, "that there was nothing that he could do. The chain of reasoning is all highly ingenious; and I, for one, find it completely convincing. But there is very little evidence which could appear in a court of law."

"That I admit," sighed Ashwin reluctantly. "All that I can definitely prove is that Paul Lennox's Vignard story is, in essence, unsubstantiated, as my reply from Chicago demonstrates, and that he did have in his possession, on the night of April sixth, a sound-effect record such as his alibi required. Mr. Lamb, perhaps you had best relate what you discovered in San Francisco?"

Martin told briefly his experience with the clay-smoking old clerk, including the identification of Alex as an earlier inquirer.

“You do get around, Martin,” was Alex’s only comment.

“Last Sunday,” Ashwin resumed, “I gave Mr. Lamb a little list of the points which he should consider in order to reach my conclusions. With the permission of the rest, I shall explain them henceforth as I go along, lest Mr. Lamb accuse me of cryptic charlatanry. To date we have covered the first three—that is:

A: THE POINT OF THE FATHER’S RELIGION.

B: THE POINT OF THE SUPERFLUOUS ALIBI *(which is two points).*

and C: THE POINT OF THE FORTUNATE STUMBLE—all of which, I hope, are now clear.

“Thus we have finished with the first murder, which is, I firmly believe, solved as fully as ever it will be, even though legal proof is incomplete. Before you raise objections, allow me to discuss the remaining appearances of the Seven of Calvary. But first I should like to suggest a brief rest—preferably wordless.…”

“I think you might resume your discussion,” Dr. Grisrwold suggested after some five minutes of restful silence.

“Very well.” Dr. Ashwin finished off his glass and turned again to face his guests, who roused themselves anew to sharp attentiveness. “I have now brought my résumé up to Thursday, April nineteenth—the night of the dress rehearsal of *Don Juan Returns.* At that point I was completely checkmated; I felt sure that I had solved the murder of Dr. Schaedel, and I felt almost equally sure that another attempt would soon be made on the life of Mr. Bruce; and yet I could do nothing but ask Mr. Lamb to watch carefully the two men involved.

“And then came the poisoning of Paul Lennox. You were all present on that occasion; I need not refresh your memories. With this event, I failed lamentably, for once, to perceive the obvious. Instead my mind leaped to what might be called the pseudo-obvious—to the thought that here at last was the real murder, for which the other had been in the nature of a miscued rehearsal. This would mean that Paul Lennox had been the intended victim of the first killing, and that the murderer of Dr. Schaedel must be sought among those who had a motive for killing Lennox. It was this, I may add, that led me into futile speculations concerning the previously mentioned professor and his wife.

“I confess even to having entertained briefly the theory that the story of the Vignards might be true, and that Mr. Lennox had indeed been killed because of his knowledge of the sect. But this theory was disposed of finally when the real

killer of Lennox rifled his room—left unlocked in its owner's excitement on the previous evening—and tore from a certain notebook those pages dealing with the Vignards, leaving on a previous page enough to show what had been stolen. As I explained at some length to Mr. Lamb, a true Vignard would have stolen the entire notebook. But since later events agree in exposing the Vignards as a myth, there is no use in elaborating this point here. I may merely add that Mr. Lennox had doubtless written up this matter of the Vignards in an old notebook (the preceding pages on Jean Stauffacher and the history of Lausanne are probably genuine) in case he should be called upon to substantiate his story.

"But there were many objections to considering Mr. Lennox as the originally intended victim. For one thing, there was no indication that he had proposed going to Miss Wood's on the night of April sixth. But most important, I could find no flaw in the case which I had built up against him as the likely murderer—a case now fully substantiated by the answer from Chicago and by the evidence of Mr. Lamb's clay-smoking old gentleman.

"I resolved for the moment simply to try to find Mr. Lennox's killer without reference to the first murder, and considered the classic trinity of Motive, Means, and Opportunity. Motive, because of the complex emotional situation I have already outlined, gave me a plethora of suspects, all of whom also had opportunity. Means pointed chiefly, although not necessarily exclusively, to the chemical student Alex Bruce. And a comparison of memory between Mr. Lamb and Dr. Griswold showed us further that it was Mr. Bruce who had broken the glass of stage-wine, and therefore almost certainly Mr. Bruce who had earlier prepared the other glass.

"The next three points which I suggested to Mr. Lamb are those which led me out of this impasse to the solution which must already be clear to the rest of you. The first was Mr. Lamb's description of a brief bit of dialogue overheard by him at the 'Morris party.' Mr. Bruce, impressed by my theory of the erroneous murder, was expounding it to Mr. Lennox, who seemed disproportionately anxious to dissuade Mr. Bruce from such a belief. This is

D: THE POINT OF THE DISPUTED THEORY.

"The second was the great diversity in means between the two murders, a diversity so great as to imply either different agents or some striking necessity for change. This point

E: THE POINT OF THE VARYING WEAPONS

led me directly into the next as I asked myself, ‘Why did Paul Lennox have to die at that moment of that play?’ I found the answer on reading Mr. Lamb’s translation. You must all remember the speech during which the poison was entering Mr. Lennox’s system. I shall forbear reading it aloud to you; I fear that my declamatory style is ill suited to sixteenth century rodomontade. But its essence is this: Don Juan knows that he is about to die at the hands of the avenging Don Félix. He says, in effect, ‘I know that this is, from your point of view, a just killing; I have seduced, I have murdered, I have gloried in my crimes. But rather than perform abject penance and beg you for my life, I prefer to die in my full glory as lecher and murderer.’ And these, gentlemen, were the last coherent words of Paul Lennox.”

As Dr. Ashwin paused, the silence of the room grew loud. Martin himself had not realized the dread appropriateness of that speech, nor why that scene had been chosen for a killing. Now it was too clear, and he shuddered. Alex sat unmoved.

“Thus,” Ashwin resumed, it was

F: The Point of the Sevillian Tirade

which brought me closest to the truth. And it was the murderous attack upon Mr. Bruce which confirmed me in my new belief, and led me to pin my faith on

G: The Point of the Eye and the Tooth.

I had fallen into the grievous error, fostered no doubt by my fondness for mystery novels, of believing that a series of murders involving a strange symbol must all be traced to one murderer. Now I saw that each attack was simply a logical consequence of the previous one.

“I have explained how I had reasoned that Paul Lennox must be the murderer of Dr. Schaedel. I now believe that Mr. Bruce, knowing my theory that the first murder was a mistake and having his interest stirred by Mr. Lennox’s obvious unwillingness to have him believe in that theory, proceeded to form the same conclusions as I. He had the same facts to work with, and I do not know what corroborative details. His opinion was probably confirmed beyond doubt when he learned that Paul Lennox had indeed rented the typewriter record needed for his alibi. He felt, as did I, that the scheduled killing, with himself as victim, would in time still take place; and he resolved to forestall it by killing Lennox first.

“The symbol of the Seven of Calvary he left under the poisoned glass

probably to indicate that Lennox was the source of the symbol; and he chose that moment of your play, Mr. Lamb, in order to provide Paul Lennox with a most appropriate dying utterance—a grim piece of humor. Afterwards, not only to clear himself but also, I hope, to clear possible innocent suspects, he laid two false trails leading to the Vignards—one, the notebook; the other, the sign on Richard Worthing's door. But, clever though the crime was, one person other than I saw through it. That person, needless to say, was Paul Lennox's accomplice in the first murder, Cynthia Wood Bruce, who knew that one person and only one had a motive for killing her lover and leaving the Seven beside him —his intended victim. So she, in turn, sought an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth by shooting Mr. Bruce and hurling at him that damnable symbol, thereby rounding out

G: THE POINT OF THE EYE AND THE TOOTH."

Again Dr. Ashwin paused and filled his glass. "Gentlemen," he said, "I believe that that concludes my exposition."

The group sat in silence for a full minute. Then Alex spoke. "Dr. Griswold's first objection still holds, you know that very well. You've no proof."

"I know that, Mr. Bruce. For my part, I want no proof. Self-defense has always seemed to me the strongest of justifications."

Alex smiled slowly. "I admit nothing, you understand."

"I understand."

"But since you are so ingenious, Dr. Ashwin, at perceiving the obvious, allow me to remind you that the case is not yet closed. The third attack was a failure, and I am still alive."

"And, you wish to imply, in peril of your life? True."

"Well?" Alex spread his hands and looked questioningly at Dr. Ashwin.

"Well … I understand that you admit nothing, Mr. Bruce, but, if my theories were correct, this is the advice that I should give: Make out a complete statement of all you know concerning the case. Add to it the evidence of the old man at Zolotoy's and, if you wish, the corroborating evidence which I received from Chicago. Make clear beyond a doubt why you killed Paul Lennox (granting always my suppositions) and why he had wished to kill you and with whose aid. Seal this statement and turn it over to someone whom you trust—I offer myself as candidate for the position—with instructions to hand the contents over to the police and the newspapers in case of your sudden death. Inform your assailant of

what you have done. I think she will realize that the publication of such a document, even though its statements are incapable of legal proof, would be sufficient to ruin her forever in the eyes of the world and, even more important, in the eyes of her father. However much she loved her lover, however much she wishes to avenge his death, I cannot help believing that she loves her own life and her financial security even more."

Alex thought a moment and then nodded. "Thanks," he said. "That seems like good advice—of course, granted the premises. Anything else?"

"Yes," Dr. Ashwin replied emphatically. "For God's sake get a divorce!"

The ensuing half hour was anticlimactically pleasant. Aided ably by Dr. Griswold, Ashwin turned the conversation to general literary topics, and the evening ended as a quiet and cultured symposium.

At last Alex Bruce rose. "I'm afraid I must be getting home," he said. "I want to do a good bit of writing this evening. Thank you for your hospitality, Dr. Ashwin; I think I shall drop into your classroom tomorrow. I may have something to give you."

Kurt also rose. "I shall walk home with you, Alex," he offered. "I should ever regret it were anything to happen." His words were ordinary enough, but in his voice Martin read an intense feeling of gratitude toward the man who had avenged his uncle.

Martin lingered for one more glass of Scotch, after first fetching a second glass of water for Dr. Griswold, who had sat in blinking silence during the farewells. At last, sipping his chaste drink, he spoke. "It was an admirable exposition, Ashwin," he said. "I should describe it, however, as a piece of criticism rather than of scholarship. You have offered conviction rather than proof."

"It is probably just as well." Ashwin settled back in his swivel-chair. "If I had had definite proof, my conscience might have rebuked me for not going to the police—as I assuredly should not have done. I am not a sentimentalist who condones murder, but I feel that Mr. Bruce had quite as much right as the State—more, if anything—to execute the murderer of Dr. Schaedel."

Dr. Griswold nodded. "And you, Martin, as a loyal Watson, are you completely satisfied with your master's exposition of the case?"

Martin roused himself. "All but one thing. Dr. Ashwin, you mentioned all of your supposedly helpful little points but the last—

H: THE POINT OF THE SEVEN OF CALVARY."

"Mr. Lamb, you are a slave-driver. For this I shall punish you mercilessly when we commence reading the *Hitopadeça* on Friday. The Seven of Calvary was at first a completely meaningless symbol—a pointless red herring, to mix metaphors. Thanks to Mr. Lennox, it assumed a false meaning as the symbol of a non-existent sect. And thanks to Mr. Bruce and Miss Wood, it assumed an even more confusing meaning as a symbol of private vengeance.

"On each appearance, the Seven of Calvary had a different meaning. The first, or Schaedel-Seven, meant nothing. The second, or Lennox-Seven, meant *'Here lies the murderer of Dr. Schaedel.'* The third, or Worthing-Seven, meant *'Boogie, boogie, boogie! Here come the Vignards!'* And the fourth, or Bruce-Seven, meant *'Paul Lennox can still strike, even from beyond the grave.'"*

"Then the point …?"

"The Point of the Seven of Calvary, Mr. Lamb, is that it had no point." With which Dr. Ashwin poured the last drops from his bottle of Highland Cream.

Postlude

I poured the last of the coffee as Martin finished his narrative.

"Well, Tony," he asked lightly, "are you content?"

"Content with Ashwin's explanations? Quite, and rather inclined to kick myself around a block or two. But I would like some footnotes."

"Footnotes?"

"A little of the what-became-of-who business."

Martin settled back in a manner which reminded me of his descriptions of Ashwin in the swivel-chair. Their corruption had apparently been mutual. "Alex," he began, "apparently carried out Dr. Ashwin's suggestion. At least I know that he gave him a large sealed envelope and that the Seven of Calvary never appeared again. He got his divorce in Reno, and I think that Robert R. Wood knew as little of his daughter's divorce as he did of her marriage. Alex has a decent job now with a chemical firm, and is engaged to a pleasant sweet girl. I introduced them—I always do—rates on request. The rest of Cynthia's life story is too long to go into now; I'll tell it to you some other time. Suffice it that she's quite lived up to her early promise."

"And the others?"

"The Leshins returned to Europe in May and never came back to Berkeley, although I heard that a very good offer had been made him. He was an excellent lecturer. Associations, I suppose.… The same reason that I refused when Drexel wanted to try Don Juan Returns *again the next semester. It was produced eventually by the Federal Theatre Project in Los Angeles, with quite astounding criminological results. Maybe it really is a jinx play … but that's another story, and an even longer one."*

"And Kurt?"

"The illness of General Pompilio Sanchez proved fatal, which effectively removed the necessity of Lupe's marrying her father's choice. She and Kurt are married now and living in Los Angeles—very happy when last I saw them, with an amazing infant which has Kurt's features and Lupe's complexion. Don't ask me what became of Boritsin and Worthing—I haven't the least idea, and don't

much care."

"Two more questions, Martin. I am a strict host who exacts payment in full for French toast and bacon."

"And worth it at that. What are they?"

"Has Ashwin had any further chances of proving his detective ability?"

"Tony," Martin smiled, "I begin to suspect your motives.… But I tell you what —We'll both call on him some night soon and you can get all the fascinating facts. The Maskeleyne cipher ought to appeal to you, and that odd business about the Angels' Flight—a problem that really should belong to Dr. Fell. But the other question?"

"What's become of the entrancing Mona?"

"Oh," a little too carelessly, "she's still in Berkeley. And that reminds me, Tony—mind if I use your phone?"

I nodded, and Martin stepped eagerly into the next room. As I lit a cigarette and began in my mind to frame Martin's narrative into possible shape for a novel, I could hear his voice.

"Hello. International House? … May I speak to Miss Morales, please?"

Well, I thought, a love story needn't necessarily spoil the novel.

EXPLICIT

About the Author

Anthony Boucher was an American author, critic, and editor, who wrote several classic mystery novels, short stories, science fiction, and radio dramas. Between 1942 and 1947 he acted as reviewer of mostly mystery fiction for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

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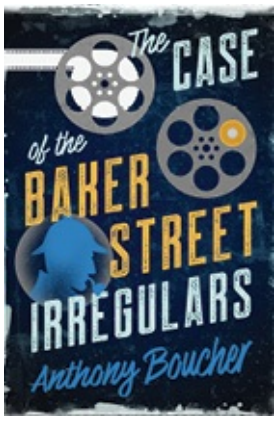
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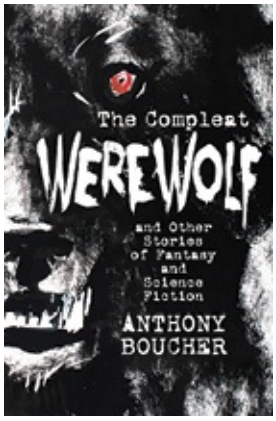
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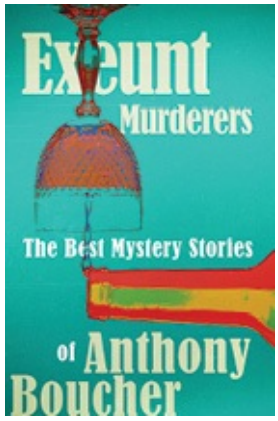


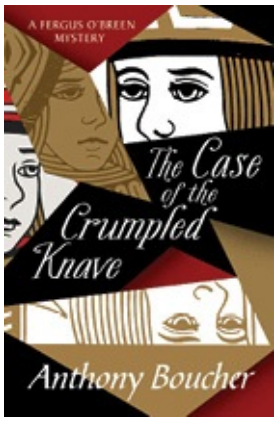
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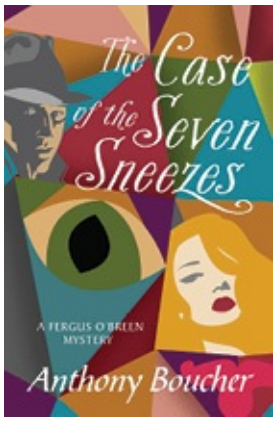
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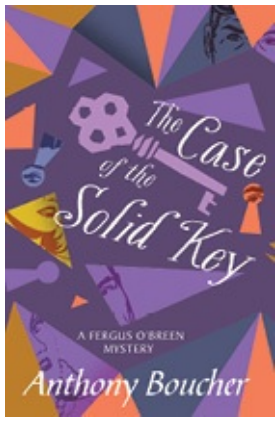


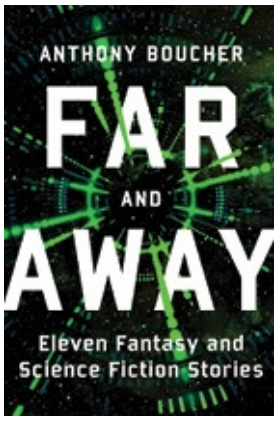




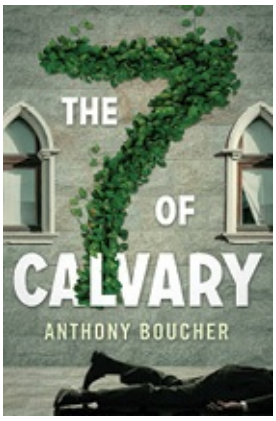












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