



Martin comes up and says: "My God, she's killed herself!"

A Death in the Family

by
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It looked like suicide—and should have been—the dead woman's husband being what he was. But there were angles that pointed in another direction, Detective Carr found, on taking a second look. Angles whose corners wouldn't square unless the sum of the sides equaled murder.

THIS makes the sixth night that I sit there and try to eat and try not to listen to them dig at each other. Just little mean remarks that don't mean a hell of a lot by themselves but show what the score is. He's got a big, boomy voice and she's got a little, whiny voice and every time they speak they get in my hair so that I figure this is the last night for me. If I can't eat in peace I figure it's time to quit

It starts out like one of the ordinary run of the mill things. He telephones me and I go and see him and he tells me that he's scared and wants somebody for a nurse. I ask him what he's scared about and he stalls and tells me to sit tight and work at it for a week and if I haven't figured it by that time he'll tell me. I figure it's a false alarm but I also figure he's good for the twenty a day and expenses that I ask for, and besides there's nothing else doing. Twenty a day is twice what I should get, but he never says a word. So I start living with him, going to the office where he's supposed to be running a wholesale linen factory in the morning, going home with him at night and eating with him and then going out chipping with him. I bet my expenses, if I paid them instead of him, would have run into plenty on this last. He knows every clip joint in town and gives 'em all a play, and after the first time I tell him he's being took and he tells me

he knows it, I don't say a word.

After twenty minutes at dinner the first night and I hear his wife I know where he's getting the dough and I figure out who he's scared of about the same time. She makes a crack about how a man that cheats on his wife is better off dead and follows this up with what the Bible says about the same thing. She's nuts about him and she's got the bankroll and she's nuts about religion . . . the eye for an eye kind. Also she's got a sour pan that don't match and is about ten years older than him so I don't know as I blame him much for chiseling.

This night she says:

"Shall we have our coffee in the other room?" the same as she always does, and he says: "Sorry, dear. I have to check on that last shipment," the same as *he* always does. That is, he always stalls though he changes the stall each night.

She sniffs and says: "Blonde or Brunette, Henry?" and he gets red in the face and says to me: "Shall we go, Mr. Carr?"

It's "Mr. Carr" when he's with her but it's "Johnny" when we're alone or brawling. I don't think he's told her I'm a dick that's supposed to be guarding him because she curls up her lips at me and says: "I'm disappointed in you, Mr. Carr. I had hoped you would influence Henry toward a *better* life, rather than drag him down."

Just a nice girl taking her Sunday cut. Any man that could drag Henry down would be a honey and she knows it. It's my turn to get red and I say: "Now, Mrs. Martin! I hope—"

She don't even give me a chance to finish it. She whines: "I suppose *your* girl is redheaded."

We get out.

WE MAKE the usual rounds and he gets half tight and I take about two more than I should and we take the gals home and this gives me an awful bang. He's called up some friend of his and told her to get a girl for me and she turns out to be a redhead. All the time I'm with her I keep thinking about what Mrs. Martin had said. We start home about two with me doing the driving, because he never takes the chauffeur with him when he's catting, and on the way I tell him that I'm going to quit. This sobers him up plenty. He says: "But I'm afraid. *You* know what I'm afraid of."

I say: "You're nerts. She's too crazy about you to kill you."

He gets very solemn then. He says: "Did you

ever see her mad?"

I say: "No, thank God."

He says: "She's just like a crazy woman but I'm not afraid of her when I'm with her because I can talk her out of it. I keep thinking that she'll hire it done."

I don't say anything and he goes on and tells me that he thinks that lots of guys would kill a man for a couple of thousand dollars.

This is funny. I know a lot that'd kill a man for a hell of a lot less and think nothing of it. If I didn't think she was so nuts about him I might believe him. I say: "You're screwy. Why would she?"

He says: "If she gets one of these mad spells and thinks about religion at the same time it'll just be too bad. She'll sacrifice me"—I see him make a face in the light that comes from the dash—"on the altar of her love."

I tell him he's eppus but he ain't so screwy at that when I think about it. I've got her pegged as being just about ready to blow her cork but I never think of this angle. I don't blame her so much at that, for she must know he's married her for what dough she has and must figure that as long as she puts it out she's living up to her end of the bargain and that when he steps out he isn't. I think about this for a minute and decide that I should worry about either of them. I don't particularly go for him even when he's buying me drinks and I don't go for her at all. I think about the frozen-faced butler and how I hate his guts, and about the pleasant line of chatter that's handed me and I say: "I quit. Tomorrow."

He says: "Why? I'm paying you what you asked."

I say: "I left home when I was twelve because my old lady and old man battled all the time. It makes me nervous. Besides, I don't like the late hours."

He sighs and sits back in the seat and we pull in the driveway.

They've got a big house that's set back from the road in a bunch of trees and there's a drive that winds up in front of the front door and then goes back to the street so you don't have to back the car. He gets out and opens the front door and tells me to leave the car there and let the chauffeur get it in the morning and when we go into the hall he says: "Well, we'll talk about this in the morning," and I tell him sure but I'll still quit.

All the bedrooms are on the second floor and as

you go down the hall, his is the second on the right and mine the third. His wife has got the first, the one with windows fronting on the street. I watch him go in his door and I go in mine and take off my coat and the harness I use to carry two guns. I'm just sitting on the bed when I hear a funny noise outside. It sounds like a bump and if I hadn't been about half stiff I'd have probably looked right then. I don't though, and have got one shoe off and am leaning over the other when I hear him call: "Mr. Carr!" in the next room.

I dash in there, hippity-hop, one shoe off and the other on, and see him leaning against the dresser and the window open. He points out the window when I come in and I stick my head out and see a guy running toward the front of the lot. He's about ten feet from a clump of trees but I shoot once, just for luck. And I know I miss the minute I let go. I keep craned out the window for a minute, hoping he'd cross the driveway and give me a break but he don't and I can't see any sense in chasing him so I turn around to Martin and say: "What happened?"

He's holding the top of his head with both hands and he says: "He was hidden in the closet and when I opened the door he hit me with something. It didn't knock me out but dazed me so I couldn't move. When I was able to say anything I called you."

His voice *had* sounded funny but that might have been from coming through the wall. I say: "Where'd he hit you?" and he shows me his head and there's a place there that he says is a bump. I know that a sap doesn't have to leave a bump when it lands on top of a guy's hair and he couldn't have been hit hard because he didn't go clear out. I say: "Lucky he didn't land on your temple. A sap's bad."

He sits down on the bed and groans and says: "Pour a drink!" and waves at a bottle on a stand, but I say: "I'm going to see how Mrs. Martin is," and walk out and leave him.

I KNOW she's got a wall safe in her room and I think she might have got hurt. I go to her door and knock and she says: "Yes?" and I say: "It's Mr. Carr. There's been a burglar in Mr. Martin's room and I didn't know whether he'd hurt you or not."

She says: "Did you shoot? A shot woke me."

I say: "Yes, ma'am. Did you see anyone?"

I can hear her sniff through the door. She says: "No, and you didn't either. You and Mr. Martin are

both so intoxicated you don't know what you saw."

I go back to Martin and find him holding the whiskey bottle like he's in love with it and he says: "Did she?" and I say: "Did she what?"

He waves the bottle and says: "Did she get hurt?" and I tell him: "No!" and go to bed.

I kick myself for not looking out the window when I hear the bump because that was probably the guy going down the side of the house. There's a drain pipe runs right by Martin's window and a good man could go up and down it like a ladder, and if I'd looked I'd have got a clear shot at him. I go to sleep thinking what a hell of a guard I am and wondering whether maybe Martin ain't right and if he is, why the guy didn't kill him and have done with it.

The next morning at breakfast Martin meows around about what a sore head he's got and she tells him that if he'd lay off the whisky his head would be O.K. and we go down to the office. I been thinking this over plenty. There's something screwy about it but I can't figure what.

We get down there and he says do I still want to quit and I say that I do and he says that if I stay on he'll raise the ante to two hundred a week. I pretend to think about it though I know I'm going to say yes, and he says for me to try it for another week anyway. I say that I will and he says that's fine and calls up the same gal he had the night before and makes another date with her and tells her to get the redhead for me again, which is just dandy with me.

We chew the rag a little bit about the night before and I ask: "What d'ya think was the idea of the guy in your room?"

He says: "She hired him to kill me."

I say: "Then why didn't he, instead of bopping you with a sap. He could have knifed you and you'd never made a sound. For that matter, he could have sapped you hard enough to kill you."

This kinds of holds him. He thinks for a minute and says: "Maybe she just meant it as a warning."

I say: "Why don't you take it?" and he grins at me and starts telling me what a sweetheart this gal he just made the date with is. She is at that. She calls him "daddy" but she should call him granddaddy because he's old enough to be hers. He's made the date for ten o'clock and we're supposed to go out to a roadhouse that's on the way to the beach.

I stick around with him all day and we go home

about five that evening and just before we hit the block his house is on a car passes us and I get a flash of a guy I could swear is Tod Debenham. I don't get a good look but I think it's him all right, even if I haven't seen the so-and-so in six months.

We go on the rest of the way to the house and the chauffeur lets us out in front. I go upstairs to wash my face and hands before dinner, leaving him downstairs where he wants to look at his personal mail.

There's supposed to be a butler and a maid besides a cook in the kitchen and I don't see anything of 'em but I don't think anything about it. Sometimes they're at the front of the house and sometimes you don't see 'em until dinner. The place does have a kind of funny feeling though and it worries me. As soon as I change my shirt and collar I go back downstairs to Martin's little cubbyhole that he calls a den but there's nothing wrong. He's sitting there holding a drink and he waves me down to a chair and passes me a glass and I take a couple with him before he goes upstairs.

I go in the room with him while he dresses and he tells me what a brawl he's going to put on that night, all the time talking low so his wife won't hear him in the next room. By this time it's about six-thirty and they eat about seven as a rule. By and by he says: "We'd better go downstairs before we're told to," and grins at me and we go downstairs and into the big room that's off the dining room. He rings the bell for the butler and nobody shows up and after a minute he rings again and just about that time I get smart. I say: "Hold everything!" and head for the kitchen.

There's no smell of cooking in the hall but I hear a little noise and what I see in the kitchen don't surprise me one damn' bit.

The cook's a big fat woman and she's over underneath a table she mixes stuff on, tied up and so damn' red in the face I think she's had a fit. She gurgles at me: "Glug, glug!" sort of, and I see she's got a dish rag stuck in her face and tied there with a piece of string. She can still make a noise but not enough to hear her outside of the kitchen. I take a butcher knife and cut the gag loose and then where her feet and hands are tied and say: "Where's Jonas?"

Jonas is the butler. She tries to talk and can't make the grade and points over to a pantry arrangement at the side.

I HOP in there and here's Jonas on the floor with a welt over his forehead that spells concussion as far as I can see it. I know I can't do anything for him—he's a hospital case for sure—and go back in the kitchen and see the cook's kind of paled down. I say: "Where's Liddy?"

Liddy's the maid. The cook says: "I don't know."

She talks like she has to learn how all over again. I pile back to the front room and tell Martin: "You call on the telephone and say 'I want a policeman.' When you get one you tell him you want a doctor, too. Hurry!"

He opens his mouth and looks at me and I say: "Now!" and run for the stairs. I hit the top and go to Mrs. Martin's room. I knock once though I know it's no dice and then I try the door. It's locked and I take a slam at it with my shoulder and then remember the door that goes from his room to hers and go in there and try it.

It's open.

I face a big clothes closet when I look in and Mrs. Martin's looking at me. That is, she's looking at the floor between us. This clothes closet has a lot of hooks and she's hanging on one at the back. Her face is a funny purple and I run over there and feel of her and she's stiff. It ain't bad yet but I've got hold of her hand and the joint at the elbow don't bend any too easy. There's a chair about a foot away from her feet that's lying on it's side and I look at this and say: "Suicide!"

At the same time Martin comes in and says: "My God! She's killed herself!"

Now I think that but I don't see how he knows. I'm in front of the chair. Of course I know how it looks because suicides hang 'emselves and murderers don't usually hang people, but about the same time I take a better look at her face. It's this sickening purple all over but on one side of her jaw I see a place the skin is broken. About this time Martin comes all the way into the room, starts to reach up to her and I say: "Get away!"

He stares at me stupid and reaches up again and I take him by the shoulder and spin him over to the other side of the room. I say: "Did you call the law?"

He's leaning against the wall with his mouth open and holding his shoulder. He don't say anything, and I say:

"Did you?"

He says: "Why—why no."

I say: "Well you better. This is murder."

He opens his mouth again and just stands there.

I look again at her and see she's got high heels on and that the back of them or the closet door right back of her ain't scuffed any. Then I know my murder hunch is right. I go over to Martin and say: "We're going to call the law. And we've still got the maid to find." I take him by the shoulder again and shove him out the door into his room. There's a key in the door on her side and I lock the door and stick it in my pocket and he says:

"But you can't leave her there like that!"

I say: "If *I* don't leave her here like that, *we're* going to have a lot to tell the law about why we didn't. We can't help her. She's been dead for over an hour."

This takes hold and he shuts up. I get excited some if anything like this happens, but thank the Lord, I don't get foolish enough to forget that this is murder and that the law's as smart as I am.

Martin's got an extension phone in his room and I call the law and tell 'em we need help. Then I start looking for the maid, which is lucky. The cook didn't know where she was and so I beat it back to her room. She lives on the second floor, same as us, but way in the back, alongside the back staircase. I open the door of her room, after I knock, and don't see her but she's got a bathroom she shares with the cook and I look there. Libby's there all right.

The cook was gagged with a dishrag and didn't do so bad. This Libby is gagged with a big bath sponge that's been squeezed and then filled and then jammed into her mouth and she *ain't* doing so good. She's out cold and when I finally dig the sponge out of her face she don't come to. Any gag is bad enough, but when anybody is gagged so tight they can't swallow good and is left on their back with their mouth filled with water they can't get rid of it. If they try to breathe through their mouth, they can suffocate pretty damn' easy.

I yank this gal out into the middle of the room and work on her just like she's been drowning. After about five minutes of this I hear a siren whining up to the house and figure it's a prowl car that's got the flash. It's too soon for the ambulance but I know these cops all know first aid. Martin's offered to help but he don't know what it's all about and so I don't let him but I need help bad. I say: "Go down and open the door for the law. And keep your trap shut."

HE DOES and brings both of 'em up. You can tell they're both off a radio car by the uniforms. One's a big red-faced Mick and the other's smaller and plenty nasty. I hear Martin running off at the face when they come in and I say to the big Mick: "Give me a hand."

He takes the whole layout in with one look and goes to work on the gal without opening his face. Nasty don't. I stand up and stretch—my back's about broke—and Nasty says:

"Where's this body he's talking about? This it?" He looks down at Libby and says: "Why waste time? *She's* dead."

The gal gasps at the same time and makes him out a liar. I don't pay no never minds to him and the gal starts to come out of it stronger and breathes for herself and the Mick says: "Gimme a wet towel."

I wet one in cold water and hand it to him and he takes one end and slaps her on the cheeks with it a couple of times. Her lungs are working O.K. and this brings her to. She opens her eyes and looks up at him and tries to scream. She's popeyed as hell yet. He says: "There now, sister. I ain't going to hurt you."

She's just scared because she hasn't got her head to working yet. She takes another peep and says: "Oh . . . oh . . . oh . . . oh!" and wastes all the breath the Mick and I worked so hard to give her. He picks up the towel again and gives her another slap and she comes out of it all the way. She sees his cap with the badge on it and quiets down.

The cook comes waddling in then and the Mick gets off his knees and says:

"She's all right now. This woman can look after her and we'll talk to her when she feels better." He looks at me then and asks: "Who're you?"

Martin busts in then and says: "He's working for me, and—"

The Mick says to him: "Shut up!" and Martin does. The Mick looks at me again and I say: "I'm John Carr, private detective. Working as a guard for Mr. Martin." I point at Martin then and say: "That's Martin."

The other cop says: "*Is* there a dead woman or is *this* the one that's supposed to be dead?" He waves at Libby. Libby's crying all over the front of the cook and she's picked a place where there's plenty of room.

I tell him: "There's another one. Come along."

We go back the hall and I unlock the door to

Mrs. Martin's room and we go in. They go right over to the body and start to snoop around and I look around and see all I missed when I was there before.

She's got a wall safe there and the door's open about halfway. The combination is pulled out and is hanging down like an eye that's been gouged and I know there's been a gadget used that fastens on the knob and pulls the works right out. I go over and look at it but don't touch it and when Martin comes alongside of me I keep *him* from touching it. I notice he looks funny. I hear another siren then and the big copper says to the nasty one: "Let 'em in, Dutch! I'll stay here."

I see him look over at us and I know he knows it's murder already and ain't taking chances, but at the same time he ain't going to get tough with nothing to go on unless he's forced. It didn't worry me any because my conscience is clear and I ain't touched anything. Martin's all right, too, I think. We've got an alibi up to a little after five and the doctor can tell how long she's been dead and that'll let us out. And then I remember her arm hadn't been so stiff when I felt of her and I don't feel so good.

A surgeon and two interns follow this Dutch back in and in a minute there's four guys follow *them* in and I thank my lucky stars I know a couple of them. They're in plainclothes. I say: "'Lo, Mae . . . 'lo, Tony!" and they both say: "Hi, Johnny!" and come over and shake hands.

Mac is Leon McAndrews and Tony is Anatole Corte and they're both Homicide men. One of the guys with 'em is a photographer and the other is a print man and they both go to work. Mac says: "What's this?" and waves his hand at the body.

I say: "That ain't all of it. There's a guy downstairs with a cracked head and can't the doctor look at him first? I'd have gone to the door and met you but there'd been an argument."

Tony says: "Why would there?"

I say: "This is murder and I don't think the big copper over there would have gone for it. He'd think I might take a powder."

Mac says: "Hunh!" and tells the doc what I tell him about Jonas and where to find him and comes back. He says: "I thought she did the dutch."

I say: "It's murder!"

We all look solemn. Then I introduce them to Martin and they go over to the body while we stay at the side out of the way. The big cop angles back

by us just in case we should start to run away I figure, and the nasty one called Dutch just stands and eyes us from over by the door. *He* ain't taking chances either.

The big guy says: "What happened?" and I start to tell him, and then Mac and Tony come back and I start all over again. The doctor calls the two interns and they go down and take Jonas out to the ambulance and then the doctor comes back and starts to look at Mrs. Martin. They've already taken pictures of her hanging there and he cuts her down and looks her over. He gets through and comes over and Mac says: "How long's she been dead?"

The doctor looks at his watch and says: "Killed about five, I'd say. Few minutes one way or the other. *Rigor mortis* is prominent but not complete."

Mac says to me: "And you say you and Mr. Martin got here about that time." He gives Martin a screwy look and I see this Dutch brighten up. He comes over and says to Mac: "Why couldn't they have sapped the butler and tied up the maid and the cook and done this? They was here and you know"—I get the dirty look then—"how these private dicks are. A bunch of thugs."

Mac's a very patient man. He heard the whole speech before he cracked. He says then: "You on Homicide or the Radio Squad?" and says it very low.

Dutch says: "Why, Radio Squad."

Mac leans over and taps him on the chest and says: "Stay on it then." You could have heard him for a full block. He taps himself on the chest then and says:

"*I'm* on Homicide. *I'm* in charge here. Get it?"

A detective-lieutenant hates to have a patrolman tell him his business. This Dutch gets red in the face and walks away and his partner snickers. I want to but I'm too smart. I don't want enemies on the force if I can help it even if I never could be friends with a so-and-so like this Dutch.

ISAY to the Doc: "How bad was the butler hurt?" and he tells me: "Partial concussion. He'll be out for hours and probably won't be right for a couple of days." I tell him about the maid and he beats it out to see that she's all right.

Then I tell Mac about Martin getting sapped the night before and he pulls at his lower lip and tells me it's probably burglars. He also says for us to be at the inquest at ten in the morning and not to try and leave before then. Then he takes me over to

one side and says: "I'm taking your alibi for Martin, now, Johnny. This looks screwy though. That woman was knocked out and then hung, and why would a burglar do that?"

I've been thinking that same thing. If she'd committed suicide I know that while she was strangling her feet would have kicked all the varnish off the door behind her but that panel didn't show a mark in back of her heels and that means she died while she was unconscious. That's plenty plain. I say: "I'll check up on what I can, Mac. Martin couldn't have done it."

Mac says: "Try and find out what you can as a favor then."

I say: "Then we're clear?" and he says: "Sure, but—see you in the morning."

I know if he don't see us then that there'll be murder warrants out for us by noon. I go back to Martin and tell him: "Let's go. We can't do any good here and the cook can stay and look after things. The law will be here for hours."

Tony comes over to us and asks Martin if he knows what his wife usually kept in the safe and Martin says she never kept much money and all the jewelry was paste. He can't remember just *what* was there, so Tony says that it's too bad. We go out in the hall and see the doctor and he says the maid's still scared but O.K. and Martin and I go to his office.

I figure I'm hard and all that but then I get a shock. Martin looks at his watch and says: "We better eat. We got just about time before we meet the gals."

I'm holding a highball glass and I drop it. I look at him and he gets red and says: "Why not! I didn't kill her and I wasn't in love with her at any time."

I get thinking then. I've had a dirty little hunch for the last hour. We talk a little bit more and take another drink and before we start out to eat I say: "If I was you I'd see my lawyer tonight. You're liable to need him pretty bad tomorrow."

He looks dumb at me and I explain that the first thing the law looks for is motive and that this killing is senseless for a burglar. I tell him he's the logical suspect and that he'd probably be in jail now if it hadn't been that Mac and Tony knew me and believed me. He says: "I haven't any motive."

I say: "You'll get her money."

Then I get another shock. He says:

"She left most of her money to two colleges and what's left goes to the Community Relief Fund.

She was very charitable."

This knocks the motive stuff all to hell. I'd remembered the funny way he'd looked when he saw the safe was open, and this wanting to step out the same night his wife was killed had made me think he'd had her killed. It was just a hunch, though. He says: "She told me that about a month ago and showed me the will."

I think this over and decide I'm wrong. I say:

"If *you're* not worried, *I'm* certainly not," and we go out and eat.

We go on the party though I don't want to, and I see that he don't stay late or get stiff. There's decency in all things and I still got a little even if I am a private copper.

Instead of going back to the house we go to a hotel that night. Adjoining rooms. It's about one-thirty when we check in and can't sleep from thinking about all that's happened and about how Mrs. Martin looked on that door. About two I think I hear somebody talking in Martin's room. I slip out of bed and try to hear through the wall and can't and then I go into the closet which has thinner walls and I hear him say:

"Right away, then."

I can't tell where he's standing but I don't hear any other voices so I figure he's phoning. I get dressed and look out the window and see there's a ledge that runs from my window almost to his. I wait until I hear him open the door and hear a little talk that I can't understand and then I sneak my window open and climb out a little way on the ledge but I can't go far because there's nothing to hang onto after I get where I can't reach my window. I feel like a young robin just learning to fly out there and if it was daylight I'd probably look like one. Martin's got his window open though and I can hear all right and I can see one corner of his room, the corner that has the head of the bed.

THE first thing I hear is Martin saying: "He's in the next room asleep. He's half drunk trying to keep me sober." Then I hear somebody else say: "I don't get the idea of coming up tonight."

Martin says: "I can't meet you tomorrow the time I said I would and I wanted to talk to you."

The other guy says: "Why not?"

This one's got a slow, sleepy way of talking that rings a bell someplace in my head but not strong enough to place him. Martin says: "I've got to

attend that inquest in the morning. This didn't work out so good. Carr says the law knows it's murder and figures I'm in it."

Soft talk says: "And then what?"

Martin tells him: "If it hadn't been you broke into the safe it'd been just too bad for me. The way it is, they'll figure she came in in the middle of a robbery and got killed to shut her mouth."

Soft talk laughs very quietly and says: "That was an idea."

Martin acts like he's about half sore. He says: "It worked out all right, but I don't get the idea. There wasn't anything in there that was worth a damn."

The other guy laughs again and says: "It'll be two grand now for services rendered and another two grand for tearing up what wasn't worth a damn." He's laughing at Martin on this last.

Martin says: "What you mean?" then, and the other guy says: "Don't play dumb!" and they both shut up for a minute. Then Martin says: "O.K., I'll pay it."

I hear somebody walking and the other fella comes over and sits on the bed where I can see him. It's Tod Debenham. By this time I'm so damn' mad I can hardly hold on to the window and stay on my corner of the ledge. I'd forgotten all about seeing Debenham by Martin's house in the excitement, and with what I hear it all falls into line. I've got the picture now!

I pull myself back into my own window but still listen, and I hear Martin say: "Then I'll see you at the Anchor Apartments as soon as I get through with the inquest and go to the bank."

Debenham says something I can't hear and Martin tells him: "I'll see that I'm not followed. And I'll see that Carr isn't with me." Then he lowers his voice a little and I can't hear anything plain until I hear the door of his room open and close.

By this time I know how I'm going to work it. If I go out and pick Debenham as he goes out of the room I'll not get to first base. This Debenham is from down south someplace, comes from a good family, but is just a killer by heart. He's the kind of a duck that bucks the law for excitement. If he was an ordinary hood I'd pick him and let the cops find out what they want to know with a rubber hose, but I've got Debenham picked as the kind that'd be beat to death before he'd open his face. The old southern gentlemen instinct, or whatever it is. All I

can do is play along and get him and Martin together with proof. If I accuse Martin of hiring Debenham to kill his wife I've got nothing to show for it except hearing some talk that doesn't prove anything and that he can deny. I think over what I'm going to do and go back to bed.

In the morning, when we go to the inquest, I get McAndrews to one side and tell him about it. He gets hold of the coroner before the thing starts and it goes over very smooth. The coroner steers away from any questions that Martin might have trouble in answering and the verdict is, "Death by a person or persons unknown." As soon as this is over, Martin takes me to one side and says he's got business that he'll have to do by himself. He winks at me to give me an idea it's monkey business. He says he'll meet me at four at his office. It's 11:30 now. I say: "O.K.," and he beats it, and McAndrews and Corte come over and tell me they've decided to stick around with me and be in at the finish, if there is one.

I'm beating it for a phone and I tell them on the way there that if they want to follow me and stick fairly close it's dice, but that if they stick *too* close it's *no* dice. I finally get it through their heads that Debenham is smart and that one man has a chance of getting action where three wouldn't. I tell 'em to beat it down to this Anchor Apartment place which is on West Sixth Street, and when they see me go in to wait about five minutes and follow me in but to keep out of sight before then because Debenham may be watching. This finally sticks after an argument.

I call up a little rat pool hustler that works for me then. This little guy is plenty smart some ways but a chump some others but he's a swell tag because he looks harmless. I tell him where to meet me and go out and grab a hack.

IPICK this hustler, Arlie Epstein his name is, up on the corner of Sixth and Hill and we go out Sixth until about a block from where this Anchor dive is. We get out then and I tell Arlie what to do and he goes on the same side of the street the apartment is on, and I pull my hat down and go down the other and pray every foot of the way that Debenham don't see me. It's the weak point of the scheme. I duck into a grocery store that some Greek boy is running right across from the apartment. It's about 12:30 then.

The Greek comes over, and I buy an apple and

stall around eating it, and nothing happens. Arlie's hanging around the front of the Anchor and that's all. I've got to eat three more apples before Martin shows up and I don't like apples. He comes in a cab and stops in front of the apartment. The minute he goes in I step out far enough in the doorway of the grocery store so that Arlie can see me and he follows Martin in.

He sticks his head out the door in a couple of minutes and makes motions and I go over. Arlie says: "Six-A. Right down the hall on the right."

I say: "O.K., Arlie. Here's the ten now in case I don't see you. You stick here and if there's a battle and two cops come rushing in you tell 'em where I'm at." He nods his head and I go in the apartment house.

It's one of these fakes that have a desk but nobody behind it. The whole place looks like a vacuum cleaner would do it a lot of good and I can tell somebody's been cooking cabbage. I go down the hall trying to figure what I'm going to do next but it turns out I don't have a worry. Martin's only been in the place about five minutes and I don't think he's had time to get through with his business, but when I get to Six-A I hear somebody start to open the door.

The halls are about ten feet wide and straight as a string. I couldn't duck if I wanted to. I stand there and get a gun out from under my coat. The door opens wide and I see Martin's back in the door and hear him say: "I'll be see—"

I see a strange face over Martin's shoulder and I see it change when the guy sees me. It sort of tightens up and then I brace myself and go in. I've done a little wrestling and I know this shoulder butt business and how it should be done, so I get one foot against the wall to start me off and take a dive clear of the floor and hit Martin in the back and just above the hips with my shoulder. It knocks him ahead and off his feet and into the guy in front of him so hard he falls on top of him. I've hit him so hard I keep going and I take the fall on my right shoulder and do a half twist so I'm facing the room and laying on my right side.

Debenham's across the room from me, just getting out of a chair. He's stooping a little, the way he would be, and grabbing at his coat pocket. I've still kept my gun during the acrobatics, and I shoot once and it straightens him up with the back of his knees against the front of his chair. While he straightens he gets the gun out of his pocket and I

don't take any chances but pop him again and this one sets him back in the chair like he was thrown there. He ain't over ten feet from me and a .45 will hit an awful smack at a distance like that. I know he's out for good, for all and forever.

I look at the tangle Martin and the other guy are in then. I've rolled maybe six feet in front of them and am still laying on the floor like they are. I see Martin start to disentangle himself, and I get up and clip him across the face with the barrel of my gun, and I clip hard. I hear it crunch. He flops down again on the other boy and if it *had* been a wrestling match it'd been called a body press and he'd have got a fall. He just smothers the other guy.

I yank him off and look at what's under him. The guy is damn' near smothered and still don't know what it's all about. He looks up and sees my gun pointed at him and don't even move until I tell him to. I back him to a wall and make him face it and take a gun away from him and then make him turn around and sit with his back to the wall. Martin's out and will be for at least an hour and Debenham's out forever, and I figure that if I talk fast I might be able to learn something before Mac and Tony bust in. I do but not much, I don't have time.

Mac and Tony come boiling in carrying guns out and ready, like they expected to fight an army, and right along with 'em is Arlie. Mac takes in the layout quick, goes over to Debenham and looks at him and then he says: "Very nice, Johnny. You caught him right in the Adam's apple."

I see Arlie with his mouth open so damn' far I can see where *his* Adam's apple ought to be, and I tell him: "Beat it, Arlie," and he does. Then I say to Mac: "Why not take Martin and this heel up to the station and see what they know. Martin's just bought a will his wife left in the safe that was robbed. He paid two grand for it, and paid another two grand to the guys that killed her for him. This heel claims he didn't have anything to do with the killing, but he's already said that he's the one that gagged Martin's maid and a charge of attempted murder ought to fix him up. I wink at Mac and Mac gets it and says: "We can charge him with it anyway, but hell! Why not stick him on the murder rap? I can pin it on him just like a false front."

The guy breaks right then. He's a yellow pup and I know he will. He spills the whole thing before even the ambulance and the fast wagons get there that Mac has sent for, and he pulls the rope

tighter around Martin's neck with every word.

IN THE first place Martin tries to hire him to kill his wife. The guy won't go for that. Then Martin hires him to hide in his closet and pretend to sap him. This was so I wouldn't get wise that Martin wasn't right. He wanted me to be with him all the time, on account of being an alibi, and he figured that if I thought he was in danger from his wife I'd stick. Then Martin hires Debenham to kill his wife and gets this guy to go along with him and help take care of the interference, if any. Debenham'd kill his *own* wife for two hundred dollars and Martin offers him two thousand. The rest is just like I figured it.

This guy—his name is Albert Hood, though he ain't got guts enough to be one—goes to the house about an hour before we're due home. They knock on the back door and tie up and gag the cook and sap the butler when he comes out in the kitchen. Then they go upstairs and Debenham goes to Mrs. Martin's room while this guy looks for the maid. He's the kind that *would* be brave around women.

He admits gagging the girl but claims that when he went in the bedroom Debenham already had Mrs. Martin hanging on the door and was working on the safe. It don't make any difference. He's talked himself into an accessory charge and is too dumb to know it.

About this time the ambulance and the fast cars from the station come and the doctor patches Martin's face, where I slugged him, up enough to take him to the station.

He hasn't come to yet and the doctor says he won't for quite a while longer. Mac and Tony load Martin and this fella Hood into one of the cars to take 'em up and book 'em, and then I remember something. I say to Mac: "Hey! Wait a minute! This Martin owes me for two days work on this week. What about it?"

Mac gives me that dirty grin he's got and says: "You should have collected before you had him arrested. I bet he'll be mad at you now and *never* pay you."

He never did, either.