

RIGGS IS HERE

Jackson Gregory, Jr.

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TOMMY RIGGS? Well, there are some that say he's a smart little guy. "Smart as a whip," they'll tell you. "You watch that guy. One of these days—"

And then there are others, the guys like Mac down at Ryan's place and like George Setter. "Him?" they'll say, and laugh just a little bit, pleasantly because they like him, but: "That guy—he beats everything. Tommy, he sure is dumb. He's got just one idea in his head, and not enough brains left over to know when he's licked. If the guy'd wise up—"

You, if you saw Tommy, would probably remember him by the infectious way he grins. Otherwise he's just a short, stocky guy with sandy hair and a homely face. But when he grins, unless you're pretty sour on the world, you grin back.

So they can't help liking him even if he is dumb. Like this day. He was grabbing a beer and cheese-on-rye at the bar in Ryan's restaurant. Mac was in back of the bar. Then George Setter came in.

Setter was built with a wide-shouldered leanness—a dark, good-looking guy. You could see at a glance that he knew his way around. The suit he wore told you that; so did the snappy-looking roadster that he had parked at the curb, outside. Only twenty-seven and a year younger than Tommy, he knew ropes that Tommy Riggs would never guess at.

"Brandy and water, Mac," he said, and then to Tommy, kidding: "Hi y'u, copper!"

Setter laughed. "Sure! Y'u been seein' him once a month for the last two years. Why don't y'u wise up, kid? That guy's not goin' to give y'u a job."

"Yes he is!" Tommy stated. "He told me that—"

"Look, Tommy." Setter took his brandy, killed it. Then he said: "Y'u and I been pals for a long time now, and I hate to see y'u go on bein' a sucker like this. Even if Carey did give y'u a job, then what? A private dick never makes any jack. Why don't y'u let me get y'u a job?"

"I got a job, George."

"That!" Setter snorted. "That's no job!"

Tommy's job was washing dishes in the back of Ryan's restaurant for eats and a dinky room upstairs and five bucks a week.

"It's pretty good," Tommy told him. "And anyhow, Carey told me that he was just waiting to see what I could do. If I can crack a case on the outside, he'll fix a spot for me."

THAT wasn't strictly true. He had arrived at the door to International Agency's office well before eight that morning. When Carey's secretary got there to open up, she looked at him, sighed, and let him in to wait.

Carey came in briskly at eight thirty. He said, "Hello, Dot," and then spotted Tommy sitting in the chair by the window. Carey's face, lean and harsh at the best, grew dark as he frowned annoyance. He grunted and strode into his office.

When Tommy stood up to follow him, the secretary said: "You'd better wait. Mr. Carey is busy right now." So he waited. People, a lot of them, because International with its branches in six cities is a big firm, came in, were escorted to Carey's office and left again.

At eleven thirty Tommy stood up. "There isn't anybody in there now."

"Well—I'll see." The secretary went into Carey's office. Through the open door, he heard her explain: "That Riggs person is still here."

"Damn it, I'm busy!" Carey exploded. "Tell him—Oh, send him in!"

Tommy went in and closed the door behind him. Grinning, he said: "Good morning, Mr. Carey. I—"

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"I'm sorry, Riggs." Carey's gray eyes were like brittle slate. "I told you I'd let you know if we had an opening for you. There's nothing yet."

"Sure, I know." Tommy's grin was unperturbed as he sat down in front of the desk. "I've got something to show you since I was last here."

"That's fine, Riggs, but you'll have to come back later. Right now—"

"Oh, that's all right. It won't take long, Mr. Carey." He took an envelope out of his coat pocket. There were about a dozen photographs in it. He slid three of them over to Carey, explained proudly:

"I took those with a microscope I picked up for thirty bucks, and an Argus camera I'm good with that camera, Mr. Carey, better'n some guys are with a Leica."

Carey picked up the photographs. Each was a picture of a bullet with a torn and jagged nose that showed that it had been fired. Numbered ink-lines were drawn to grooves and scratches on the surface of each bullet.

Tommy leaned forward. "Those came out of a Smith Wesson .38/44—yours, Mr. Carey. I dug them out of the bank at the police range where you were practicing last Wednesday. I'm getting pretty good at ballistics, and you need a guy like that."

Carey threw the pictures down on the desk top. "Listen! I've told you before—"

"I've got more than that." Tommy picked out four other pictures, thrust them into Carey's hand. "Look at those." Each was a fingerprint with its classification written in ink on the corner of the photograph.

"Those are yours," Tommy said. "I got them off a beer glass you drank out of at Goldie's. There are only four of them," he apologized, "because when you were drinking, you held your little finger up."

Carey took a deep breath. As he looked at Tommy Riggs his thin lips reluctantly spread in a smile. "You're crazy as hell, kid. We don't give a damn about all this stuff. That's the worry of the cops down at headquarters." He opened his desk and drew out some papers. "No, Riggs, I can't do anything for you now."

"You never know when it'll come in handy," Tommy warned. "I'm good at lots of other things besides." He took a red notebook out of his pocket. "Now just take a—"

Carey shook his head. "No, kid, nothing doing. You better beat it now. I'm busy."

"O. K." Tommy stood up and grinned. "I wanted to show you how good I was at shadowing. I tailed you all day yesterday, and you didn't even know it."

"You what!"

"Sure!" Tommy said, talking fast, now, before he got sent out. "All morning you didn't do anything—that is you stayed here. Then you went out and had lunch at the Miramar. I got the times and everything." He tapped the notebook "After that you went down to Jones and Turk streets. It was easy following you there. I live just a couple of blocks from there."

A FROWN grew deep between Carey's black eyebrows. He sat perfectly motionless in his chair while Tommy went on:

"You met a guy in a beer joint there, a little guy with a broken nose and a screwy way of jerking up the side of his mouth. I'd never seen him before, but you talked to him quite a time in a booth. Then you went over to the Freeman Warehouse and talked to Pop Dillon, the watchman there. After that—"

"Sit down a minute, Riggs." Carey tipped his head toward the chair. "Let's see that notebook." He thumbed through the leaves slowly, studying the report of everything he had done the previous day. When he looked up, his mouth was a tight line.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he snapped. "The slugs outta my gun, my fingerprints—and then shadowing me! You crazy fool, if—"

"Listen, mister!" The grin went off Tommy's face. "There's no call to get sore about it. All I wanted was to show you."

"Oh, sit down!" Carey grunted. "You say you live near the—down by Turk and Jones streets."

"Sure! You know Ryan's place just up the street from Shanty Malone's?"

"Yeah, I know." Carey picked up a pencil and traced deep lines with it on his desk blotter. "I suppose you've blown off your yap all over the place about following me?"

Tommy shook his head. "Why should I? And anyhow, what difference would it make?"

"Quite a lot, kid." Carey straightened up in his chair and smiled. To me, none at all. To you, quite a lot." He tapped the red notebook. "I sorta like the job you did in here. You might make a good shamus yet, Riggs. I was

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wondering if you could keep your mouth shut. A cop's got to do that!"

"You mean you can find a place for me?"

Carey pulled thoughtfully at the end of his nose. "Not yet, Riggs. I'll keep this and look it over." He slipped the notebook in his pocket. "If you can convince me that you know how to keep your trap closed, I'll begin to think that you've got the makings."

Tommy's grin came back. "That's easy! And I can do more than that, Mr. Carey. I can work on some case on the outside and show you—"

"Yeah, you do that. And in the meantime, I'll be keeping a check on you to see just how good you are. A guy that blabs everything he knows is no good to me."

"Sure!" Tommy's grin was wide. "I knew you'd wake up one of these days, Mr. Carey."

TOMMY RIGGS got his chance the night of that same day—a chance to crack a case on the outside. About midnight, he was at the cluttered desk in his room. Mendhom's "Psychological Studies of Criminal Minds," open before him to the third chapter, made his eyelids droop.

Sirens and the clanging bell of a fire truck brought his head up with a jerk. When they stopped not more than a block or two away, he jumped to his feet, stared for a moment at Mendhom's "Psychological Studies," grimaced, and grabbed his hat off the foot of the bed.

The fire was in the Freeman Warehouse. Twin fire hoses, fat with water, led in through the wide double doors at the loading platform. Smoke in thick streams poured out and coiled up the face of the wooden building.

As Tommy climbed the platform and slipped through the doors, the two hoses sagged and collapsed as the water was turned off. Smoke hung thick inside the big warehouse, but the fire was out. The lights on the overhead beams were dim, yellow spots that turned the firemen into ghostlike figures.

He followed the hoses to where the fire had burned hot for a few minutes, charring the wall. Four big packing cases lay there, three sides burst open, the excelsior that had spilled out of the heaped in black, smoking clumps. He heard the husky fire captain from the Jackson Street station say:

"This here's a job for the arson squad. Joe, you better put in a call."

Arson squad! Tommy's eyes brightened at that. Maybe here was a chance—

He began poking around, keeping out of the way of the firemen, choking a little bit as the smoke worked into his lungs. The crudeness of the attempt at firing the building gave him the idea that it must have been an afterthought of something else. And he began wondering where old Pop Dillon, the night watchman Carey had been talking to the day before, was.

He moved away, headed slowly toward the back of the building. He strained his eyes through the smoke-laden air, seeking something—he wasn't sure what—to give him a steer to what had happened.

He found it—but with his feet, not his eyes. He was passing a six-foot stack of paper-wrapped tires, new auto tires piled neatly, one on top of another, when his foot skidded on the floor. He grabbed at the stack of tires to steady himself looked down—and shuddered.

His foot had slipped in blood! There was enough light to show its deep-red color as it seeped from beneath the bottom tire and ran out across the dry floor boards.

"Well!" He whispered the word, as though he depended on saying it to steady himself. He lifted his eyes from the thick pool to his hand, which rested on the stack of tires. When he removed it, fast, his heart was beating in heavy thumps.

Fifteen feet away was an empty box. He carried it over, climbed on it! looked hesitantly down inside the pile of tires. It was dark in there. He made out the soles of two shoes that faced up toward him.

A match showed him more. A man—Tommy was certain he was the watchman, Pop Dillon—had been dumped headfirst in there. He could make out his hips and the pallid flesh of one hand, and down at the bottom, he could see the white hair on the side of the man's head.

At the front of the warehouse, Tommy found the fire captain. Thickly he said: "Better send for homicide. There's a guy back there—"

LIEUTENANT BARNELLEY arrived with half a dozen men of the homicide and lab squads. He said: "Hello there, Tommy. Don't tell me you landed a job with Carey, at last?"

"Not yet." Tommy's grin was lopsided. "Iñthere's a dead guy back here!"

"Yeah, I gathered that." He went back to the stack of tires and stared down at the corpse. "A hell of a place to

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dump a guy," was his only comment.

While his photographer was setting up a camera to shoot the inside and outside of the tires, the lieutenant strode all the way back to the rear of the warehouse. Tommy followed him.

There was a small glassed-in office. Barnelley found the light switch, snapped it on. The sight of a half-eaten sandwich lying on the desk made Tommy choke. The picture of the other half lying in the stomach of the dead watchman was too vivid.

The wall at one end of the office was concrete with a steel door open a few inches, set in its center. The homicide cop pushed the door wide to show the fireproof storage vault behind it. Three wooden boxes stood on the cement floor. Their tops had been ripped off, and labels on them: BECK FUR COMPANY.

For the next twenty minutes Tommy stood back, watching and admiring the smooth routine of investigation. Barnelley called Inspector Dean of the burglary squad, said: "It's another one of those warehouse jobs—thirty thousand bucks' worth of furs. You better get over here. Yeah. sure, tell Carey."

Tommy asked, remembering that Jeff Carey had talked with the watchman the day before: "Does International Agency cover for the insurance company on this warehouse?"

"Yeah!" Barnelley told him.

Tommy watched them lift the tires one by one off the stack, watched Pop Dillon's body uncurl and stretch out on the floor. He slipped up close while one of the detectives inspected the bloody wound in the side of the old man's neck. The dick said: "Twenty-five caliber I'd guess. Anyhow the slug's still in there."

Back in the glassed-in office a lab man blew dragon's blood powder over the dark steel of the door to the vault. With one exception, the entire door had been wiped clean. That exception was the print of a hand that the powder brought up on the right side of the door just above the lock.

While the photographer came in and set up his camera in front of it, Tommy examined it. The print was of a right hand and was at a peculiar angle, the fingers pointing toward the left. He figured that there was only one way that it could have gotten there—by a man leaning his right hand against the door while he bent over and wiped off the lower portion of the door with his left. A guy in a hurry to remove his fingerprints and carelessly planting them there while doing so.

And then, when the photographer had finished, he spotted something that brought his eyes wide and a quick exclamation to his lips. He bent over to examine the print. It was smeared in places, but the thumb and third finger were outlined sharply. He recognized the thumb print!

It was Carey's! There couldn't be any doubt about it. An egg-shaped whorl with a tiny scar through the left delta and a ridge count of eighteen from the right delta.

There was more than just that print, though at first Tommy didn't recognize its significance. A wooden door, unlocked, at the back of the warehouse, opened onto an alley. He went out there and, with matches held low, studied the dust-covered asphalt.

There were oil drippings and tire tracks of a car that had parked by the door for some time. The tracks had been left by a sharp tread and he classified them easily: the right rear was B 2/3,9—the left A 6/6,4,6.

Tommy was back inside the warehouse when Carey strode in. The International Agency dick's face was drawn up tight with anger that exploded into curses when he looked down at the body of Pop Dillon.

"The lousy rats!" he grated. "The dirty—" He twisted toward Lieutenant Barnelley. "They got the furs?"

"All of 'em," the homicide cop said.

"The—" Then Carey spotted Tommy Riggs. He stared at him for a minute, yelled: "You! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I—"

"Beat it!" Carey snapped. "Damn it, do you always have to be under my feet? Beat it outta here!"

Tommy left—thoughtfully. He was even more thoughtful when he saw Carey's car parked at the curb. He examined its rear tires. They matched exactly the traces in the alley.

Tommy swore softly—

TOMMY crouched low as he crept up the driveway, kept his body close against the four-foot hedge that bordered it. Carey's house was dark and maybe he wasn't back yet, but Tommy wasn't taking any risks of being seen. He slipped up quietly to where the drive rounded the corner of the house to the garage. There he froze!

Somebody was on Carey's front porch. Tommy saw first the red glow of a cigarette cupped in the man's palm,

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then the blurry shape of the man himself. He was standing there on the porch, close against the white front of the house.

Tommy sank down lower until his body was buried in the shadows of the hedge, moved on around the corner out of sight of the man. Then he straightened, vaulted the hedge. He retraced his steps on the other side until he could see the red tip of the cigarette again.

He waited there, moving only slightly when his muscles cramped. The guy on the porch snapped his cigarette in a spinning arc to the driveway, kept his place close to the front door. Then Carey came, the headlights of his car throwing a white brilliance up the drive. Carey drove the coup up to the doors of the garage, left it parked outside. Before the headlights flicked out, Tommy saw that the doors were locked with a heavy padlock.

The man came down off the porch. He called ahead of him softly: "Carey!"

The International Agency dick stopped halfway out of his car. "Yeah? Who is it?"

"Me," was the guy's only answer. He strode up the drive, and Carey met him a few feet from where Tommy crouched.

The guy lit a cigarette. In the second that the match was at his face, Tommy recognized him. He was the guy with the broken nose and twitching mouth that Carey had talked to in the beer joint at Jones and Turk streets. Now he said:

"He's goin' to be ready to move them furs outta town tomorrow mornin'. About ten, usin' a Hedder Bakery truck."

Carey snapped his words out: "O. K.! I'll be ready! You beat it now."

The guy left, slouching down the driveway. When the sound of his leather heels had faded, Carey went to his porch and into the house.

"I'll be damned!" Tommy muttered into the leaves of the hedge. "I'd never've believed it of him. Carey a crook! I'd never've thought it." He shook his head.

Lights in the back of Carey's house went on. Tommy watched them, squatting on the ground, waiting patiently until at last they blinked off. He waited after that until he thought Carey would be asleep. Then he went back to the garage.

He was wondering, why should the doors be locked? Why did Carey leave his car outside? The padlock was heavy, a Yale, and to tear it loose would make a racket to wake the dead.

What he did next scared him to think about—so he did it without thinking. He found a window in Carey's house that was open, cut the screen, and climbed in. With his heart bouncing in his throat, he sent out a pin of light from a pencil flash, found he had climbed into the dining room.

With his shoes under his arm, he tip-toed back through the house. The door to Carey's bedroom was open. He stood there listening to the detective's deep, steady breathing.

He got into and out of that room safely, Carey's pants clutched in his hand. Back in the dining room he went through the pockets and found what he wanted—a ring of keys.

At the garage, he picked out the key that opened the lock. The click of it and then the creak of doors as he slid them sounded in his ears like a roar that could be heard for blocks.

They were there! At the back of the garage, wrapped first in canvas and then in cotton sheeting, were the furs, a bulky pile of soft, glossy pelts. What had Barnelley said? Thirty thousand dollars' worth? Forty thousand? Sable and mink strapped into tight bundles, silver fox—Tommy sucked in his breath.

He grinned a little at what he did next. There was a workbench against one wall, with tools on it. He picked up a husky monkey wrench and walked out of the garage with it. He swung the wrench against the windshield of Carey's car.

This time he didn't have to wait long. Hidden around behind the corner of the garage, he heard the front door open, a faint slap-slap of slippered feet, Carey's curse as he saw the shattered windshield, and then the sound of the garage doors grating open.

Tommy slipped around the corner. Carey, a revolver in one hand, a flashlight in the other, was shouldering in through the doors. Tommy rushed up on him, swung the wrench.

"NOW I guess you wish you'd given me a job." Tommy was sitting on the work bench, Carey's .38/44 in his hand. Carey, down on the floor in his pajamas, was bound hand, foot and mouth with mechanic's tape. He lay motionless, his eyes slots of rage.

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"If you'd given me a job you could've put me to work on something else," Tommy said. "Instead of that—well, now look at you. A guy like you a crook! A killer too!" He balanced the gun in his hand. "I oughta drill you like you did poor old Pop Dillon."

He stared thoughtfully back at the pile of furs. "Murdering a guy for that! You low rat! It makes me sorta sick to think that I ever wanted to work for you. But I got you now—plenty—and the two of us'll just stay here until your pals come around with their bakery truck."

On the floor Carey started thrashing around. Incoherent sounds of rage came out through his nose.

"Take it easy," Tommy advised. "Me, I don't like waiting any more than you do. I—" Suddenly he jumped down from the workbench. "On second thought, I guess I won't have to wait!"

He went out and locked the doors of the garage behind him. He put the heavy gun in his pocket, and it felt large against his side as he strode down the drive.

IT was nearly three in the morning, but there was plenty of spots that didn't bother with the two-o'clock closing law. Tommy made the rounds of them, and in each place he asked:

"Do you know a little guy with a broken nose and a way of jerking up the side of his mouth? A little thin guy that looks like that?"

"No, Tommy," was the answer in the first four places. And then in the Red Rooster the bartender said:

"Yeah, I guess I know who you're talking about. A cheesy little bum. Dipper, the boys call him. Just a cheap punk. I don't know where you'd find him. He hangs around here some, but I ain't seen him tonight."

Tommy kept going. It was three thirty when he opened the side door to the Exposition Bar on Larkin Place. There were two men at the bar. Tommy didn't know them, and he didn't know the bartender. But over at a side table sat George Setter.

Setter had a woman at the table with him. She wasn't young, and there was a certain hard look about her—the dark shadows under her eyes weren't eye shadow. Still, she somehow managed to be attractive. She was the first to glance up as Tommy approached the table.

"Hello there, George," Tommy said.

Setter looked up "Well I'll be damned! How are y'u, Tommy boy? Si' down. Have a chair." He waved his arm vaguely, drunkenly

Tommy looked at the woman questioningly. "I don't know if I oughta butt in."

"Sure!" She smiled at him. "Sit down. You're not interrupting anything."

"How are y'u, Tommy boy?" Setter asked again. "Have a drink. What're y'u doin' out so late?" Setter laughed suddenly. "I know!" he said. "Bet y'u're playin' cops again."

"Yeah!" Tommy said. "I'm working on that warehouse case."

"Good old Tommy!" Setter leaned over the woman. "Tommy, here, thinks he's a cop."

Tommy leaned over the table. "Look, George, there's a guy I want to find. A little guy with a broken nose and a way of twitching his mouth."

"Yeah?" Setter stared at him, then at the woman. "That sounds like y'ur brother, Billie. That sure as hell sounds like y'ur brother. Good ol' Dipper."

"Dipper! That's him!" Tommy swung his eyes to the girl. "He—is he your brother?" She nodded. Tommy looked at her for a moment, studying her face as he said: "I found the furs that were stolen, and I thought maybe he could—"

"Foun' the furs?" Setter looked at him owlishly. "Tha's old Tommy for yu—a real copper." He stood up uncertainly. "You stay here, Billie. I'll take Tommy aroun' to find Dipper."

Outside Setter drew in deep breaths of air. "Smells good," he muttered. "Come on Tommy boy." He led the way to the sleek lines of his car.

As they pulled away from the curb, Tommy said: "I never used to be able to figure how you did it, George. Driving a truck for the Hedder Bakery like you do, and on that salary managing to own a car like this and all those good clothes, and money to spend on women."

Setter turned his eyes from the windshield to stare at him. "It's just bein' smart," he said. "Makin' y'ur money stretch."

"I guess that's it." Tommy noticed that Setter wasn't very drunk as he drove. He asked quietly: "You know where Dipper is?"

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"Sure!" Setter said. Then: "Where'd y'u find the furs."

"I can't tell anybody that." Tommy answered. "Not until I notify the cops. I haven't done that yet."

Setter laughed—a harsh and sudden outburst. "So this is what all your snooping and wanting to be a cop adds up to! Just waiting your time until you could put the squeeze on somebody."

"I thought—"

"You really had me fooled, Tommy boy." As he talked, Setter lifted his right hand from the wheel, slipped it into his pocket. "I'd never have guessed y'u had the guts. Comin' straight to me when y'u foun' the furs! An' now that y'u've told me about it, how much do you figure you oughta get to keep your mouth shut?"

TOMMY shrugged. He looked at Setter's hand in his coat pocket.

"Y'u're a smarter guy than I thought y'u were," Setter said. "An' y'u're a damn sight dumber. I don't know how y'u spotted the furs—but it's sure as hell not goin' to do y'u any good." He jerked his hand out of his pocket. There was an automatic in it—a tiny .25 Colt that he pushed hard into Tommy's side.

"One move now?" He grated, "an' y'u get a gut fulla this!"

"That gun," Tommy's voice was husky, "is the one that killed Pop Dillon!"

Setter's voice was a sneer, "The old fool recognized my voice, yeah, it's the gun! Y'u're goin' to get a taste of it too. Tryin' to chisel in! That's a laugh."

"You'd kill me?" Tommy didn't get an answer to that, but there wasn't any need for one. Setter was keeping to the back streets, heading south and out of the city. His arm, his right arm with the gun, trembled a little bit from the sheer tension as he held the automatic ready to fire at the slightest move from Tommy.

They passed the intersection at Valencia Avenue and Sixteenth Street. Tommy's eyes moved from the street ahead to the rear-sight mirror above the windshield. The car had two—one for the driver, one for the passenger. In his he saw a car following them. It was running without lights about a block behind, and he saw it when it crossed the intersection.

"George," he said quietly. "You can't get away with this. In that car that's following us—"

Setter's eyes whipped up to his rear mirror. For one instant, when he first saw the car, his attention wavered; and the gun against Tommy's ribs drew away a fraction of an inch.

Tommy slammed his elbow back, hard. It caught Setter's wrist, pushed the gun into the upholstery. The gun went off, its slug digging into the seat. When Tommy had his hand around it, it cracked out a second time as Setter swung a blow at him with his left, and the sleeve kicking back with the recoil tore skin and flesh out of Tommy's palm.

Gripping the automatic with his bleeding hand and with his head pulled down against his chest, he battered his right into Setter's stomach, driving it with the strength of his compact shoulders. He felt the car swerve wildly, jolt up over the curb, and still he kept slugging. Setter yelled once, a strangled sound as the wind was hammered out of him.

The car crashed into a store window, hurled Tommy against the dash. When he struggled up off the floor, Setter was bent over the steering wheel, gasping, choking, both arms locked around his stomach.

The gun was still gripped in Tommy's hand. He swung it twice—short, chopping blows to Setter's head. Setter collapsed sideways, toppled against him.

Tommy stayed there, crouched down on the seat. The other car had stopped, and he heard footsteps running across the pavement. A second later, the door on his side of the car was yanked open.

It was Dipper. Over his broken nose, his eyes were narrow, alert. He was gripping a bulldog revolver.

Tommy didn't wait to see more. He swung his foot up from the floor boards. His toe slammed into Dipper's chin, whipped his head back. Then Tommy jammed his other foot into the guy's belly. Dipper shot backward, spilled onto the glass-littered sidewalk.

Tommy pulled himself out of the car. Dipper was out, unmoving on his back, but somebody else came around the back of the roadster. It was Billie, the woman who had been drinking with Setter. She was coming fast, and the street light glittered from the chromium-plated automatic in her slim hand.

Tommy dove at her. He slapped the pistol to one side, pistoned his fist to her chin.

TOMMY was talking into the green call box, half a block from the wrecked car. Lieutenant Barnelley of the homicide squad was on the other end of the phone. Tommy was telling him:

"Sure! I got the whole crowd that tuck up the warehouse. One of the guys, George Setter, had the gun that

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killed Pop Dillon. And I got the furs."

Barnelley said: "O. K." The radio cops loaded the three unconscious forms into the back of their prowl car and left Tommy there on the corner.

When Barnelley picked him up, he was grinning in spite of his torn hand and bruises. "I really cracked a mob for you boys tonight. The furs are out at 193 Melbourne. Maybe you'd better get out there in a hurry before something happens to them."

Barnelley grinned as he shot the car down the street. "You ought to get your job with Carey after this." When Tommy just grunted at that, he went on: "Only you don't have to worry about anything happening to those furs. They're fake—rabbit and squirrel."

"What!"

"That's right," Barnelley told him. "Carey had a tip that the stuff was going to be lifted, so he sneaked the good fur out of the warehouse early tonight and planted it in his garage. The stuff he left in its place was just a lot of fancy junk."

"He . . . he what?"

Barnelley laughed softly. "Not that you didn't do a good job, but we were ready to crack down on Setter tomorrow. We knew all about him, though we thought he was working alone. Carey figured him quite a while ago as the egg who'd been pulling these jobs; so he got a couple of his agents up here from the south, a man and his sister. The girl got to work on Setter, got him so he was shooting his mouth off to her."

"This guy—this agent of Carey's," Tommy's voice was weak. "What'd they call him? Dipper?"

"Yeah!"

"Oh," Tommy said. Then: "Go on!"

"Well that's about all," Barnelley said. "The only thing that went wrong was Pop Dillon getting killed. The poor old boy must have got panicky and gone for his gun or something. We didn't know where Setter hid the furs, but Carey's agents and a couple of my boys were watching him, ready to jump him as soon as he tried to move them."

"I see." Tommy put his hand on the door handle. "Look, lieutenant, I better get out here. You can go on to that address without me. I . . . I guess I don't feel so good."

Barnelley looked at him sympathetically "You've had quite a time of it tonight at that."

"Yeah!" Tommy said. "I guess that's it." When Barnelley let him out, he shuddered a little bit. He was thinking about Carey, in his pajamas, tied up with tape on the cement floor of the garage.

THE next afternoon Tommy was sitting in the bar in Ryan's restaurant. Over a glass of beer, he was telling Mac behind the bar:

"Carey's a funny guy. I've been thinking that maybe he's going to be sore for a while. But if I crack another case and show him—"

A voice behind him grated out: "Like hell you will!"

Tommy turned around and saw Carey's bleak, hawklike face.

"Oh!" Tommy said. "Eh—hello, Mr. Carey."

"Bourbon!" Carey strode to the bar. "Strong and straight." He scowled at Tommy. "So you think you're a shamus!"

"Yeah!" Tommy admitted. "Look at what I did last night." When Carey grunted and scowled harder, he said: "Maybe I did make one mistake. But I got Setter didn't I? I—"

"Luck!" Carey sneered. "Nothing but plain, damn—fool luck!"

Tommy leaned forward suddenly. "Say, Mr. Carey! That's something I've never told you. Me! I'm lucky, lucky as hell. A cop without luck isn't much good—but I've got plenty of it. If you'd think about that, and forget about what happened—"

Carey snorted. "Forget!" He picked up his bourbon, tipped it. "Like hell I'll forget! I don't have to learn a lesson twice. You come around tomorrow, Riggs—I'll have a job for you. I can keep you outta my hair that way—maybe."

So the next morning Tommy showed up at the International Agency's office. He grinned at the secretary and said: "Tell the boss, Riggs is here."