

NOVEMBER 35¢

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



His stories presented by the master of SUSPENSE



Dear Readers:

Since the first showing of THE BIRDS many moviegoers are convinced I have supernatural powers and can produce a flock of feathered friends wherever I go. I don't wish to disabuse such confidence nor fall from such

celestial heights on the wing of their disillusionment, but I must.

Halloween, haunted houses, ghost stories and supernatural manifestations are synonymous. For me they can be calamitous. Hence my appeal to the Boys in Blue each Halloween, and my subsequent incarceration during All Saints' Eve. Here is where I sing a few old songs with the fellows in the constabulary and then return to the safety of my home after the bougainvillea bushes, the high ixora hedge, the patio and garage are checked for anti-Hitchcock merry-makers.

We admit it's all in fun until my wife tells me a ghost story and then I'm certain I've heard someone in the house as in August Derleth's story, ADVENTURE OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE, in this issue. This story and Michael Zuroy's, THE AWFUL EXPERIMENT, should supply horripilant material to spook any party, Halloween or otherwise.

Alfred Hitchcock

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ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S mystery magazine

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Occasionally situations coincide in such a way that there remains only one thing for a sensible person to do. These instances, appropriately enough, are referred to as matters of life and death.

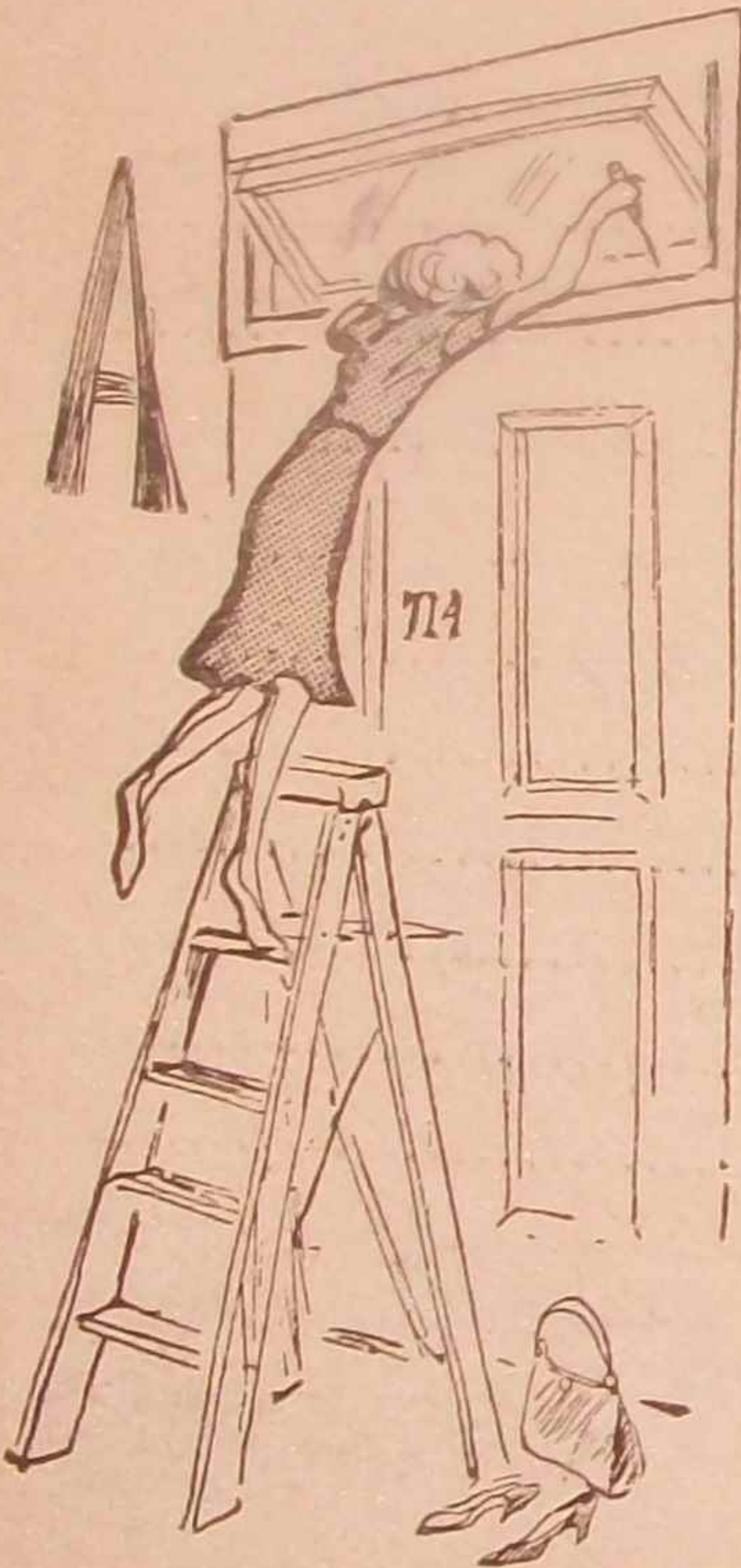
THE PHONE CALL Lydia Hartman had been awaiting all day came just as she was leaving the office. She paused in the doorway and waited to see if it was for her.

She heard her boss say, "Apex Insurance. Mr. Tremaine speaking." Then he looked up and mo-

tioned toward her energetically.

Crossing the room, she took the phone from Tremaine's hand and said into it, "Mrs. Hartman speaking."

"This is Jules," a deep masculine voice said in her ear. "I'm calling from Buffalo."



GIRL

"Buffalo!" she said abruptly.

"You told me to stick with him no matter where he went," Jules Weygand said a trifle resentfully. "When he caught a bus to Buffalo, I drove my car up and was waiting at the depot here when he arrived."

Lydia glanced toward her boss, who had moved across the room and was lifting his hat from a clothes tree.

"Does he know you followed him?" she asked in a low voice.

"He hasn't seen me. I feel like a private eye, tailing him around like

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this from one city to the next." From the doorway Mr. Tremaine said, "Night, Lydia. Lock the door when you leave, will you?"

Placing her hand over the mouth piece, Lydia said, "All right, Mr. Tremaine. Good-night."

Then, as the door closed behind her boss, she said into the phone, "Is he all right?"

"Of course he's all right," Weygand said with a shade more resentment. "He's registered at the Redmill Hotel, and since noon he's had two pints of bourbon delivered.

"I might prevent him from doing something desperate, Jules."

"Like killing himself? Drunks don't commit suicide."

"Jim's hardly a drunk," she said sharply. "You can't blame him for going off the deep end after losing everything he had."

"He lost it for me too," Weygand said dryly. "I was his partner, remember?"

"I know," she said on a note of contrition. "You've been like the Rock of Gibraltar in this, Jules. You could have prosecuted."

MUST be Practical!

I told you he wasn't planning anything but a drunk."

"Oh, my!" she said. "If he's drunk, he might do anything. I'm coming there."

"I thought you probably would," he said resignedly. "So I checked train and bus schedules. The next train leaves Rochester at six P.M. and gets here at seven-thirty. There isn't a bus leaving there until eight."

"I'll be on the next train."

"What do you expect to accomplish?" he asked.

"I didn't hold off for his sake, Lydia. Only for yours. You know how I feel about you."

"I don't want to hear that as

By RICHARD DEMING

long as I'm married to Jim," she said with a return of sharpness. "And I certainly can't leave him now, when he needs me more than he ever has."

"That sounds as though you finally plan to, once he's straightened out," Weygand said in a pleased voice. "It's the first real encouragement you've given me."

"Meet me at the station at seven-thirty," she said, and hung up.

Jules Weygand was waiting when Lydia Hartman got off the train at Buffalo. When she saw him standing, tall and lean and handsome, at the top of the inclined ramp leading up from the trains, it occurred to her that a month ago the sight would have made her heart skip a beat. But then he had been a successful businessman; now he was a bankrupt. She might have traded one successful businessman for another, but she had no desire to trade a bankrupt for a bankrupt. At thirty-two a girl had to start being practical.

He stood smiling down at her as she moved upward toward him, openly admiring the rounded slimness of her body. When she paused before him and he took the small overnight bag from her hand, she tossed her blond head pettishly.

"You shouldn't look at me like that," she said.

"You shouldn't be so beautiful,"

he countered, taking her elbow to steer her toward the main exit.

His car was parked on the lot only a few yards from the exit. Dropping the overnight bag in back, he held the door for her, then rounded the car to slide under the wheel.

Without turning on the ignition, he said, "Now that you're here, what are your plans?"

"To talk to him. If he won't come home, I'll stay here with him."

"And watch him drink himself into a stupor? He may stay on this a week."

"Then I'll stay a week."

"You'll lose your job."

"I can phone in the morning. Mr. Tremaine is understanding."

"But you've only been there three weeks, Lydia. Even an understanding boss won't put up with you taking a week off so soon."

"I'm not exactly a new employee," she said. "I worked for Apex Insurance five years while Jim was getting on his feet."

"You've been away five years too."

"Apparently I haven't been forgotten, or I wouldn't have been taken back with a set-up to chief clerk."

"Yeah," he said. "That hasn't helped Jim psychologically either, you moving back to your old em-

ployer with a promotion at the moment he's bungled himself out of business entirely."

"Bungled?"

"If embezzlement to play the ponies isn't bungling, I don't know what is. Why don't you leave him to stew in his own juice, Lydia? A month ago you were considering it."

"A month ago he wasn't down. I can't leave him now."

"Your damned loyalty," he said irritably. "He'll never get back on his feet, even if you stick with him. He's washed up."

"So I should leave him for you?" she asked sarcastically. "You're as bankrupt as he is."

"But not through my own fault. I'll spring back again, eventually. Jim won't. Even if you managed to help him back on his feet again, he'd fritter it away a second time. He's weak, Lydia."

"Perhaps. But he's my husband. And at the moment you're no better prospect than he is. I don't think you realize what a practical person I am, Jules. Even if I weren't married to Jim, I wouldn't have you at this point."

He gave her a surprised look. "Are you serious?"

"Completely," she assured him. "Maybe ten years ago I'd take the chance. As a matter of fact, I did with Jim. With youth, you don't

mind helping a man struggle ahead. But I've gone through that once. Now I'm thirty-two and you're nearly forty. I'm not interested in any more financial struggles that can be avoided. I'm stuck with Jim, but I'm not about to jump from the frying pan into the fire. My next husband, if there is one, is going to be firmly established before we say the vows."

"You don't make sense," he growled. "You'll have a lot more financial struggle with Jim than you would with me."

"We happen to be already married. And I'm just as loyal as I am practical. Shall we go where he's staying?"

Wordlessly he started the engine and drove off the lot.

The Redmill Hotel was on lower Pearl Street, hardly the best section of town. However, Jules Weygand assured Lydia, it was a perfectly respectable second-class hotel. She left her overnight bag in the car when they went inside.

The building was ancient and both the furniture and carpet in the lobby were well worn, but it seemed a clean enough place. Two old men sat in the lobby reading newspapers and a middle-aged man with a bald head was behind the desk.

Going over to the desk, Weygand said to the bald man. "He still in

his room swilling the booze?" The man merely nodded. Weygand led Lydia on toward the elevator.

"I slipped him a ten to keep track of Jim's activities for me," he said in explanation. "That's how I knew about the bourbon he had delivered."

"I'll repay all your expenses," she said.

"Don't be silly. What's a few more bucks when you're fifty thousand in the hole? I have enough ready cash."

They stepped on the elevator and Weygand said, "Seventh."

When they got off at seven, Weygand led the way down the hall and around a corner to a door numbered 714.

"Well, here you are," he said.

Over the door there was a transom with its glass painted white. It was open about four inches at the top, enough to show that a light burned in the room. Lydia gave the door a timid knock.

When there was no response, she rapped harder. After several moments of waiting, Weygand stepped forward and pounded several times.

A door across the hall opened and an elderly man peered out, then closed the door again.

Lydia said, "He must be asleep."
"More likely passed out drunk,"

Weygand growled. "I'll go down and have Baldy bring up a pass key."

Lydia waited in front of the door while Weygand went down stairs. In a few minutes he reappeared with the clerk.

"This is Mr. Simms, Lydia," Weygand said. "I've explained that you're Jim's wife. Mrs. Hartman, Mr. Simms."

"Pleased to meet you," the desk man said a little dubiously. "There isn't going to be any trouble here, is there?"

Lydia said, "I'm just concerned about my husband, Mr. Simms. We haven't been having any marital discord, if that's what you mean. I assure you he'll be glad to see me if you let us in."

"Well, I guess it'll be all right," Simms said reluctantly.

He fitted a pass key in the door, turned it and pushed on the knob. Nothing happened.

"He's got it bolted," Simms said. He pounded on the door until several doors along the hall opened and tenants peered out.

"Just a sound sleeper, folks," Simms announced generally. "Excuse the noise."

The tenants withdrew and their doors closed. The three in front of 714 listened for some sound within the room, but there was none.

Lydia said worriedly, "He usu-

ally snores, particularly when he's been drinking."

This made Simms look worried. He tried the pass key again, with no more result than before.

"Is there a fire escape?" Lydia asked.

Shaking his head, Simms pointed to a fire-exit sign up the hall. "Just fire stairs in each hallway. Maybe we can see something through the transom. I'll get a ladder."

He went away and was gone some ten minutes before he returned carrying a six-foot stepladder and a small, stubby screwdriver.

As he set the stepladder before the door, he said, "I know I won't be able to reach the release, because it's too far down. But I may be able to unscrew the sideplate and get the transom open that way."

Climbing the ladder, he attempted to peer into the room through the V-shaped crack left by the partially open transom.

"Can't see anything but a piece of the ceiling," he announced.

Holding the screwdriver, he thrust his right hand through the very top of the aperture and groped around for a moment. Then he withdrew it and climbed down the ladder.

"The metal plate holding the rod that opens and closes the transom

is on the right edge about halfway down," he said. "My wrist's too thick to get my hand down that far. You want to try it, lady?"

"All right," Lydia said in a steady voice.

Taking the screwdriver, she climbed the ladder. Holding the screwdriver in her left hand, she inserted her right in the crack and felt for the metal plate. As Simms had said, it was attached to the edge of the transom about halfway down. Her hand and wrist were small enough to reach it easily. She couldn't see it, but with her fingers she could feel that it was held by two screws.

Withdrawing her hand, she transferred the screwdriver to it and pushed it through the aperture again. Even though she couldn't see what she was doing, the screwdriver was short enough so that with its butt end nestled in her palm, she could still touch the screws with her fingertips. Guiding the blade into the slot of the lower screwhead, she unscrewed it, pulled her hand back out and handed the screw down to Simms.

"Better hold the top of the transom with your other hand when you unscrew the second one," Simms cautioned. "Otherwise it'll bang down against the door and maybe break the glass."

Lydia put her hand through the

crack again, located the upper screw by feel and seated the blade of the screwdriver. Before unscrewing it, she grasped the top of the transom with her left hand. When the screw came all the way out, the transom was suddenly released from its rigid position. Handing down both the screw and screwdriver, Lydia cautiously let the transom move forward and swing down, climbing higher as she did and thrusting her arm farther into the room until the transom finally hung vertically downward against the door below it.

Only then did she peer through the oblong frame at the motionless figure lying on the bed. She stared at it silently for a long time.

"Is he all right?" Weygand asked.

The question roused Lydia to action. Kicking off her shoes and letting them fall to the floor, she climbed clear to the top of the ladder, steadied herself by grasping the upper part of the transom frame with both hands and slid her legs inside.

As she lowered herself to a seated position, Weygand said, "What do you think you're doing?"

"Going in to open the door," she said calmly.

Reversing herself to roll over on her stomach and transfer her grip to the bottom sill, she slid backward into the room and dropped

to the floor. Quickly she crossed to the bed and bent over the still figure there.

Outside in the hall Jules Weygand tired of waiting for the door to open and climbed the ladder to peer in. His face appeared just as she turned away from the bed and began to move woodenly toward the door.

"What is it?" he asked worriedly when he saw her numb expression. He couldn't clearly see the figure on the bed because her body partially blocked the view.

Without answer she went to the door, drew back the bolt and pulled the door open. Weygand came down off the ladder, set it to one side and followed the bald-headed Simms into the room. Lydia quietly stepped out in the hall and put her shoes back on. Then she leaned against the door jamb and closed her eyes.

Inside the room the two men stared down at the figure on the bed. It was that of a man about thirty-five, good-looking in a weak sort of way, but beginning to go to fat. He wore nothing but socks and trousers, his shoes lying in one corner and the rest of his clothing wadded on top of a chair. An empty pint bottle lay next to him on the bed and another lay on the floor beside the bed. His hands were crossed on his stomach just below

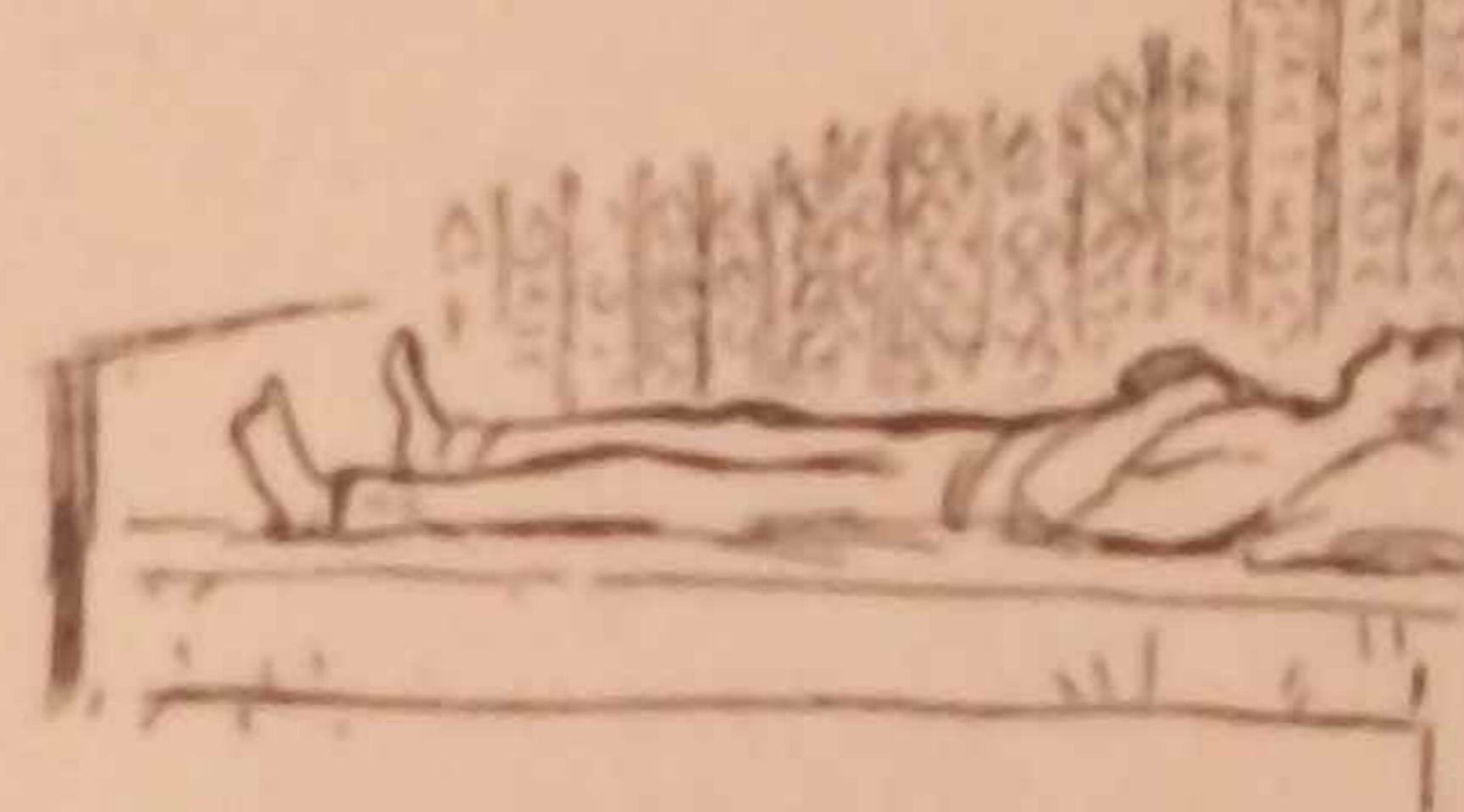
a thin, horizontal slit of a wound on the left side of his chest, as though he had been reaching for the wound when he died, and hadn't quite had the strength to raise his hands that high.

Simms tentatively touched the dead man's cheek, then hurriedly withdrew his hand. "Cold," he said. "Must have been dead for a while."

"And I told her drunks never commit suicide," Jules Weygand said softly.

Simms gave him a sharp look. "Suicide? Where's the knife?"

Lydia's eyes popped open. Weygand's expression turned startled. After glancing about the room, he fell on hands and knees to peer under the bed. When he rose, he



stared at the desk clerk strangely.

"The door was bolted from inside," he said.

"Yeah," Simms said slowly. He glanced at the window, which was unscreened and wide open from the bottom.

"It's the seventh floor," Weygand

reminded him. "And you said there's no fire escape."

He walked over to look out, then turned and stared at the closed bathroom door from narrowed eyes. Lydia's breath caught in her throat. The desk clerk gulped.

"You think the killer is still in there?" Simms whispered.

Without answering, Weygand returned to the bed, stooped and picked up the empty bottle lying next to it. Holding it by the neck,



he quietly approached the bathroom door and suddenly flung it open. He stepped in with the bottle raised high as a club.

Lowering it again, he came out, his expression puzzled. Simms's gaze strayed to the door of the closet.

Striding over to it, Weygand jerked it open, the bottle again held high. The closet was empty.

With a snort of disgust Weygand set the bottle atop the dresser. Returning to the open window, he peered out a second time.

"There's a ledge about a foot wide just below the window," he announced. "Who has the rooms on either side of this one?"

"I'd have to check the register," Simms said faintly. "We'd better get out of here and let the police handle this."

"Yeah, I guess," Weygand said.

He moved toward the door. Lydia stepped back out of the way, swaying on her feet. Grasping her arm to steady her, Weygand gave her a sympathetic smile.

"I'll be all right," she said in a low voice.

Setting the spring lock, Simms pulled the door closed behind him and led the way to the elevator. Weygand steered Lydia after the desk clerk, still holding her arm. She moved stiffly, leaning against him for support.

Downstairs the two old men still sat in the lobby. Simms moved behind the desk and lifted the phone. Weygand led Lydia over to a sofa.

"I'll be all right now," she said, pulling her arm from his grip. "I don't want to sit down."

He gazed down at her speculatively. "You're sure?"

"I'm not the fainting type," she said straightening her shoulders. "I don't suppose we'll be able to go back to Rochester tonight, will we?"

"I hardly think so. The police will want to talk to us. And of course you'll have to arrange for a local funeral director to ship Jim home."

"Are you registered here?"

He shook his head. "I'm not registered anywhere. For all I knew, you meant to have me load Jim in my car and drive back to Rochester tonight. I didn't even bring a toothbrush."

"We may as well stay here, don't you think?"

"The place seems clean enough," he said with a shrug. "I'll see if I can get us a couple of rooms." He walked over to the desk just as Simms hung up the phone.

"They'll be right over," the desk clerk said. "You and Mrs. Hartman better stick around."

"We plan to," Weygand said. "Do you have a couple of rooms on the

same floor, or perhaps adjoining?"

As Simms was checking his room chart, Lydia quietly walked to the door and outside. When Weygand finished registering, he turned to find her standing behind him with her overnight bag in her hand.

"You should have let me get that," he said, taking it from her.

"It isn't heavy," she said. "Did you get rooms?"

"Two right across the hall from each other on five. We may as well wait here until the police arrive, though. Mr. Simms says they'll be right along."

Lydia walked over to seat herself on the couch she had previously refused. Setting the bag next to the desk, Weygand went over to sit beside her.

A homicide team arrived five minutes later. It consisted of a burly middle-aged man who introduced himself as Sergeant Charles Carter and a lean, younger man named Harry Nicholson. Carter had a puffy, red-veined face and heavy-lidded eyes which gave a first impression of stupidity until you noted the shrewd glint in the eyes behind the drooping lids.

The first thing he asked was if Simms had phoned for a doctor.

"Yes, sir," the desk clerk said. "Before I called you. We have an arrangement with a man just up the

street to be on call. He should be here any minute."

"Then let's take a look at the body," Carter said. "Harry, you stay here with these folks and send the doc up when he comes."

The sergeant and Simms moved off toward the elevator.

Harry Nicholson seemed to have no intention of asking any questions about the murder, for after making a comment about the pleasant weather Buffalo was having, he lapsed into silence. Five minutes passed before a thin, elderly man carrying a medical bag came in. Nicholson walked over to meet him at the door, and after a moment's conversation the elderly man proceeded to the elevator.

Lydia glanced at her watch and was surprised to see it was only eight forty-five, just an hour and a quarter since she had gotten off the train.

Silence resumed when Nicholson returned to his seat. Apparently any questioning to be done was to be conducted by Sergeant Carter. Twenty more minutes passed before Simms, the sergeant and the doctor all got off the elevator together. The elderly doctor went out the front door. Simms and Carter came over to where Lydia, Weygand, and the other detective were seated.

"It's homicide all right," Carter

informed his partner. "Somebody slid a knife between a couple of his ribs into his heart. He died so quick, he didn't even bleed. Funny thing, though."

"What's that?" Nicholson asked.

"Simms here says the door was bolted from inside and the transom open only a slit." He pushed a thumb toward Lydia. "She unscrewed some gadget to get the transom open and climbed through to unbolt the door."

Nicholson looked at Lydia. She said, "I was the only one with small enough hands to get a screwdriver through the crack."

Nicholson looked back at his partner. "The guy left by the fire escape?"

"There isn't any," Carter informed him.

"Hmm. Then he must have still been there when they found the body. Maybe hiding in the bathroom. He must have sneaked out when they left the room to call us."

Carter shook his head. "Simms says they had the same thought, and checked both the bathroom and closet." He looked at Weygand. "That right, mister?"

Weygand nodded. "I even looked under the bed."

"You mean we got a locked room mystery?" Nicholson asked in a querulous voice.

"Nope," Carter said. "It just nar-

rows down to only one possible means of exit. There's a foot-wide ledge that runs clear around the building just below the window. A guy who didn't get dizzy could work his way along it to another room."

"Who's in the rooms either side of Hartman's?" Nicholson asked.

Simms said, "They're both vacant."

"I looked at them," Carter said. "The windows of both are closed, but unlocked. The guy could have pushed either up, then closed it again after he was inside. The doors have spring locks, so once he stepped out in the hall and pulled the door closed behind him, there'd be no sign of anybody ever being in the room."

Nicholson asked, "What's the doc say?"

"Dead three to five hours, which would make it three-thirty to five-thirty this afternoon. Probably closer to five-thirty."

"How do you figure that?"

"Simms delivered the guy a pint of bourbon at noon, a second one at two-thirty. If it took him two and a half hours to kill the first, it probably took at least as long to kill the second, which would take him to five o'clock. And both are empty."

Nicholson nodded. "That's logical. Where do we go from here?"

"You can call the ice wagon and the fingerprint boys and stand by here to show them around. Have the fingerprint guys catch the windows in the rooms both sides of 714 too. I'll take these people down to headquarters to get their stories."

Jules Weygand stood up. "I'd better move my car then, Sergeant. It's parked in the hotel loading zone."

Simms said, "I'll move it for you, Mr. Weygand, and you can pick up the keys at the desk when you come back. I'll put it on the hotel lot."

Weygand handed over the keys and Simms said, "I'll put Mrs. Hartman's bag in her room too. It's 521, Mrs. Hartman."

"Thank you," Lydia said.

"Okay, folks," Sergeant Carter said. "Let's take a ride over to headquarters."

Police headquarters was only two blocks away, also on lower Pearl Street. Sergeant Carter ushered them into an elevator, and when they got off upstairs, led them to a door lettered: HOMICIDE AND ARSON. Beyond the door was a large squadroom with several desks in it. The only person in the room was a man in shirtsleeves talking on a phone at one of the desks. Carter seated himself behind another desk on the opposite side of the room and waved Lydia and Wey-

gand to a pair of nearby chairs.

"Smoke?" he asked, extending a pack of cigarettes.

Both Weygand and Lydia shook their heads. Carter lit one for himself, leaned back in his chair and regarded Lydia from beneath his drooping lids.

"I understand the dead man was your husband, Mrs. Hartman. That right?"

Lydia nodded.

"And you're here from Rochester?"

"That's right. Jules here too."

"Uh-huh. What was your husband doing here?"

"Just getting drunk," she said, flushing slightly. "He's been doing that recently. But up until this time he's always holed up in some Rochester hotel."

"This is just something recent? His drinking, I mean."

"The last few weeks. He's been depressed over business matters."

"Oh? What was his business?"

"Jim and Jules, here, were partners in the Weygand and Hartman Realty Company. They filed for bankruptcy three weeks ago and the company is in receivership. It was all Jim's fault, really."

"How's that?" Carter asked.

"He—he misappropriated some funds. Jules found it out too late to save the business. He's been wonderful about it. He could have had

Jim prosecuted and imprisoned."

"That wouldn't have saved anything," Weygand said dryly. "It would just have sent Jim to jail."

Carter turned his attention to Weygand. "Weren't you a little sore at your partner?"

"That's an understatement," Weygand said in the same dry tone. "I would have sent him to jail if it weren't for Lydia. I didn't want to hurt her."

"Oh? Why so considerate?"

"She hadn't done anything," Weygand said reasonably. "And I happen to like her."

After studying him for a moment, Carter turned back to Lydia. "How'd you know your husband was here in Buffalo?"

"Jules phoned me about five P.M. I had asked him to keep an eye on my husband, because Jim's been so depressed, I feared he might do something desperate. When Jules said my husband had registered here at the Redmill Hotel, and was having whisky delivered to his room, I took the six P.M. train here. I got in at seven-thirty and Jules met me at the train."

"Hmm. If you were in Rochester at five P.M., I guess you're cleared as a suspect." He swung his gaze back to Weygand. "You verify her story?"

"Of course," Weygand said in surprise. "You didn't actually suspect

her of doing this thing, did you?"

"The wife is always a routine suspect when a man's murdered. Now about you. You tailed him here from Rochester, huh?"

"Not exactly. I watched him buy a bus ticket to Buffalo, drove here and picked him up at the bus depot again. When he checked in at the Redmill, I arranged with the desk clerk to let me know if he had any orders sent to his room. When I learned he was having whisky delivered, I phoned Lydia."

"I see. Seems to me you went to an awful lot of trouble for a guy who'd made you bankrupt."

Weygand flushed. "I wasn't doing it for him. It was a favor for Lydia."

"Kind of fond of her, huh?"

Weygand's flush deepened. "What are you getting at, Sergeant?"

"I'll spell it out for you," Carter said. "Hartman's wallet was in his hip pocket with sixty-three dollars in it, so the motive wasn't robbery. He was a stranger here, so it isn't likely he had any local enemies. You admit you had a grudge against him and you're fond of his wife. You married, Mr. Weygand?"

After staring at him for a time, Weygand said hotly, "No. But if you're accusing me—"

"I'm not accusing anybody, just yet," the sergeant interrupted. "I'm

just pointing out that you seem to have a couple of good motives, and you tailed him here all the way from Rochester."

"But that was at my request," Lydia protested, her face paling. "I was afraid Jim might try to kill himself."

"Maybe your boy friend was afraid he wouldn't," Carter said cynically. "Until we turn up a better suspect, guess we'll have to hold you a while for investigation, Weygand."

Jules Weygand puffed up with indignation. But before he could open his mouth, the squadroom door opened and Harry Nicholson walked in. He was carrying a small paper bag in his hand.

As Nicholson approached the desk, Sergeant Carter said, "Get anything?"

"The lab boys are still lifting prints. The guys from the morgue have been and gone." He set the paper bag on the desk. "You can handle this. It's already been checked for prints, and there aren't any."

Sergeant Carter peered into the bag, then reached in and drew out an open, thin-bladed clasp knife with a blade about five inches long. The blade was darkly stained.

Laying it on his desk blotter, Carter asked, "Anyone recognize this?"

Lydia managed to overcome her revulsion at the dark stain and leaned forward to examine the knife more closely. In its tan-colored bone handle the initials "J.H." were inset in silver.

"It's my husband's," she said in a whisper. "He always carried it."

Carter looked up at Nicholson. "So he was killed with his own knife, huh? Probably he was passed out on the bed when the killer entered his room."

"What I figured," Nicholson said. "Of course we'll have to get the lab to run a check of the blood type on the knife against Hartman's, but I'll bet a beer they match."

"No bet," Carter said, "Where'd you turn it up?"

"I was making a routine check of Weygand's car," Nicholson said casually. "It was in the glove compartment."

It was nearly midnight when Lydia got back to her hotel room. She had stood by to protest Jules' innocence to the two unbelieving homicide officers, then had phoned a lawyer, waited until he arrived, and had outlined the whole situation to him. None of it had done any good. There was no bail in first-degree homicide cases, so Jules Weygand was in jail.

Her performance had helped her

own case, she knew, even if it hadn't helped Jules'. It would have been inconvenient if the police had suspected collusion between her and Jules, even though there had been none. As it was, they had seemed rather admiring that she had stood by her husband in his trouble to the extent that she had sent a friend to watch over him in case Jules attempted suicide.

Of course nobody, including Jules, suspected the real reason for her worry over Jim was that he might commit suicide before she could arrange a suitable accident.

Slipping off her dress and slip, she hung them neatly in the closet. As she peeled off her left stocking, she frowned at the small bloodstain on the inside of her thigh. Then she saw that a run had started where the point of the knife had punctured the nylon when she thrust it down inside the stocking.

Before removing the other stocking, she went into the bathroom and washed away the tiny bloodstain. Reaching down into the other stocking, she drew out a folded slip of paper, opened it and read

it for the first time. There hadn't been time to read it in Jim's room, of course; only time to get it out of sight.

The note was almost illegible, obviously written in the last stages of drunkenness. But amid the erratic scrawling she could make out the phrase: "Sorry I have to take this way out, Lydia, but—" Nothing more was decipherable, but that was enough to indicate it was a suicide note.

Tearing it into small pieces, she flushed it away.

It was a good thing she worked for the insurance company where Jim was insured, she thought. Otherwise, she might have been unaware that his fifty-thousand-dollar policy contained a suicide clause which voided it in the event he took his own life.

It was only right that she should salvage something from a marriage to which she had devoted ten years, Lydia thought. And if she hadn't removed the knife from Jim's chest and the note from his hand, she would have nothing to show for the ten years.





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