

# REDBOOK

M A G A Z I N E

December  
25<sup>c</sup>

IN U.S. AND CANADA

**COMPLETE  
BOOK-LENGTH  
NOVEL**  
*by*  
**PHILIP WYLIE**

*Beginning*  
"Neighbor to the Sky"  
*by*  
**GLADYS HASTY  
CARROLL**  
*Author of "As the Earth Turns"*

Novelette  
*by*  
**LUCIAN CARY**

**KATHARINE BRUSH  
CARL SANDBURG**



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DECEMBER  
VOL. 68

**REDBOOK**  
M A G A Z I N E

1936  
No. 2

EDWIN BALMER, *Editor*

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COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE — BOOK-LENGTH — 50,000 WORDS

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The Redbook School Directory will be found on pages 122 through 126.

# The HOLLOW DRAGON

MISS MERRIVEL always said (she said) that the Lord took care of everything; and she reaffirmed it now with undiminished faith, although she was careful to add in her vigorous contralto that it didn't hurt to help Him out if you could.

"And can you?" asked Mr. Ellery Queen a trifle rebelliously, for he was a notorious heretic, besides having been excavated from his bed without ceremony by Djuna at an absurd hour to lend ear to Miss Merrivel's curiously inexplicable tale. And if this robust and bountiful young woman—she was as healthy-looking and as overflowing as a cornucopia—had come only to preach, Ellery firmly intended to send her about her business and return to bed.

"Can I?" echoed Miss Merrivel grimly. "*Can I!*" And she took off her hat. Aside from a certain rakish improbability in the hat's design, which looked like a soup-plate, Ellery could see nothing remarkable in it; and he blinked wearily at her. "Look at this!"

She lowered her head, and for a horrified instant Ellery thought she was praying. But then her long brisk fingers came up and parted the reddish hair about her left temple, and he saw a bump beneath the Titian strands that was the shape and size of a pigeon's egg.

"How on earth," he cried, sitting up straight, "did you acquire *that* awful thing?"

Miss Merrivel winced stoically as she patted her hair down and replaced the soup-plate.

"I don't know," she replied.

"You don't know!"

"It's not so bad now," said Miss Merrivel, crossing her long legs and lighting a cigarette. "The headache's almost gone. Cold applications—you know the technique? I sat up half the night trying to bring the swelling down. You should have seen it at one o'clock this morning!"

Ellery scratched his chin. "There's no error, I trust? I'm—er—not a physician, you know."

"What I need," snapped Miss Merrivel, "is a detective."

"Hmm! But how, Miss Merrivel, in mercy's name—"

The broad shoulders under the tweeds shrugged. "It's not important, Mr. Queen. I mean my being struck on the head. I'm a brawny wench, as you can see; and I haven't been a trained nurse for six years without gathering a choice assortment of scratches and bruises on my lily-



"I GOT UP TO INVESTIGATE. AND—THE DOOR SUDDENLY SWUNG SHUT."

white body. I once had a patient who took the greatest delight in kicking my shins." She sighed; a curious gleam came into her eye, and her lips compressed a little. "It's something else, you see. Something—funny."

A little silence swept over the Queens' living-room and out the window, and Ellery was annoyed to feel his skin crawling. There was something in the depths of Miss Merrivel's voice that suggested a hollow moaning out of a catacomb.

"Funny?" he repeated, reaching for the solace of his cigarette-case.

"Queer—prickly. You feel it in that house. I'm not a nervous woman, Mr. Queen; but I declare if I weren't ashamed of myself, I'd have quit my job weeks ago." Looking into her calm eyes, Ellery fancied it would go hard with any ordinary ghost who had the temerity to mix with her.

"You're not taking this circuitous method of informing me," he said lightly, "that the house in which you're currently employed is haunted?"

She sniffed. "Haunted! I don't believe in that nonsense, Mr. Queen. Besides, who ever heard of a ghost raising bumps on people's heads?"

"An excellent point."

"It's something different," continued Miss Merrivel thoughtfully. "I can't quite describe it. It's just as if something was going to happen, and you waited and waited without knowing where it was going to strike—or, for that matter, what it was going to be."

"Apparently the uncertainty has been removed," remarked Ellery dryly, glancing at the soup-plate. "Or do you mean that what you anticipated *wasn't* an assault on yourself?"

Miss Merrivel's calm eyes opened wide. "But Mr. Queen, no one has assaulted me! I mean—not intentionally. I just happened to get in the way."

"Of what?" asked Ellery wearily, closing his eyes.

"I don't know. That's the horrible part of it."

Ellery pressed his fingers delicately to his temples, groaning. "Now, now, Miss Merrivel, suppose we organize? I confess to a vast bewilderment. Just why are you here? Has a crime been committed—"

"Well, you see," cried Miss Merrivel with animation, "Mr. Kagiwa is such an odd little man, so helpless and everything. I do feel sorry for the poor old creature. And when they stole that fiendish little door-stop of his with the tangled-up animal on it—

well, it was enough to make anyone suspicious, don't you think?" She paused to dab her lips with a handkerchief that smelled robustly of disinfectant, smiling triumphantly as she did so, as if her extraordinary speech explained everything.

Ellery took off his *pince-nez* and very deliberately polished the lenses. Then he put the glasses back on his nose and said: "Did I understand you to say *door-stop*?"

"Certainly. You know, one of those thingumabobs you put on the floor to keep a door open."

"Yes, yes. Stolen, you say?"

"Well, it's gone. And it was there before they hit me on the head last night; I saw it myself, right by the study door, as innocent as you please. Nobody ever paid much attention to it, and—"

"Incredible," sighed Ellery. "A door-stop. Pretty taste in petit larceny, I must say! Er—animal? I believe you mentioned something about its being tangled up. I'm afraid I don't visualize the beast from your epithet, Miss Merrivel."

"Snaky sort of monster. They're all over the house. Dragons, I suppose you'd call them. Although *I've* never heard of anyone actually seeing them, except in delirium tremens."

"I begin," said Ellery with a reflective nod, "to see. This old gentleman, Kagiwa—I take it he's your present patient?"

"That's right," said Miss Merrivel brightly, nodding at this acute insight. "A chronic renal case. Dr. Sutter of Polyclinic took out one of Mr. Kagiwa's kidneys a couple of months ago, and the poor man is just convalescing. He's quite old, you see, and it's a marvel he's alive to tell the tale. Surgery was risky, but Dr. Sutter had to—"

"Spare the technical details, Miss Merrivel. I believe I understand. Of course, your uni-kidneyed convalescent is Japanese?"

"Yes. My first."

"You say that," remarked Ellery with a chuckle, "like a young female after her initial venture into maternity. Well, Miss Merrivel, your Japanese, your unstable door-stop and that bump on your charming noodle interest me hugely. If you'll be kind enough to wait, I'll throw some other clothes on and go a-questing with you."

IN Ellery's big car Miss Merrivel watched the city miles devoured, drew a long breath, and plunged into her narrative. She had been recommended by Dr. Sutter to nurse Mr. Jito Kagiwa, the aged Japanese gentleman, back to health on his Westchester estate. From the moment she had set foot in the



The ever-resourceful Mr. Queen reaches new heights of ingenuity in this thrilling mystery story.

by ELLERY QUEEN

A BUMP THE SIZE OF A PIGEON'S EGG. "HOW ON EARTH," HE CRIED, "DID YOU ACQUIRE THAT?"



house—which from Miss Merrivel's description was a lovely old non-Nipponese place that rambled over several acres and at the rear projected on stone piles into the waters of the Sound—she had been oppressed by a most annoying and tantalizing feeling of apprehension. She could not put her finger on the source. It might have come from the manner in which the outwardly Colonial house was furnished: inside, it was like an Oriental museum, she said, full of queer alien furniture and pottery and pictures.

"IT even smells foreign," she explained with a handsome frown. "That sticky-sweet smell—"

"The effluvium of sheer age?" murmured Ellery.

Miss Merrivel did not know. It might have been merely the *people*. Although the Lord Himself knew, she said piously, they were nice enough on the surface; all but Letitia Gallent. Mr. Kagiwa was an extremely wealthy importer of Oriental curios; he had lived in the United States for over forty years and was quite Americanized. So much so that he had actually married an American divorcée who had subsequently died, bequeathing her Oriental widower a host of fragrant memories, a big blond footballish son, and a vinegary and hard-bitten spinster sister. Bill, Mr. Kagiwa's stepson, who retained his dead mother's maiden name of Gallent, was very fond of his ancient little Oriental stepfather, and for the past several years, according to Miss Merrivel, had practically run the old Japanese's importing business for him.

THERE WERE MEN  
IN THE BOAT, AND  
APPARATUS....SOME  
ONE SHOUTED.



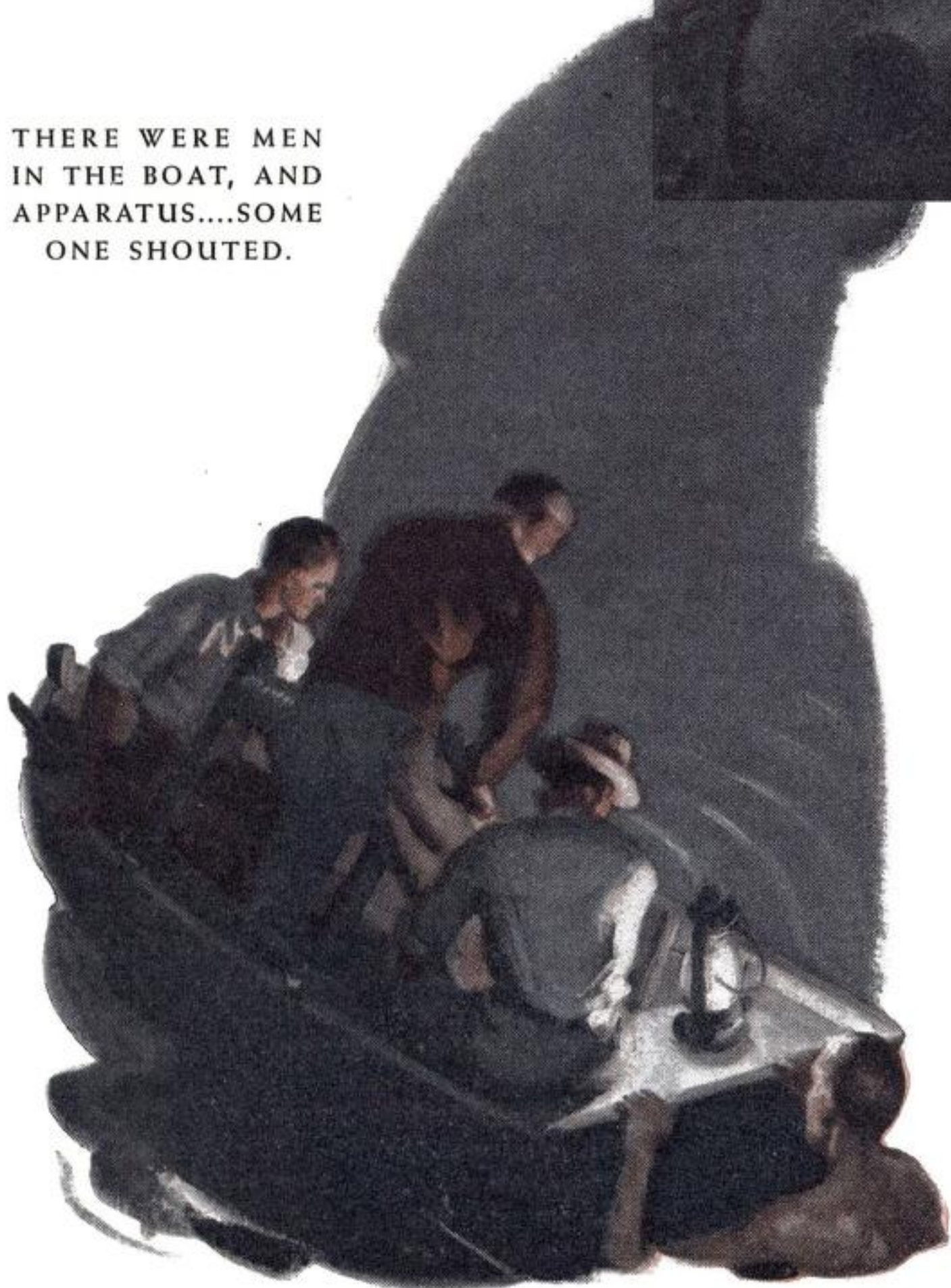
ELLERY WAS NOT FOOLED. HIS GRIP TIGHTENED ON

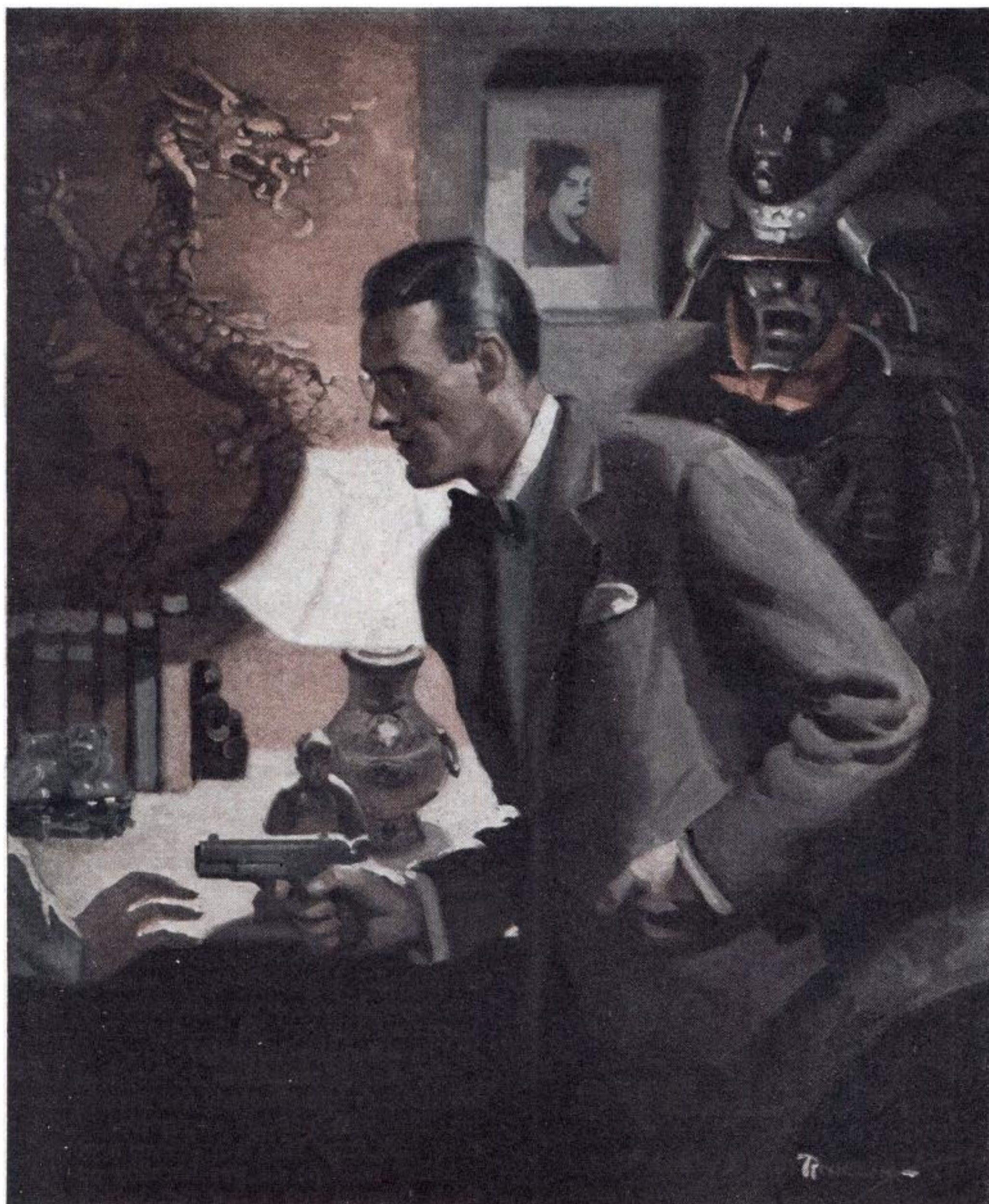
As for Letitia Gallent, Bill's aunt, she made life miserable for everyone, openly bewailing the cruel fate which had thrown her on "the tender mercies of the heathen," as she expressed it, and treating her gentle benefactor with a contempt and sharp-tongued scorn which, said Miss Merrivel with a snap of her strong teeth, were "little short of scandalous."

"Heathen," said Ellery thoughtfully, sliding the car into the Pelham highway. "Perhaps that's it, Miss Merrivel. Alien atmospheres generally affect us disagreeably. By the way, was this door-stop valuable?" The theft of that commonplace object was irritatingly nibbling away at his brain-cells.

"Oh, no. Just a few dollars; I once heard Mr. Kagiwa say so." And Miss Merrivel brushed the door-stop aside with a healthy swoop of her arm and sailed into the more dramatic portion of her story, glowing with its reflected vitality and investing it with an aura of suspense and horror.

ON the previous night she had put her aged charge into his bed upstairs at the rear of the house, waited until he fell asleep, and then—her duties for the day over—had gone downstairs to the library, which adjoined the old gentleman's study, for a quiet hour of reading. She recalled how hushed the house had been, and how loudly the little Japanese clock had ticked away on the mantel over the fireplace. She had been busy with her patient since after dinner, and had no idea where the other members of the household were; she supposed they were sleeping, for it was past eleven o'clock. . . . Miss Merrivel's calm eyes were no longer calm; they reflected something unpleasant and yet exciting.





Illustrated by  
WILLIAM REUSSWIG

THE AUTOMATIC. THE WINDOW WAS OPEN,...INVITING TO A DESPERATE MAN.

"It was so cozy in there," she said in a low troubled voice. "And so still. I had the lamp over my left shoulder, and was reading 'White Woman'—all about a beautiful young nurse who went on a case and fell in love with the secretary of— Well, I was reading it," she went on quickly, with a faint flush, "and the house began to get creepy. Just—creepy. It shouldn't have, from the book. It's an awfully nice book, Mr. Queen. The clock went on ticking away, and I could hear the water splashing against the piles down at the rear of the house, and suddenly I began to shiver. I don't know why. I felt cold all over. I looked around, but there was nothing; the door to the study was open, but it was pitch-dark in there. I—I think I got to feeling a little silly. Me, hearing things!"

"Just what do you think you heard?" asked Ellery patiently.

"I really don't know. I can't describe it. A slithery sound, like a—a—" She hesitated, and then burst out: "Oh, I know you'll laugh, Mr. Queen, but it was like a *snake*!"

Ellery did not laugh. Dragons danced on the macadam road. Then he sighed and said: "Or like a dragon, if you can imagine what a dragon would sound like; eh, Miss Merrivel? And where did this remarkable sound come from?"

"From Mr. Kagiwa's study. From the dark." Miss Merrivel's pink skin was paler now, and her eyes were luminous with half-glimpsed terrors. "I was annoyed with myself for imagining things, and I got up to investigate. And—and then the door of the study suddenly swung shut!"

"Oh," said Ellery in a vastly different tone. "And despite everything, you opened the door and investigated?"

half in the study. The study was still dark; nothing had changed. I put the light on in the study and looked around. It seemed the same, you know. All except the door-stop; that was gone, and I knew then why the door had swung shut so suddenly. Funny, isn't it? . . . I spent most of the rest of the night bringing the swelling down."

"Then you haven't told anyone else about last night?"

"Well, no." She screwed up her features and peered through the windshield with a puckered concentration. "I didn't know that I should. If there's anyone in that house who's—who's homicidally inclined, let him think I don't know what it's all about. Matter of fact, I don't." Ellery said nothing. "They all looked the same to me this morning," continued Miss Merrivel after a pause. "It's my morning off, you see, and I was able to come to town without exciting comment. Not that anyone would care! It's all very silly, isn't it, Mr. Queen?"

"Precisely why it enthralls me. We turn here, I believe?"

TWO things struck Mr. Ellery Queen as a maid with frightened eyes opened the door for them and ushered them into a lofty reception-hall. One was that this house was not like other houses in his experience, and the other that there was something queerly wrong in it. The first impression arose from the boldly Oriental character of the furnishings—a lush rug on the floor brilliant and soft with the vivid technique of the East, a mother-of-pearl-inlaid teak table, an overhead lamp that was a miniature pagoda, a profusion of exotic chrysanthemums, silk hangings embroidered with colored dragons. . . . The second thing that troubled

him arose perhaps from the scared pallor of the maid, or the penetrating aroma. A sticky-sweet odor, even as Miss Merrivel had described it, hung heavily in the air, cloying his senses and instantly making him wish for the open air.

"Miss Merrivel!" cried a man's voice, and Ellery turned quickly to find a tall young man with thin cheeks and intelligent eyes advancing upon them from a doorway which led, from what he could see beyond it, to the library Miss Merrivel had mentioned. He turned back to the young woman, and was astonished to see that her cheeks were a flaming crimson.

"GOOD morning, Mr. Cooper," she said with a catch of her breath. "I want you to meet Mr. Ellery Queen, a friend of mine. I happened to run into him—" They had cooked up a story between them to account for Ellery's visit, but it was destined never to be uttered.

"Yes, yes," said the young man excitedly, scarcely glancing at Ellery. He seized Miss Merrivel's hands. "Merry, where on earth is old Jito?"

"Mr. Kagiwa? Why, isn't he upstairs in his—"

"No, he isn't. He's gone!"

"Gone?" gasped the nurse, sinking into a chair. "Why, I put him to bed myself last night! When I looked into his room this morning, before I left the house, he was still sleeping."

"No, he wasn't. You only thought he was. He'd rigged up a crude dummy of sorts—I suppose it was he—and covered it with the bedclothes." Cooper paced up and down, worrying his fingernails. "I simply don't understand it."

"I beg your pardon," said Ellery mildly. "I have some experience in these matters." The tall young man stopped short, flinging him a startled glance. "I understand that your Mr. Kagiwa is an old man. He may have crossed the line. It's conceivable that he's playing a senile prank on all of you."

"Lord, no! He's keen as a whippet. And the Japanese don't indulge in childish tomfoolery. There's something up; no question about it, Mr. Queen. . . . Queen!" Cooper glared at Ellery with sudden suspicion. "By George, I've heard that name before—"

"Mr. Queen," said Miss Merrivel in a damp voice, "is a detective."

"Of course! I remember now. You mean you—" The young man became very still as he looked at Miss Merrivel. Under his steady inspection she grew red again. "Merry, you know something!"

"The merest tittle," murmured Ellery. "She's told me what she knows, and it's just skimpy enough to whet my curiosity. Were you aware, Mr. Cooper, that Mr. Kagiwa's door-stop is missing?"

"Door-stop? . . . Oh, you mean that monstrosity he keeps in his study. It can't be. I saw it myself only last night—"

"Oh, it is!" wailed Miss Merrivel. "And—and somebody hit me over the head, Mr. C-Cooper, and t-took it."

The young man paled. "Why, Merry! I mean—that's perfectly barbarous! Are you hurt?"

"Oh, Mr. Cooper—"

"Now, now," said Ellery sternly, "let's not get maudlin. By the way, Mr. Cooper, just what factor do you represent in this bizarre equation? Miss Merrivel neglected to mention your name in her statement of the problem."

Miss Merrivel blushed again, positively glowing; and this time Ellery looked at her very sharply indeed. It occurred to him that Miss Merrivel had been reading a romance in which the beautiful young nurse fell in love with the secretary of her patient.

"I'm old Jito's secretary," said Cooper abstractedly. "Look here, old man: What has that confounded door-stop to do with Kagiwa's disappearance?"

"That," said Ellery, "is what I propose to find out." There was a little silence, and Miss Merrivel sent a liquidly pleading glance at Ellery, as if to beg him to keep her secret. "Is anything else missing?"

"I don't know what business it is of yours, young man," snapped a female from the library doorway, "but praise be, the heathen is gone, bag and baggage, and good riddance, I say! I always said that slinky yellow devil would come to no good."

"Miss Letitia Gallent, I believe?" sighed Ellery; and from the stiffening backbones and chilling faces of Miss Merrivel and Mr. Cooper, it was evident that such was the case.

"Stow it, Aunt Letty, for heaven's sake," said a man worriedly from behind her, and she swept her long skirts aside with a sniff that had something Airedale-ish about it. Bill Gallent was a giant with a red face, and bloodshot eyes in sacs. He looked as if he had not slept, and his clothes were rumpled and droopy. His aunt in the flesh was all that Miss Merrivel had characterized her, and more. Thin to the point of emaciation, she seemed composed of whalebone, tough rubber and acid—a tall she-devil of fifty with slightly mad eyes, dressed in the height of pre-war fashion. Ellery fully expected to find that her tongue was forked; but she shut her lips tightly, and with a cunning perversity, persisted in keeping quiet thenceforward, and glaring at him with a venomous intensity that made him uncomfortable inside.

"Baggage?" he said, after he had introduced himself and they had repaired to the library.

"Well, his suitcase is gone," said Gallent hoarsely, "and his clothes are missing—not all, but a suitcase, several suits, and plenty of haberdashery. I've questioned all the servants, and no one saw him leave the house. We've searched every nook and cranny in the house, and every foot of the grounds. He's just vanished into thin air. . . . Lord, what a mess! He must have gone crazy."

"Ducked out during the night?" Cooper passed his hand over his hair. "But he isn't crazy, Mr. Gallent; you know that. If he's gone, there was a thumping good reason for it."

"Have you looked for a note?" asked Ellery absently, glancing about. The heavy odor had followed them into the library, and it bathed the Oriental furnishings with a peculiar fittingness. The door to what he assumed was the missing Japanese's study was closed; he crossed the room and opened it. There was another door in the study; apparently it led to an extension of the main hall. Miss Merrivel's assailant of the night before, then, had probably entered the study through that door. But why had he stolen the door-stop?

"Of course," said Gallent; they had followed Ellery into the study and were watching him with puzzled absorption. "But there isn't any. He's left without a word."

Ellery nodded; he was kneeling on the thick Oriental rug a few feet behind the library door, scrutinizing a rectangular depression in the nap. Something heavy, about six inches wide and a foot long, had

rested on that very spot for a long time; the nap was crushed to a uniform flatness as if from great and continuous pressure: the missing door-stop, obviously. He rose and lighted a cigarette and perched himself on the arm of a huge mahogany chair, carved tortuously in a lotus and dragon *motif*, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

"Don't you think," suggested Miss Merrivel timidly, "that we ought to telephone the police?"

"No hurry," said Ellery with a cheerful wave of his hand. "Let's sit down and talk things over. There's nothing criminal in a man's quitting his own castle without explanation—even, Miss Gallent, a heathen. I'm not even sure anything's wrong. The little yellow people are a subtle race, with thought-processes worlds removed from ours. This business of the pilfered door-stop, however, is provocative. Will some one please describe it to me?"

MISS MERRIVEL looked helpful; the others glanced at one another, however, with a sort of inert helplessness.

Then Bill Gallent hunched his thick shoulders and growled: "Now, look here, Queen, you're evading the issue." He looked worried and haggard, as if a secret maggot were nibbling at his conscience. "This is certainly a matter for old Jito's attorney, if not for the police. I must call—"

"You must follow the dictates of your own conscience, of course," said Ellery gently; "but if you will take my advice, some one will describe the door-stop for my edification."

"I can tell you exactly," said young Cooper, brushing his thin hair back again with his white, musician's fingers, "because I've handled the thing a number of times, (*Please turn to page 80*)

Next Month

## "The Satan from Grand Rapids"

The story of one of the most amazing crimes in modern history

by

Milton MacKaye

Who prepared and edited "Under Secret Order," by Melvin Purvis

## THE HOLLOW DRAGON

(Continued from page 54)

and in fact, signed the express-receipt when it was delivered. It's six inches wide, six inches high, and an even foot long. Perfectly regular in shape, you see, except for the decorative bas-reliefs—the dragons. Typical conventionalized Japanese craftsmanship, by the way. Nothing really remarkable."

"Heathen idolatry," said Miss Letitia distinctly; her ophidian eyes glared their chronic hate with a fanatical fire. "Devil!"

ELLERY glanced at her. Then he said: "Miss Merrivel has told me the door-stop isn't valuable." Cooper and Gallant nodded. "What's its composition?"

"Natural soapstone," said Gallant; his expression was still worried. "You know, that smooth and slippery mineral that's used so much in the Orient—steatite, technically. It's a talc. Jito imports hundreds of gadgets made out of it."

"Oh, this door-stop was something from his curio establishment?"

"No. It was sent to the old man four or five months ago as a gift by some friend traveling in Japan."

"A white man?" asked Ellery suddenly.

They all looked blank. Then Cooper said with an uneasy smile: "I don't believe Mr. Kagiwa has ever said anything about him, Mr. Queen."

"I see," said Ellery, and he smoked for a moment in silence. "Sent, eh? By express?" Cooper nodded. "You're a man of method, Mr. Cooper?"

The secretary looked surprised. "I beg your pardon?"

"Obviously, obviously. Secretaries have a deplorable habit of saving things. May I see that express-receipt, please? Evidence is always better than testimony, as any lawyer will tell you. The receipt may provide us with a clue. Sender's name may indicate—"

"Oh," said Cooper. "So that's your notion? I'm sorry, Mr. Queen. There was no sender's name on the receipt. I remember very clearly."

Ellery looked pained. He blew out a curtain of smoke, communing with his thoughts in its folds. When he spoke again, it was with abruptness, as if he had decided to take a plunge. "How many dragons are there on this door-stop, Mr. Cooper?"

"Idolatry," repeated Miss Letitia venomously.

Miss Merrivel paled a little. "You think—"

"Five," said Cooper. "The bottom face, of course, is blank. Five dragons, Mr. Queen."

"Pity it isn't seven," said Ellery without smiling. "The mystic number." He rose and took a turn about the room, smoking and frowning in the sweet heavy air at the coils of a golden monster embroidered on a silk wall-hanging. Miss Merrivel shivered suddenly, and moved closer to the tall thin-faced young man. "Tell me," continued Ellery, turning and squinting at them through smoke-haze, "is your little Jito Kagiwa a Christian?"

Only Miss Letitia was not startled; that woman would have outstared Beelzebub himself. "Lord preserve us!" she cried in a shrill voice. "That devil?"

"Now why," asked Ellery patiently, "do you persist in calling your brother-in-law a devil, Miss Gallant?"

She set her metallic lips and glared. Miss Merrivel said in a warm tone: "He is not. He's a nice, kind old gentleman. He may not be a Christian, Mr. Queen, but he isn't a heathen, either. He doesn't believe in anything like that. He's often said so."

"Then he certainly isn't a heathen, strictly speaking," murmured Ellery. "A heathen, you know, is a person belonging to a nation or race neither Christian, Jewish nor Mohammedan, who has not abandoned the original creed of his people."

Miss Letitia looked baffled. Then she shrilled triumphantly: "He is, too! I've often heard him talk of some outlandish belief called—called—"

"Shinto," muttered Cooper. "It's not true, Merry, that Mr. Kagiwa doesn't believe in anything. He believes in the essential goodness of mankind, in each man's conscience being his best guide. That's the moral essence of Shinto, isn't it, Mr. Queen?"

"Is it?" murmured Ellery in an absent way. "I suppose so. Most interesting. He wasn't a cultist? Shinto is rather primitive, you know."

"Idolater," said Miss Letitia, like a phonograph needle caught in one groove.

THEY looked uneasily about them. On the study desk there was a fat-bellied little idol of shiny black obsidian. In a corner stood a squat and heavy suit of Samurai armor. The silk of the dragon rippled a little on the wall under the urge of the sea breeze coming in through the open window.

"He didn't belong to some ancient secret Japanese society?" persisted Ellery. "Has he had much correspondence from the East? Has he received slant-eyed visitors? Did he seem afraid of anything?"

His voice died away, and the dragon stirred again wickedly, and the Samurai looked on with his sightless, enigmatic, invisible face. The sickly-sweet odor seemed to grow stronger, filling their heads with dizzying, horrid fancies. They looked at Ellery mutely and helplessly, caught in the grip of vague primeval fears.

"And was this door-stop *solid* soapstone?" murmured Ellery, gazing out the window at the heaving Sound. Everything heaved and swayed; the house itself seemed afloat in an endless ocean, bobbing to the breathing of the sea. He waited for their reply, but none was audible. Big Bill Gallant shuffled his feet; he looked even more worried than before. "It couldn't have been, you know," continued Ellery thoughtfully, answering his own question.

"What makes you say that, Mr. Queen?" asked Miss Merrivel in a subdued voice.

"Common-sense. The piece being valueless from a practical standpoint, why was it stolen last night? For sentimental reasons? The only one for whom it might have possessed such an attachment is Mr. Kagiwa, and I scarcely think he would

have struck you over the head, Miss Merrivel, to retrieve his own property if he merely had a fondness for it." Aunt and nephew looked startled. "Oh, you didn't know that, of course. Yes, we had a case of simple but painful assault here last night. Gave Miss Merrivel quite a headache. The bump is, take my word for it, a thing of singular beauty. . . . Did the door-stop possess an esoteric meaning? Was it a symbol of something, a sign, a portent, a *warning*?" Again the breeze stirred the dragon, and they shuddered; the hatred had vanished from Miss Letitia's mad eyes, to be replaced by the naked fear of a small and malicious soul trapped in the den of its own malice.

"It—" began Cooper, shaking his head. Then he licked his dry lips and said: "This is the Twentieth Century, Mr. Queen."

"So it is," said Ellery, nodding; "wherefore we shall confine ourselves to sane and demonstrable matters. The practical alternative is that, since the door-stop *was* taken, it was valuable to the taker. But not, obviously, for itself alone. Deduction: it *contained* something valuable. That's why I said it couldn't have been a solid chunk of soapstone."

"That's the most—" said Gallant; his shoulders hunched, and he stopped and stared at Ellery in a fascinated way.

"I beg your pardon?" said Ellery.

"Nothing. I was just thinking—"

"That I had shot straight to the mark, Mr. Gallant?"

The big young man dropped his gaze and flushed; and he began to pace up and down with his hands loosely behind his back, the worried expression more evident than ever. Miss Merrivel bit her lip and sank into the nearest chair. Cooper looked restive, and Letitia Gallant's stiff clothing made rustling little sounds, like furtive animals in underbrush at night. Then Gallant stopped pacing and said in a rush:

"I suppose I may as well come out with it. Yes, you guessed it, Queen, you guessed it." Ellery looked pained. "The door-stop isn't solid. There's a hollow space inside."

"Ah! And what did it contain, Mr. Gallant?"

"Fifty thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills."

IT is proverbial that money works miracles. In Jito Kagiwa's study it lived up to its reputation.

The dragon died. The Samurai became an empty shell of crumbling leather and metal. The house ceased rocking and stood firmly on its foundation. The very air freshened and was noticed no more. Money talked in familiar accents; and before the logic of its speech, the specter of dread, creeping things vanished in a snuffed instant. They sighed with relief in unison, and their eyes cleared again with that peculiar blankness which passes for sanity in the social world. There had been mere money in the door-stop! Miss Merrivel even giggled a little.

"Fifty thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills," nodded Mr. Ellery Queen, looking both envious and disappointed in the same instant. "That's an indecent num-

ber of hundred-dollar bills, Mr. Gallent. Elucidate."

Bill Gallent elucidated—rapidly, his expression vastly comforted, as if a great weight had been lifted from his mind. Old Kagiwa's business—there was no concealing it longer—was on the verge of bankruptcy. Tariffs on Japanese goods had risen steeply; the universal depression had made heavy inroads on the sales of the products of frivolous industries. There had been a period, a year or so before, when it would still have been possible to retrench and lie low, weathering the economic storm. But against his stepson's advice, old Kagiwa, with the serene, silent, and unconquerable will of his race, had refused to alter his lifelong business policies. Only when ruin stared him in the eyes did his resolution waver, and then it was too late to do more than salvage the battered wreck.

"HE did it on the *q.t.*," said Gallent, shrugging; "the first I knew about it was the other day, when he called me into this room, locked the door, picked up the door-stop—he'd left it on the floor all the time!—and unscrewed one of the dragons. . . . Came out like a plug. He told me he'd found the secret cavity in the door-stop by accident right after he received it. Nothing in it, he said, and went into some long-winded explanation about the probable origin of the piece. It hadn't been a door-stop originally, of course—don't suppose the Japanese have such things. Well—there was the money, in a tight wad, which he'd stowed away in the hole. I told him he was a fool to leave it lying around that way, but he said no one knew except him and me. Naturally—" He flushed.

"I see now," said Ellery mildly, "why you were reluctant to tell me about it. It looks bad for you, obviously."

The big young man spread his hands in a helpless gesture. "I didn't steal the damned thing, but who'd believe me?" He sat down, fumbling for a cigarette.

"There's one thing in your favor," murmured Ellery. "Or at least I suppose there is. Are you his heir?"

Gallent looked up wildly. "Yes!"

"Yes, he is," said Cooper in a slow, almost reluctant voice. "I witnessed the old man's will myself."

"Tut-tut! Much ado about nothing. You naturally wouldn't steal what belongs to you anyway. Buck up, Mr. Gallent; you're safe enough." Ellery sighed, and began to button up his coat. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, my interest in the case, I fear, is dissipated. I had foreseen something *outré*." He smiled and picked up his hat. "This is a matter for the police, after all. Of course, I'll help if I can, but it's been my experience that local officers prefer to work alone. And really, there's nothing more that I can do."

"But what do you think happened?" asked Miss Merrivel in hushed tones. "Do you think poor Mr. Kagiwa—"

"I'm not a psychologist, Miss Merrivel. Even a psychologist, as a matter of fact, might be baffled by the inner workings of an Oriental's mind. Your policeman doesn't worry about such subtle matters, and I don't doubt the local men will clear this business up in short order. I'll bid you good day."

Miss Letitia sniffed and swept by Ellery with a disdainful swish of her skirts. Miss Merrivel wearily followed, tugging at her hat. Cooper went to the telephone, and Gallent frowned out the window at the Sound.

"Headquarters?" said Cooper, clearing his throat. "I want to speak to the Chief."

A little of the old heavy-scented alien silence crept back as they waited.

"One moment," said Ellery from the doorway. "One moment, please." The men turned, surprised. Ellery was smiling apologetically. "I've just discovered something. The human mind is a fearful thing. I've been criminally negligent, gentlemen. There's still another possibility."

"Hold the wire, hold the wire," said Cooper. "Possibility?"

Ellery waved an airy hand. "I may be wrong," he admitted handsomely. "Can either of you gentlemen direct me to an almanac?"

"Almanac?" repeated Gallent, bewildered. "Why, certainly. There's one on the library table, Queen. . . . Here, I'll get it for you." He disappeared into the adjoining room and returned a moment later with a paper-backed volume.

Ellery seized it and riffled pages, humming. Cooper and Gallent exchanged glances; then Cooper shrugged and hung up.

"Ah," said Ellery, dropping his aria like a hot coal. "Ah. . . . Hmm. . . . Well, well. Mind over matter. The pen is mightier—I may be wrong," he said quietly, closing the book and taking off his coat, "but the odds are now superbly against it. Useful things, almanacs. . . . Mr. Cooper," he said in a new voice, "let me see that express-receipt."

The metallic quality of the tone brought them both up, stiffening. The secretary got to his feet, his face suffused with blood. "Look here," he growled, "are you insinuating that I've lied to you?"

"Tut-tut," said Ellery. "The receipt, Mr. Cooper, quickly."

Bill Gallent said uneasily: "Of course, Cooper. Do as Mr. Queen says. But I don't see what possible value there can be—"

"Value is in the mind, Mr. Gallent. The hand may be quicker than the eye, but the brain is quicker than both."

COOPER glared, but he pulled open a drawer of the desk and began to rummage about. Finally he came up with a sheaf of motley papers and went through them with reluctance until he found a small yellow slip.

"Here," he said, scowling. "Damned impertinence, I think."

"It's not a question," said Ellery gently, "of what *you* think, Mr. Cooper." He picked up the slip, adjusted his *pince-nez*, and scanned the yellow paper with the painful scrupulosity of an archæologist. It was an ordinary express-receipt, describing the contents of the package delivered, the date, the sending point, charges and similar information. The name of the sender was missing. The package had been shipped by a Nippon Yusen Kaisha steamer from Yokohama, Japan, had been picked up in San Francisco by the express company, and forwarded to its consignee, Jito Kagiwa, at his Westchester address. Shipping and expressage charges

had been prepaid in Yokohama, it appeared, on the basis of the forty-four-pound weight of the door-stop, which was sketchily described as being of soapstone, six by six by twelve inches in dimensions, and decorated with dragons in bas-relief.

"Well," said Cooper with a sneer, "I suppose that mess of statistics means something to you."

"This mess of statistics," said Ellery gravely, pocketing the receipt, "means everything to me. Pity if it had been lost. It's like the Rosetta Stone—it's the key to an otherwise mystifying set of facts." He looked pleased with himself; and at the same time his gray eyes behind the glasses were watchful. "The old adage was wrong. It isn't safety that you find in numbers, but enlightenment."

Gallent threw up his hands. "You're talking gibberish, Queen."

"I'm talking sense." Ellery stopped smiling. "You gentlemen are excused. By all means the Chief of Police must be called—but it's I who'll call him, and by your leave—alone."

"I WAS not to be cheated of my tidbit of *bizarrie*, after all," announced Mr. Ellery Queen that evening. Serene and self-contained, he perched on the edge of the study desk, and his hand played idly with the obsidian image.

Cooper, Miss Merrivel and the two Gallents stared at him. They were all in the last stages of nervousness. The house was rocking again; the dragon quivered in all his coils in the wind coming through the open window; and the Samurai had magically taken watchful life unto himself once more. The sky through the window was dark and dappled with blacker clouds; the moon had not yet slipped from under the hem of the sea.

Ellery had departed from the Kagiwa mansion after his telephonic conversation with the Chief of Police, to be gone until evening. When he returned, men were with him. These men, quiet, solid creatures, had not come into the house. No one had approached the Gallents, the secretary, the nurse, the servants. Instead, the deputation had disappeared, swallowed up by the darkness. Now strange clankings and swishings were audible from the sea outside the study window, but no one dared rise and look.

And Ellery said: "What a world were this, how unendurable its weight, if they whom Death had sundered did not meet again." A moving thought; and very apt on this occasion. We shall meet Death tonight, my friends; and even more strangely, the weight shall be lifted—as Southey predicted."

They gaped, utterly bewildered. From the night outside, the clankings and the swishings continued, and occasionally there was the far shout of a man.

Ellery took off his *pince-nez* and polished the lenses slowly. "I find," he said, replacing the glasses on his nose, "that once more I have been in error. I demonstrated to you this morning that the most likely reason for the theft of the door-stop was that it was stolen for its contents. I was wrong. It was not stolen for its contents. It was never intended that the belly of the dragon should be ravished."

"But the fifty thousand dollars—" began Miss Merrivel weakly.

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## ABSORBINE JR.

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"Mr. Queen," cried Bill Gallent, "what's going on here? What are those policemen doing outside? What are those noises? You owe us—"

"Logic," murmured Ellery, "has a way of being slippery. Quite like soapstone, Mr. Gallent. It eluded my fingers today. I pointed out that the door-stop could *not* have been stolen for itself. I was wrong again. It could have been stolen for itself in one remote contingency. There was one value possible to the door-stop beyond its worth in dollars and cents, or in a sentiment attached to it, or in its significance as a symbol. And that was—its utility."

"Utility?" gasped Cooper. "You mean somebody stole it to use as a door-stop?"

"That's absurd, of course. But there is still another possible utility, Mr. Cooper. What are the characteristics of this piece of carved stone which might be made use of? Well, what are its chief points physically? Its substance and weight. It is stone, and it weighs forty-four pounds."

Gallent made a queer brushing-aside gesture with one hand, rose as if under compulsion and went to the window. The others wavered, and then they too rose and went to the window, pressing eagerly toward the last, their pent-up fears and curiosity urging them on. Ellery watched them quietly.

The moon was rising now. The scene below was blue-black and sharp, a miniature etching in motion. A large rowboat was anchored a few yards from the rear of the Kagiwa house. There were men in it, and apparatus. Some one was leaning over the side, gazing intently into the water. The surface suddenly quickened into concentric life, becoming violently agitated. A man's dripping head appeared, with open mouth sucking in air. And then, half-nude, he climbed into the boat and said something, and the apparatus creaked, and a rope emerged from the blue-black water and began to wind about a small winch.

"But why," came Ellery's voice from behind them, "should an object be stolen because it is stone and weighs forty-four pounds? Regarded in this light, the view became brilliantly clear. A man was mysteriously and inexplicably missing—a sick, defenceless, wealthy old man. A heavy stone was missing. And there was the sea at his back door. Put one, two and three together, and you have—"

Some one shouted hoarsely from the boat. In the full moon a dripping mass emerged from the water at the end of the rope. As it was pulled into the boat, the silver light revealed it as a mass made up of three parts. One was a suitcase. Another was a small rectangular chunk of stone with carving on it. And the third was the stiff, naked body of a little old man with yellow skin and slanted eyes.

"—And you have," continued Ellery sharply, slipping from the edge of the desk and poking the muzzle of an automatic into the small of Bill Gallent's rigid back, "the murderer of Jito Kagiwa!"

**T**HE shouts of the triumphant fishers made meaningless sounds in the old Japanese's study, and Bill Gallent without turning or moving a muscle, said in a dead voice: "You damned devil! How did you know?"

Miss Letitia's bitter mouth opened and closed without achieving the dignity of speech.

"I knew," said Ellery, holding the automatic quite still, "because I knew that the door-stop had no hollow at all, that it was a piece of solid stone."

"You couldn't have known that. You never saw it. You were guessing. Besides, you said—"

"That's the second time you have accused me of guessing," said Ellery in a grieved tone. "I assure you, my dear Mr. Gallent, that I did nothing of the sort. But knowing that the door-stop was solid, I knew that you had lied when you maintained that you had seen with your own eyes Kagiwa's withdrawal of the dragon 'plug,' that you had seen the 'cavity' and the 'money' in it. And so I asked myself why such an obviously distressed and charming gentleman had lied. And I saw that it could only have been because you had something to conceal, and were sure the door-stop would never be found to give you the lie."

**N**OW the waters were stilling under the moon.

"But to be sure that the door-stop would never be found, you had to know where the door-stop was. To know where it was, you had to be the person who had disposed of it after striking Miss Merrivel over the head and stealing it from this room, unconsciously making that slithery, dragonish sound in the process which was merely the scuffing of your shoes in the thick pile of this rug. But the person who disposed of the door-stop was the person who disposed of the carcass of gentle little Jito Kagiwa; which is to say, the murderer. No, no, my dear Gallent; be fair. It wasn't precisely guesswork."

Miss Merrivel said in a ghastly voice: "Mr. Gallent, I can't— But why did you do this awful—awful—"

"I think I can tell you that," sighed Ellery. "It was apparent to me, when I saw that his story of the cache in the door-stop was a lie, that he had probably planned to tell that ingenious story from the beginning. Why? One reason might have been to cover up the real motive for the theft of the carved piece—divert the trail from its use as a mere weight for a dead body, to a fabricated use as the receptacle of a fortune, and its theft for that reason. But why the lie about the fifty thousand dollars? Why so detailed, so specific, so careful? Was it because you had embezzled fifty thousand dollars from your stepfather's business, Mr. Gallent, and knew that the discovery of this shortage was imminent, and therefore created a figmentary thief who last night stole the money which you had stolen and dissipated possibly months ago?"

Bill Gallent was silent.

"And so you built up a series of events," murmured Ellery. "You arranged the old gentleman's bedclothes during the night to form a human figure, as if he had done it himself. You threw some clothes of his in one of his suitcases, as if he had planned to flee. In fact, you arranged the whole thing to give the impression that Mr. Kagiwa, whose business I have no doubt is shaky—largely due to your speculations—had cut loose from his Occidental surroundings once and for all time, and vanished into

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the mysterious Orient from which he had come—with the remnants of his fortune. In this way there would be no body to look for, no murder, indeed, to suspect; and you yourself would escape the consequences of your crime of grand larceny. For you knew that, like all honorable and gentle men, your stepfather, who had given you everything, would forgive everything except your crime against honor. Had Mr. Kagiwa discovered your larceny, all would have been lost."

But Bill Gallent said nothing to these inexorable words; he was still staring out the window, where nothing more was to be seen except the quieting water. The rowboat, the stone, the suitcase, the dead body, the men had vanished.

And Ellery nodded at that paralyzed back with something like sad satisfaction.

"And the inheritance!" muttered Cooper. "Of course, he was the heir. Clever, clever."

"Stupid," said Ellery gently, "stupid. All crime is stupid."

Gallent said in the same dead voice, "I still think you were guessing about the door-stop being solid," as if he were engaged in a polite difference of opinion. Ellery was not fooled. His grip tightened on the automatic. The window was open, and the water might look inviting to a desperate man, for whom even death would be an escape.

"No, no," said Ellery, almost protesting. "Please give the devil his due. It was all obscure to me, you know, until on my way out I thought of the fact that the door-stop was made of soapstone. I knew soapstone to be fairly heavy. I knew the piece was almost perfectly regular in shape, and therefore admissible to elementary calculation. It was conceivable that I could test the accuracy of your statement that the door-stop was hollow. And so I came back and asked to consult an almanac. Once I had run across in such a reference-book a list of

the weights of common minerals. I looked up soapstones. And there it was."

"There what was?" asked Gallent, almost with curiosity.

"The almanac said that one cubic foot of soapstone weighs between 162 and 175 pounds. The door-stop was of soapstone; what were its dimensions? Six by six by twelve inches, or 432 cubic inches. In other words, one-quarter cubic foot. Or, by computing from the almanac's figures and allowing for the small additional weight of the shallow bas-relief dragons, the door-stop should weigh one-quarter of the cubic-foot poundage, which is forty-four pounds."

"But that's what the receipt said," muttered Cooper.

"Quite so. But what do those forty-four pounds represent? They represent that weight in *solid* soapstone! Mr. Gallent had said the door-stop was *not* solid, had a hollow inside large enough to hold fifty thousand dollars in hundred dollar bills. That's five hundred bills. Any space large enough to contain five hundred bills, no matter how tightly rolled or compressed, would make the total weight of the door-stop considerably less than forty-four pounds. And so I knew that the door-stop was solid, and that Mr. Gallent had lied."

Heavy feet tramped outside. Suddenly the room was full of men. The corpse of Jito Kagiwa was deposited on a divan, where it dripped quietly, almost apologetically, naked and yellow as old marble. Bill Gallent turned about, still frozen, and his eyes regarded the corpse—as if for the first time the enormity of what he had done had struck home.

Ellery took the heavy door-stop, glistening from the sea, from the hand of a policeman, and turned it over in his fingers. And he looked up at the wall and smiled in friendly fashion at the dragon, now obviously a pretty thing of silk and golden threads, and nothing more.

## THE IDOL

(Continued from page 49)

myself if there wasn't some one else—some one older—she was interested in. That would account for everything—wouldn't it?"

The screen door opened before he could answer, and Corrie came out. She was carrying a tray with a pitcher and glasses. She placed it on the table and shrank back a step. She was very pale, and her one thought seemed to be to avoid her mother's eyes. "I think I'll say good night and go upstairs now," she faltered, a note of panic in her voice, as she turned to grope for the knob of the screen door. "Will you both excuse me?" she asked.

"Put out the lights downstairs, dear, except in the hall," her mother called after her.

They sat silent until they heard her footsteps die away.

She needn't have expected any help from Corrie, Mrs. Bates reflected bitterly. As usual, everything depended on her own initiative—her tact.

She touched Horace's arm with her fan. "I don't suppose I ought to be telling you this. I wouldn't want you to think for a minute—Corrie is *most* reserved. But when we sit here sewing and gossiping

together about the friends we're really fond of, Corrie always says you are too busy a man to have time for marriage and a home. She says you'll probably always go on living where you do, in that one room up over your office, and getting your meals at the restaurant with all those railroad men. She says you're settled and contented as a bachelor. But I've never believed that!"

Mrs. Bates couldn't be sure that Horace Weatherby was listening to her. He still sat gazing into the hall where Corrie had vanished. The screen door had been closed quietly, decorously, but he looked as if it had been slammed in his face.

Slowly he drew his silk handkerchief out of his pocket and mopped his forehead. Then, after a moment, he turned to face her, and she saw how pale he was.

"Well—I'm not so settled I couldn't think of living differently," he admitted. "In fact—" He sat up, squaring his shoulders, and took a deep breath. "In fact, I'm thinking of it right now. Because I got a telegram last night. You remember that farm, Cora, that was left me out in Iowa, and that I've always had to pay taxes on? Well, it's just a bit of luck that