

# ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

*including* **BLACK MASK MAGAZINE**

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*Winner of the \$1500 First Prize in EQMM's Eleventh Annual Contest: an important and distinguished story, unusual in crime-concept and profound in its sense of inner turbulence.*

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## **Black Mask — Badge of Merit**

*Erle Stanley Gardner, himself "a famous alumnus of the hard-fisted school," has nominated Carroll John Daly as the first pulp-author to have written in what we now call the "hardboiled" technique. As early as 1922, Mr. Gardner has reminded us, Carroll John Daly had a story published in "Black Mask" which featured Race Williams, the probable "forerunner of all the hard-boiled detective characters." But it is now generally acknowledged that the true founding father, in spirit and style if not in first publication, was the "individual picked out to represent the whole movement" — Dashiell Hammett, rated "the ace performer" by someone who ought to know. Surely it can be said that Daly, Hammett, and Gardner were the earliest great trio, and under the guidance and tutelage of those pioneering "Black Mask" editors (George Sutton, Phil Cody, Harry North, and Captain Joseph T. Shaw) many other star-names were added to the school, including Raymond Chandler, Raoul Whitfield, and Frederick Nebel.*

*Now that "Black Mask" is part of EQMM, we try to give you the very best of the old action stories and of the new hardboiled stories. To give you the best, we sometimes have to leave the bailiwick of "Black Mask" itself — for many of the "Black Mask" writers, after the heyday of the pulp field, began to write for national "slick" magazines, bringing to their work the finest qualities of the old school. One of the "graduates" of the old "Black Mask" days is Frederick Nebel, and we are happy to announce that we have arranged for a group of Nebel stories to be reprinted in EQMM. The first of the group appeared originally in "Collier's" in 1939 — nearly two decades after the hardboiled 'tec type originated — and while this tale is a "slick magazine" story, it also represents what might be called the full flower of the restrained "Black Mask" method. It is taut, clipped, packed with suspense, and has that curious blend of realism and sentiment which is one of the hallmarks of the hardboiled. You won't be the slightest bit surprised to learn that the "heavy" in Mr. Nebel's story is "the plainest of men and looked rather like a solid, conservative shopkeeper"; nor will you be any more surprised to learn that this man, built "like a sack of cement," is hard and tough; he gives no quarter — and expects none.*

*In the remainder of the Nebel series we will tell you about the author*

himself — interesting facts about his background, likes and dislikes, work habits, and favorite writers. Fred Nebel has written and published more than 5,000,000 words in his long and honorable career. He is a real “pro” — and it is an unmasked privilege to welcome him back to EQMM.

## CHANCE IS SOMETIMES AN ENEMY

by FREDERICK NEBEL

KERRIGAN CLOSED THE DOOR. HE stood for a minute with his hand on the knob, his ear turned toward the door panel, his dark eyes troubled beneath bent black brows. Then he heard Julia's muffled crying. Twice during the past week he had caught her crying and each time she had laughed herself out of it, saying she was just a silly woman.

He took his hand off the knob. Turning, he went swiftly down the staircase, feeling his ears burn and sing. In the apartment below that loud-mouthed blonde and her husband were brawling again. Passing their door, Kerrigan swore under his breath. He went through the vestibule into the windy darkness outside and walked south.

He took a crosstown bus, got off at Eighth Avenue, and walked to Twenty-sixth Street. In the middle of the block he found Christophe's cheap table d'hôte restaurant — a dim blur of light in the darkness. It was almost 10 o'clock. When he entered, he thought the place was empty; but then he saw Ruell seated at a table in the rear behind a carafe

of red wine. And as he approached the table Ruell said to him, “You look much the same as ever.”

Kerrigan was laconic. “Don't kid me.” He threw his hat and topcoat on one chair and pulled another out from the table. He saw a napkin lying on the floor beside it, and sitting down, he picked it up and tossed it on the table. The napkin was smeared with lip rouge. “I was trying to figure out where I last saw you, Ruell.”

“Rome — in May of 1946. You were covering the abdication of King Victor Emmanuel for Apex.”

“I remember now,” Kerrigan said. “It was noon. You were getting into an automobile, in a great rush.” He lit a cigarette. “That evening the Italian agents were looking for you.”

“Yes. That evening I was across the frontier.” It was made as a statement of fact only. “I was in Paris during August and September. It was in September, I believe, that your trouble began. I said to an acquaintance at the time, ‘A pity. He had a great career ahead of him.’”

Kerrigan turned and called toward the bar, “Bring me a rye highball,

will you?" And to Ruell, "Listen, I don't like going over all that again."

"Excuse me for neglecting to offer you a drink. I was preoccupied."

"That's all right. You can pay for it."

Kerrigan sniffed, wrinkling his thick wiry brows. He glanced at the carafe of red wine, but it was not wine that he smelled. Then he knew what it was. Pernod. The licorice odor of Pernod. The tablecloth beneath his elbows was soiled. He glanced at the rouge-stained napkin.

He said good-humoredly, "This must be something new. I've never seen you dine with a woman, or even heard of it."

"Not dined," Ruell said blandly. "Madame Christophe gave me the pleasure of her company for a few minutes."

Christophe himself, a worried wisp of a man, bald, with a face full of erratic angles, brought the rye highball. At a terse glance from Ruell he snatched up the rouge-stained napkin and disappeared with it through a swing door.

"I can see," Ruell said, "that you're still touchy about that Paris affair."

Kerrigan leaned heavily on his elbows and cocked his forefinger straight upward. "Listen. Two years ago I was Apex's top European man. Do you know what I'm doing today? Clerking in a tourist agency at fifty-two-fifty a week, while my wife knocks down even less in a Madison

Avenue bookstore." He took a long pull at his highball and banged the glass down on the table. "So maybe I've got a right to be touchy."

"Or a little drunk."

"No, I haven't the money for that," he said; then he put his eyes curiously on Ruell and asked, "What brought you to New York, anyhow?"

Ruell placed his hands flat on the table without a sound. They were broad hands with square fingertips. He said, "Tonight, I have a proposition." In appearance he was the plainest of men and looked rather like a solid, conservative shopkeeper. He was a heavy man — not fat, but compactly heavy, like a sack of cement. No one, so far as Kerrigan knew, had ever discovered his nationality, and the mélange of features he possessed made it difficult to guess. He spoke a number of languages fluently. He was as international as the sun and a tireless trader in the open espionage market.

Kerrigan's dark eyes chided him. "Remember, you're not speaking to Kerrigan of Apex now. I couldn't buy the time of you. Or don't you know that Jonas Pakenham, the head of Apex, blacklisted me in every newspaper office in the country?"

Ruell poured more wine. "I knew that practically as soon as you did. This is what else I know."

He paused to watch Christophe as the latter walked to the front windows and stood at one peering out between the curtains. Christophe's hands were restless.

Ruell went on: "Yes, this is what else I know. While in Paris in August of 1946 you employed a Frenchwoman named Adrienne Pelletier to transcribe on the typewriter a series of political observations you had made over a period of six months spent in Berlin. She worked in your apartment, using your own typewriter. At the same time she also wrote letters for you, which you dictated, and took care of minor details. She had come to you well recommended by half a dozen newspapermen, American and British. She was at the time thirty-five and, unknown to you, in love with a German named Franz Auermann. Your writings had to do with conditions in Germany. If they were published, a number of heads would fall. We must assume that either she related the contents of your writings to Auermann or showed him the papers. At the end of August your writings were concluded and so having no further need of Adrienne Pelletier, you dismissed her. Early in September Auermann appeared before the manager of Apex's Paris bureau, Mr. Oldmorrow, and said that he had heard you were about to release a series of articles concerning high German officials. He told the manager that if you did so, he was prepared to produce a check, drawn on his American bank in the amount of five thousand dollars, as proof that he had paid you to destroy these articles. You of course denied it. The check was produced. Your signature of en-

dorsement was on the back of it. And your bank showed that you had deposited it by post, as you were in the habit of doing with your checks."

Kerrigan's eyes were hard and lacquer-bright. "That check was originally for five dollars. While the Pelletier woman worked for me, this man came to see her one day. He said he was Frank Aronson, an American importer. He took a fancy to an etching hanging on one of my walls and asked to buy it. I didn't think much of it, so I said he could have it as a gift. But he insisted on making some payment. So I said, all right, and named a token sum. He asked if a check drawn on his New York bank would be all right. I said sure. He made it out for five dollars and the next day, when the Pelletier woman was sending several of my checks to my American bank for deposit, she reminded me to endorse it. I did.

"What they must have done was this: after I'd endorsed it, Auermann — the way he wrote his name, you couldn't quite make it out; it looked as much like Frank Aronson as Franz Auermann — Auermann raised it from five dollars to five thousand. He'd left sufficient room to add the ciphers and the word 'thousand.' Then Adrienne Pelletier sent it off with the other checks. Auermann's superiors were willing to pay five thousand to break me, and they succeeded. The Pelletier woman was my only witness, and she had vanished. And then a month later she and Auermann were found bashed to

pieces in a plane wreck in Poland. It was the check that ruined me: handwriting experts proved that the signature on the back was mine — which it was; and there was the amount credited to my account in my bank.” Kerrigan took a drink. “That’s evidence you can’t beat, Ruell!” He chuckled drily. “That job was probably better than anything even you could have done.”

Ruell said, “But I can beat it. Today, I can beat it. I can produce the means to clear your reputation.”

Kerrigan shook his head. “Nope. What, just by going up to Jonas Packenham and saying, ‘Look, Kerrigan is innocent?’ Remember, Auermann and the Pelletier woman are dead.”

“But today,” Ruell insisted, “I can produce the means of rehabilitating you . . . if you will do something for me.”

Kerrigan was unreasonably angry. “I’ll not play your dirty game, Ruell!” He smacked the table with his palm.

“You’d rather be a little clerk who makes so much money that his wife is forced to seek employment in order to —”

“Shut up!”

Ruell brushed his thick fingers lightly together and was not offended. “You are touchy on that subject also, eh?”

“You damned well figured I would be.”

Ruell nodded amicably. “Very well, then. Let us change the sub-

ject.” He leaned forward on his elbows. “What are your fellings toward Nicholas Santry?”

Suddenly there was a sharp, sibilant sound. Kerrigan twisted his head and saw Christophe’s right hand gripping the window curtains, holding them together. His eyelids were spread wide apart. He snapped thumb and forefinger of his left hand.

A chair scraped. It was Ruell’s. Ruell was on his feet, grabbing his hat and overcoat. All at once his voice was quick, clipped: “I will phone you at your home, Kerrigan. Do not be alarmed.”

He turned and drummed his heels toward the kitchen. He slapped open the swing door. It clacked a couple of times afterward, then was motionless. Kerrigan remained seated.

The front door opened and a man stepped in quietly and looked around. His eyes showed no interest in Kerrigan. He was about forty and wore a dark gray raglan topcoat and a limp brown hat cocked impudently over one ear.

Christophe bubbled, “Monsieur, I am sorry, I am on the very point of closing up.”

“I’m not buying anything. I’m just looking around. For a friend. I guess he’s not here. Okay.” The man turned and walked out.

Christophe closed the door. Then he hurried to one of the front windows and peered between the curtains for longer than a minute. Presently he relaxed, blew out his breath, flapped his hands against his thighs.

"Please, Monsieur," he cried in a harassed voice, "I truly desire to close up. For one night, I have had sufficient!"

"Me too," said Kerrigan, rising, putting on his hat.

When he got home it was half-past eleven and Julia was propped up in bed, reading. He said, "Hello, honey," and hung his topcoat in the closet. He had walked twenty blocks and what he had been thinking about still enmeshed him. He took off his jacket, stuffed a pipe, lit it.

Julia said, "I've been worried, Kerry."

He walked across the small bedroom and sat down on the edge of the bed. Deep in his eyes was a low fire, but she didn't see it because he kept gazing at the wall. She looked at him, at the long flat sweep of his cheek, the bony structure of his jaw, the nervous flickering of the crow's-feet alongside his right eye. But she didn't say anything. She had been married to him five years and was quick to sense his moods.

Suddenly he looked at her. "H'm? Worried? About what?"

"That man Ruell." She took a deep breath, smiled. "I'm so glad you're back!"

He turned his gaze on the wall again and was silent for a while. Then he said meditatively, "Ruell knows something." The fire in his eyes grew in intensity. Abruptly he turned to her and put his hands on her arms and held them tightly.

"What, darling?" she said.

He told her what had taken place at Christophe's. It brought color rushing into her face and then all at once the color fled and she was white. She grabbed a fistful of his tie. She shook her head.

"Darling, don't get mixed up in anything!" she cried. "I don't like the sound of it. You've described Ruell to me so many times that I almost feel I know him. And I don't trust him. Kerry, you know those people — you know that nothing matters but themselves. They'd throw anyone to the wolves if —"

"Listen," he said, massaging the back of her hand with his palm, "I don't trust him. But I did some business with him when I was with Apex and he gave good value for what he received. He wouldn't have made an appointment with me tonight if he hadn't something to offer — something important."

"But what have you got to give, Kerry?"

He closed her hand between his palms. "I don't know. But he does. He asked me what my feelings were toward Santry." His lip curled. "I didn't have time to tell him!"

"Santry got your job," she sighed.

"Santry swore to Oldmorrow that he'd seen me several times in La Cloche with Franz Auermann!" he said savagely.

"Santry'd been angling six or seven years for that job. Shaughnessey got it, and then when Shaughnessey went to Moscow you got it. Santry's in his

late forties. Shaughnessey was much younger and you were much younger. And Santry is a bachelor, and a man who lives alone has more time to think and burn himself up with envy." She shook her head and then leaned it against Kerrigan's shoulder. "Still, he might have mistaken someone else for Auermann, darling. Let's forget it. We're poor but we have each other and at least when you're poor no one tries to knife you.

Kerrigan said in a low, stubborn voice, "I never sat anywhere with anyone who looked anything like Auermann. It was just Santry's golden opportunity. The rottenness of European politics and intrigue had got into his blood."

Julia lay back. "But even if he hadn't said anything, Apex would have thrown you out."

Kerrigan nodded. "Of course. But that doesn't make him any less the rat." He stood up and crossed the room, braced his arms on the window-sill, and peered out across a hopeless jumble of rooftops. "We deserve more than this, Julia. I don't know about me. But you do. Smelly alleys and brawling neighbors."

She said, "I can understand what it all means to you, darling. But I'm satisfied this way."

The telephone rang and he went into the living room and picked it up.

"Kerrigan?"

"Yes."

"Ruell speaking."

"Oh. Who was that fellow looking for you?"

Ruell said, "Can you meet me somewhere tomorrow?"

"Remember, I'm a working man."

"You have a luncheon hour?"

"Between 1 and 2."

"At ten past 1, in the main waiting room at Grand Central Terminal. Yes?"

When Kerrigan reached the Grand Central waiting room, at five past one, Ruell was already there, seated in a far corner. He did not rise. There was no change of expression on his face.

Kerrigan sat down beside him and said, "Christophe must have known who that guy was, to warn you."

"He merely suspected. While watching at the window, he saw the man stroll past several times and look at the door. When the man stopped, Christophe thought it best to warn me."

"He must be a good friend of yours."

"He does not want trouble."

"Who is the man?"

Ruell said, "I don't know. It is worth a great deal to me to find out. The night before last my hotel room was searched. In the lobby of my hotel I saw, prior to that, a man such as Christophe later described to me. It is important for me to now whether this man is an agent of the State Department or" — he put his palms together without a sound — "a man hired by Nicholas Santry."

Kerrigan's hands were clenched in his coat pockets. He said, without

looking at Ruell, "I get it. You want me to find out."

"Yes," said Ruell.

"Why are you worried about the State Department?"

"For reasons of my own."

"Or about Santry?"

"Also, for reasons of my own. By a regrettable coincidence, Santry was also a passenger on the *Ionic*, on which I crossed."

Kerrigan sat up straight. "Santry's in New York?"

Ruell nodded. "He resigned two weeks ago from Apex. I think he fears that I know why he is in America. Besides, he fears me. He is a weak man, but dangerous."

Kerrigan said, "And if I find out for you, you'll produce the means to clear me." It was not a question but a statement tinged slightly with sarcasm.

"When you have found out — not before."

"You wouldn't go so far as to tell me how you can do it?"

Ruell stared straight ahead. "I trust no one. And I do not expect you to trust me. But you will recall that Apex always received of me exactly what it paid for. And Apex did not pay for it until it had received it. So here, I do not pay until I have received. So." He leaned back and closed his eyes. "Find out if Santry is having me shadowed. If it is not Santry, then it must be the State Department. You will not be required to do anything beyond that."

"Where are you stopping?"

"The address is unnecessary. The telephone number is here." He handed Kerrigan a slip of paper. "Santry is at the Hotel Cheltham."

He stood up and without a word, without a backward look, strode out of the waiting room.

For a couple of minutes Kerrigan sat staring at the slip of the paper. A healthy revulsion against all this double-dealing rose within him and broke like a wave. He stood up and crumpled the slip of paper and flung it under the bench. He plowed his hands deep into his coat pockets and tramped out.

Forty-second Street was bright and noisy and windy. Kerrigan took a long breath. He had not eaten but now he did not feel like eating. He headed west, then turned north on Madison Avenue. What he would do, he would stop at the bookstore where Julia worked. He wanted to hear her say, "Stay out of it, darling." This was when you needed a wife, a wife like Julia.

It was twenty to 2 when he entered the bookstore. A gray-haired woman approached him.

Looking around over her head, he said, "Where's Mrs. Kerrigan?"

"Mrs. Kerrigan is no longer here."

"What?" he said gravely.

"Since a week ago. We were sorry to see her go. You know how it is when the management feels it must cut down on expenses. Can I do something for you?"

"No." He flipped the pages of a book. "No, thanks."

He walked down Madison Avenue. His chest hurt. She'd been out of a job for a week and hadn't told him. She was probably tramping the streets looking for another job and when she got one — and if she got one — then she'd tell him. Meantime she'd kid him; she'd smile and laugh and say what fun they were having; while inside her hung the dread that maybe she wouldn't get another job. And over at the tourist agency there was rumor of a lay-off also.

He pulled up at Forty-fourth Street and waited for the traffic on Madison to stop. The agency was in West Forty-fourth. The traffic stopped but he did not cross. He was thinking, "These stinking, puny scruples of mine!" He turned and walked fast down Madison, swung east into Forty-second Street and was almost running by the time he reached Grand Central. Under the bench in the waiting room he recovered Ruell's slip of paper. Then he hurried back to the agency.

Julia was broiling two hamburgers filleted with bacon strips. She did not hear Kerrigan come in. He stood in the center of the living room, watching her through the kitchen doorway. She was bending in front of the stove, adjusting the gas flame, and he could tell by her shoulders that she was sobbing. He turned and moved quietly back to the hall door, opened it, then gave it a loud bang.

"Hi, Julie!" he called out. He tossed his hat and topcoat on the sofa

and strode into the bathroom. He consumed an elaborate period of time washing his face and hands, combing his hair. When he came out, Julia was putting water glasses on the folding table. He saw that she was all right now.

"Smell good?" she said, nodding toward the kitchen.

"Delicious." He gave her a kiss and a slap. "I'll make a couple of cocktails."

"There's no gin, Kerry. I plain forgot." She didn't look at him. "Besides, we ought to drink less."

He said, "You talk as if we were a couple of rummies, baby."

"What I meant, I guess, is that we ought to do without it. There's only a can of beer left."

"Okay. We'll split the beer."

"No, you drink it. I don't want —"

"We split it, sweetheart."

Well, she was still putting up a good front. He didn't have the heart to break it down. He wasn't going to tell her that he had stopped at the bookstore. He wasn't going to tell her anything.

After dinner he helped her with the dishes and when they had finished he said, "Well, I think I'll go out for a while."

She watched him put on his hat and coat. He watched her.

"Ruell," she said, her lip quivering.

The hair on his neck stiffened. He didn't want to be part of any emotional scene; he didn't want her to plead with him; he didn't want to see her cry again. Not now. Not tonight.

"Don't worry," he said, and went out quickly.

He remembered the cold, prim, matter-of-fact manner in which Santry had spoken to Oldmorrow, and the way Oldmorrow had dropped his eyes. Kerrigan, already deflated because of the damning evidence of the endorsed check, had merely closed his eyes and sighed. He had thought, "You're lying, Santry. But what does it matter now?" And he had heard Santry's quiet, pedantic voice say, "I am telling you this, Mr. Oldmorrow, because I feel it is my duty to Apex." Kerrigan had laughed suddenly and raucously and Oldmorrow had snapped. "Cut it, Kerry!" And then added, "You'll have to see Packenham in New York."

Striding into the lobby of the Hotel Cheltham, he knew exactly how Santry would look. He remembered clearly the white, round face, with mouth, nose, and eyes concentrated in the very center of it; a small man's pointed features in the middle of a fat man's face. The small shell-like glasses. The plume of gray hair above each ear which should have made him look distinguished and didn't. The conical shoulders. The head held high, primly. The snake-wood walking stick with the big silver knob. A man who never touched anything stronger than vermouth or a glass of wine and possessed a shuddering contempt for drunkards.

But Kerrigan told himself, "I must be nice to him. I must kid him

into believing I don't hold anything against him." Into a house telephone he said, "Ring Mr. Nicholas Santry, please." And while waiting he wondered how he might be able to do this and at the same time discover if Santry were having Ruell followed.

"Hello," a man's voice growled.

"Santry?"

"No."

"Let me speak to Mr. Santry."

"He can't — not right now."

"I'm an old friend of his. Tell him Kerrigan would like to see him."

There was a momentary pause, then the voice said, "Well, look, if you're a friend of his, come up and maybe help me straighten something out."

"What room?"

"Six-ten."

Kerrigan pushed the instrument slowly down into its cradle and walked thoughtfully to the elevators. The man who opened the door of 610 wore an expression that was half puzzled and half exasperated. He threw up his hands limply, and said, "I can't do anything with him. See what you can do." His eyes, striking Kerrigan casually at first, hit him intently the second time. "Say, I've seen you somewhere before, haven't I?"

Kerrigan shrugged. "That so? What's the matter with Nick?"

"Plastered. What did you say your name was?"

"Kerrigan. I used to work with him."

"Was he always a screwball?"

"No. Pretty steady type."

"Say, I know I've seen you somewhere before!"

Kerrigan was walking slowly across the large living room toward an open door. The man suddenly jumped in front of him, saying, "Wait a minute! Just wait a minute!" He cocked a thumb. "Last night. In a restaurant in West Twenty — Now hold on, pal, there's something I don't understand here!" He jumped back and there was a gun in his hand. "Just stay where you are!"

"Don't be stupid. Put that away. I'm unarmed."

"Turn around. Put your hands up."

Kerrigan turned around and felt deft fingers race from pocket to pocket and up beneath his arm.

The man said, "Okay. Drop 'em."

Kerrigan turned, but the man was still holding the gun. Kerrigan said, "Since when has Nick been hiring gunmen?"

"Gunman your neck! My name's Farrell — I'm a private cop." Abruptly he thrust his gun into his pocket. "Your friend hired me to tail a guy and get the address of every place he stopped at. I did that for four days. There weren't many. Then he had me bust in the guy's hotel room and see if there were any papers or letters there, with his name in them. I did and there weren't. He got dissatisfied. He said maybe I wasn't following him to all the addresses. Well, maybe I did miss some, but I sure walked off a lot of shoe leather. Then last night I tailed him to that

French restaurant and hung around outside. In about an hour I walked up the street to a phone booth and phoned Santry and said, 'He's been in a restaurant called Christophe's, down here in West Twenty-sixth Street, for an hour.' This seemed to mean something, because he said, 'Go in and see who's with him.' When I went in, he was gone. And when I got back here, Santry was drinking. I didn't think he was a drinking guy. But there he was, guzzling away. When I told him the guy'd given me the skip, he blew up. I got sore and went home. So tonight I says to myself, 'I'm through with that guy, but I'm going to get what he owes me.' So when I get here he's reeling around and shoving bullets into a gun. I take it away from him and he comes after it and I give him a slap. So then he goes back to the bottle again. Listen — he owes me forty bucks and I want it!"

Kerrigan said, "Keep your shirt on." He strolled to the bedroom doorway and leaned in it. Santry lay on the bed, fully dressed. His hair was tangled. His face was bloated and smeared with red blotches. His breath wheezed, his lips blubbered. He was drunk and less than semi-conscious.

Crossing to the bed, Kerrigan bent over him, shook him, said, "Santry! Santry!" But there was no response. Santry's whole body was throbbing like a great heart. Kerrigan was shocked, dismayed — not because he had found a man drunker than he

had ever seen a man before, but because the man was Santry.

"See?" said Farrell. "What did I tell you?"

Kerrigan turned. He felt that he was very close to the solution of those strange events which had caused the wreckage of his own career. Though he did not gloat, his blood sang through his veins. Yet he knew he could get nothing out of Santry now or perhaps for hours to come. But he must, he also knew, keep Santry where he could find him.

He picked up the telephone and said to the operator, "Call an ambulance."

"What you doing?" Farrell asked.

"Hospital. He's in pretty bad shape."

When they had taken Santry to the hospital Kerrigan telephoned Ruell from a midtown booth and said, "Kerrigan. Where can I meet you?"

Ruell gave him an address in West Nineteenth Street. It took Kerrigan fifteen minutes to reach it, and when he entered the vestibule he looked at a brass plate containing six buttons, each with a name alongside it. He pressed the button beside the name, J. Christophe. It was now nine o'clock. The door clicked open and on the second floor he found Ruell waiting for him.

"Christophe must be a good friend," Kerrigan said as they entered a small, comfortable apartment.

Ruell shrugged and sat down in an overstuffed armchair. His eyes were

wide open, blunt, searching. "Well?" he said.

Kerrigan looked at two traveling bags, side by side, with Ruell's overcoat thrown across them. He said, "Going somewhere?"

"That will depend on the kind of information you give me. Either I catch the *Centralia*, which sails in less than an hour, or I do not. Well?"

Kerrigan lit a cigarette and over the flame his eyes measured Ruell. He blew out the match. "A lot will depend also, Ruell, on the kind of information you give me. Why did Santry resign from Apex? What's he doing in America?"

Ruell frowned impatiently. "That is only incidental. It has no bearing on your case. It will not clear you."

"I'm curious."

Ruell shrugged. "He resigned for two reasons. One, because when he indicted you before Oldmorrow he lost, for some sentimental reason, the respect of his fellow correspondents. They cut him at every turn. He could not bear it. And then he found an opportunity to come to America as a foreign propaganda agent. This he suspected me of knowing. He was right; but he was wrong when he suspected that I intended to betray him. There was nothing in it for me." He leaned back and his jaw was suddenly stubborn. "Come, what have you discovered?"

Kerrigan was still measuring him. Presently he said, "It was not a State Department agent. It was a man Santry hired to tail you."

"Ah!" Ruell struck his thigh. "Good!"

"When the man reported that you visited Christophe's, Santry went to pieces. Now you talk, Ruell."

Ruell looked at his watch. "Yes. He feared I would meet a certain person at Christophe's whom he also knew. He was afraid I would use this person against him. I had no intention of doing this at first; later, circumstances forced me to do so. It was necessary for me to know whether I was being shadowed by Santry's man or a State Department agent." He stood up and put on his overcoat. He looked at his watch again. "Now I can sail on the *Centralia*, knowing that I will not be apprehended at the pier by a Government agent."

Kerrigan rose. "Listen, Ruell," he said dangerously, "don't talk around me. You said you would —"

"Yes — produce the means of clearing you with Apex. I —" A buzzer sounded and Ruell said, "Ah, that will be Madame Christophe. She attends the cash register at the restaurant until nine. She loaned me her key." He pressed a button beside the door. He thrust a blue envelope into Kerrigan's hand, then opened the door and picked up his bags.

Kerrigan got in his way. "Listen, Ruell —"

"Madame Christophe!" Ruell exclaimed. "I did not expect you so soon. I am hurrying to catch a boat —"

Suddenly Kerrigan forgot about him. Standing at the head of the

staircase, staring, her face draining slowly of all color, was Adrienne Pelletier. Ruell barged past her, lugging his bags. His feet thumped down the staircase. Adrienne Pelletier's teeth closed hard. Her jaw shook. She took one step forward and then all the bones in her body seemed to collapse and she fainted.

Julia said, "Darling, you look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"I haven't, Julie," Kerrigan said, scaling his hat across the room. "I've seen Adrienne Pelletier."

"But she's dead, Kerry!"

He shook his head. "No. She's alive. She's the wife, now, of the owner of a restaurant named Christophe." He took hold of Julia's hand and led her across to the sofa. They sat down. "The woman killed in that plane wreck was not Adrienne Pelletier. The man was Auermann, all right, but it was another woman traveling on Adrienne Pelletier's passport. Auermann had stolen it. The Pelletier woman didn't report it because she was afraid she would be thrown in jail for what she and Auermann had done to me. She was living under an assumed name at the time of the wreck. Adrienne Otard. Last year she met Christophe in Paris — he was back home, on a visit. He asked her to marry him. She said she'd think it over. He returned to America. The more she thought of it, the more she wanted to go to America. But she had no money and she had no passport. She'd heard of Ruell and

went to him and asked if he could fix her a passport under the name of Adrienne Otard. But she had no money. Ruell told her that she might be able to get some by going to Santry and telling him that she intended to tell just how she and Auermann had framed me. Santry fell for it. He was afraid of losing his job. He gave her quite a bundle to keep quiet. That was a year ago."

"Oh, darling!" Julia cried, gripping his hands.

"She came to America. She married Christophe. Then Ruell came over." He wagged his head. "It's probably the first time in his life that he didn't travel on business, or to escape capture. Ruell, of all people, had fallen for the Pelletier woman. But he found her married when he got here. And all at once he was Ruell again. Hard. Tough. No quarter."

"But what about Santry?"

"I sent him to a hospital." He told her about Santry. "I phoned Jonas Pakenham a little while ago. He'll see the Pelletier woman tomorrow — and Santry when Santry's sober enough."

Julia puckered her forehead. "But how do you know you'll be able to

get her again?" She asked it hesitantly.

"Ruell was thorough," he said, drawing a blue envelope from his pocket. "Her passport's in here — the one Ruell fixed for her a year ago. He must have stolen it from her. At any rate, he gave it to me."

Julia shivered. "I was afraid for a minute that you were going to say you'd taken pity on her — and after all she did to you."

"She just got in deeper and deeper — took chance after chance." He stood up. "Maybe I might have taken pity on her." He was going to add, "But there's you, Julie — I won't have you living in a dump like this!" But he hid this by saying laconically, "I got tired of taking it on the chin," and wandered into the kitchen.

Julia called, "There's beer in the icebox. I went out and got six cans."

"What did you do, charge them?"

He opened two cans and when he turned she was standing in the doorway, her eyes round and grave. "Kerry, maybe I can tell you now —"

"I know. You lost your job last week. Forget it, honey. Santry's job is still open. Here, drink this — to tomorrow."

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