

Gambler's Throw

by Eustace L. Adams.

SYNOPSIS: The members of Ashwood's "house party," whom he is holding for ransom, are crooked by a scheme to find one of their number murdered. Stevens, a detective, Callahan and Bottles, intercepted before they attacked Ashwood's island, are granted a chance to help Steacy Westworth and the other cops.

Chapter 23 ON THE BEACH

BENEATH the washstand in the far corner was a steel and silver table knife, its edge still gleaming redly in the light. A few inches away lay a wrinkled table napkin, its corner and one edge drenched with blood. Stevens stood at the edge of the washstand, looking down at the exhibits, studying knife and napkin intently. He lifted the latter very gingerly, holding it by the edge with his thumb and forefinger. He carried it beneath the light and studied it, inch by inch. Then, with a depressed sigh, he handed it to Jerry.

"No use looking for finger prints without a microscope," he said regretfully. "Might as well pick up the knife, too. The bird that did Williams in stole the knife and the capkin at dinner time, wrapped the handle of the knife in the napkin,

heard. Something about the hastening footsteps caused a chill to run through the listeners. It seemed to come to all, simultaneously, that the rapidly approaching man was bringing news that would add to the horror of the night.

Ashwood, his face stony, waited. One of the guards, panting, raced down the corridor. Seeing the strange group, he hesitated, his eyes darting from one white face to another. Then he blurted out his news.

"Boss, Di Michael's been croaked. Throat cut. His gat and all his ammunition's gone."

Ashwood again scanned the face of each man who stood there in the hall. He studied each expression searchingly, lingeringly, as though he might read the guilt or innocence of each in the breathless silence which had enveloped them all like a fog. At length, his face showing no shade of emotion, he stepped forward.

"Will you gentlemen kindly go to your rooms and remain there?" His tone was more a suggestion than a command.

"Hell!" burst out Luce, his face contorted, "I'm going to sit in the big room. I'm not going to have anyone creeping in and sitting my pipes for me."



"Boss, Di Michael's been croaked," panted the guard. "Throat cut."

to as not to leave any prints. Bottles takes care of them, kid, and we'll look them over in the morning. But I don't believe we'll find anything."

"I'll send for Alfred and see from whose place the things were stolen," suggested Ashwood.

"No use," declared the detective pessimistically. "If the fellow was smart enough to cover up his finger prints this way, he wouldn't have stolen the tools from his own place. Might be the best way of finding out who did not do it, though. The one whose things were missing is innocent."

He roved around the room restlessly, his faded eyes examining everything. Then he straightened up, looked at Ashwood and shook his head.

"One of these homicide experts could find a lot, maybe, with the proper instruments—microscope, chemicals, and such. But I don't see a thing that looks like a clue. The fibre of this rug doesn't hold the imprint of my two feet, even for more than two-three seconds after I step down hard on it. No bloody finger marks except those this poor devil made when he tried to crawl off the bed. Clothes aren't mussed and no attempt made at robbery. Don't see any motive at all."

"All right, then," snapped Ashwood decisively. "I'll lock the door and have the men clean up in the morning."

The cripple studied Luce's face thoughtfully.

"You may suit yourself about sitting up," he acknowledged indifferently, "but if you do, it will be in the safety and the seclusion of your own room. If anyone disturbs your meditations, you may stand for assistance. Mueller will stand watch here in the hall."

There was an instant's silence. Jerry tensed his muscles in anticipation of a sudden clash. Luce glanced at Mallory who, now cold sober, returned the look meaningly. The flyer was amazed to note that for the moment, at least, these two were allies, not enemies. He saw Mallory's heavy form gather itself for a spring. Luce, too, stood on the balls of his feet, his hands opening and shutting.

Ashwood backed swiftly against the wall, his gun pointing at Luce's midriff. Mueller's automatic covered Mallory. The outside guard moved close to the gangster, patting him dutifully in search for a weapon. The gangster's malevolent eyes glanced at the armed men, then he relaxed and submitted docilely to the search. Mallory, too, was swiftly examined. Jerry could see the sweat of perspiration upon the turbulent stockbroker's brow as, by sheer force of will, the man gained control of himself.

"Stevens," said Ashwood, at last, "I wonder if you would accompany me?"

"Sure," replied the detective. "Caboose," continued the cripple, "I'd be glad if you and Bottles would remain here until we return. You two will please leave your doors open."

Mr. Hamilton laughed, an edged note of hysteria in his voice. He went into his room, bolted the door, but the sound of his shrill laughter was still audible. One after another the others turned away to follow the cripple's instructions. Ashwood, Stevens and the guards were left alone in the hall.

Wordlessly, the detective, the cripple and the outside guard walked to the beach where, bathed in the steely glare of the moon, lay a huddled, distorted figure. A ghastly black smear across his throat told of the manner of his death.

NIPPONS ACCUSE CHANG OF PLOTS

TOKYO, Japan, Aug. 5.—(AP)—Chang Hsiao-Liang, Chinese war hero, was accused in a statement issued by the war office today of instigating the current wave of banditry in south Manchuria.

SAYS KIDNAPERS SHOT OMAHA MAN

OMAHA, Neb., Aug. 5.—(AP)—County Attorney Henry Beal today announced that John Toth, an ex-convict who was returned here from Milwaukee yesterday, has confessed that he was a member of a kidnaping gang that killed Harry Lapidus, prominent Omaha business man and politician, December 22.

FEDERAL JUDGE TO FACE PROBE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5.—(AP)—A house judiciary subcommittee headed by Chairman Summers will convene in San Francisco the latter part of this month to begin an investigation into the official conduct of Federal Judge Harold C. Louderback of the northern district of California.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Looking For Evidence!

WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHY YOU'RE PLAYING A LONE HAND IN TRYING TO SOLVE THIS MYSTERY?

I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO CONVINCE ANYBODY THAT MY THEORY WAS WORTH THE EXPENSE OF A BIG MAN HUNT—AND ITS TERRITORY TO COVER.

THAT'S REASONABLE—NOW, ASSUMING YOU'RE RIGHT WE'VE GOT LOTS OF TERRITORY TO COVER.

HOW'S THAT?

THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS THAT THE BANDITS COULD BRING A HEAVY TRUCK INTO THIS SECTION—LICK CREEK PASS AND MESQUITE GULCH.

THEY MUST HAVE A TRUCK—AND THEY COULDN'T HIDE ITS TRACKS—WHICH PASS IS THE CLOSER?

THIS IS LICK CREEK—MESQUITE DAM IS FIVE MILES NORTH—I DON'T SEE ANY SIGNS OF RECENT TRAVEL IN HERE.

I DON'T EITHER, BUT JUST TO PREVENT THE POSSIBILITY OF A RETREAT THROUGH HERE I'M GOING TO DO A LITTLE WORK WITH THE AXE.

IS TOMMY RIGHT? ... OR FOLLOWING A WILL-O'-THE-WISP THAT WILL GET HIM NOWHERE? WHAT WILL MESQUITE GULCH REVEAL?

'SMATTER POP—Someone Else Said It For Pop

AND HER HAT LOOKED SO FUNNY!

MAW!

WAIT TILL I'M THROUGH TALKING PLEASE.

BUT YOU NEVER DO GET THROUGH TALKIN'!

'SMATTER, POP?

HAR!

BOUND TO WIN—Still Another Message

WELL, BEN, HOW DID YOU SLEEP?

FINE! BRIAR GROWN UP ONCE OR TWICE, BUT I RECKONED HE WAS BEING PUT HERE LAST NIGHT!

HEY, JONATHAN! HERE'S ANOTHER MESSAGE! IT COVERED THE OTHER ONE! IT MUST HAVE BEEN PUT HERE LAST NIGHT!

OH, GOSH! OH, GEE! WHAT'S IT SAY? WHAT'S IT SAY?

PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR LISTENING TO YOUR TALK LAST NIGHT BUT YOUR BOAT REALLY IS GONE—BIG FEET SAILED AWAY IN IT YESTERDAY MORNING—SOMEONE SO NEAR THE TREASURE—THOUGH YOU MIGHT AS WELL GET IT BEFORE GOING SOUTH, W.D.H.—

BEN, W.D.H.'S AINT NO HUMAN BEING! HE'S A WITCH OR A DEVIL! I'LL BET THAT'S WHAT W.D.H. IS HIS INITIAL STANDS FOR!

DO YOU THINK "BIG FEET'S" LEFT US?

GR-R-R-R!

THE NEBBS—Celebrating Too Soon?

GOOD MORNING, SENATOR.

GOOD MORNING, FAIR LADY.

HI, SENATOR!

I WANT TO GIVE A DINNER TO EVERYBODY IN THIS HOTEL CELEBRATING MY NOMINATION FOR SENATOR—REMEMBERING THAT I'M A HOTEL MAN AND THAT I'M LIFTING THEM OUT OF YOUR DINING ROOM WHERE THEY HAVE ALREADY PAID FOR THEMSELVES—HOW MUCH ARE YOU GOING TO CHARGE PER PLATE?

WELL, I CAN THROW TOGETHER A FAIRLY DECENT DINNER FOR TWO DOLLARS INCLUDING CIGARETTES AND CIGARS.

TWO BUCKS?—IN THESE TIMES? FOR ONE BUCK YOU SHOULD PURNISH LOBSTER, SQUAB, DESSERT AND ORCHID SALAD AND BLESS THE DAY I CAME TO YOU!

MUTT AND JEFF—Jeff's Not A Second Chauncey Depew

WHATCHA GIGGLING ABOUT, JEFF?

I JUST HEARD A WOW OF A CONTRACT BRIDGE STORY, IT'S A SCREAM—STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD IT.

I CERTAINLY ENJOY A GOOD BRIDGE STORY, PROCEED!

IT SEEMS THE COHENS AND KELLYS WERE PLAYING—AND MRS. COHEN WAS THE DUMMY. MUTT—THIS IS A RIOT—STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD IT.

I AIN'T STOPPING YOU, GO ON WITH THE STORY!

WELL, IT SEEMS SOMEBODY REVOKED AND MRS. COHEN SAID SOMETHING—AND KELLY MADE A SNAPPY USE CRACK—BUT I'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS—M-M—LET ME THINK.

OOWAH!

OUCH!

BRINGING UP FATHER

MISS LOTTA VOTES IS DOWN AT THE BEACH SHE DON'T SEEM TO BE PAYIN' MUCH ATTENTION TO THE ELECTION.

LET'S GIT A PAPER AN SEE WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT ME.

WELL, LOOK AT THAT!

I AM LOOKIN'.

WHAT THEY SAW PRINTED IN THE PAPER.

I THOUGHT I DIDN'T SEE MANY GUYS IN TOWN TO-DAY.

SHE DON'T HAVE TO MAKE POLITICAL SPEECHES, I WISH I WUZ AT THE BEACH, MESELF.

REGIONAL CREDIT CORPORATION FOR PORTLAND ASKED

PORTLAND, Ore., Aug. 5.—(AP)—A request that a regional agricultural credit corporation be established in Portland with a paid up capital of \$5,000,000, was forwarded to the reconstruction finance corporation today by a group of Portland business men. Provisions for such corporations are made in the emergency relief and construction act, and loans to farmers and stockmen for agricultural purposes are provided for.

The redoubt privileges to which such a corporation would be entitled, would make possible the financing of farm and livestock operators in Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon, all these states being included in the 12th federal land bank district.

Among those sponsoring the proposal are J. C. Ainsworth, chairman of the board, United States National Bank; Kenneth D. Dawson, president States Steamship company; Donald J. Sterling, managing editor Oregon Journal; Paul S. Dick, president United States National Bank; C. F. Adams, chairman of board, First National Bank; E. B. McNaughton, president First National Bank; and W. B. D. Dodson, manager Portland chamber of commerce.

They expect that if a unit with an initial capital of \$5,000,000 is allocated to Portland, discounts probably will be confined to a sum equal to six times the capital of the corporation, making available a fund of \$35,000,000 to agricultural and stockmen of the four states.

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