

## 2 THE WEB OF THE GOLDEN SPIDER

cabal. The unexpected, the impossible lurk at every corner. He brushes shoulders with strange things, though often he feels only the lightest breath of their passing, and hears only a rustle like that of an over-turned leaf. But he knows, either with a little shudder and a startled glance about or with quickened pulse and eager waiting.

This he felt, and something, too, of that fellowship which exists between those who have no doors to close behind them. For such stand shoulder to shoulder facing the barrier Law, which bars them from the food and warmth behind the doors. To those in a house the Law is scarcely more than an abstraction; to those without it is a tyrannical reality. The Law will not even allow a man outside to walk up and down in the gray mist enjoying his own dreams without looking upon him with suspicion. The Law is a shatterer of dreams. The Law is as eager as a gossip to misinterpret; and this puts one, however innocent, in an aggressive mood.

Looking up at the sodden sky from beneath a dripping slouch hat, Wilson was keenly alive to this. Each rubber-coated officer he passed affected him like an insolent intrusion. He brought home all the mediocrity of the night, all the shrilling gray, all the hunger, all the ache. These fellows took the color out of the picture, leaving only the cold details of a photograph. They were the men who swung open the street doors at the close of a matinee, admitting the stale sounds of the road, the sober light of the late afternoon.