

## THE THEFT

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necessity arose, be the means of establishing an alibi, and that required something of at least a definite recognition by Tooler of his, Dave Henderson's, presence. He stepped abruptly out into the hall.

"Heh, Tooler!" he called. "Tooler!"

A door opened somewhere above.

"Hello!" snapped a gruff voice.

"It's me," announced Dave Henderson.

"I heard you!" grunted Tooler.

"I just came in for a wash-up," explained Dave Henderson. "Came up in Skarvan's car. I'm going back to-night by train."

"All right!" Tooler grunted again.

"How's the wife?"

The only answer was the closing of a door upstairs. Dave Henderson smiled pleasantly, and re-entered his own room. When it came to sociability Tooler was a star! Well, so much the better! He had no complaint to register on that score—especially to-night! He crossed to where his trunk stood against the wall at the lower end of the room, opened the trunk, lifted out the tray, and from somewhere in the lower recesses possessed himself of an automatic pistol and a generous supply of reserve ammunition. With this in his pocket, he closed the trunk again, and, sitting down on the edge of the bed, unlaced and removed his shoes.

And now Dave Henderson, silent as a cat in his movements, his shoes tucked under one arm, the black hand-bag under the other, made his way out into the hall. The car standing in front of the house was mute evidence that he was still in his room. Later on, when he returned, in the course of an hour, say, he would call up to Tooler again to say that he was going. It was a perfectly good alibi!

He crept on along the hall, reached the back door,