

He snapped the other link over the Ladybird's left wrist, and smiled menacingly.

"I guess there's dead weight enough there to anchor you for a few minutes while I take a look around here!" he said curtly—and turned to Lanson.

The Hawk was licking at his lips again. Upstairs, the tramp of feet was dying away. There would be no one there now but the other member of the gang who, it seemed, had been hurt when the house was rushed, and the one man who was guarding the prisoner. The Ladybird's cultured voice at the Hawk's side poured out an uninterrupted stream of abandoned oaths that were like a shudder in the nonchalant, conversational tones in which they fell from the twitching lips. MacVightie and Lanson were moving here and there about the place. Snatches of their conversation reached the Hawk:

" . . . Well, I reckon I called the turn, all right, when I said it was the same crowd that was turning out the phony stuff, eh? . . . Yes, the telegraph set. . . . Can't trace the wires until daylight, of course. . . . Sure, a clean-up. . . . "

The Hawk's eyes travelled furtively around the cellar. They rested hungrily on a spot in front of him, where, in the centre of the floor, but partially hidden by one of the workbenches, was the bolted trapdoor of the underground passage that led out to the wagon shed. He circled his lips with his tongue again, and furtively again, his glance travelled on—to the door at the head of the cellar stairs that had