

reached inside and pulled down the roller shade to within an inch of the sill, and pulled the window down again to a little below the level of the shade. The opening left was unnoticeable—but he could now both see and hear.

There came a faint sound from within—the creak of a slowly opening door, a step across the floor, then the flare of a match, and the light in the room went on.

Jimmie Dale was drawn back now against the wall at one corner of the window, his eyes on a level with the sill. He had made no mistake about that misshapen, twisted shadow—it was Hunchback Joe. Jimmie Dale's eyes travelled to the hunchback's companion—and narrowed as he recognised the other. The man was well enough known in the underworld, a hanger-on for the most part, a confirmed hop-fighter, though when not under the influence of the drug he was counted one of the cleverest second-story workers and lock-pickers in the Bad Lands—Hoppy Meggs, they called him. Again Jimmie Dale's eyes shifted—to Hunchback Joe once more. Like some abnormal and repulsive toad the man looked. His shoulders were thrust upward until they seemed to merge with the head itself, the body was crooked and bent forward, due to the ugly deformity of the man's back, while the face was carried at an upward tilt, as though tardily to rectify the curvature of the spine, and out of the sinister, bearded face, the beard tawny and ill-kempt, little black eyes from under protruding brows blinked ceaselessly.

A sudden fury, an anger hot and passionate seized upon Jimmie Dale; and there came an impulse almost overpowering to play another rôle, a deadlier, grimmer rôle than that of spectator! A toad, he had called the man. He was wrong—the man was a devil in human guise. He crushed back the impulse, a cold smile on his lips. He could afford to wait! It was not time yet. There was still the game to play out. He would have an