

Vickers, if Baldy Vickers could not get both, would very obviously and very earnestly prefer the hundred thousand dollars. His lips tightened in a sort of merciless irony. Well, Baldy Vickers would have a chance at least to exercise his preference! A few miles farther on, just a few miles, the road, in a wooded tract, made an abrupt, almost right-angled, turn. He remembered that turn—and he had banked on that, too, if by then speed alone should have failed him! He could hold out that much longer. The inches did not accumulate fast enough to overtake him before he reached that turn—he was not afraid of that—but every one of those inches made of him a better target.

He was motionless, like a figure carved in stone, as he hung over the wheel. The car rocked to the furious pace—but it did not swerve. A swerve meant the gift of another of those inches to that gray thing behind. He held the center of the road, driving with all the craft and cunning that he knew, his arms like steel bands, his fingers locked in an iron grip upon the wheel.

He did not look behind him now. It was useless. Nearer and nearer the gray car was creeping up, he was well aware of that; but, also, nearer and nearer came that wooded stretch ahead. He could see it now—a mile down the road. But a mile at this rate of speed did not take long to cover.

The shouts grew more exultant behind him; the shots came thicker. Murderers! The angry hum of a bullet past his ear roused a fury in his soul that was elemental, primal, and he cursed now under his breath. Murderers . . . six feet of earth . . . in cold blood . . . or if they winged him, the car, amuck, slanting from the road to up-end itself, would do their bloody work for them . . . Bookie Skarvan . . . some day, if he lived through this . . . Bookie Skarvan . . . it