

THE ENDING OF THE NIGHT

MECHANICALLY, Dave Henderson rose to his feet, and for an instant stood as though, his mental faculties numbed, he were striving to grasp as a concrete thing some stark and horribly naked tragedy that his eyes told him was real, but which his brain denied and refused to accept. Thin layers of smoke, suspended, sinuous, floated in hideous little gray clouds about the room—like palls that sought to hide what lay upon the floor from sight, and, failing in their object, but added another grim and significant detail to the scene.

And then his brain cleared, and he jumped forward to bend first over Bookie Skarvan and then over Dago George; and, where his mind had been unreceptive and numbed but an instant before, it was keen, swift and incisive now—the police who had been summoned—the Scorpion and his parasite yegg who were on the way back—there was no time to lose! There was no one in the house to have heard the shots—Bookie Skarvan had settled that point—no one except Teresa upstairs. But the shots might have been heard *outside*.

His ears throbbed with strange noises; those shots seemed still to be reverberating and beating at his eardrums. Yes, the shots might have been heard outside on the street, or by some one in the next house. Was that some one at the front door now? He held his breath, as he rose from Dago George's side. No,