

of wild, seething, remorseless passion—that maudlin, grovelling thing there, whose clawing hands had found the end of the desk, and who hung there with curious limpness, as though, because the knees sagged, the weight of his body was supported by his arms alone—that thing whose lips, evidently trying to form words, jerked up and down like flaps of flesh from which all nerve control had gone.

“Maybe you didn’t know that I knew it was you who were back of that attempt to murder me that night—five years ago.” Dave Henderson thrust the flashlight into his pocket, and took a step forward. “Well, you know it now!”

A sweat bead trickled down the fat, working face—and lost itself in a fold of flabby flesh.

“No!” Bookie Skarvan found his tongue. “No! Honest to God, Dave!” he whined. “It was Baldy.”

“Don’t lie! *I know!*” There was a cold deadliness in Dave Henderson’s tones. “Stand away from the desk a little, so that I can get a look at that telephone on the floor! I don’t want any witness to what’s going to happen here, and a telephone with the receiver off——”

“My God!” Bookie Skarvan cried out wildly. “What are you going to do?”

“Yes, I guess it’s out of commission.” Dave Henderson’s voice seemed utterly detached; he seemed utterly to ignore the other for a moment, as he looked at the broken instrument.

Bookie Skarvan, in an access of fear, mopped at his wet face, and his little red-rimmed eyes, like the eyes of a cornered rat, darted swift, frantic glances in all directions around the room.

“Dave, do you hear!” Bookie Skarvan’s voice rose