

ld fashioned safe," he
sure it will give you
Now then, what will
u to get that tin box

itated for a moment.
igarette from the box
ated it from the glow-
finished.

ks," he decided at last.
her fifty when I turn
you. And if it aint
there's any trouble—
foks in the house or
ind—the fifty already
the same."

"the broadshouldered

f bills from his pocket
several of them.

fifty. We better go
even. I'll meet you
t of the Day Building
re. That all right?
ne, will you?"
t eleven," said Shan-

of the papers, and ar-
ws more comfortably
umed his reading.

of eleven that evening,
curb before the Day
s in his pockets and
ver his eyes, watching
ffic on the glistening
zling rain was falling,
wind which whistled
e neighboring corner,
p his overcoat collar
on the curbing for

the long line of pass-
ghts swung in his di-
kish road car shot up
man at the steering-
rd to peer into Shan-

," said the familiar
er of the afternoon.

st—need

zer

hot one

ur-fifths

S

est.

kitchen.

Ltd.



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"All ready?"

"Sure," said Shannon, climbing into the car.

They sped away from the square, headed up the avenue, and were soon making good speed to the north. Shannon sat huddled silently, his hands in his pockets, and his head lowered to the driving mist. The man beside him, too, was silent. No word passed between them until they reached Claverly Road with its row of imposing houses each set in its ample expanse of well-kept grounds.

Presently they stopped before one of the houses, and the man at the steering-wheel alighted.

"This it?" Shannon asked, climbing stiffly from the car.

"No, fourth house down," the other replied. "I left the car here because its dark under these trees. Come on."

He led the way down the road, turned into a gateway flanked on either side by tall stone posts, and made his way up a winding drive. Between the trees Shannon could see a big, rambling house looming dimly. They kept to the drive until they were close to the house. Not a light showed in any of the windows.

Shannon's companion drew him into a clump of syringa bushes on the lawn. "I'm going to wait for you here," he whispered. "It won't take you but a few minutes at the most. Open the third basement window on the back. That will bring you into the lower hall. Then go up the stairs and you'll find two doors on your right. Take the second of them. It opens into the dining-room. You know about the rest of it. Safe's in the closet at the left of the side-board. Open it and bring back that tin box. Go ahead, now."

Shannon kicked off his shoes and replaced them with a pair of sneakers he drew from his at-pocket. Then he slipped like a wraith through the mist to the back of the house, found the third window, and in the twinkling of an eye had it open and was crawling cautiously

through it. He pulled the little electric lantern from his pocket, took a swift survey of the place, and noiselessly ascended the stairs. Another quick blink of the lantern and he had opened the second door and was in the dining-room. There was a sideboard, and to the left the little china-closet. He opened the door and saw beneath the lower shelf a little old safe—the sort of safe the veriest tyro might open without trouble.

He sank to his knees and pulled a bit of steel from his hip-pocket. In a trice the knob of the lock was off and Shannon with his finger was clicking the falls. It was child's play to him. He grinned to himself as he thought of the man out there in the bushes. A hundred for a job like this was like robbing a blind man. Had the man outside but known it, Shannon would have gladly done a job of this kind for a quarter of what he was getting.

Silently he swung open the door of the antiquated safe. The whole thing had taken less than five minutes. Once more the lantern winked briefly. Sure enough! There within the safe was the tin strong box. He lifted it out and arose from his knees.

And then suddenly the room glowed with light. Shannon sprang up, blinking and sputtering inarticulate oaths. For a moment the flood of light blinded him; but in another moment he saw, standing by the table and surveying him with steady eyes, a young woman in a blue bath-wrap.

She was a very beautiful woman, tall, willowy, with great dark eyes, in whose depth was no hint of fear. Indeed, her beauty—the satin smoothness of her skin, the soft waviness of her loosened hair, the roundness of her superb throat—filled him with a vague shame, like some potent accusation. His hand which had intuitively gone to the gun in his right coat-pocket, was suddenly withdrawn empty. He stood there with the tin box in his fingers, staring motionless.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded in a low, cool voice.

Shannon said nothing, but over his puffy features stole a sickly, apologetic grin.

"Put down that box you have," she went on. "You are making a mistake in taking it. It is of no earthly good to you."

Shannon looked down stupidly at the box. Then he remembered that box was worth fifty dollars to him.

"Say, don't make no holler," he advised, his heavy brows drawing together ominously. "Don't try to put up no squeal."

"I'm not foolish enough to attempt to make any outcry," she said in the same guarded voice. "You may take anything else you find and I won't say a word. Only—only," there was a choking sound in the low tones, "leave that box. It is nothing to you. You don't want it."

"Maybe I do, at that," Shannon growled.

"Open it and see," she demanded. Shannon merely stared.

"Open the box and see what's in it. Then tell me if you want it," she persisted.

A sudden curiosity as to just what the box contained took possession of him. Moreover, through his mind flashed the sudden suspicion that it might be more valuable than he thought; that this woman was taking a desperate chance with him; that the man out there in the bushes had put him up to a big job, after all.

The woman was quick to note his hesitation.

"Here's the key," she said, tossing it across the table to him.

Shannon slipped it into the lock and jerked open the cover. Within was a pair of tiny, much worn shoes, a rattle, an ivory ring, and two bits of pale blue ribbon.

"Surely you don't want those—not

those," the woman was saying in the same choking voice.

Shannon grimly locked the box and stuffed it under his arm. For the first time fear came into the woman's eyes.

"Listen," she almost sobbed, "I have money—a lot of it—here in the house, but you could never find it. I'll give you the money gladly—all of it, if you'll leave the box. Or you can have more tomorrow—"

Even men of Shannon's type have their code of ethics, however warped and distorted these may be. To break faith with a pal was perhaps the most heinous offence in Shannon's particular private code. It was something he prided himself he had never done; and the man out there in the bushes was a pal for the time being. Shannon had accepted his money and pledged his word in this thing.

"Sorry, Ma'am," said he, "but—"

"You don't mean you still want it, after you know what's in it?" she said breathlessly.

"Uh, huh," he grunted tersely, and like a flash he had jumped to the French window on the other side of the room.

The wonder of it all to Shannon was that the woman did not scream. There was a quick catch of her breath, a smothered, broken and wholly from Shannon's point of view—ineffectual cry, and she, too, sped to the window, just as Shannon pulled it open, leaped out on the wide verandah, vaulted the rail, and sped down the drive. Behind him the patter of footsteps told him of the pursuit.

He neared the syringa bushes, running hard and panting.

"Come on," he gurgled. "The house is up. They're after me. Out for it."

The other man jumped from the bushes.

"Bungled it, eh?" he growled. "What's this?"

He had caught sight of the woman in the bath-wrap running down the drive.