

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark blue color, framing the central text.

Something for the Sweeper

Something for the Sweeper

by Norbert Davis

Jones limped slowly along, his rubbers making an irregular squeak-squish sound on the wet cement of the sidewalk. He was not a large man and, walking as he was now, humped forward in an unconscious effort to favor his feet, he looked small and insignificant. He wore an old trenchcoat with grease stains running jaggedly down the front. The sun was bright on the slick-black wetness of the asphalt paving, and he had his hat-brim pulled low over his tired eyes.

The houses on this street were gaunt, ugly and brown, and as alike as the teeth in a saw. They all had a wide flight of worn stairs leading up to the front door with another flight beside it leading down into the basement. They had all been built by one man, those houses, and he evidently was a person who believed in getting a good, plain plan and then sticking to it.

Jones was watching house numbers out of the corners of his eyes. He was coming pretty close now, and he began to walk even slower. His mouth twisted up at one side every time he came down on his right foot.

Ahead of him he could see a man's head and shoulders. The man was halfway down one of the basement flights of stairs. His head and shoulders moved back and forth in a sort of a jiggling rhythm. Approaching, Jones saw that he was sweeping up the stairs of the basement. He swept in careful, calculating little dabs, as precisely as if he were painting a picture with his broom.

"Hi," said Jones, stopping and standing on his left foot.

The man made another dab with his broom, inspected the result, and then looked up at Jones. He was an old man, small and shrunken and wiry, with white, smooth hair that was combed straight back from his softly plastic face. He nodded silently at Jones, solemn and wordless.

"Hendrick Boone live here?" Jones asked.

The old man sniffed and rubbed his nose. "Who?"

"Hendrick Boone."

The old man considered for a moment. "Live where?"

“Here,” said Jones.

“Yes,” said the old man.

Jones stared at him sourly. “Thanks a lot,” he said at last.

“Oh, that’s all right,” the old man said, and smiled.

Jones went up the stairs, grunting painfully, and, when he got to the top, leaned over and pinched the toe of his right rubber and muttered to himself under his breath. He straightened up and looked at the closed double doors ahead of him. There was a narrow frosted-glass panel in each one, and the pair of stiff-legged storks, with toothpick beaks depicted on them, leered disdainfully at him with opposite eyes. Jones looked around for a doorbell, finally located a little iron lever that protruded out of a slit in one of the doors. He pulled it down and then up again, and a bell made a dismal blink-blink-blink sound inside.

Jones waited, standing on his left foot, and the door opened slowly, squeaking a little. Jones touched his hat and said: “Hello. Is Mr. Hendrick Boone here, and if so, can I talk to him for a minute?”

“He’s not here. He’s really not here.”

“Oh,” said Jones.

She was a very small woman with gray hair that was puffed up in a wide knot on the top of her head. She wore thick, rimless glasses and behind them her eyes were a distorted blue, wide and a little frightened and anxious to please. She wore a long skirt that rustled and a white waist with lace stiffen the front. She had a timid, wavering smile.

“Where is he?” Jones asked.

“He’s in the hospital.”

“Hospital?” Jones repeated.

“Yes. He fell downstairs. Are you the man from the installment company?”

“No,” said Jones. “I’m a detective, believe it or not. I know I don’t look like one.

I can't help that. I didn't pick this face, and, to tell the truth, I don't think so much of it myself."

"Oh, but he didn't do it! Really he didn't, officer! He couldn't have, you see. He's been in the hospital, and his condition is very serious, really if is, and he couldn't have done it."

"Done what?" said Jones.

She moved her hands a little, helplessly. "Well—well, whatever you think he did. Was it—windows again?"

"Windows?" Jones asked.

"I mean, did you think he broke some windows, like he usually does?"

"He makes a habit of breaking windows?"

She nodded. "Oh, yes. But only plate glass ones."

"Particular, huh? What does he break windows for?"

Her sallow face flushed slightly. "He sees his image. You know, his reflection. And he thinks he is following himself again. He thinks he is spying on himself. And so he breaks the windows."

"Well, maybe it's a good idea," said Jones. "Is he ever troubled with pink elephants?"

"Yes, he is. He often sees them walking on the ceiling when he wakes up in the morning."

"What does he do for them?"

"Oh, he always saves a half pint, and as soon as he drinks that they go away."

"I should think they would," said Jones. "I'm still talking about Hendrick Boone, by the way? Are you?"

"Yes. My husband."

“Oh,” said Jones. “You’re Mrs. Boone. Could I come in and sit down and speak to you for a moment? I’ve got some news for you, and besides my feet hurt.”

“Oh, yes. Surely. Excuse me, please. I was a little flustered when you said ‘detective’—”

The hall was dark and small and narrow with a carpeted staircase running up steeply just to the right of the front door. The wallpaper was a stained brownish-black. There was a hole worn in the carpet at the foot of the stairs.

“Right in here,” Mrs. Boone said anxiously.

It was the parlor that stretched across the narrow front of the house. The furniture was stiff and awkward, mellowed with age, and there was a clumsy cut-glass chandelier that had been originally designed to burn gas.

Jones sat down on a sofa that creaked mournfully under him and looked down at his feet, wincing involuntarily.

“Now,” said Mrs. Boone. She was sitting primly upright, looking very small against the high carved back of the chair, with her hands folded on her lap and smiling a little, timidly. “Now—you wished to speak to me?”

Jones nodded, still thinking about his feet. “Yes. Your husband was born in Awkright, Idaho, wasn’t he?”

She nodded brightly. “Yes.”

“Had one brother—by the name of Semus Boone?”

“Yes.”

“Not any more,” said Jones. “Semus Boone died a couple of months ago.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Boone. She was silent for a moment. “We hadn’t seen him for over twenty years. He didn’t like Hendrick. He invited us to a Christmas party, and Hendrick took a drop too much and broke the plate glass window in Semus’ living room. Semus was very angry.”

“He must have gotten over it,” said Jones. “He left your husband all his money.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Boone. She smiled vaguely. “Was it enough to pay his funeral expenses?”

Jones nodded. “Yes. And a little bit to spare. About a million and a half.”

Mrs. Boone’s hands gripped tight. Her eyes glazed behind the thick glasses, and her lips moved soundlessly. After a while she drew a deep breath. “You’re not—joking?”

“No,” said Jones.

“You’re—you’re sure there’s no mistake?”

“No,” said Jones. “I don’t make mistakes—not when there’s a million and a half in the pot. I’ve been hunting your husband for two months.”

“A million and a half!” said Mrs. Boone dreamily.

“Yes,” said Jones. “Your husband can’t touch the principal, though. It’s in trust. That’s where I come in. I’m an investigator for the Suburban Mortgage and Trust Company. The company’s the trustee—handles the principal. Your husband gets the income—he and his heirs and assigns and what not—for twenty years. Then the principal sum goes to certain charities. The income amounts to over a thousand a week.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Boone. “Oh!” Her eyes began to gleam behind the glasses, and she swallowed. “Sarah!” she called, and there was a gasping catch in her voice. “Sarah! Sarah!”

There was the flip-flop of slippers in the hall, and a girl came and stopped in the doorway. She had a wide red mouth and cigarette drooping in the corner of it that slid a smooth blue stream of smoke up past her cheek and the faded blondness of her hair. She was big and heavy-boned, but had a lazy, cat-like gracefulness. Her eyes were a deep-sea blue, set far apart. They were narrowed sullenly now, and she looked Jones up and down.

“Well,” she said. “And now what?”

She wore a blue kimono with the sleeves rolled back and was wiping her hands on a towel. Her forearms were white and smoothly muscled. There were

birthmarks on both of them.

“Sarah,” said Mrs. Boone. “This gentleman here just came to tell us that your Uncle Semus died.”

“Too bad,” said Sarah. “What’d he do—bite himself on the tongue and die of hydrophobia?”

“No,” said Jones. “As a matter of fact he had a heart attack.”

“Somebody must have cheated him out of a nickel,” said Sarah. “That would do it, all right.”

“Don’t speak ill of the dead,” Mrs. Boone said in a gently reproving voice. “He left your father a lot of money.”

“How much?”

“The income from a million and a half,” Jones told her.

Sarah’s wide set eyes blinked once and then narrowed slowly. “Oh yeah? What’s the gag, mister?”

“No gag,” Jones said. “I don’t have anything to do with it. The trust company that handles the principal hired me to find you, and here you are. I’m through.”

“A million and a half,” said Sarah slowly. “About how much would that be a month?”

“Around five thousand.”

Sarah’s breath made a little hissing sound between her white teeth. “Five thousand a month! The old man will drink himself to death in a week.”

“Won’t make any difference to you if he does,” Jones said. “The income will go to your mother in that case.”

“Oh,” said Sarah thoughtfully. “It would, hey? That’s something that needs a little thinking about.”

Jones got up. “I’ll run down and see Mr. Boone before I leave town.”

Mrs. Boone blinked at him, worried. "He's in the City Hospital. But, I don't know. He's really pretty seriously ill. I don't know whether they'll let you in his room."

"I just want to look at him," Jones said. "I'll have to put it in my report. You say he fell?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Boone. "He came home late, and he was—"

"Fried," said Sarah. "Drunk as a skunk. He crawled up the front steps and started walking around in circles looking for the front door and fell down again. He cracked his noggin on the sidewalk. He'll get over it, though, I'm afraid."

"Sarah," said Mrs. Boone. "Sarah, now. He's your father."

"That's your fault," said Sarah. "Not mine."

"Well, I'll be going," Jones said.

"Mr. Morganwaite," Mrs. Boone said brightly, getting up with a sudden swish of her long skirt. "I must tell him! He'll be so pleased! I won't have to worry—" She hurried out of the room.

"Morganwaite?" Jones said inquiringly, looking at Sarah.

"He's an old stooge we keep around to clean up the joint now and then," Sarah told him. "He takes care of the old man when he gets potted. You probably saw him when you came in. He was sweepin' the basement stairs."

"Oh, yes," Jones said. "Well, so long."

"So long," Sarah said. "Lots of thanks, mister, for coming around and doing a Santa Claus for us."

Jones smiled. "I got paid for it." He went down the dark hall and out the doors past the two storks that were still leering at him and the world in general.

The city hospital was a great square pile of brick, masonry and steel that covered a complete city block. Three hours after he had visited the Boones, Jones rode up and down on seven elevators and limped through a mile and a half of silent cork-

floored corridors and finally located the section he wanted. He went in through a glass door in a glass partition that blocked off the short end of a hall. There was a middle-aged woman sitting behind a flat desk in a little cubby-hole off the corridor.

“Yes?” she said. Her voice had a low, practiced hush, and her face looked as stiff and white and starched as her uniform and cap.

“Hendrick Boone?” Jones inquired wearily.

She nodded. “Mr. Boone is in Room Eighteen Hundred.”

“Hah!” said Jones triumphantly, and shifted his weight from one foot to the other. “Can I see him?”

“No. Mr. Boone is allowed to receive no visitors except the members of his immediate family. His condition is very serious.”

“I’m not a visitor,” said Jones. “I just want to look at him. Don’t worry—it’s not curiosity. It’s my job. I was hired to find him.”

“He’s here.”

“Look,” said Jones. “How do you think that would sound in my report? I can’t say I think he’s here, or he’s supposed to be here, or somebody by his name is here, or you told me he’s here. I got to know he’s here. I’ve got to see him. They’re not paying me for guessing.”

The nurse regarded him silently.

“Just a peek,” said Jones. “Just open his door and give me a squint. I’ve got his picture and description. I won’t say a word to him.”

The nurse picked up a precisely sharpened pencil, opened a leather-bound notebook. “Your name, please?”

“Jones,” said Jones.

“Your first name?”

“Just Jones.”

The nurse looked up at him, and her lips tightened a little.

“All right,” said Jones quickly. “Don’t get mad. You asked for it, and that’s really my name—just plain Jones. J. P. Jones. See, my mother had a lot of kids, and she always thought she ought to give them something fancy in the way of first names on account of there being lots of Joneses around. She named ‘em Horatius and Alvimina and Evangeline and things like that. But she began to run out of names pretty soon, and she had an awful time with Number Twelve. She said: ‘If there’s any more, I’m not going to all this trouble. The next one is going to be just plain Jones.’ So here I am.”

The nurse wrote in her book. “Address?”

“Suburban Mortgage and Trust—New York City.” She closed the notebook, laid the pencil carefully beside it. “This way, please.” She went along the hall to the last door on the right and, standing in front of it, turned to look at Jones. “You are not to speak to him. You understand?”

“Right,” said Jones.

The door swished a little, opening slowly. The room was a small one, and the high iron bed was in the corner beside the big window. The man in the bed made a bulging mound of the covers. He was lying on his back, and there was a white bandage like an adhesive and gauze skullcap on his head. There was something the matter with his face.

The nurse made a gasping sound, and her starched stiffness seemed to crack. She ran across to the bed, and Jones trailed right behind her. She fumbled under the covers, found the man’s limply slack wrist. It was a thick wrist, big-boned, and the hand was big and square and powerful.

The nurse’s voice was breathlessly small. “No—pulse. He strangled himself—”

“He didn’t have to do it, himself,” Jones said. “He had some help.” He pointed to the red blotches, slowly turning dark now, on the thick throat.

“Pulmotor,” the nurse said, and started for the door.

Jones caught her arm, spun her around. “No. A pulmotor won’t do him any good. Look at the color of those marks on his throat. Who came to see him this afternoon?”

The nurse jerked against his grip. “His daughter. She left a half hour ago. Said—he was asleep.”

“He was, all right,” said Jones. “You sure it was his daughter? Sarah? You’ve seen her before?”

“Yes—yes. Let go!”

“You sure it was Sarah?” Jones repeated. “You positively saw her?”

“Yes! She was veiled, but her arms—the birthmarks—”

“Oh, yeah,” said Jones. “Anybody else come?”

“No!” She twisted free, ran out the door.

Jones looked closely at the face of the man on the bed. It was Hendrick

Boone. Jones went out of the room. There was no one in sight in the corridor, and he went out through the glass partition and walked along the hall until he found a stairway and went down it.

In five minutes, he came out in the main entrance hall of the hospital and entered one of the public telephone booths beside the reception desk. He consulted the directory, finally deposited a nickel and dialed a number. He could hear the telephone at the other end ring and ring. It rang for a long time while Jones squinted at the black hard-rubber mouthpiece in front of him and muttered to himself inaudibly. Finally, the line clicked.

“Hello,” a voice said casually.

“Is Sarah Boone there?” Jones asked.

“Who?”

“Sarah Boone.”

“Where?”

Jones drew a deep breath. “Oh, it’s you again, is it? Listen, Morganwaite, this is Jones, the detective that was there this morning. I want to know if Sarah Boone is there and by there I mean where you are. Now, quit playing around and answer me.”

“No,” said Morganwaite.

Jones choked and then recovered himself. “Are you saying no, you won’t answer me, or no, she isn’t there?”

“No, she isn’t here.”

“Is Mrs. Boone there?”

“No. She left as soon as she got Sarah’s message.”

“Message?” Jones said. “Sarah sent her a message?”

“Yes.”

“How do you know?”

“Mrs. Boone told me.”

“When?”

“When she got it.”

“That’s what I want to know!” Jones said explosively. “When did she get it?”

Morganwaite was silent while he evidently considered the matter at some length. “About a half hour ago.”

“What did the message say?” Jones asked.

“I don’t know. Mrs. Boone didn’t say. She just left.”

“What kind of a message was it? Telephone—telegraph?”

“No.”

“Well, what kind?”

“A written message—in an envelope.”

“Who brought it? Come on now, shake yourself and think hard.”

“It was a boy,” said Morganwaite pensively. “A boy in a gray uniform on a red bicycle. A small boy with freckles.”

“Thanks,” said Jones. He hung up, took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. Then he got up and walked quickly out of the hospital.

There was a taxi-stand across the street. Only one taxi was there now, and its driver was sitting disconsolately on the running-board cleaning his fingernails with a jackknife. He stood up when Jones approached and said, “Taxi?” in a not very hopeful voice.

“Is there a messenger service around town that specializes in red bikes and gray uniforms?” Jones asked him.

“Sure. Bullet Service.”

“Have they got a branch office near here?”

“Sure, on Court Street. Three blocks down and one to your right.”

“Show me,” said Jones. He opened the door of the taxi, climbed in, and plumped himself down on the seat with a sigh of relief.

It was a ‘small, neat office with a big plate glass window that ran clear across the front and had an enormous bullet painted on it with red lines trailing behind to show it was traveling at tremendous speed. There were several people waiting when Jones limped up to the high counter and leaned on it with his elbow, looking as mysterious and hard-boiled as possible in view of the fact that his feet were hurting him more and more all the time.

A clerk with a polished haircut and a vacantly cordial smile stepped up to the other side of the counter. “Yes.”

“I’m a detective,” Jones sneered at him. “Don’t act funny. Just be natural. Treat me like anybody else.”

The clerk gulped. “Police! What—”

“Shut up,” said Jones. “I said act natural. I want some information about a party who sent a message by one of your boys to Mrs. Hendrick Boone at Forty-five-fifteen Raleigh Street. Was it sent from this branch?”

The clerk nodded once, then again, and finally said, “Yes,” in a frightened stage whisper.

“When?”

“About—about an hour ago.”

“Did a woman send it?”

“Yes,” the clerk said. He swallowed and then said: “Her ‘name was Sarah Boone.”

“So?” said Jones sharply. “And how do you know that?”

“Well, we have a rule about messages. A few months ago someone started sending poison-pen letters—anonymous—through our messenger service. Brought us a lot of bad publicity. Now, we require anyone sending a sealed message to sign it in our presence. This lady did.”

“What’d she look like?” Jones asked.

The clerk stared. “Well, she was a woman—I mean, sort of young, I think. She was veiled. I didn’t notice. She had a lot of birthmarks on her arms.”

“Yeah,” said Jones absently. He squinted thoughtfully at the clerk for a moment, then suddenly pulled one of the blank pads of paper on the counter toward him, picked up a pencil, and wrote rapidly You’re a liar.

“I’m not!” the clerk denied, instantly indignant. “You—”

Jones slapped the pad down. “I thought so! You’re a shark at reading

handwriting upside down, aren't you? That's the why of your signature rule, to give you boys a chance to spot a poison-pen letter before it goes out. Now, what did Sarah Boone's message say? Don't stall me."

The clerk shifted uneasily. "Well, I can't repeat it, word for word. I didn't pay enough attention. I saw right away it wasn't anything like what we've been looking for. It was headed 'Dear Mother,' and it said something about a lot of serious trouble and for the mother to meet her right away at Ten-eleven Twelfth Avenue."

"Where?" Jones asked.

"Ten-eleven Twelfth Avenue. I remembered that on account of the sequence of figures—ten, eleven, twelve. I was thinking that ought to be a lucky address—"

"Maybe not so lucky," said Jones. "Keep this under your hat—if you have a hat. Thanks."

Half the pickets were gone out of the fence, and it swayed backward wearily toward the wet brown square of earth that had once been a lawn. The house was gaunt and weather-beaten and ugly, and it had boards nailed haphazardly across the windows on the lower floor. It looked long deserted. A sign beside the gate said For Sale or Lease and gave the name of a realty company.

Jones looked from the sign to the house and back again, squinting thoughtfully. He turned his head slowly. There were no other houses within a half block.

Jones said, "Huh," to himself. He dropped his right hand into the pocket of the trenchcoat. He was carrying a pair of flat brass knuckles in the pocket, and he slid his fingers through the metal loops and closed his fist. He unfastened the middle button of the coat with his left hand and touched the butt of the .38 Police Positive he carried in his waistband. Then he nudged the sagging gate open with his knee and strolled aimlessly up the narrow walk.

There were some children playing in the street a block away, and their excited cries carried high and shrill in the stillness. Jones' feet made hollow thumps on the steps, on the damp-warped boards of the porch. The front door was open about an inch. Jones took his right hand out of his coat pocket and rapped with the brass knuckles. The echoes came back from empty rooms, hollow and thin and ghostly. Jones put his right hand behind him and waited. Nothing happened.

Jones closed the fingers of his left hand more firmly around the grip of the Police Positive and then suddenly kicked the door open and stepped to one side. The door swung in a dark, silent arc and banged against the wall. After about thirty seconds, Jones looked cautiously around the edge of the doorway and saw Mrs. Boone and Sarah.

Mrs. Boone was lying in front of the door. She wore a long, old-fashioned coat with a thin fur collar and an old-fashioned hat that sat high on her gray hair. The hat was tipped sidewise now at a grotesquely jaunty angle. She was lying on her back, and she had one arm thrown across her face.

Sarah was crumpled in a heap under one of the boarded windows, and the failing sunlight made a barred pattern across her broad face. A little trickle of blood on her cheek glistened brightly. One smooth white arm was flung limply wide. Jones could see the birthmark on it. The lax fingers just touched a stubby automatic lying there beside her.

Jones came inside the room, taking one cautious step, then another. He knelt beside Mrs. Boone. She was breathing faintly. There was a swollen, blue-black welt on her cheek. Jones leaned over Sarah and touched the smooth white arm. Then he suddenly spun around and ran out of the room. He ran down the walk, through the gate, on down the street. He ran two blocks to a corner drugstore, dodged into a telephone booth, dropped a nickel in the instrument, and dialed the operator.

“Ambulance,” he said breathlessly.

Dusk was a soft-gray smoothness closing down slowly over the row of houses that were just alike when Jones stopped on the sidewalk in front of the Boones’ and looked up the steep front stairs at Morganwaite. Morganwaite was sitting on the top step, leaning forward weakly, as if he had collapsed there. His broom was lying beside him, and he had the evening paper spread across his knees.

“Hello,” Jones said, and climbed the steps slowly and sat down beside him..

Morganwaite’s hand was trembling a little, and he touched the paper on his knees with his forefinger gingerly. “This paper—I picked it up. The newsboy—delivered it just like any other night. It says that Sarah killed her father and tried to kill her mother and then—had an attack of remorse and killed herself.”

“It’s mostly right,” said Jones. “Only Sarah didn’t kill herself. She isn’t dead.”

“Not dead,” Morganwaite repeated dully.

“No. They thought she was, at first. I did, too. I never saw anybody that looked deader. But the bullet was a small-caliber one. It didn’t penetrate her brain. Gave her a multiple skull-fracture. It’s a toss-up whether she’ll pull through or not. The doc thinks she’s got a good chance. Funny thing—she’s in the same room her father was in at the hospital. That’s the wing where they put the head injuries, and it was the only room vacant. She doesn’t know it, of course. She’s unconscious.”

“Mrs. Boone,” Morganwaite said. “There—there was no mistake about her? She’s—all right?”

Jones nodded. “Just a concussion and shock. She’s not even in the hospital. She’s staying at a private nursing-home.”

“Sarah,” said Morganwaite. “I can’t believe it. I can’t think she’d do that.”

“People do,” said Jones. He stretched his feet out on the stairs, grunting painfully. “Chilblains—I get ‘em every spring. They’re killing me. Ever have ‘em?”

“No,” said Morganwaite.

Jones sighed. “You’re lucky. Can you look after things around the place here for a couple days? Mrs. Boone will be O.K. by then.”

“Yes,” said Morganwaite.

Jones got up. “Well—I’ve got to go. So long.”

Morganwaite didn’t answer. He sat staring straight ahead with eyes that were wide and unseeing.

There were two big stone pillars on either side of the broad walk that led up to the entrance of the City Hospital. Jones was leaning against one of them, a thin indistinguishable shadow in the darkness, with his hat pulled low over his eyes. He was peering around the edge of the pillar, up toward the entrance of the

hospital. After a moment, he stepped from behind the pillar, walked quickly up to the steps, pushed the plate glass door open.

A thick-set man with square, heavy shoulders was standing just inside the door. He wore a blue overcoat and a black felt hat, and he had a thin white scar on his face that ran from the corner of his left eye straight down across his cheek to the line of his jaw.

“Jones?” he asked softly.

“Yes,” said Jones in a surprised voice.

The scarred man stepped forward and picked up Jones by the front of the trenchcoat. He swung Jones around and slammed him against the wall.

“Careful,” said Jones. “Don’t step on my feet, or I’ll kill you.”

He said it in such a murderously calm voice that the scarred man let go of him. Jones straightened the front of his coat with a jerk and a shrug of his shoulders. “You don’t have to tell me,” he said. “I know you’re a cop.”

“Yeah,” said the scarred man. “Maybe you didn’t think there were any cops in this town. Maybe you think you’ve been playing a little game of hide-and-seek with yourself. What’s the big idea of trying to make us look like monkeys?”

“I can’t help what you look like. You wanted to see me, you said.”

“All right. You’ve been in this case from the first. In fact, you started the ball rolling. You found Hendrick Boone. Did you stick around? No, you ducked out before we got here. You found the other two. Now, just what do you think you’re doing?”

“Trying to find a murderer.”

The scarred man stared at him. “Are you so dumb you haven’t figured it out yet? Sarah Boone did for her father and tried to do for her mother so she’d get the money her uncle left.”

“Did she?” said Jones.

“Why, sure. What—” The scarred man’s hard eyes narrowed. “Oh, so you’ve got something else up your sleeve, have you? All right, then. Who is the murderer?”

“The person I was following. You can come along and take the credit for the arrest, if you don’t bother me with a lot of dumb questions.”

The feet of Jones and the scarred man were soft and noiseless on the cork flooring. They walked side by side, tensely, and ahead of them was the bright, clean glitter of the glass partition that blocked off the short corridor where Hendrick Boone’s room had been.

Through it they could see the nurse sitting behind her desk and looking up into Mrs. Hendrick Boone’s thick glasses and shaking her head in a blank, surprised way. Jones nodded at the scarred man and then reached down and turned the knob on the glass door very softly.

“No,” said Jones. “Sarah isn’t here. That was just a gag to see if I couldn’t get you out from under cover. You really killed Sarah. She’s in the morgue. Your feet are too big, Mrs. Boone.”

Mrs. Boone’s skirt rustled silkily. Mrs. Boone’s white-kid gloves made a blurred streak rising above the collar of her old coat, flipping down again. The knife was a flat, hissing glitter coming at Jones.

The scarred man ducked with an inarticulate cry. Jones dove under the knife and it smashed through the glass partition and rattled on the corridor floor beyond. Jones’ shoulder hit against bony knees. There was a strangled cry, and Mrs. Boone’s coat ballooned clumsily, falling..

Jones got up, drawing in a long breath. “You were a big help,” he said to the scarred man. “Thanks.” He looked at the white-faced nurse. “Sorry, Miss. I didn’t figure on any knife-throwing.”

The scarred man pointed. “She—Mrs. Boone—she killed her husband and daughter?”

“No,” said Jones. “Of course not. Morganwaite killed them. What do you think I just tackled him for?”

“Him?” the scarred man said blankly.

Jones leaned down and picked up Mrs. Boone's glasses and loosened the collar of Mrs. Boone's coat and pulled it down. Morganwaite's face looked white and peaceful and kindly.

"Morganwaite killed Sarah and Hendrick Boone," Jones said. "He did it so he could marry Mrs. Boone and live in comfort on her money. He had been planning it even before I turned up. Mrs. Boone had a little property. The news I brought about the trust fund just gave him added incentive. I don't think there's any doubt that he would have married Mrs. Boone had his plan gone through. She was a timid, trusting soul, beaten down by years of living with her drunken husband. She wouldn't be hard for anyone as clever as Morganwaite."

"Well, how?" said the scarred man.

"Easy for him," said Jones. "He's quite a female impersonator. Must have been an old-time actor. He looks like one. First, he got rid of Sarah. On some pretext, he got her to go to that old house on Twelfth Street. He'd picked out the spot a long time ago. He shot her when he got her there— in the temple, close enough so it would look like suicide. Then he dressed himself in Sarah's clothes, painted some birthmarks on his arms, came down here and finished Hendrick Boone. Then, still pretending to be Sarah and laying a nice plain trail, he sent a note to Mrs. Boone and signed Sarah's name to it, asking Mrs. Boone to meet Sarah at the house on Twelfth."

"Huh!" said the scarred man. "You mean the old lady didn't even know her kid's writing?"

Jones held up the thick glasses. "Morganwaite thought of that, too. He stole Mrs. Boone's glasses. Look at 'em. They're an inch thick. Mrs. Boone couldn't read anything without 'em. Some neighbor read the note to her, or else the messenger did. Of course, she didn't question the writing. She went right down to the house on Twelfth. Morganwaite was waiting there for her. He hit her on the head as she came in, before she saw him, and left her there. The set-up was supposed to look as if Sarah had planned to kill her father and mother, but that, when she got to the point of actually doing for her mother, she had an attack of remorse and killed herself, instead.

"I was pretty sure of the set-up, but I didn't have any proof. So I went around and told Morganwaite Sarah wasn't dead—that she was here. Well, that upset his

whole apple cart. Sarah knew he shot her, and, if she told, why there he'd be in the soup. So he came down to finish the job. This time he dressed up in Mrs. Boone's clothes to keep from being identified. He knew Mrs. Boone wouldn't be suspected, actually, because she was in a rest-home and would have an airtight alibi."

Jones looked around. "If you've got any more questions, we'll have to go somewhere where I can sit down. My feet are killing me."