Margaret Tharp habitually passed from slumber to clear-eyed liveliness without intermediate languor. This morning nothing was unusual in her awakening save the absence of the eight o'clock San Francisco boat's sad hooting. Across the room the clock's hands pointed like one long hand to a few minutes past seven. Margaret rolled over beneath the covers, putting her back to the sunpainted west wall, and closed her eyes again.

But drowsiness would not come. She was definitely awake to the morning excitement of the next-door chickens, the hum of an automobile going toward the ferry, the unfamiliar fragrance of magnolia in the breeze tickling her cheek with loose hair-ends. She got up, slid feet into soft slippers, shoulders into bathrobe, and went downstairs to start toast and coffee before dressing.

A fat man in black was on the point of leaving the kitchen.

Margaret cried out, catching the robe to her throat with both hands.

Red and crystal glinted on the hand with which the fat man took off his black derby. Holding the doorknob, he turned to face Margaret. He turned slowly, with the smooth precision of a globe revolving on a fixed axis, and he managed his head with care, as if it balanced an invisible burden.

“You—are—Mrs.—Tharp.”

Sighing puffs of breath spaced his words, cushioned them, gave them the semblance of gems nested separately in raw cotton. He was a man past forty, with opaquely glistening eyes whose blackness was repeated with variety of finish in moustache and hair, freshly ironed suit, and enamelled shoes. The dark skin of his face — ball-round over a tight stiff collar — was peculiarly coarse, firm-grained, as if it had been baked. Against this background his tie was half a foot of scarlet flame.

“Your—husband—is—not—home.”

It was no more a question than his naming her had been, but he paused expectantly. Margaret, standing where she had stopped in the passageway between stairs and kitchen, was still too startled not to say 'No.'

“You're—expecting—him.”

There was nothing immediately threatening in the attitude of this man who should not have been in her kitchen but who seemed nowise disconcerted by her finding him there. Margaret's words came almost easily. “Not just — I expect him, yes, but I don't know exactly when he will come.”

Black hat and black shoulders, moving together, achieved every appearance of a bow without disturbing round head's poise.

“You—will—so—kindly—tell—him—when—he—comes—I—am—waiting. I—await—him—at—the—hotel.” The spacing puffs prolonged his sentences interminably, made of his phrases thin-spread word-groups whose meanings were elusive. “You—will—tell—him—Leonidas—Doucas—is— waiting. He—will—know. We—are—friends—very—good—friends. You—will—not—forget—the—name—Leonidas—Doucas.”

“Certainly I shall tell him. But I really do not know when he will come.”

The man who called himself Leonidas Doucas nodded frugally beneath the unseen something his head supported. Darkness of moustache and skin exaggerated whiteness of teeth. His smile went away as stiffly as it came, with as little elasticity.

“You—may—expect—him. He—comes—now.”

He revolved slowly away from her and went out of the kitchen, shutting the door behind him.

Margaret ran tiptoe across the room to twist the key in the door. The lock's inner mechanism rattled loosely, the bolt would not click home. The warmly sweet fragrance of magnolia enveloped her. She gave up the struggle with the broken lock and dropped down on a chair beside the door. Points of dampness were on her back. Under gown and robe her legs were cold. Doucas, not the breeze, had brought the bream of magnolia to her in bed. His un-guessed presence in the bedroom had wakened her. He had been up there looking with his surface-shining eyes for Guy. If Guy had been home, asleep beside her? A picture came of Doucas bending over the bed, his head still stiffly upright, a bright blade in his jeweled fist. She shivered.

Then she laughed. Little silly! How conceivably could Guy — her hard-bodied, hard-nerved Guy, to whom violence was no more than addition to a bookkeeper — be harmed by a perfumed, asthmatic fat man? Whether Guy slept or Guy woke, if Doucas came as an enemy, then so much the worse for Doucas — a fleshbound house dog growling at her red wolf of a husband!

She jumped up from her chair and began to bustle with toaster and coffeepot.

Leonidas Doucas was put out of her mind by the news he had brought. Guy was coming home. The fat man in black had said so, speaking with assurance. Guy was coming home to fill the house with boisterous laughter, shouted blasphemies, tales of lawlessness in strangely named places; with the odours of tobacco and liquor; with odds and ends of rover's equipment that never could be confined to closet or room, but overflowed to litter the house from roof to cellar. Cartridges would roll underfoot; boots and belts would turn up in unexpected places; cigars, cigar ends, cigar ashes would be everywhere; empty bottles, likely as not, would get to the front porch to scandalise the neighbours.

Guy was coming home and there were so many things to be done in so small a house; windows and pictures and woodwork to be washed, furniture and floors to be polished, curtains to be hung, rugs to be cleaned. If only he did not come for two days, or even three.

The rubber gloves she had put aside as nuisances — had she put them in the hall closet or upstairs? She must find them. So much scrubbing to do, and her hands must not be rough for Guy. She frowned at the small hand raising toast to her mouth, accused it of roughness. She would have to get another bottle of lotion. If there was time after she finished her work, she might run over to the city for an afternoon. But first the house must be made bright and tidy, so Guy could tweak a stiff curtain and laugh, “A damned dainty nest for a bull like me to be stabled in!”

And perhaps tell of the month he had shared a Rat Island hut with two vermin-live Siwashes, sleeping three abed because their blankets were too few for division.

The two days Margaret had desired went by without Guy, another, others. Her habit of sleeping until the eight o'clock boat whistled up the hill was broken. She was dressed and moving around the house by seven, six, five-thirty one morning, repolishing already glowing fixtures, laundering some thing slightly soiled by yesterday's use, fussing through her rooms ceaselessly, meticulously, happily.

Whenever she passed the hotel on her way to the stores in lower Water Street she saw Doucas. Usually he was in the glass-fronted lobby, upright in the largest chair, facing the street, round, black-clothed, motionless.

Once he came out of the hotel as she passed.

He looked neither at her nor away from her, neither claimed recognition nor avoided it. Margaret smiled pleasantly, nodded pleasantly, and went on down the street away from his hat raised in a jewelled hand, her small head high. The fragrance of magnolia, going a dozen steps with her, deepened her feeling of somewhat amused, though lenient, graciousness.

The same high-held kindliness went with her through the streets, into the shops, to call on Dora Milner, to her own street door to welcome Agnes Peppier and Helen Chase. She made proud sentences for herself while she spoke other sentences, or listened to them. Guy moves among continents as easily as Tom Milner from drug counter to soda fountain, she thought while Dora talked of guest-room linen. He carries his life as carelessly in his hands as Ned Peppier his briefcase, she boasted to the tea she poured for Agnes and Helen, and sells his daring as Paul Chase sells high-grade corner lots.

These people, friends and neighbours, talked among themselves of “poor Margaret,”

“poor little Mrs. Tharp,” whose husband was notoriously a ruffian, always off some distant where, up to any imaginable sort of scoundrelism. They pitied her, or pretended to pity her, these owners of docile pets, because her man was a ranging beast who could not be penned, because he did not wear the dull uniform of respectability, did not walk along smooth, safe ways. Poor little Mrs. Tharp! She put her cup to her mouth to check the giggle that threatened to break in rudely on Helen's interpretation of a disputed bridge point.

“It really doesn't matter, so long as everyone knows what rule is to be followed before the game starts,” she said into a pause that asked words of her, and went on with her secret thinking.

What, she wondered with smug assurance that it never could have happened to her, would it be like to have for husband a tame, housebroken male who came regularly to meals and bed, whose wildest flying could attain no giddier height than an occasional game of cards, a suburbanite's holiday in San Francisco, or, at very most, a dreary adventure with some stray stenographer, manicurist, milliner?

Late on the sixth day that Margaret expected him, Guy came.

Preparing her evening meal in the kitchen, she heard the creaking halt of an automobile in front of the house. She ran to the door and peeped through the curtained glass. Guy stood on the sidewalk, his broad back to her, taking leather travelling bags out of the car that had brought him up from the ferry. She smoothed her hair with cold hands, smoothed her apron, and opened the door.

Guy turned from the machine, a bag in each hand, one under his arm. He grinned through a two-day stubble of florid beard and waved a bag as you would wave a handkerchief.

A torn cap was crooked on his tangled red hair, his chest bulged a corduroy jacket of dilapidated age, grimy khaki trousers were tight around knotted thighs and calves, once-white canvas shoes tried to enclose feet meant for larger shoes, and failed to the

extent of a brown-stockinged big toe. A ruddy viking in beggar's misfits. There would be other clothes in his bags. Rags were his homecoming affectation, a labourer-home-from-the-fields gesture. He strode up the walk, careless bags brushing geraniums and nasturtiums back.

Margaret's throat had some swollen thing in it. Fog blurred everything but the charging red face. An unvoiced whimper shook her breast. She wanted to run to him as to a lover. She wanted to run from him as from a ravisher. She stood very still in her doorway, smiling demurely with dry, hot mouth.

His feet padded on steps, on porch. Bags fell away from him. Thick arms reached for her.

The odours of alcohol, sweat, brine, tobacco cut her nostrils. Bearded flesh scrubbed her cheek. She lost foothold, breath, was folded into him, crushed, bruised, bludgeoned by hard lips. Eyes clenched against the pain in them, she clung hard to him who alone was firmly planted in a whirling universe. Foul endearments, profane love names rumbled in her ear. Another sound was even nearer — a throaty cooing. She was laughing.

Guy was home.

The Evening was old before Margaret remembered Leonidas Doucas.

She was sitting on her husband's knees, leaning forward to look at the trinkets, Ceylonese spoils, heaped on the table before her. Cockleshell earrings half hid her ears, heavy gold incongruities above the starched primness of her housedress.

Guy — bathed, shaved, and all in fresh white — tugged beneath his shirt with his one free hand. A moneybelt came sluggishly away from his body, thudded on the table, and lay there thick and apathetic as an overfed snake.

Guy's freckled fingers worked at the belt's pockets. Green banknotes slid out, coins rolled out to be bogged by the paper, green notes rustled out to bury the coins.

“Oh, Guy!” she gasped. “All that?”

He chuckled, jiggling her on his knees, and fluttered the green notes up from the table like a child playing with fallen leaves.

“All that. And every one of 'em cost a pint of somebody's pink blood. Maybe they look cool and green to you, but I'm telling you every last one of 'em is as hot a red as the streets of Colombo, if you could only see it.”

She refused to shudder under the laugh in his red-veined eyes, laughed, and stretched a tentative finger to the nearest note.

“How much is there, Guy?”

“I don't know. I took 'em moving,” he boasted. “No time for bookkeeping. It was bing, bang, get clear and step in again. We dyed the Yodaela red that one night. Mud under, darkness over, rain everywhere, with a brown devil for every raindrop. A pith helmet hunting for us with a flashlight that never found anything but a stiff-necked Buddha up on a rock before we put it out of business.”

The “stiff-necked Buddha” brought Doucas's face to Margaret.

“Oh! There was a man here to see you last week. He's waiting to see you at the hotel. His name is Doucas, a very stout man with —”

“The Greek!”

Guy Tharp put his wife off his knees. He put her off neither hastily nor roughly, but with that deliberate withdrawal of attention which is the toy's lot when serious work is at hand.

“What else did he have to say?”

“That was all, except that he was a friend of yours. It was early in the morning, and I found him in the kitchen, and I know he had been upstairs. Who is he, Guy?”

“A fellow,” her husband said vaguely around the knuckle he bit. He seemed to attach no importance to, not even be interested by, the news that Doucas had come furtively into his house. “Seen him since then?”

“Not to talk to, but I see him every time I pass the hotel.”

Guy took the knuckle from between his teeth, rubbed his chin with a thumb, hunched his thick shoulders, let them fall lax, and reached for Margaret. Slumped comfortably in his chair, holding her tight to him with hard arms, he fell to laughing, teasing, boasting again, his voice a mellow, deep-bodied rumble under her head. But his eyes did not pale to their normal sapphire. Behind jest and chuckle an aloof thoughtfulness seemed to stand.

Asleep that night, he slept with the soundness of child or animal, but she knew he had been long going to sleep.

Just before daylight she crept out of bed and carried the money into another room to

count it. Twelve thousand dollars were there.

In the morning Guy was merry, full of laughter and words that had no alien seriousness behind them. He had stories to tell of a brawl in a Madras street, or another in a gaming house in Saigon; of a Finn, met in the Queen's Hotel in Kandy, who was having a giant raft towed to a spot in mid-Pacific where he thought he could live with least annoyance from the noise of the earth's spinning.

Guy talked, laughed, and ate breakfast with the heartiness of one who does not ordinarily know when he will eat again. The meal done, he lit a black cigar and stood up. “Reckon I'll trot down the hill for a visit with your friend Leonidas, and see what's on his mind.”

When he mauled her to his chest to kiss her, she felt the bulk of a revolver bolstered under his coat. She went to a front window to watch him go away from the house. He swaggered carelessly down the hill, shoulders swinging, whistling, 'Bang Away, My Lulu.'

Back in the kitchen, Margaret made a great to-do with the breakfast dishes, setting about cleaning them as if it were a difficult task attempted for the first time. Water splashed on her apron, twice the soap slipped from her hand to the floor, a cup's handle came away in her fingers. Then dishwashing became accustomed work, no longer an occupation to banish unwanted thoughts. The thoughts came, of Guy's uneasiness last night, of his laughter that had lacked honesty.

She fashioned a song that compared a fleshbound house dog with a red wolf; a man to whom violence was no more than addition to a bookkeeper, with a perfumed, asthmatic fat man. Repetition gave the unspoken chant rhythm, rhythm soothed her, took her mind from what might be happening in the hotel down the hill.

She had finished the dishes and was scouring the sink when Guy came back. She looked a brief smile up at him and bent her face to her work again, to hide the questions she knew her eyes held.

He stood in the doorway watching her.

“Changed my mind,” he said presently. “I'll let him write his own ticket. If he wants to see me, he knows the way. It's up to him.”

He moved away from the door. She heard him going upstairs.

Her hands rested on idle palms in the sink. The white porcelain of the sink was white ice. Its chill went through her arms into her body.

An hour later, when Margaret went upstairs, Guy was sitting on the side of the bed running a cloth through the barrel of his black revolver. She fidgeted around the room, pretending to be busy with this and that, hoping he would answer the questions she could not ask. But he talked of unrelated things. He cleaned and greased the revolver with the slow, fondling thoroughness of a chronic whittler sharpening his knife, and talked of matters that had no bearing on Leonidas Doucas.

The rest of the day he spent indoors, smoking and drinking the afternoon through in the living-room. When he leaned back, the revolver made a lump under his left armpit. He was merry and profane and boastful. For the first time Margaret saw his thirty-five years in his eyes, and in the individual clearness of each thick facial muscle.

After dinner they sat in the dining-room with no illumination but the light of fading day. When that was gone neither of them got up to press the electric button beside the portiered hall door. He was as garrulous as ever. She found speech difficult, but he did not seem to notice that. She was never especially articulate with him.

They were sitting in complete darkness when the doorbell rang.

“If that's Doucas, show him in,” Guy said. “And then you'd better get upstairs out of the way.”

Margaret turned on the lights before she left the room, and looked back at her husband. He was putting down the cold cigar stub he had been chewing. He grinned mockingly at her.

“And if you hear a racket,” he suggested, “you'd better stick your head under the covers and think up the best way to get blood out of rugs.”

She held herself very erect going to the door and opening it.

Doucas's round black hat came off to move with his shoulders in a counterfeit bow that swept the odour of magnolia to her.

“Your—husband — is — in.”

“Yes.” Her chin was uptilted so she could seem to smile on him, though he stood a head taller than she, and she tried to make her smile very sweetly gentle. “Come in. He is expecting you.”

Guy, sitting where she had left him, fresh cigar alight, did not get up to greet Doucas. He took the cigar from his mouth and let smoke leak between his teeth to garnish the good-natured insolence of his smile.

“Welcome to our side of the world,” he said.

The Greek said nothing, standing just inside the portiere.

Margaret left them thus, going through the room and up the back stairs. Her husband's voice came up the steps behind her in a rumble of which she could pick no words. If Doucas spoke she did not hear him.

She stood in her dark bedroom, clutching the foot of the bed with both hands, the trembling of her body making the bed tremble. Out of the night questions came to torment her, shadowy questions, tangling, knotting, raveling in too swiftly shifting a profusion for any to be clearly seen, but all having something to do with a pride that in eight years had become a very dear thing.

They had to do with a pride in a man's courage and hardihood, courage and hardihood that could make of thefts, of murder, of crimes dimly guessed, wrongs no more reprehensible than a boy's apple-stealing. They had to do with the existence or non-existence of this gilding courage, without which a rover might be no more than a shoplifter on a geographically larger scale, a sneak thief who crept into strangers' lands instead of houses, a furtive, skulking figure with an aptitude for glamorous autobiography. Then pride would be silliness.

Out of the floor came a murmur, all that distance and intervening carpentry left of words that were being said down in her tan-papered dining-room. The murmur drew her toward the dining-room, drew her physically, as the questions drove her.

She left her slippers on the bedroom floor. Very softly, stockinged feet carried her down the dark front stairs, tread by tread. Skirts held high and tight against rustling, she crept down the black stairs toward the room where two men — equally strangers for the time — sat trafficking.

Beneath the portiere, and from either side, yellow light came to lay a pale, crooked 'U' on the hall floor. Guy's voice came through.

“... not there. We turned the island upside down from Dambulla all the way to the Kalawewa, and got nothing. I told you it was a bust. Catch those limeys leaving that much sugar lay round under their noses!”

“Dahl—said—it—was—there.”

Doucas's voice was soft with the infinitely patient softness of one whose patience is nearly at end.

Creeping to the doorway, Margaret peeped around the curtain. The two men and the

table between them came into the opening. Doucas's over-coated shoulder was to her. He sat straight up, hands inert on fat thighs, cocked profile inert. Guy's white-sleeved forearms were on the table. He leaned over them, veins showing in forehead and throat, smaller and more vivid around the blue-black of his eyes. The glass in front of him was empty; the one before Doucas still brimmed with dark liquor.

“I don't give a damn what Dahl says.” Guy's voice was blunt, but somehow missed finality. “I'm telling you the stuff wasn't there.”

Doucas smiled. His lips bared white teeth and covered them again in a cumbersome grimace that held as little of humour as of spontaneity.

“But—you—came—from—Ceylon—no—poorer—than—you—went.”

Guy's tongue-tip showed flat between his lips, vanished. He looked at his freckled hands on the table. He looked up at Doucas.

“I didn't. I brought fifteen thousand hard roundmen away with me, if it's any of your business,” he said, and then robbed his statement of sincerity, made a weak blustering of it, with an explanation. “I did a thing a man needed done. It had nothing to do with our game. It was after that blew up.”

“Yes. I—choose—to—doubt—it.”

Soft, sigh-cushioned, the words had a concussive violence no shouted You lie! could have matched.

Guy's shoulders bunched up, teeth clicked, blood pulsed in the veins that welted his face. His eyes flared purplishly at the dark baked mask before him, flared until the held breath in Margaret's chest became an agony.

The flare went down in the purple eyes. The eyes went down. Guy scowled at his hands, at his knuckles that were round white knobs.

“Suit yourself, brother,” he said, not distinctly.

Margaret swayed behind her shielding curtain, reason barely checking the instinctive hand with which she clutched for steadiness at it. Her body was a cold damp shell around a vacancy that had been until to-day — until, despite awakening doubts, this very instant — eight years' accumulation of pride. Tears wet her face, tears for the high-held pride that was now a ridiculous thing. She saw herself as a child going among adults, flaunting a Manila-paper bandeau, crying shrilly, “See my gold crown!”

“We—waste—time. Dahl—said—half—a—million—rupees. Doubt-less—it—was—less.

But—most—surely—half—that—amount—would-be—there.” The pad of breath before and after each word became by never-varying repetition an altogether unnatural thing. Each word lost association with each other word, became a threatening symbol hung up in the room. “Not—regarding—odd—amounts—my—portion—would—be—say—seventy-five—thousand—dollars. I—will—take—that.”

Guy did not look up from his hard white knuckles. His voice was sullen.

“Where do you expect to find it?”

The Greek's shoulders moved the least fraction of an inch. Because he had for so long not moved at all that slight motion became a pronounced shrug.

“You—will—give—it—to—me.
You—would—not—have—a—word—dropped—to—the—British—consul
—of—one—who—was—Tom—Berkey—in—Cairo—not—many—yesterdays—back.”

Guy's chair spun back from him. He lunged across the table.

Margaret clapped a palm to her mouth to stop the cry her throat had no strength to voice.

The Greek's right hand danced jewels in Guy's face. The Greek's left hand materialissd a compact pistol out of nothing.

“Sit—down—my—friend.”

Hanging over the table, Guy seemed to become abruptly smaller, as oncoming bodies do when stopped. For a moment he hung there. Then he grunted, regained his balance, picked up his chair, and sat down. His chest swelled and shrank slowly.

“Listen, Doucas,” he said with great earnestness, “you're all wrong. I've got maybe ten thousand dollars left. I got it myself, but if you think you've got a kick coming, I'll do what's right. You can have half of the ten thousand.”

Margaret's tears were gone. Pity for self had turned to hatred of the two men who sat in her dining-room making a foolish thing of her pride. She still trembled, but with anger now, and contempt for her boasted red wolf of a husband, trying to buy off the fat man who threatened him. The contempt she felt for her husband was great enough to include Doucas. She had a desire to step through the doorway, to show them that contempt. But nothing came of the impulse. She would not have known what to do, what to say to them. She was not of their world.

Only her pride had been in her husband's place in that world.

“Five—thousand—dollars—is—nothing.
Twenty—thousand—rupees—I—spent—preparing-Ceylon—for—you.”

Margaret's helplessness turned contempt in on herself. The very bitterness of that contempt drove her to attempt to justify, recapture some fragment of, her pride in Guy. After all, what knowledge had she of his world? What standards had she with which to compute its values? Could any man win every encounter? What else could Guy do under Doucas's pistol?

The futility of the self-posed questions angered her. The plain truth was she had never seen Guy as a man, but always as a half-fabulous being. The weakness of any defence she could contrive for him lay in his needing a defence. Not to be ashamed of him was a sorry substitute for her exultance in him. To convince herself that he was not a coward still would leave vacant the place lately occupied by her joy in his daring.

Beyond the curtain the two men bargained on across the table.

“... every—cent. Men—do—not—profitably—betray—me.”

She glared through the gap between portiere and frame, at fat Doucas with his pistol level on tabletop, at red Guy pretending to ignore the pistol. Rage filled her weaponless, impotent rage. Or was it weaponless? The light-button was beside the door. Doucas and Guy were occupied with one another —

Her hand moved before the motive impulse was full-formed inside her. The situation was intolerable; darkness would change the situation, however slightly, therefore darkness was desirable. Her hand moved between portiere and doorframe, bent to the side as if gifted with sight, drove her finger into the button.

Roaring blackness was streaked by a thin bronze flame. Guy bellowed out, an animal noise without meaning. A chair slammed to the floor. Feet shuffled, stamped, scuffled. Grunts punctuated snarls.

Concealed by night, the two men and what they did became for the first time real to Margaret, physically actual. They were no longer figures whose substance was in what they did to her pride. One was her husband, a man who could be maimed, killed. Doucas was a man who could be killed. They could die, either or both, because of a woman's vanity. A woman, she, had flung them toward death rather than confess she could be less than a giant's wife.

Sobbing, she pushed past the portiere and with both hands hunted for the switch that had come so readily to her finger a moment ago. Her hands fumbled across a wall that shuddered when bodies crashed into it. Behind her, fleshed bone smacked on fleshed

bone. Feet shuffled in time with hoarse breathing. Guy cursed. Her fingers fluttered back and forth, to and fro across wallpaper that was unbroken by electric fixture.

The scuffling of feet stopped. Guy's cursing stopped in mid-syllable. A purring gurgle had come into the room, swallowing every other sound, giving density, smothering weight to the darkness, driving Margaret's frenzied fingers faster across the wall.

Her right hand found the doorframe. She held it there, pressed it there until the edge of the wood cut into her hand, holding it from frantic search while she made herself form a picture of the wall. The light-switch was a little below her shoulder, she decided.

“Just below my shoulder,” she whispered harshly, trying to make herself hear the words above the purring gurgle. Her shoulder against the frame, she flattened both hands on the wall, moved them across it.

The purring gurgle died, leaving a more oppressive silence, the silence of wide emptiness.

Cold metal came under sliding palm. A finger found the button, fumbled too eagerly atop it, slid off. She clutched at the button with both hands. Light came. She whirled her back to the wall.

Across the room Guy straddled Doucas, holding his head up from the floor with thick hands that hid the Greek's white collar. Doucas's tongue was a bluish pendant from a bluish mouth. His eyes stood out, dull. The end of a red silk garter hung from one trouser-leg, across his shoe.

Guy turned his head toward Margaret, blinking in the light.

“Good girl,” he commended her. “This Greek was no baby to jump at in daylight.”

One side of Guy's face was wet red under a red furrow. She sought escape in his wound from the implication of was.

“You're hurt!”

He took his hands away from the Greek's neck and rubbed one of them across the cheek. It came away dyed red. Doucas's head hit the floor hollowly and did not quiver.

“Only nicked me,” Guy said. “I need it to show self-defence.”

The reiterated implication drove Margaret's gaze to the man on the floor, and quickly away.

“He is-?”

“Deader than hell,” Guy assured her.

His voice was light, tinged faintly with satisfaction.

She stared at him in horror, her back pressed against the wall, sick with her own part in this death, sick with Guy's callous brutality of voice and mien. Guy did not see these things. He was looking thoughtfully at the dead man.

“I told you I'd give him a bellyful if he wanted it,” he boasted. “I told him the same thing five years ago, in Malta.”

He stirred the dead Doucas gently with one foot. Margaret cringed against the wall, feeling as if she were going to vomit.

Guy's foot nudged the dead man slowly, reflectively. Guy's eyes were dull with distant things, things that might have happened five years ago in a place that to her was only a name on a map, vaguely associated with Crusades and kittens. Blood trickled down his cheek, hung momentarily in fattening drops, dripped down on the dead man's coat.

The poking foot stopped its ghoulish play. Guy's eyes grew wide and bright, his face lean with eagerness. He snapped fist into palm and jerked around to Margaret.

“By God! This fellow has got a pearl concession down in La Paz! If I can get down there ahead of the news of the killing, I can — Why, what's the matter?”

He stared at her, puzzlement wiping animation from his face.

Margaret's gaze faltered away from him. She looked at the overturned table, across the room, at the floor. She could not hold up her eyes for him to see what was in them. If understanding had come to him at once — but she could not stand there and look at him and wait for the thing in her eyes to burn into his consciousness.

She tried to keep that thing out of her voice.

“I'll bandage your cheek before we phone the police,” she said.