

CHAPTER IX

TWISTY MUNN

FOR a moment Jimmie Dale stood there staring at the door which he had just closed, his mental vision following the disreputable figure of Mother Margot as she went scuffling along out there on the street—to God knew where, and to what ultimate fate! Fear! He, too, knew fear. The past was full of that fear. It was upon him now. He told himself in almost a panicky and frantic sort of way that he would give all he possessed if she were out of this. Then he smiled thinly. The statement was inane, futile, and the phrase was the most hackneyed in the English language. Except one. The die was cast!

His mind snapped back to the immediate present, and he swung abruptly away from the door. If he was to accomplish anything to-night there was no time to indulge in vain wishings that things were other than they were! Much more to the point was Connie Gowan, alias the Ferret!

Something implacable crept into Jimmie Dale's face. That it was the Ferret whose trail the Gray Seal had so ironically disguised, that it was the Ferret who had killed Ray, he, Jimmie Dale, had not the slightest doubt—though to prove it, as he had told the Tocsin, was another matter. But first he must find the man. After that, in some way or another, the proof would come—it might take days or weeks—he meant to get

next to Connie Gowan—Smarlinghue would come to know the Ferret *intimately!*

Jimmie Dale suddenly took off his coat and vest, removed the leather girdle from around his waist, stored it away behind the baseboard, and put on his coat and vest again. There would be no need for any burglar's tools, or mask, or the gray seals in that little metal case to-night; and, if they were not a necessity, Smarlinghue was *safer* without them. The police, goaded into unusual activity, would be combing the underworld in their efforts to track down the Gray Seal, and raids on dens and dives might very well be the feature of the night. He, Jimmie Dale, did not know where his hunt for the Ferret would lead him before morning, but quite probably into some of those selfsame dens and dives; and it would be a very unhappy moment for Smarlinghue if unluckily there were a raid and he was searched—and that girdle with its damning proof that the police had at last run their quarry to earth was found upon him! Decidedly, the Sanctuary was the place for it to-night!

True, upon his person he still had an automatic and a flashlight, but, by comparison, they were articles of a most innocuous character; and, besides, they could be quickly disposed of in an emergency. If they proved to be embarrassing, it would take much less time to pitch them away, into a corner, say, or under a table, or out of a window, than it would take the police, no matter how "strong-armed" the squad might be, to break down a door!—and then even if found who could prove their ownership?

Was there anything else? Jimmie Dale glanced sharply around him, answered his own question with a

conclusive shake of his head, crossed over to the wheezy gas jet, turned out the light—and a minute later, with the Sanctuary door locked behind him, stepped out on the street.

Jimmie Dale traversed the intervening block quickly and reached the Bowery. But here he halted abruptly, staring up and down that one-time familiar thoroughfare in confusion and perplexity. He who had known it so well!

He had not been on the Bowery since before the war. Where he now stood had once been the very heart of it, swirling with life and activity—and now it was like a place of the dead. The Tocsin had told him he would not recognize it. He had expected changes. He had not expected a metamorphosis!

Back into his memory flashed the scenes of bygone days—the jostling crowds, the riotous noise, the glare of lights, the shouts of the pushcart vendors hawking their wares under the hiss of their gasoline banjo-torches, the squabbling of their customers; and here a “gape wagon” disgorging its occupants before the door of some “notorious” joint, the cold shivers almost visible as they ran down the passengers’ spines while the barker painted his epic picture of the “fearsome” sights soon to meet their gaze; the confusion of tongues; the mixture of races; rags and tatters; jewels and affluence. There had been no place like it in all the world. And now it was gone. Where there had been life, there was now almost desolation. Where there had been color, the only tints remaining were cold and drab and forbidding. Even the street itself was almost empty—there were very few pedestrians about.

Mechanically Jimmie Dale started forward along the

Bowery, walking in a downtown direction. He was conscious of a curious rush of emotions; a sense of strange loneliness that was almost one of dejection, as though something acutely intimate had gone out of his life; a yet stranger sense of unreality, which still left him incredulous in spite of the evidence of his own eyes; and, too, a sense of misgiving—like one who walked in strange places and was not sure he could find his way.

And then Jimmie Dale shrugged his shoulders philosophically. Well, even so! The passing of the Bowery, whether it was a matter for rejoicing or regret, was of no vital moment in his search for Connie Gowan. He had not expected to find the Ferret on the Bowery. There were still the haunts that would never change, and to those Smarlinghue needed no guide!

Jimmie Dale paused suddenly. A man sidling past him, a man who was several degrees more disreputable in appearance than he, as Smarlinghue, was, had opened a door on the street level and had disappeared inside. Jimmie Dale whistled low under his breath. From the glimpse he had been able to obtain of the interior, he had recognized the nature of the place instantly—not that he had ever seen one of these establishments before, for they were a product of the new and not of the old Bowery, but Carruthers in his frequent dissertations on what he called the shifting sands of crime in New York had spoken about them more than once. Commonly known as shock joints, Carruthers had dubbed them the Clubs of the Down-and-Outers.

Jimmie Dale stared speculatively at the door. Such places were as free of access as the old-time saloons, Carruthers had said. There would be no questions asked. It might be worth while to go in. Even in the old days

there had been plenty of down-and-outers amongst the lags and crooks, and there was always a chance that some of these were still eking out an existence in some such fashion as this. Who would be more ready to gossip about their own faded glories and the comings and goings of those who still were overlords in Crimeland's realm?—that is, to one they knew and recognized as a kindred soul—such as Smarlinghue!

Jimmie Dale pushed the door open and stepped inside. The place was none too well lighted and the tobacco smoke hung low; the atmosphere was fetid; the only ventilation seemed to be supplied by the occasional opening and closing of the street door. Smarlinghue coughed.

The room was long and narrow. On each side was a row of cheap chairs with table arms, the chairs much the worse for wear—like their occupants. There were perhaps twenty or twenty-five men seated or sprawled in the chairs in all stages of intoxication, from those relatively sober to those already in a comatose condition. At the far end of the room was a small bar, its shining foot-rail testifying to its constant patronage. On the floor was sawdust; everywhere was squalor.

"The passing of the Bowery," muttered Jimmie Dale to himself. "God save the mark!"

He scuffled up to the bar—noting that there was an empty chair or two from which presently he could unobtrusively scrutinize the faces around him. A hard-visaged individual in an unclean collarless shirt, and whose suspenders did duty for both coat and vest, confronted him from the other side of the bar.

"Hell of a night!" mumbled Smarlinghue, as he produced a one-dollar bill.

"It sure is!" agreed the bartender. He poured into a mug a drink of what Jimmie Dale remembered Caruthers had said was usually three ounces of raw, fifty-percent-proof alcohol, and pushed the mug across the bar. "Want a chaser wid it?"

"Sure," said Smarlinghue, "that'll——"

"Hello, Smarly!"

Jimmie Dale swung around. Here, opposite the bar, the room made a sort of recess in which two small tables were installed. One of them was vacant; the other was occupied by an unshaven, gray-haired man of slovenly appearance whose face was now distorted by a maudlin grin. Jimmie Dale's mind pushed back the years. It was old Twisty Munn, the "fence," a one-time well known receiver of stolen goods—old even in those days, but infinitely older now and little more than a wreck of his former self. It was in Twisty Munn's room that Bunty Myers, the Phantom's unholy chief of staff, had shot and killed Kid Gregg in an attempt to appropriate unto himself some thirty thousand dollars' worth of jewels that Kid Gregg had stolen and was just then in the act of "placing" with Twisty Munn!¹ Yes, he had good reason to remember Twisty Munn, for the Gray Seal had been present on that occasion and had narrowly escaped with his life—and the jewels! Also, Twisty Munn ought to prove a find!

"Hello, Twisty!" Smarlinghue grinned back.

"Come on over here!" invited the other.

"Gimme two!" Smarlinghue instructed the bartender—and with a mug in each hand crossed to the table and seated himself beside Twisty Munn.

¹*Jimmie Dale and the Phantom Clue.*

"Atta boy!" applauded Twisty Munn, as he reached eagerly for one of the mugs. "Say, Smarly, youse're all right, an' youse always was! I'll tell de world! Say, I couldn't believe me eyes when I seen youse walk up to de soda fountain. Nobody ain't seen youse fer years. Where've youse been?"

Jimmie Dale closed one eye confidentially.

"I've been away—for my health, Twisty," he answered. "I just blew in to-day, but I'm still not sure I'm in the right town. The signs on the street out there say it's the Bowery, but is this New York or isn't it?"

Twisty Munn imbibed deeply.

"Ain't it hell!" he said in lacrimose tones. "Dere ain't nothin' on de Bowery now but dese joints an' de flop houses. De righteous has been tryin' to mop up de whole works."

Jimmie Dale looked around the room. White, pinched faces—those that were not hidden in stupor on outflung arms! Lusterless eyes—two rows of them! Emaciation! Ghosts of Lost Hopes! And yet some laughed—or, rather, the booze did!

"Well, they've made a bum job of it, then!" commented Smarlinghue gruffly. "There was nothing that was even a patch on this before—and it seems to run wide open. This is a new one on me. What's the big idea? I heard someone say these dumps were called shock joints. What's the answer to that?"

Twisty Munn pointed a shaky finger at Jimmie Dale's drink.

"Youse take a swig of dat, an' youse'll find out!" he grunted. "Dere oughter be a skull an' crossbones on every mug! It's all made around de corner."

"They should have used it in the war as a high ex-

plosive!" Smarlinghue grimaced after a mouthful. "But say, I'm asking you, what's the big idea? Don't the cops ever butt in?"

Twisty Munn shook his head.

"Nix!" he said. "Dere's more'n thirty of dese dumps on de Bowery all runnin' just de same as dis one, an' some of 'em bigger. Wot's de cops goin' to do wid us? Dey ain't buildin' no extensions on de coolers, ar' we ain't no place to go unless we got de price of a flop house, an' de price of de flop houses has gone up too."

"I paid twenty cents apiece for these drinks," objected Smarlinghue, "and the price of a bed hasn't gone up over that, has it?"

Twisty Munn sniffed.

"Well, den, mabbe we ain't got de price of *both*," he said. "Youse ain't on yer uppers, Smarly! See?"

"No; I don't see," retorted Smarlinghue. "What do the cops do, and what do you do when these joints close up for the night and you get throw'd out?"

"Smarly, youse've been a long time away!" said Twisty Munn pityingly. "Dese joints don't never close, an' youse can stay as long as youse likes—a week if youse wants to, an' youse don't have to buy nothin' neither. De guys dat runs 'em ain't so bad, bo! Say, take a look at dat"—he pointed to the half-open door of a small room that had been partitioned off between the end of the bar and the rear wall of the building. "Wot d'youse see?"

Jimmie Dale's eyes followed the direction indicated. The room, from what he could glimpse of the interior, contained a stove, on the top of which rested a huge metal boiler. He could also see a portion of a shelf on which a large number of white bowls were stacked—and

which suddenly changed color as a swarm of cockroaches scurried across them.

"Mostly cockroaches," replied Smarlinghue facetiously.

"Sure!" said Twisty Munn. "Dat's wot some of us calls it—cockroach stew."

Smarlinghue shook his head.

"I don't get you," he said.

"Soup!" explained Twisty Munn. "I ain't sayin' de vegetables is fresh, or dat de bones ain't picked up in de discard, an' somebody slipped it to me dat it didn't cost more'n a dollar fer de whole tubful, but it's hot, an' dere ain't no charge for it. Twice a day, at noon an' five in de afternoon, it's handed out as long as it lasts, an' no questions asked. An', besides dat, every mornin' between five an' eight dere's a free drink handed out to anyone wot wants it. It ain't a big one, just an ounce, Smarly—? pick-up to start youse off on another day."

"Gawd!" said Smarlinghue. "How did you get down to this, Twisty?"

Twisty Munn shook his head dolefully.

"De toughest kind of luck," he said, "dat's wot! It wasn't my fault. Youse remember hearin' about Kid Gregg gettin' bumped off in my room, don't youse?"

"Everybody remembers that," nodded Smarlinghue.

Twisty Munn circled his lips with his tongue reminiscently.

"Well, dey never found out who handed de Kid de spot, but de cops rode me hard 'cause dey thought I knew. Y'understand?"

Again Smarlinghue nodded. He understood very well. It was quite true that Twisty Munn had never squealed, but that was because he had been very much more

afraid of Bunty Myers than he had been of the police!

"Go on, Twisty," he invited. "What's the rest?"

"I lost me job—dat's de rest," said Twisty Munn mournfully. "Youse knows wot me line was, Smarly. Wid de cops nosin' all de time, dere wouldn't nobody take a chance on me shovin' anythin' fer dem any more. I went broke. I had ter do somethin'. I was de stall fer a wire on de shorts—ridin' de ozone, an' doin' de ratlers an' de hole, youse knows."

"Picking pockets in the subways, or street cars, or anywhere else, doesn't sound much in your line!" observed Smarlinghue in genuine surprise. "Where did you go to college?"

"Aw, say—not me!" protested Twisty Munn modestly. "Didn't I tell youse I was only de stall? But de wire was good. I ain't mentionin' any names, but he was good. I worked wid him for about a year, an' den I got pinched. I got sent up for two spaces, an'—well, I guess dat's all. Here I am, Smarly."

"Tough is right!" agreed Smarlinghue. "I'll say it was tough! Have another, Twisty?"

Twisty Munn's face brightened.

"Smarly, youse're a real friend," he said eagerly.

Jimmie Dale replenished the other's mug at the bar. He had let Twisty Munn talk, invited it, in fact, in order to probe now for the information he was really after without arousing any suspicions in the other's mind. He, Jimmie Dale, did not want it noised abroad that he was *particularly* interested in Connie Gowan, alias the Ferret. His inquiries regarding old haunts and old acquaintances were merely the casual and natural inquiries of a wanderer on his return! He went back to the table with Twisty Munn's mug.

"I ain't taking any more myself, Twisty," said Smarlinghue apologetically. "I feel now like I'd been kicked in the guts!"

"Dat's all right," said Twisty Munn graciously. "I guess youse've got to get used to it. Dat's de way it hit me at first. Here's how!"

"Drink hearty!" returned Smarlinghue; and then anxiously: "Say, Twisty, I'm glad I bumped into you. The way things have changed it looks like I'd got to buy a guidebook. Wise me up a bit. All the old joints like Malay John's, and Hoy Loo's, and Blind Peter's, and that sort, ain't out too, are they?"

"No; they ain't," replied Twisty Munn. "None of de *real* ones is. Dey're still doin' business at de old stands."

"Well, that's good news anyway!" exclaimed Smarlinghue in well-simulated relief. "I was afraid I was going to be lonely. Yours is the first face I've seen since I got back that I knew. So the old crowd's still at the same hangouts, eh?"

"Sure, as far as I knows; but"—Twisty Munn's voice grew suddenly bitter—"dey doesn't let me into any of dem dumps now. I'm only a bum."

"Aw, forget it!" said Smarlinghue brightly. "Don't let that get your goat! Tell us about some of the boys. Is Connie Gowan still around?"

"Youse means de Ferret? Sure, he's around—some-where. But he ain't been seen fer de last few days!" Twisty Munn indulged in a chuckle. "Anyone wot wants to know where he is'd better go over to Nassau Joe's at de Jungle an' ask Tony de Wop about him. Youse remembers Tony, an' de Jungle, don't youse? Sure, youse does! Well, dat's where Tony hangs out now

most of de time. De Jungle—see? Dat's where dey say he runs his fleet of booze wagons from."

"I don't know the answer to your riddle!" complained Smarlinghue. "I ain't anxious about Connie or the Wop any more than any of the rest of the boys that used to send me Christmas cards—but where does the laugh come in?"

"It ain't no riddle," replied Twisty Munn; "an' I'll tell youse wot I was laughin' at in a minute. Listen, Smarly. De racket's changed a lot around here—and so's de gangs. Dere's a lot of de boys has given up dere old perfeshuns an' gone in fer de booze game; an' de Ferret an' de Wop is two of 'em."

"I'd hate to believe that!" There was pain in Smarlinghue's voice. "The Wop maybe, for he never got on the front page anyhow; but not Connie Gowan! Why, he was the slickest box-worker in the country, the best we ever had. Say, why don't you tell me he's dead? It wouldn't make me feel any worse!"

"Wot I'm tellin' youse is de straight goods," asserted Twisty Munn earnestly. "Dere's more money in it—dat's de answer. Some of de guys youse an' me uster know dat didn't have two nickels to rub together between pinches is millionaires today. Dat's right, Smarly; an' dat's de racket Connie an' de Wop is in now."

"Working together, you mean?"

Twisty Munn began to chuckle again.

"Nothin' like dat! An' dat's where de laugh comes in. I was laughin' because de Wop thinks he's got Connie scared an' has made him duck his nut, just because he's sayin' wot he's goin' to do to Connie. All de guys down

here is talkin' about wot happened, an' dat's how I got next to it. Youse see, Smarly, de two of 'em gets into a row over a moll de other night at a dump called de Rose Garden, an' de shootin' starts, but nobody gets hurt 'cause de lights goes out an' everybody beats it wid de cops gattin' dere on de jump. Den de Wop says he's goin' to hand Connie de spot—an' Connie ain't been seen since. An' dat's why I says dat if anybody wants to get a line on de Ferret, de Wop's de best bet 'cause he's got his whole gang out lookin' fer Connie. But if youse asks me it'll be de Wop wot gets his! All de world knows dat Connie's workin' a booze run dat's got a secret to it dat nobody ain't found out, an' I'm shovin' in all de chips I got dat dat's wot he's doin' now. When he gets dat off his chest, de Wop'll get wot he's askin' fer. An' I ain't so sure about dat moll stuff neither. Mabbe it's only a stall dat Tony's pullin' as an excuse to get the low-down on Connie's layout. I dunno! But youse can take it from me dat Connie ain't duckin' 'cause he's scared. De Ferret'll just step around when he gets ready an' blow de Wop's block off!"

Jimmie Dale's mind was working quickly. He was not at all pleased with whac he had heard. Connie Gowan wasn't going to be so easy to find after all. He quite agreed that the Ferret's disappearance was not due to any fears engendered by the threats of Tony the Wop; but he had a most excellent reason for disagreeing very emphatically with Twisty Munn's theory as to why Connie Gowan had taken cover. It was a certainty that something far different from bootlegging had engaged the Ferret's attention last night, as witness his spying on Daddy Ratzler; and it was almost equally a certainty that last night the Ferret had shot and killed Ray

Thorne in Ray Thorne's home! And now—what? Tony the Wop and the Jungle? He did not like that, either. But it seemed the best lead.

Smarlinghue grinned at Twisty Munn. He had obtained all the information he could hope for from the other; but it was still not yet even midnight, and he had no intention of leaving Twisty Munn with even so much as a vague impression that the comings and goings of the Ferret mattered a whit to Smarlinghue above those of anyone else in Yeggland.

"I believe you, Twisty!" he said. "Connie's the boy I'd put my own money on every time. But there'll be something doing, that's sure, and I ain't shedding any tears that I'm out of it. Tell us about some of the rest of the bunch. Where's the Kitten?—no, I forgot, he got bumped off before I went away. What's Parson Pete doing?"

"In stir!" said Twisty Munn. "He's chummin' wid de P. K. up de river. He got ten spaces fer a bank job."

"Hell!" exclaimed Smarlinghue feelingly. "That's rough!" He got up abruptly, and once more stepped over to the bar on Twisty Munn's behalf. "Spill some more, Twisty," he urged as he returned to the table. "I'm beginning to feel like I was really home again!"

Twisty Munn's bleary eyes brightened. He was effusively grateful for the re-replenished mug, and he was very glad to talk to a kindred soul—and so he talked. But Twisty Munn, hardened as he was by long usage to the shock joint's brew, was not superhuman. Articulation, as time went on, became increasingly difficult, and at the end of another half hour Jimmie Dale rose from his chair and made his way out to the street. Twisty Munn was snoring raucously on the table.

"Poor devils—the lot of them!" muttered Jimmie Dale. "I can't say I think the Bowery has improved!"

The night had grown worse; the drizzle had turned to rain and the fog had thickened. Jimmie Dale turned up the collar of Smarlinghue's shabby coat, and, with a philosophical shrug of his shoulders, swung off the Bowery and headed into the East Side. Moralizing wouldn't find Connie Gowan!

His brows drew together and his face clouded. The Jungle! One of the worst and therefore one of the most carefully guarded dives in the Bad Lands! Smarlinghue could get in there, of course—it was one of the old haunts—but it did not sound very promising. What, after all, could he expect from a visit there?

And then Jimmie Dale shook his head impatiently. Who knew! He might pick up a word or two if Tony the Wop had learned anything new. Luck might break for him. Anything might happen. Anyway, it was the logical starting point and he was going there. Afterward, there were other places; and if he got no trace of Connie Gowan anywhere to-night, there was to-morrow night—and night after night thereafter! Tony the Wop would not be alone in his efforts to unearth the Ferrêt!

Jimmie Dale, in spite of Smarlinghue's characteristic slouch, covered the ground rapidly. He was in an uninviting neighborhood now, comprised of cheap stores and cheap tenements, with a sprinkling here and there of self-contained houses of woebegone appearance. The Jungle was one of the latter and was in the next block. The front of the house, by way of camouflaging the premises, presented itself to the eye of the passer-by in the innocent guise of a somewhat dingy little tobacco store.

But the entrance to the Jungle was not through the tobacco store. Between the house and the adjoining tenement there was an alleyway, and by means of the alleyway one might reach the back door of the house without attracting undue attention. Once there, if one had the entrée, one got in—otherwise one didn't! It was a sub-cellar dive of unspeakable iniquity in which Nassau Joe, the proprietor of whom Twisty Munn had spoken, a West Indian of mixed parentage, catered raptaciously to every vicious taste.

Jimmie Dale passed the tobacco store—it was unlighted and obviously closed for the night—and turned into the alleyway. He had no fear of being observed. The street was never adequately lighted at best, and to-night with the fog and rain the visibility was reduced to the radius of a few yards. But the visibility in the alleyway was still less—it was so black here that he had to feel his way.

The house had a small backyard, he remembered, that opened off the alleyway. Yes, here it was! The back door was just a yard or so away, and——

He halted suddenly, and instinctively drew back against the wall of the house. Someone was not only coming from the street end of the alleyway, but was coming as though in frantic haste, running and stumbling through the darkness. And then whoever it was passed by so close that Jimmie Dale could almost have reached out his hand and touched the other, but in the blackness he could see no more than an indistinct blur. A moment more, and he heard the newcomer knock upon the back door.

Jimmie Dale's lips tightened. He had got Smarlinghue into a rather unenviable situation—if Smarlinghue were

caught crouching here against the wall, and apparently in the act of spying!

The door opened.

"Who's there?" demanded a voice.

"It's de Mole," came the answer in hurried and excited tones. "Tony's here, ain't he?"

"Sure!"

"Is he alone?"

"What do you think he's doing—playing solitaire?"

"Well, I gotta see him alone, an' I gotta see him on de jump," stated the Mole even more excitedly than before. "Tell him to come out here, will youse?"

"Sure! I'll tell him."

The door closed. There was silence. Jimmie Dale's pulse quickened. The errand that had brought the Mole here might have nothing whatever to do with the Ferret, but a prescience that would not be denied told Jimmie Dale that it had—that the something he had hoped might happen, plus the luck that he had hoped might break, was happening for him now in unbounded measure. And he had no further fear of being discovered himself. All he could see of the Mole was a vague outline that would have been meaningless if he had not actually known that the man was standing there on the doorstep. A chance in a thousand, then, that he would be seen himself!

The door opened once more.

"Dat youse, Tony?" demanded the Mole.

"Yeh! Got anything?"

"Got anything!" ejaculated the Mole boastfully. "I got de whole dope from de cellar up! Say, shut dat door behind youse. Now, listen! I found out where de Ferret is an' all about de whole of his racket. Some nifty work,

eh? I'll spill youse de story of how I done it when we has de time. Dat don't cut no ice now. Dere's an old guy named Bilwitz wot's got a wharf down on dis side of de East River. He's got a little lumber business, an' he's supposed to be on de level—only he ain't. Lumber barges ain't de only things dat's unloaded on dat wharf! Bilwitz an' de Ferret has been workin' de booze racket together on de quiet fer de last year. See?"

"Yeh!" Tony's voice was hoarse with excitement. "To hell with Bilwitz! Is that where the Ferret is?"

"Dat's where he is, an', wot's more, he's all alone down dere right now. An' dere's something else, too. De wharf's phoney. Dey got a big motor boat hidden dere dat's got a hundred cases an' mabbe more in her now dat dey didn't get no chance to unload—an' de Ferret's stayin' wid it. I ain't so sure he's been hidin'; he's just been stayin' wid de booze 'cause two or thlee nights ago, comin' in from Rum Row, old Bilwitz, who ain't no young chicken, caught a cold dat' landed him up in de hospital wid noomonia or something, an' dat left de Ferret up in de air, an' all alone wid de booze to look after. See? I guess youse don't have to draw no cards to dat hand, eh?"

Tony the Wop began to laugh in ugly glee; then his voice, sharp and sibilant, cut through the darkness:

"A hundred cases—besides bumping the Ferret off! There's enough of the boys hanging out over at Skilly's to-night to do the job. You go get 'em! That won't take long. I'll be waiting for you outside here on the street. Bring a truck back with you to ride us over and ride the booze back. The Ferret'll get *his* ride in a glass wagon! Go on, beat it—quick!"

And now, too, the Mole laughed in ugly fashion.

"I won't be long!" he promised.

The door opened and closed again. The Mole's retreating footsteps died away—and, a minute later, Jimmie Dale had reached the street and was racing along it.

But his brain raced the faster. Where was this wharf? The Mole had said that Bilwitz carried on, or at least pretended to carry on, a legitimate business. The answer was simple—a drug store and a city directory! Luck! It was beyond anything he could have hoped for. Smarlinghue had had only a passing and casual acquaintance with the Ferret—and here, to hand, was the opening wedge that would lead to *intimacy*. The Ferret would be grateful to Smarlinghue for the warning to-night! He had no compunction in playing a double game with the Ferret, no pity and no mercy where the man who had shot down Ray Thorne was concerned. The fact that, in any case, he could not have stood idly by without doing anything to prevent the Ferret from being murdered was a secondary consideration. It was the proof of the Ferret's guilt he was after. It might take days or weeks or months to get it, but he was on the sure road to it now—if only he could reach the Ferret *in time* to-night!