

Code on the Keyboard

An ace foreign correspondent had been mysteriously murdered in New York by an unknown assailant. There was no apparent motive and no clues. But Kerry Keen got a lead from a coded message – and he went gunning as the Griffon for a travel agency folder!

by Arch Whitehouse

CHAPTER I A Man OF Mystery

A TRIM bell-hop in a cream uniform piped with scarlet brought the telegram and accepted the proffered quarter tip with due respect and the proper amount of heel-clicking.

“Carry on, Sergeant - Major,” grinned Keen. “I rose from the ranks myself.”

“Yes, Sir!”

“I’ll bet old Lang has discovered something new in Fourth of July cap pistols and wants you to identify it,” Barbara Colony suggested as they sat on Lido Beach Hotel’s exclusive surf front in Miami.

“We can’t go,” Barney O’Dare bellowed. “We still got half a case left.”

“Who’s Ralph Craven?” asked Keen, studying the telegram.

“Don’t you read the papers?” Pebbles asked: “That’s the chap who was murdered as he stepped off the Atlantic Clipper two days ago. Newspaperman just back from the other side.”

“Well, they’s five bottles left, any-way,” O’Dare persisted.

“It’s from Scott. They’re in Washington and they want us to get the noon plane out of here. They’ll get aboard there and go on through to New York with us.”

“They won’t let you drink on planes,” argued Barney. “We gotter go back in the trailer if....”

“Oh, well,” Miss Colony said dejectedly. “I knew this was too good to last. Being friends

with you is like making up to a howitzer. No one knows when you’ll go off.”

“They have some lovely summer togs at Millgrim’s,” said Keen as he got to his feet. “I saw a full-page spread in the New York Times.”

“I was wondering if you had noticed that,” she said with a sly smile. “But what about this chap Craven?”

“Well, he was shot – how, they don’t know. But I guess there’s more to it than that – plenty more.”

“How can a guy get more than being bumped off?” demanded Barney, picking up the stuff Miss Colony and Keen had left strewn all over the beach.

“They don’t bump off newspaper-men to get in target practice.”

“He had been in Germany and Italy,” Miss Colony added.

“Probably had seen Hitler crying his eyes out against some beer-hall door,” Keen said, still studying the telegram as they walked back to the hotel with the burdened Barney following. They went on in silence, trying to figure it all out in something like a sane fashion.

THEIR PATH led over a causeway built up on blocks of stone. It was about seventy yards long and connected to the beach with the formal front grounds of the hotel. At intervals, artificial-looking palms were set in squared-off blocks down each side. As they went on, Keen suddenly noticed a high-speed motor boat racing along dangerously close to the edge of the beach. Then he turned, mainly by instinct, and saw the bellhop who had delivered the telegram standing at the far end of the jetty and pointing at them. Instantly, every thread and fibre of his imagination called a warning.

The motor boat was curling around now and was passing along close to the walled up causeway.

He whispered a quick warning, shoved Miss Colony forward so that she had to jump into one of the depressions around the nearest palm tree.

“Quick! Down low!”

Barney saw what Keen had done and he flattened on the concrete jetty.

Keen leaped and straddled over the girl only a few seconds before a blasting burst of automatic-weapon fire blazed out and sang their slug song only a few feet over their heads.

The boat passed close to the jetty. Then the hate stopped and Keen raised his head a trifle and saw a man standing in the stern of the boat suddenly swing the gun on a new line and fire again.

There was a penetrating scream farther down the jetty and the stiff little bell-hop fell writhing on the sun-scorched jetty, his fingers clawing at the cruel, hard surface.

"Boys!" gasped Barney, struggling to get a gun out of the tangle of bath towels, inflated mattresses, and folding beach chairs. "They got little Napoleon!"

He finally managed to get a big gat out and crawled to the edge of the jetty. He poured a whole clip at the boat and watched it scramble over several rollers and head out to sea.

"Lay low! Lay low!" yelled Keen. "They sure have this timed."

There was a roar out of the northeast, and a wide-winged flying boat slammed down at the hotel and jetty.

Keen saw the watertight bomb bay panel open and two sandy-colored eggs surge out. He yelled again to Barney and then flattened hard as the first bomb caught a red-tiled cornice high on the front of the hotel and exploded with a roar.

The second wailed and swished down, bashed itself with a retch of metal and exploded with all the might of untamed Hell.

There were a few seconds of rumbling somewhere. There was the picric tang of explosive, the curling waft of ye31ow rinsed smoke and the rain of debris that kept them all down low.

"Now we've got to go to Millgrim's," Keen said finally, peering over the edge of the palm box. "That bomb took most of our corner suite away."

"I have an idea they want to get rid of us," Miss Colony smiled.

Keen was working now. He took a quick look at Barney, saw that the Mick had escaped, and then watched the big flying boat ram around, sweep into the wind, and set itself out for a landing less than a quarter of a mile away.

The smart-looking motor boat was in the clear and racing for the point where the big flying boat would touch.

"What was that?" husked Barney crawling over to them.

"Dornier Do. 26. One of the Lufthansa line jobs they use on South American runs," said Keen. "We'll see more of that baby before we're through."

"The motor boat guys are getting aboard," Barney said. "Bet they'll abandon it."

"We'll look awfully funny flying north in bathing suits," Pebbles put in.

They made sure there would be no further attacks and then crawled out of their shelter and went along the jetty. The bellhop was a tragic mess, and Keen threw a large bath towel over him.

"They got the kid to sell out and then bumped him off once he had put the finger on us," Keen explained. "I saw him pointing at us as the boat came up to the jetty. That's what made me yell."

"He must have tipped them off to our rooms, too. That bomb took our whole corner off."

The shambles in the open courtyard of the hotel reminded them of the pictures they had seen of bombed London. There were several shattered bodies among the tangle of beach umbrellas and cocktail tables. A small fire was burning near the wall of the building and the windows were alive with anxious faces. A fire engine clanged somewhere and men and women in the daintiest of summer-resort clothing were trying to clamber over the wreckage to give aid to wounded and release those who had been trapped by the fall of timbers and walls. A new trickle of smoke belched out from a heap of window frames, and long hissing fingers of flame stabbed at the volunteer workers as they struggled to get at the less fortunate.

Keen and Barney chipped in and helped until a company of firemen and policemen

took over. Then they went inside, got their valuables from the hotel office, and took a taxi into town where they bought clothing for their unexpected trip.

After making a short report to the Chief of Police, they taxied to the airport and just managed to get aboard the second section of Flight Nine heading north.

Barney fell asleep at once. Miss Colony went off and had a quiet cry by herself once the reaction began to set in, and Keen, with an armful of newspapers, sat down to try to figure it all out.

"This guy Craven," he muttered as the plane sped north, "must have had something, if he was important enough to bump off like that."

He read about the man and learned that he had been a respected representative for an American news syndicate. He had been ordered out of Germany because he had "indulged in false, hateful, and sensational reporting which had endangered German interests," according to the Nazi charges. Later he had served in Italy, and was then sent to Vichy to cover activity in unoccupied France. His syndicate had suddenly recalled him to New York, and on his arrival at the Pan-America seaplane base he had been mysteriously shot and killed while walking up the ramp from the floating stage to the Customs shed. No one seemed to know how the murder was committed. His baggage seemed intact, according to the stories in the newspapers, but Keen wondered about that.

THE MILES sped on and in due course the second section of Flight Nine reached Washington. Several passengers disembarked and were instantly pounced on by the newspaper reporters who wanted further information on the bombing of the Lido Beach Hotel. Keen, Barney, and Miss Colony kept their seats and watched John Scott, Drury Lang, and another man come out of the Reception Room and enter the plane.

"You sure can stir up trouble everywhere you go, can't you?" taunted Lang, sitting down behind Keen. "What happened down there, anyway?"

"You will send me 'telegrams and make me look important," Keen re-plied. "Why couldn't you let us alone?"

"Stop squabbling," Scott broke in. "Glad to see you, Keen."

"Miss Colony and my mouthpiece, Barney O'Dare," grinned Keen, making the introductions. "Complete in new cloths grabbed off a department store hook."

"Must have been very unnerving, Mr. Keen," the third man said, sitting down behind Barney.

"Oh, yes. This is Mr. Tolliver, Keen. Mr. Tolliver is the Chief Foreign Editor for Trans-Atlantic Press. He's the man who employed Craven, the chap we're all interested in."

The man named Tolliver was a strange wispy looking person with sandy hair that seemed to have been frisked from a coconut. He had violet eyes that were nevertheless penetrating with considerable power of analysis behind them. He had knobby hands, long tapering fingers, and his arms seemed to have been crudely carved from odds and ends.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Tolliver," Keen said, taking the man in completely. "You are providing your own stories now, eh?"

"It isn't quite as funny as that," Tolliver said, taking the wrong meaning. "We hope you can help us."

"I might be able to, if you tell me why Craven was murdered," Keen replied.

"I don't know," was the immediate and direct answer.

There was the usual bustle and activity about the plane and the hostess came down the aisle and was giving instructions to the passengers to fasten their safety belts. Then suddenly Tolliver got up; said some-thing to Scott, and hurried toward the door.

"I'll see you later in New York. I've forgotten...."

And before Keen or anyone could quite figure it all out, the newspaper-man was out of the plane and hurrying up the covered ramp to the Administration Building.

"He's taking the next plane up. Flight Eleven, I think," explained Scott.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Keen. "Did Mr. Tolliver leave a bag on board?"

He signaled the girl and went back. A small weekend bag with no name on it stood by the service-compartment door.

"Was this Mr. Tolliver's bag?" he asked the girl who was checking a manifest sheet.

"Tolliver? The man who just got off?"

"Is it his bag – quick?"

"I think so. It should have been stowed away with the others."

"Well, he's not leaving it on board here. Put it away – outside."

The girl handed the bag out to one of the two attendants- who were dragging the boarding platform away.

Fifteen minutes later, when the second section of Flight Nine was well on its way to New York, the baggage room of the Washington Air Terminal was rocked with an unexplained explosion.

CHAPTER II SECRET OF THE DORY

"WELL, what's the real dope?"

Keen asked once they were well on their way. "Your Mr. Tolliver has no sense of humor, and I don't like guys who bounce aboard a plane and then suddenly duck off leaving their luggage. Where did you pick him up?"

"What's wrong with him?" Lang snarled. "Re's a respectable citizen. He's keen on clearing up Craven's murder."

"He may be only interested in it as a news feature," taunted Keen. He was baiting Lang to learn some-thing.

"You dope, asking him if he knew why Craven was murdered," said Lang. "How would he know?"

"Well, since he was Craven's boss he ought to know what Craven had been up to over there. Tolliver got every story that was cabled and he could have received a few lines of special stuff on the side. Of course he knows why Craven was murdered – and why were you birds in Washington when Craven was murdered in New York?"

"The State Department –" began big John Scott.

"Sure! You went down there to see if Germany, Italy, or England for that matter had anything on Craven. What d you find out?"

"Nothing. Craven was just another American foreign correspondent. Had a run-in with the German government and the Trans-Atlantic people transferred him to Italy. Not a thing on him otherwise," explained Scott.

"Then why was he brought back? Did Tolliver tell you that?"

"He was due for a rest. They give them a vacation every so often, and I guess Craven had been working hard."

"That's as good an excuse as any."

"What are you getting at, Keen?" asked Scott.

"I think your man Tolliver knows all about Craven's being bumped off. Too many angles. Why were we picked on down there when your telegram was delivered? Why was the hotel bombed? Of course, it might have been plain circumstance that the corner that held our suite was hit – but why that hotel of all in Miami?"

Keen took some time explaining just what had actually happened. Barney and Miss Colony added their bits which completed the authenticity of it all.

Scott paced up and down the aisle for a few minutes and then rang for the hostess.

"Get me a message form, will you, Miss?"

"What's the idea?" asked Lang.

"I think we'd better have Tolliver checked."

He wrote a message and the girl took it forward to the control compartment for dispatching. In a minute she came back with the Senior Flight Officer. He had Scott's message in his hand and said: "Mr. Scott?"

"That's right. I'm Scott. Anything wrong?"

"Well, sir. Seeing your message and knowing you, I thought you might be interested. They've had an explosion in Washington. A piece of baggage left by this man Tolliver must have contained a time bomb. They're already looking for him."

"Thanks. Send the message just the same, please. Charge it to the Bureau of Investigation."

The Senior Flight Officer saluted and went forward again.

"Now we're getting somewhere," said Keen.

"Sure, but where?" mooned Scott.

Keen sat staring through the cabin window and noting the obvious change in the weather conditions. Ahead it was beginning to pile up the murk and the flat land of lower New Jersey were being blotted out with a dull leaden wash of bad weather.

"I wish we were safe in New York," Barbara Colony muttered to Keen. "I don't like this business."

"Take it easy," whispered Keen. "Don't get upset."

"Can't help it. Look at all the things that have happened since you got that telegram. We'll run into something bad yet."

"Take it easy," Keen said soothingly. "It's all a state of mind. Keep your chin up."

The girl smiled and sat back again.

Keen got up and scotched on the arm of Scott's chair. Barney and Lang were arguing about the relative merits of some unrelated subjects.

"What do you think about Tolliver?" Scott asked in a subdued tone.

"Let's talk about Craven. Why was he murdered?" Keen said, evading Scott's question.

"Rut there are many American correspondents coming back from Europe with stories about Germany, Italy, and the occupied countries. Why pick on Craven?"

"That's just it. Why pick on Craven? He must have had something more than some inside sensational news that would have made the German High Command writhe. What could he have had?"

"Nothing I tell you," Scott persisted. "I know what you are thinking. You believe he was a Secret Service agent acting as a newspaperman. Well, he wasn't. Nothing to do with the Intelligence Department. We made sure of that. As a matter of fact, most newspapermen are damned poor agents."

"Look through his baggage?"

"Not a thing there. Just regular stuff. Extra underclothes, portable typewriter still with a sheet of paper in the roller with a crazy story half finished. He had a couple of small foreign dictionaries and a copy of John Gunther's Inside Europe. Not even a notebook of telephone numbers or official addresses."

"Did he have a small brief case?" asked Keen.

"We didn't find one."

"That's queer," Keen said. "Look at this picture taken on the ramp a few minutes after he was shot."

He unfolded a two-day-old newspaper of the tabloid variety.

"See! There's a brief case there on the platform, right near him. Where did that go to?"

Scott stared at the picture. He allowed his face to mull into a blank mask of surly amazement: "Damned queer," he said. "We never found that. But it certainly looks like one he might have been carrying when he was shot down, doesn't it?"

"Find that brief case," said Keen, "and we find out why this guy Craven was killed. But that won't be all we'll have to know."

"We've got to find out what he was killed for," Keen went on. "I mean we've got to discover what he was carrying that was so important."

"Hello!" said Scott, looking up. "What's up now?"

THE SENIOR Flight Officer was coming out of the forward control compartment. His face was pale and drawn and he stared at Scott like a man who was plainly frightened and looking for someone to confide in.

"Can I speak to you alone, Sir?" he asked, leaning over Keen. "You can talk here, I think," said

Scott. "Mr. Keen is one of our confidential advisors."

"It's about the other ship," the chief pilot went on.

"What other ship? The first section plane?"

"Yes. It was apparently shot down just as it was trying to get into LaGuardia Field. They're all killed."

"What was it, a German Dornier seaplane?" asked Keen.

"How did you know?" snapped the airline pilot.

"He made damned good time getting up from Miami," was all Keen would say.

"It was a Dornier. That's the last they got out of Graves, the pilot. He reported that they were being 5redon in the clouds above the field."

"You're lucky," Scott added. "That was supposed to be our plane."

"I don't understand, Sir," the pilot said hopelessly.

"They got the wrong one. They were trying to nail Mr. Keen, here."

The airline pilot stared at Keen with a blank gaze that made Kerry smile.

"Such popularity must be de-served," Keen quoted. "But don't worry. I guess they've made the last stab at me. You'll get in okay."

"I hope so. We've been ordered to try Newark. The weather's too thick at LaGuardia."

"Okay. Order a taxi to get us to the seaplane ramp at LaGuardia the minute we get in," Keen said suddenly. "Craven's stuff is still there, eh, Scott?"

The big detective nodded dumbly and then said: "It's all there and locked up. But we searched through it carefully, I tell you."

"Sure, and you let Tolliver blind you and almost slip a time-bomb aboard this crate. I'm taking a look at that stuff – with your kind permission, Professor," smiled Keen.

The rest of the mad trip was uneventful. They made a routine con-tact with Newark and landed just as the weather shut down tight. They scurried out, evading the newspapermen, and grabbed the waiting taxi. Miss Colony, on a tip from Keen, got out in mid-town New York and went off on a mysterious series of errands. Barney went along to drive her out to Graylands in Long Island and pre-prepare for any eventuality.

Keen was coldly setting his plans and arranging his moves for the next twelve hours.

The taxi rushed them to the administration building of the Pan-America airlines where Scott was able to use his official badge to get doors opened and Customs routine red tape slashed. The stuff belonging to Craven was laid out on a big table and Keen was allowed plenty of time to look it over.

First he examined the clothing, most of which had been purchased in London months before, and toilet articles. But there was nothing concealed in them.

He examined the Gunther book Craven had been reading on the way over. With a hurried glance around the room, Keen went to work on the typewriter. He raised the lid care-fully and saw that it was a regulation Smith-Corona which had evidently seen much service. He thumbed the knurled paper roller and read the hundred or so words that had been typed there.

"You see," said Scott. "There's nothing here. He evidently had started to write, and then quit. Quoting something from Gunther's book, I think."

Keen nodded, tapped one or two keys idly, and then stiffened.

"But he didn't write on this ma-chine. Look, this is different type!"

The keys tapped had produced one or two letters, but they were not the Elite type that had written the words at the top of the paper. They were what is generally known as Social Script.

"What does that mean?" said Scott. "He probably started this on his office machine and intended to finish it aboard the plane on this typewriter. You can't make any more than that out of it."

"No? Well push this key marked 'p' and see what happens," Keen said coldly, standing to one side.

Scott put a heavy finger gingerly on the "p" key. The letter bar snapped up and wrote "w." He frowned and tried another. He pressed the "s" key and it produced the letter "k."

"Don't you see," explained Keen. "This machine has removable rubber key pads, but they apparently have been put on wrong."

"How can a guy write anything with a machine like that?" blurted out Lang.

"You dope! Don't you get it?"

"No. Do you?" Lang growled. "Be-sides, you were only supposed to identify' the slug that killed Craven."

"Look He makes a mention of a page in Gunther's book. He even mentions the paragraph... Why?"

"You're the white-haired boy," snapped Lang. "Why?"

"I can't explain in simple enough words to you. Let's see how it works out if we type off that paragraph using the letters as they are set on the keys now."

SCOTT HURRIEDLY fingered through *Inside Europe*, found the page, and began quoting from the paragraph. As he read, Keen slowly tapped out the letters and words according to the rubber-key arrangements as they were set on Craven's typewriter. It was a slow process, because it was against all regular keyboard arrangements, and when he was finished they stared at the written result.

Keen read it aloud:

"Complete details of Axis plans to strike at Yankee air bases and naval stations wrapped up in sheets, between sheets of Swiss resort agency photo book-let third pocket of short bag case. To be brief. Toll-ever boss of Dutch agency in Amsterdam-New. Just in case."

They read it over twice and all three whistled aloud.

"You see," said Keen, "some of the words in Gunther's, paragraph would not fit, so he used words like 'Yankee' and 'Amsterdam - New,' which means New York. He also ran some words together, so that he could get it all in. It's an old spy gag, but it sure worked this time."

"Then he has something hot inserted between the pages of a travel agency catalogue, eh?" Scott babbled. "But where's

the brief case – the 'short bag case' he mentions?"

"Where were you guys?" grinned Keen. "Let's go out and look over the ramp."

Scott had everything put away except the typewriter and the book. These he kept and went out with them in his hands, clutching to the typewriter until his knuckles showed ivory blotches.

"What actually happens when they bring one of these Clippers in?" Keen asked one of the Pan-America officials who was standing outside.

"The pilot lands on signal and brings the plane back and eases it

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up to a certain point. We usually send out a power boat to tow her up to the mooring, and a crew goes in a dory and takes the line from the marine gear hatch forward. That line is brought up to the buoy and they work her from that point until the hull is in position for the passengers to disembark."

"What does the dory do then?"

"It is rowed back to the main jetty by the crew and tied up. There it is yet."

"Is that the one they used when Craven was killed?" Keen asked after a moment of hesitation.

"Yes. The power boat stands off for some time and then helps move the Clipper away from the stage and assists in mooring her to buoys clear of the platform."

"I want to see the dory," snapped Keen. "And, if possible, the crew that mans her."

"That will be easy. That is, except...."

"Sure. Except for one guy who's sick or has fallen overboard and has not been seen since. Wake up, Scott!"

"Well, one of our dory crew men has been out for a few days," the Pan-America official said dumbly.

"Put a tailer on him!"

They went over to where the dory was tied up. In it were two sets of oars, several canvas-covered keel buffers, and two regulation boat hooks. Keen dropped from the wharf and clattered about the boat while the others stood above.

He inspected the oars and the coiled lines of the anchor. Then he went to the boat hooks and tried them. One had a carefully wrapped canvas binding halfway along the staff. He felt it and frowned. There was a point below that was hollow. He fingered the wrapping and found that it was none too tight and that he could move it up and down. He slipped it up.

Then he looked at the business end and saw that there was a hole at a point between the pike point and the curved hook. Then he discovered how Craven had been killed. Now he could identify the slug Scott was so worried about.

"They didn't take any chances," he grinned, shoving the boat hook up to Lang. "They fitted a fairly heavy caliber rifle-barrel in this, complete with a short trigger, hidden in that recess there."

"I'll be damned!" gasped Scott.

"The rest was easy. While Craven was walking up the gangway, these dory guys rowed in to shore. One of them held the boat hook and aimed it at Craven from a trail position, and with all the racket of motorboats, idling engines, and the rest of it, no one could tell where the shot come from!"

"You have the best luck finding things, Keen," sneered Lang. "It's a good thing you were in Miami. I'd say you know all about this."

CHAPTER III PEBBLES IN DANGER

WITH THAT MUCH in hand, Scott led the way back to the Administration building. Around the rest of the airport was plenty of excitement over the destruction of the first section of Flight Nine, and they were able to confine themselves to the problem in hand.

"Well, then," old John said with a weary gesture, "if this dory guy, wherever he is, killed Craven, it's dollars to doughnuts that he knows where the brief case is. He probably picked it up and got away."

"Sure, and now all Mister Keen has to do is get it back," taunted Lang. "You gonner have the Griffon guy get it for you?"

"Look, Lang," Keen replied. "You know that you're the Griffon. Why don't you own up? You're the one who somehow always turns up at the last minute with all the evidence, the jewels, cash, and plate. Only you could be the Griffon."

Scott looked at Lang and then back at Keen. "What is this?" he demanded.

"Couldn't Lang be the Griffon?"

"Well, he might – but he can't fly."

"Neither can I. I hate the darned things. I hardly ever take a commercial plane anywhere," Keen went on while Lang's eyes and mouth were getting wider with every word. "Isn't it time Lang explained how he always comes into possession of the evidence you so badly need, and doesn't he always lay it to a guy he calls the Griffon?"

"Look!" broke in Scott. "Personally, I don't care who the Griffon is. All I care about right now is to get Craven's brief case, and quick! Now what about it, Keen?"

"Haven't I done enough? Golly, I figured we'd be able to go back to Miami!"

"You know full well you can't go back there while this guy Tolliver is running wild. You've got to stay here until this business is cleared up. You haven't run out of ideas yet, have you?"

"No. I have another," Keen said with cold serious-ness.

"You have? About the bag?"

"Sure! My bag. What do they pay for jobs like this?" Keen asked in a taunting mood.

"Now stop that. You know you'll be paid. There'll be some sort of reward put up and we'll see that you get a good share," John Scott thundered. "Now what about it?"

"I frankly don't know," Keen said. "We know how the guy was killed and we have a fair idea why, but I can't figure any more. The brief case could have been snatched in any one of a dozen ways. The point is find out who has it."

"You put some dough on &e line," argued Lang, "and he'll get your brief case for you."

"I wish I could, but I haven't an idea of any kind. I think I'll beat it home and get some rest and a chance to think."

"There he goes!" Lang said. "Here's where he contacts that Griffon guy."

"Do you want to make a little bet, Lang?" asked Keen, his steel-blue eyes piercing the Government man. "Do you want to have a little flutter for your money?"

"What are you getting at?" Lang said with an anxious tone. "You're not rigging me up with the Griffon!"

"No? Well I'll bet you that within three days you turn up with Craven's brief case and triumphantly turn it over to John Scott and put in your argument for a reward. Is that a bet?"

"You see!" wailed Lang. "He's trying to rib me. He's gonner try to pull something. He'd pull his grand-mother into it to win a hundred!"

"I'll take your bet, Keen," said John.

"I'm betting with Lang. I'm going to show him up – for one hundred bucks. If he fails to produce the brief case in three days, you'll know he's obstructing the course of justice, just to make a hundred bucks."

"I'll take the bet, I tell you," persisted the wearied Scott.

"He won't bet with you," Lang mooned. "He's gonner put one over on me. That is, he's going to try to."

Lang found himself patting his pockets, half expecting to find Craven's brief case hidden about his per-son already.

"Well, why don't you take the bet? You can't loose," smarted Scott. "Look! You take his bet and I'll bet you either way, any way you want, so that you can cover up."

Keen roared with laughter: "This is one for the books! Two Department of Justice men trying to lay bets that they *won't* solve a case!"

"I'll take your bet, Keen," said Lang with none too much confidence. "I'll take your bet for one hundred, and I'll take one with Scott."

"How do we bet?" asked Scott, feeling entangled completely now.

"I'm betting Keen that I don't produce Craven's bag, or what we think it contains, within three days. I'm betting you a hundred that Keen obtains the bag somehow and tries to plant it on me."

"That's a hell of a bet!" charged Scott. "I can't win much either way. If you produce the

bag within three days, you lose a century to Keen. Then you'll turn around and claim that Keen planted it on you, and I have to pay you one hundred bucks. What sort of bet is this, anyway?"

"But he has to prove I planted it on him," warned Keen.

"Oh, yes. Well, that makes it simpler. I'll take that bet, Lang."

And Drury let out a bellow that could have been heard at Broadway and 42nd Street. "I'm rooked! I'm rooked! I didn't mean I'd *prove* he did it. Holy Moses...!"

THEY LEFT the air field and went on their devious paths. Keen hurried to Pennsylvania Station and took a train out to Long Island. The trip gave him ample time to think and put two and two together. The newspapers carried glaring stories of the destruction of the Coastal Airlines transport. There were pictures of the victims and several commanding shots of the actual wreckage. The whole city was in an uproar about it all and most of the more important dailies carried front-page boxed editorials demanding a thorough and quick investigation of the report that the plane had been shot down.

Much of this portion of the story was garbled. Some said that it was just another trick of the warmongers to get the country into conflict with Germany. Others took the stand that this was typical of the Nazi forma of attack. Sabotage and Fifth Column stuff.

"If they only knew how much really hung on all this and what it all meant," said Keen, "they'd be scurrying for the hills by now. None of them are taking it really serious. They are just using it for a spring-board to leap further up the ladder of their own desires."

He settled back and pondered on the situation. He knew now that Tolliver was a dangerous man. He also knew that the brief case containing the information that was so important was not likely aboard the Lufthansa airliner which had bombed the Miami Hotel. And that was probably the same plane that had shot down the Coastal Airlines transport over LaGuardia Field. The ungodly would

have the brief case, but if the information was coded, as was Craven's message, it would be of no use to them unless they had Craven's port-able typewriter.

"But they don't need to know what it contains," he argued with himself. "All they had to do was to keep any-one in the United States from finding out this plan."

All the way out in the train, Keen pondered on the situation but made no headway of any sort. He tried it from all angles, but nothing seemed to lead up anything but blind alleys.

At the station he was no nearer a solution than he had been when he got on the train in New York City. He looked about and then realized that he had not called Barney to tell him what time the train would get in. He bought another newspaper and went across to the phone booth.

The moment he gave his number, he knew something was amiss. The operator put the call through, but it was not answered at the other end. The fact that his automatic recording device did not function and take his message on a record told him that something was wrong.

He hung up, darted outside, and grabbed the first cab on the rank. He gave a low quiet order and the taxi shot out of the station square and thundered into the main highway at breakneck speed. It was already dark and the twin beams of the hack's headlights cut long jetting swaths down the smooth road.

This mad race continued for about four miles, and then when the jagged outlines of Graylands appeared less than a quarter of a mile away Keen tapped on the window and stopped the cab.

"This is far enough," he said to the driver. "I'll walk the rest of the way.

The air will do me good."

"Thought you were in a hurry," the man said, taking the bill and keeping the change as Keen's nod directed.

"I was, but I've changed my mind. I'm not as hungry as I thought. Good night."

KEEN cut across the fields, clambered over a stake and rider fence into his own property, kept in the shelter of the stone wall,

and made his way toward the house. He stopped once and listened, his senses arrested by the dull throb of engines somewhere. It might have been a car or several cars somewhere in his driveway. It might have been the water-baffled chug of a motor boat's engine. But something told him that these were engines, the like of which he had ever before heard just like this. At once, the full sweep of possibility went through his frame like volts of jagged electric power.

He began to run over the uneven ground. Then there were two unmistakable pistol shots and a low scream. Lights went on and off and there was a thunder of indeterminate thuds mingled with boom and thunder. It was all wrapped up with strings of ripping fire and chain-lightning clatter of machine gun blast.

"What the devil are they staging here?" he panted, leaping an imaginary boulder. "Sounds like a San Francisco earthquake at Coney Island."

But his feeble attempts at on-the-spot humor only helped sift the evidence that was dovetailing together. He knew now that Tolliver's gang with the Dornier flying boat was somewhere nearby and that they were making one last attempt to get him out of the picture.

Well, at least they found Barney at home," he grinned, wondering how the battle was progressing.

Then he remembered that Miss Colony had gone back to Graylands with Barney. He suddenly felt the grim clammy clutch of fear and he raced on again. He passed around the dull opaqueness of a greenhouse and came out into the clear of the back garden. He tore around the corner of a building and saw Barney standing wide-legged, blasting away with two heavy automatics and swearing at the top of his voice.

"Barney!" yelled Keen. "Barney!"

"Hey, Boss! They've got Pebbles' .

I can't bop at them, Boss!"

"It is the flying boat again?" husked Keen, grabbing one of the weapons.

"Sure! They must have sneaked in here and – well, they were looking for you. Thought you were back here."

"Blast their eyes! Get moving!"

The engines of the big flying boat were ticking over gently, indicating that it was being held lightly against the swell and tide. They were probably boating across from the beach with their captive. Keen and Barney ran along the shelter of the grape arbor, and in the uncertain light of the night they could see the black out line of the Dornier and the splutter of engine exhaust.

"Get the Black Bullet out!" Keen ordered. "Move fast!"

They clambered back, darted in side, and leaped into their service flying kit and clumped downstairs to the cellar. In the dim light of a wine cellar, they moved a steel panel and slipped through into Keen's secret hangar. There on a turntable stood the Black Bullet, the much-feared nighthawk which was flown by the legendary character known as the Griffon.

A dapper young man-about-town, who was a ballistics expert by day, was the mysterious night-raiding devil who flew by night, leaving his famous calling card marked "The Griffon." This was the real Kerry Keen!

CHAPTER IV LANG LOSES – TWICE!

THE TWO Allison engines were started, and Keen, in his special coverall and scarlet mask, snapped in the Skoda mufflers that snubbed the gigantic roar down to a mere purr. They slipped on kapok jackets and parachutes while the great doors were rammed open by silent motors. Keen ran her out into the darkness and Barney clicked the outside switch which took the doors back, leaving the appearance of nothing more deadly than a country garden rockery.

Keen taxied her across the lawn after Barney had locked the wings in place, and ran around the shadow of the boathouse. He stared out to sea and tried to figure which direction the Dornier had taken. She was nowhere in sight now. He let her roll down into the water and then set an adjustment on the floats and opened the engines. The sleek black amphibian thumped out into the clear

and Keen let her take herself off over the wide swell of easy rollers.

All this had been accomplished with a minimum of noise and bustle. The Black Bullet was in the air and skating for altitude within ten minutes after Keen and Barney had raced back to the house.

"What you gonner do, Boss?" the Mick asked anxiously.

"We've got to find that bird first. Try the radio and see if they're in the air. Get a line on them with the D/R loop if possible."

"But you can't shoot them down if they have Pebbles aboard, Boss," the Mick said with a moan.

"There're plenty of ways to get those guys. She'll be all right. They won't hurt themselves, you know."

"I don't like it, Boss!"

"Who does? Get on that radio and try to trace them."

Barney went to work with little enthusiasm. Keen took the Black Bullet up to 4,00G and rammed back and forth well out to sea.

"Wow! They're right below us....Look!" exclaimed Barney.

Keen whipped the Bullet up and over sharply and then gasped. The big Dornier was almost directly under them. As he tried to get the Bullet into the clear, two long jangling bursts of fire whipped up and sprayed the sky with a festoon of tracer." We pull a dummy, Barney. Get it?"

"It'll be hotter than it was in Miami, Boss," the Mick groaned.

"Two lights guns and a sea anchor, quick!"

The Mick unjacked his headphone set and went to work. Keen lowered the retractable floats and sent the Bullet into a series of sloppy curling glides. The Dornier gunners continued to blast at them and the Bullet followed its course down toward the sea.

"They must have known we would chase them," Barney clattered from behind.

"Good. They'll be after the Griffon, which is just what we want."

Keen choked the engines, snapped the switches on and off, causing long burning

blasts of flame through the exhaust. All the business was being presented to indicate that they were going down with plenty of trouble. The Dornier followed carefully and Keen was able to keep within sight but far enough ahead to assure himself enough time to carry out his plan.

Eventually, the Black Bullet was down and Keen let her land gently, left the engines just ticking over, and tossed over a sea anchor to hold her fairly steady. Then he and Barney slipped from parachute racks, took over two light weapons, and carefully went overboard and swam well clear of the plane. With the aid of their life-jackets, they were able to keep together and float gently and conserve their strength.

The Dornier came down with a majestic sweep of wings and spray and stood off some distance from the bobbing Black Bullet. Keen and Barney were well in the clear and began to move slowly through the water to the other side of the flying boat. A small searchlight was broken out and played gingerly on the Black Bullet. There were several throaty orders, and then a cabin door opened.

"They're launching a small folding dory. Now's our chance," Keen said quietly as he breast-stroked toward the Dornier.

□

They moved up close and heard the activity on the other side. They waited until they could hear the scrawnc of the short oars, and then suddenly a small cabin door opened on their side.

"Hell!" gasped the Mick a moment before he ducked under the water. "Never mind. Look, it's Pebbles!" beamed Keen.

THE OVAL cabin door was still being held open, and together they clambered up the curved sides. They handed the girl a gun and grinned.

"I knew you two were up to your tricks when I saw you go down that way," the girl said. "They had me cooped up in here, figuring I'd never try to jump out."

"Work fast, Barney. Get every gun and don't let anyone give you a dirty look.

Remember, they'll kill you as soon as look at you."

The Mick grinned and moved aft. There was a scuffle somewhere, a shot and a low scream. Kent went forward, still well protected by his disguise. He opened the door into the center compartment and cracked a radioman who was peering through a port. In the next compartment, two men stood behind Knott-Bremse weapons that were poked through a window. He slugged both of them before they could move and then ripped the belts out of the guns, opened the breeches, and fouled the lock mechanisms.

Another man slipped out of the control compartment and started back when he saw Keen in the low light of the cabin.

"Come here, you!" ordered Keen. "Get in here and behave yourself. Tie his hands tightly behind him, Pebbles. Make it snappy!"

She took the loose ends of a life-belt line and bound the man's hands securely while he whimpered and pleaded in subdued tones.

"Shut up, or I'll bop you and keep you quiet for a week," Keen growled. "I'll get the other lug." He slipped up the steps to the control compartment and rammed his gun into the ribs of the first pilot, who was caught cold while he leaned out of an open compartment window. Keen dragged him down, and he, too, was tied up securely outside the radio compartment.

"And no funny business," warned Keen in his disguised voice, "or I'll give you a packet of Mauser malaria."

Barney came up with a broad grin, shoving two more astounded prisoners along in front of him.

"These guys were playing wise wit a couple of Jerry type writers back there, Boss. What'll I do wit 'em?" "Tie 'em up!"

Keen went to a window, called to the men in the dory to come back. They swung the boat around uncertainly, but a shot across the water took all ideas of refusal out of them and they returned to the cabin doorway and were lugged ruthlessly aboard.

"And now, gentlemen," said Keen. "We want a black brief case, complete with all the

trimmings, and we're not wasting too much time waiting for you to tell us where it is. We're shooting a man a minute until we learn where it is. Is that clear?"

One German who spoke English interpreted the remark and they all searched each other's faces to see who would be the one to give in first. Keen stood there looking at his watch and fingering his gun expertly. "Come on," he said. "I know you have it aboard here. You are taking it back south where you may pick up Tolliver. Where's he heading for, Havana?"

The Germans muttered among themselves, and finally one of them said: "The bag is in the Engineer's Compartment with the ship's log books."

"Fine! Now what is the name of the man who killed Craven in New York?"

"A man named Foyle – he works at LaGuardia Field."

"Where is he now?"

"With Tolliver, in Havana." Barney covered them and Keen went to search for the bag. He came back in a few minutes. He held up the Swiss travel agency catalogue and said: "You birds must know all about Switzerland. You were not much interested in the picture book, eh?" "There's nothing in that" one of them said.

"That's what I hoped you'd say."

"All right, Barney. Go around and plug a few bullet holes in the fuel tanks. They won't need it, anyway. The Coast Guard cutter will find them by daylight and we'll leave a few riding lights on – just in case." Barney found the hull tanks and blew several holes in them and let the fuel seep out.

"I wouldn't try any cigarette smoking if I were you, gentlemen," Keen said with a warning wag of his finger. The darndest things can happen. And now, good night!"

Barney kept watch while Miss Colony was assisted down into the boat. Keen followed and Barney dropped into the stern and shoved off. In five minutes they were aboard the Black Bullet, and they were as snug as bugs in rugs in the compact compartment while Keen took off and headed back for Graylands. "Well, it's been quite an evening – quite a day, in fact," Miss Colony

said once they had settled down. "What happens now?"

"That's very simple. When we get back, we have a drink and clean up the general mess. Then you will be driven to Hartford, where you will take a plane for Miami Beach. And at Miami Beach you will mail a large package to one Mr. Drury Lang in New York. You take the next plane back, using another name, and spend the next two weeks replenishing your wardrobe. We'll try to get a New England vacation next time." "What's all that for?" demanded the girl.

"We spend about five hundred bucks on air travel, just to win one hundred smackaroos from Mr. Lang, who is not quite sure whether he is the Griffon or not."

"You get the screwiest ideas," said Peebles, "but if you say so, I'm Miss Tessie Throckmorton going south and Fannie Fanschaeur coming north. That Okay by you?"

TWO DAYS LATER John Scott phoned Keen. It was as he had expected. Lang had gleefully produced the missing brief case and they had found the hidden sheets of information.

"So if you hear that the Navy and half the Air Force is heading for the Caribbean, you'll know what its all about," Scott said. "Those devils really had everything tied up, until you played that crazy typewriter of Craven's,"

"Yeah? Well, when the boys get down that way, tell them to look around Havana. Your Mr. Tolliver pal is taking it easy down there, waiting for a Dornier seaplane to pick him up."

□

"Well, it won't. The Coast Guard found it two days ago. We kept it pretty quiet, to see what might happen. Your friend, the Griffon, left his card in a message on the wall of the radio room."

"That guy Lang sure gets around, doesn't he?" laughed Keen. "You don't really think Lang's the Griffon, do you?"

"Did he pay you your hundred?" asked Keen.

"Sure! Said he knew you were on Long Island because he called you several times. Said he's willing to lose the bet – both ways."

"The little cheat! He won't tell you how he got the brief case. He must know the Griffon," taunted Keen.

"I don't care how he got it. We discovered what Craven wanted to tell us, and that's all that matters. But he might have a contact with the Griffon, after all. I wonder...."

"So does he, John," laughed Keen.

THE END