

# "Calling All Cars"

## The Fatal Three

By Marshall Graves

Another Thrilling True Detective Story  
Portraying Radio as the Defender of Law

On that June night the narrow streets of old San Francisco were filled with a yellow, clammy fog which swept in from the sea and gave a weird and ghostly glamour to the hurrying figures of the evening.

In a doorway on Fillmore Street two cuddlesome blondes huddled, two blondes with soft red mouths and slumbering, inviting eyes . . .

The invitation was for the two men who were coming up the street, two young, good-looking youths who wore smart raincoats and caps cocked over their eyes. They looked like college boys out for some fun.

"There's a dance at the Park," whispered the first blonde. "Maybe they'll take us there."

The other said that she wanted the boy with the moustache, because moustaches tickled so. They both giggled.

The pair were almost to the doorway now, and both girls pretended to be interested in the near-by shop window. As they passed, one girl dropped her leather handbag, and a vanity case tinkled on to the sidewalk.

It was femininity's oldest, most tried and true dodge—but it didn't work. The two young men looked around, half-smiled, and went on.

Soft red mouths grew hard. "Sissies!" said one girl, as she scooped up the contents of her handbag.

"Mamma's boys!" agreed the other.

At that moment Bob Parrett and Tommy Wilson turned the corner of Ellis Street, and left the bright lights of the shopping district behind them. They were in a drab district of pawnshops, all-night restaurants, little hotels.

"It's easy," said Bob Parrett. "I ought to know. I've done time in three pens, ain't I? All you got to do is flash the rod, and they'll hand it over like nothing. It's candy from a baby, kid."

"Yeah," agreed Wilson. His hand was in his coat pocket, clenched around the butt of a weighty .38 caliber pistol. "Just flash the rod. But—what if they don't hand over?"

"This is what, punk," Parrett told him, in a voice that rasped like sandpaper. He held out his forefinger, then closed it swiftly upon an imaginary trigger. "We got to get out of town, ain't we?"

"Yes," answered Wilson.

"We got to have dough to get to Los Angeles, don't we? And to live on till we hook up with the boys from the Purple mob?"

"Yes, we got to have dough," Wilson echoed.

There was one electrically-lit marquee in the block, signifying a hotel somewhat larger and more modern than its fellows. The name which shone there was "Hotel MADELINE".

"That's the place," said Parrett. He tugged at his short moustache nervously. "Hotel Madeline—they do a good business there."

"I—I knew a girl named Madeline once," offered Wilson. "Back in Seattle."

Parrett was bubbling with enthusiasm now. "'Paddling Madeline home', eh? I remember the song. Boy, there's not a song of the last ten years I don't remember. I like music."

He spoke in a gay, easy voice, but his cold gray eyes bored into those of his younger companion. "Okay kid. Take a deep breath and keep your shirt on."

Wilson smiled weakly. "I'll be all right!" His hand caressed the gun.

A number was painted on the skylight—1563—but Bob Parrett didn't pay any attention to numbers. He liked music; he had no head for figures.

They went through the door and started up a flight of heavily carpeted stairs.

An oblong of light showed at the head of the stairs, and from a radio came the lilting strains of Helen Morgan's great hit from *Show Boat*—"Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, I gotta love . . ." For this was June, 1930, when prosperity was just around the corner.

They went on up the stairs and came into a small but cozily furnished lobby. A fireplace flickered against one wall, and not far away was a small radio. Half a dozen guests of the small "family" hotel sat in rocking chairs around the radio, some reading newspapers and comic magazines, some humming softly in time with the



Reproduction of the scene in the hotel lobby, when the police radio call came through the loudspeaker that foggy night in San Francisco

music: "Tell me he's lazy, tell me he's slow. Tell me I'm crazy—maybe I know . . ."

There was a pretty girl behind the desk instead of the usual slick-haired, male clerk. Beatrice Ames, dark-haired, tall, with a tiny tilt to her nose—she was a hotel clerk among clerks, and later events were to prove it.

Her official title was "manager". As the two visitors approached, she dipped a pen into the ink and offered it to them.

Parrett tugged at his moustache, and his gray eyes flickered with roving yellow lights. He took a deep breath—

But Wilson spoke. "How much to put us up with a couple of beds for the night, ma'am?"

Bee Ames leaned over the counter, and gave them a friendly if impersonal smile. "For two in a room it'll be two dollars, sir," she said. "Would you like to register?"

"Say, lady, we—" began Parrett. He hadn't the patience for this sort of stalling.

But the younger man cut in on him, nervously. "We—we'll be back in about an hour," he said. "We gotta get our suitcases, you know."



Lieutenant John Mullin in the doorway of the Hotel Madeline where he and his partner fought it out with guns—for their lives

Parrett flashed a glare at him, but the younger man nudged. They moved slowly toward the stairs, as the radio program changed. A girl's voice came loudly, in imitation of a plump young lady who was appearing in *Good Boy* back on Broadway. "I wanna be loved by you, just you, and nobody else but you . . . I wanna be loved by you alone, boop boop a-doop . . ."

"Come on!" whispered Wilson. And the older man followed him down the stairs. Parrett wasn't used to taking it lying down.

In the street he gripped Wilson's arm. "Listen to me, you yellow little punk . . ."

But Wilson shook his head. "Honest, Bob, there were too many people in the place! Besides, that dark dame's eyes seemed to drill right through the back of my head. I need a drink, honest. And then we'll go back after some of the guests are gone to bed. I'm not quitting, honest I'm not . . ."

"Well, I'll buy you your drink!" agreed the leader, in a disgusted tone. "But I told you what that stuff does to your stomach. And it shoots your nerves all to hell, too. Now if it was a good shot of heroin or a sniff of happy-dust, that would be different. Drugs give you the nerve of four men, but liquor makes you soft . . ."

They went on down Ellis Street, arm in arm, like two tipsy revelers.

Beatrice Ames left the desk and went over in front of the hotel fireplace. Even with the windows closed, the fog seemed to creep in somehow, for she felt a strange shiver run up and down her back—and another and another.

She soon banished her shivers with the lilting strains of a distant dance orchestra that came over the radio. The little circle of guests, most

of them staid and middle-aged, fell into an argument over the comparative charms of "jazz" and "classical" music. Beatrice finally suited every taste by tuning in a pipe organ playing popular melodies.

Two or three people went to bed. One of the men, a night dispatcher for the street-car company, left the circle and hurried down the stairs a little before midnight.

Somebody produced a deck of cards. "How about some bridge, folks? Miss Ames'll make a fourth."

That was one of Miss Ames' duties. She sat nearest the radio, tuning for greater and greater distance as the local stations went off the air. One o'clock came, and then two in the morning . . .

The Coconut Grove in Los Angeles remained the only station on the air, and they would go off in a little while . . .

"Let's finish the rubber, folks," said Mrs. Trivers, a plump and jolly divorcee. "I'm getting sleepy as everything."

Her partner was Togerson, a mining engineer out of work. "Okay by me," he announced. Mabel Rice, public stenographer, was the (Continued on Page 29)

# The Fatal Three

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other member of the party. She yawned and nodded.

Then she looked at her cards. "I bid four no trump," she offered.

A buzzer cut short the bidding—the signal that the downstairs door had been opened.

"You'll have to excuse me," pretty Beatrice Ames interrupted. "That means a late customer."

She went out to the landing at the head of the stairs. The two young men who had gone for their bags more than five hours ago were climbing the stairs without luggage.

"Good evening, gentlemen," she said, as they reached the head of the stairs. "Glad to see you came back. Will you register please?"

But instead of picking up the pen which she offered him, Parrett registered with the muzzle of a pistol!

"This, boys and girls, is a stickup!" said Parrett. And he was not joking. Wilson covered the three hotel guests who still sat at the bridge table, holding their cards with damp, trembling hands.

"Reach for the sky—quick—and don't yell! If you make a noise, we'll blow you all full of holes!"

Beatrice Ames was in the most difficult spot of all. Many and many a time she had read of hold-ups, and wondered what she would do if someone poked a gun at her. She had seen stirring crime films, had read breath-taking stories of how an unarmed girl thwarted the mob of desperadoes.

She felt her knees turn to wobbly sticks and the tiny hairs on the back of her neck were damp with perspiration. She was cold, colder than she had ever been in her life.

## The Threat of Death

"Yell, sister and you get the works!" Parrett told her savagely. "Shove over to the safe, quick! We want what you got."

Beatrice Ames moved slowly toward the safe. There wasn't anything else to do. But it meant her job, certainly, if the robbers got away with this. Several hundred dollars were in that safe behind the counter. She hadn't gone to the bank that night, as she was supposed to have done. Usually it wouldn't matter, but now—

"Crack open that box and hurry!" ordered Parrett. "The safe, I mean! Shake it up!"

The pretty girl hardly dared take her eyes from those smoky, yellow-gray pools which blazed into hers. She felt that if she turned her back, the human rattlesnake might fire from sheer lust of killing.

She knelt at the safe, and fumbled with the combination. Wilson, the second bandit, was lining up the three bridge players against the wall.

"Keep your hands in the sky—I'd shoot you as soon as I'd look at your ugly faces!" he snarled. Whiskey had put courage into Wilson's veins.

"I think I'll see what you got," he announced. His fingers pawed at the pockets of his masculine prisoner, taking an Elgin watch, a billfold with a few dollars in it, and some silver.

"Listen," begged the victim, "let me keep my driver's license and my union card. They're no good to you."

For an answer, young Wilson tore the papers from the billfold and threw them into the smouldering fireplace. "Shut up or I'll send you after them!" he snarled. He passed on to the women, snatching a diamond ring from one, a wrist watch from the other.

"Got anything else?" he asked, and leered. "Maybe I better look . . ."

Half clowning, half serious, he stretched out his clutching hands towards the neck of one woman's dress. She flung herself backward, and let out a shrill "oh!"

But someone had been awakened by the woman's little cry. Down the hall, Mrs. Grace Lingert sat up in bed. She rubbed her eyes, and felt on the bedside table for a cigaret.

"I wish they wouldn't hold parties every night in the lobby," she complained bitterly. "Sitting up and screaming over their silly old bridge games! I've half a mind to give them a good talking to . . ."

The pound of the radio came stronger now, and Mrs. Lingert put her feet into her slippers and shuffled across the room to the door. She opened it, with a caustic phrase on the tip of her tongue—

But she saw, instead of the usual bridge game, the tense picture of that well-filled lounge at the end of the hall—where three people stood against the wall with their arms in the air, and a pistol in the hands of a stranger waving in front of their death-white faces.

Her mouth was wide open, but she did not scream. She did not run for the stairs, or have hysterics where she stood.

Softly Mrs. Lingert closed the door, tiptoed across her room and picked up the telephone. As luck would have it, the hotel had no switchboard, each telephone being a direct line. She dared not raise her voice above a whisper, but at that whispered word "POLICE" the operator snapped to attention.

"Hurry, Central!" cried Mrs. Lingert. "There's something terrible happening."

Plugs slipped into place, and a bell buzzed in a room four miles away. At Bush Street Police station a desk lieutenant picked up the phone.

He heard the muffled, half choking voice of a terrified woman. "Come quick! A robbery—"

"Where, ma'am?" implored the lieutenant.

"Where? Here, of course—I mean the Hotel Madeline, 1563 Ellis Street—"

"Okay," said the cop. "Which way did they go?"

"They didn't go—they're still here, robbing the place. Oh, snap out of it!"

The Bush Street lieutenant got through to Inspector Ray O'Brien at headquarters. He, in turn, grabbed a microphone—

"Calling cars forty-seven, seventeen, sixty-four, calling Mission cars forty-seven, seventeen, sixty-four—a holdup at 1563 Ellis Street—"

In a little alley off Bush Street Lieutenant John Mullin and Patrolman Thomas Marlowe snapped to attention as the signal came in. A siren howled, and gears screamed as the Ford squad car roared away from the curb . . .

But other ears than those of the officers heard that clarion summons. Those were the days when police calls went out over regular commercial stations—cutting in without warning in the middle of soft music or gay song! And Parrett and Wilson heard their own crime blaring out

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Radio must be a prominent element in the detection and apprehension of the criminals. Photographs, names of principals, dates and places must be bona fide.

Address all letters to Editor, RADIO GUIDE, 423 Plymouth Court, Chicago, Illinois.

into the ether while it was still being committed!

" . . . A holdup at 1563 Ellis Street—that is all!"

Beatrice Ames, with her heart pounding in her ears, froze into immobility against the door of the safe. It was a moment unforgettable, a weird and terrible culmination of the night's dark drama . . .

## Moment of Doubt

The two robbers crouched, faces white and hands trembling. They exchanged frightened, wondering glances. Each waited for a cue.

Then on the radio the police interference stopped, and the distant station came back on the air with a lilting waltz.

Wilson, feverishly gay with whiskey and excitement, couldn't believe anything was wrong. Not with the situation so well in hand, not with the music playing and the

(Continued on Page 30)



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# The Fatal Three

(Continued from Page 29)

women cringing before his gun. He spoke: "Say—could that be this place?"

Parrett was older and wiser. He bent above Beatrice. Again she felt the muzzle of the gun against her body. "Come clean, sister—what's the number of this joint? Is it 1563?"

She didn't have time to think. A second's pause would betray her. But Beatrice's face was calm, even frank. Her wide dark eyes were as innocent as a child's.

"No, of course not," she said. "Everybody knows this is 2065. That other number is a pool hall up the street five blocks!"

The bandit wavered doubtfully. "Sure," called Wilson. "How could it be this

dump? Nobody could have turned in an alarm!"

Parrett dropped his gun and nodded. "That's right. It couldn't be us. Somebody else must be in a jam, eh? Good enough! It'll keep the flat feet busy."

He bent again over Beatrice. "Listen, sister, I give you just three minutes to remember that combination and get the box open, and then I'm going to break your pretty nose with the butt of my rod."

The three against the wall were on pins and needles now, waiting for the rescue they both hoped and feared. At any moment the guns in the hands of those two grinning bandits might spout lead in desperate battle with police—and they'd be in the line of fire.

Beatrice Ames had more than that to

fear—when the bandits learned that they had been tricked, they might well send their first bullet through her back... but she still played her desperate game!

Finally the time came when she could stall no more. The big safe door swung open, disclosing the small tin box with its sheaf of greenbacks. At last the robbers saw within their reach the loot they had sought for so long. Beatrice Ames was flung aside, and greedy fingers scooped at the money.

It was all over—and in spite of her desperate attempt to delay the robbers, they were free. Beatrice leaned against the counter, her shoulders slumped helplessly—the radio tune finally died away... "Smash!"

Two brawny shoulders were flung against the downstairs door as officers Mullin and Marlowe battered their way into the picture. Beatrice Ames and her fellow captives had lived an eternity since that radio call came mysteriously through the air—but actually just four minutes had passed.

The radio call had not gone out in vain, and now with guns drawn the lieutenant and the patrolman pounded up the narrow, dim-lit stairs. They presented a perfect target, but they didn't think about that fact at the time, and it wouldn't have made any difference if they had.

## Radio Delivers

Lieutenant Mullin led the way. As his heavy brogans struck the top step, a young man with a moustache burst out of the hotel lounge. There was a tin box under his arm, and a pistol in his hand.

"Drop that gun!" roared Mullin. Cops like Mullin believe in giving even a rat a chance.

"We're officers," chimed in Marlowe, from below. "Throw it away!"

But Bob Parrett was a stir-bird, and he had sworn that never again would he go back behind the grim gray walls. Not if he had to kill a dozen cops to stay free.

His twisted lips curled in a wide snarl. He flung himself to one side, striking the light switch and putting the hallway into utter blackness—blackness like the inside of a tar barrel, as Mullin said later.

At the same time the lights went out, Parrett shot. But Mullin had been a cop too long not to know the answers. He ducked, and so did Marlowe. The bandit's bullet pinged by over their heads, and crashed into the plastered wall.

"He's asking for it!" cried Mullin. His service gun barked, the flare of the powder temporarily illuminating the hallway. By its light Mullin pulled the trigger twice more, and this time he drew a bead...

Marlowe, not to be outdone, aimed past his chief and sent three more red-hot slugs of lead into the man who faced them. There was a moment of silence, and then the crash of a tin box striking the floor.

Parrett laughed, a horrible, choking laugh, and fell forward on his face. He was dead before he struck—dead with five police .45 slugs through him. Any one of them, doctors said later, would have killed him. Parrett learned all too late that radio cops aren't the right targets.

Mullin snapped on the light. He didn't pay any attention to the tin box, but Marlowe, following close behind, snatched up the dead bandit's gun. That was regulations, too. No telling who else might want to mix into this free-for-all... besides, his own gun was part empty.

Shoulder to shoulder the two cops walked into the hotel lounge. The radio was silent now, the fireplace dead and cold. The safe gaped open, and before it Beatrice Ames knelt, sobbing hysterically.

## Thwarted Escape

Across the room two women and a man shook and trembled, with their arms still in the air.

Nobody said anything. The three against the wall were too terrified to speak.

But Beatrice Ames, the heroine of the play, was still to have her exit line. "Inside that door!" she whispered hoarsely—and pointed.

It was a door across the room next to the one which led to the hall where the

hotel rooms were located. Together Mullin and Marlowe plunged across the room—tore the door open—

There stood Wilson, the amateur bandit, with a revolver in his hand and a look of amazement on his face.

He was blank with astonishment—for he had spotted this door as a safety exit, and made a dive for it when he heard the shooting start. He had plenty of time to make his getaway—but unfortunately he had chosen a clothes closet for an exit instead of the door beside it, which led to the hall and the rear stair!

Trapped—by a second queer twist of fate! And the third of the fatal three was the fact that his nerve had weakened on the first visit, when they might have gotten away with it!

Two police automatics jammed in his ribs, Wilson didn't seem inclined to put up much of a fight. He let Marlowe snatch his gun, and came out of the closet with an apologetic smile on his face.

Then, with a monkey-like quickness, he let go a swinging left hook for Mullin's jaw. The big cop blocked it, and returned an uppercut which smashed Wilson back into the closet.

Marlowe, a flyweight, flung himself around the prisoner, trying to get one of the jiu jitsu locks that he had been taught in police school. They wrestled in the closet, among flying overcoats, coat hangers, and brooms...

## Gin Courage Fails

Mullin didn't want to shoot. One dead man was enough. They needed somebody to arrest. So he waited his time, let his partner take a bit of punishment from the fear-crazed bandit, and then, when he saw an opening, let go a right cross that dropped Wilson to the floor in a crumpled heap. And it was over—in less time than it takes to tell.

Handcuffs snapped—and at that moment heavy brogans pounded up the stairs as two other radio cars, called from the other side of town, entered the fray.

Tommy Wilson, revived by the toe of a policeman's boot, was led in handcuffs through the lounge where he had terrorized the four members of the bridge party. He saw his partner's body covered with a sheet, but that didn't seem to worry him.

He turned to Beatrice Ames, who was the center of an eager crowd of guests. She was the heroine, the recipient of all the congratulations. It was she who had saved the hotel money, who had saved her own job and the property of the three guests who had stayed up to play and listen to the radio.

Wilson's voice was raised in a shrill and bitter complaint. "That dame lied to us!" As he was dragged to the patrol car, he continued the plaint. "She said this place was number 2065—that's a lousy break!"

He was even more convinced of his left-handed luck when he was slammed behind the bars on a triple charge of robbery, burglary, and assault.

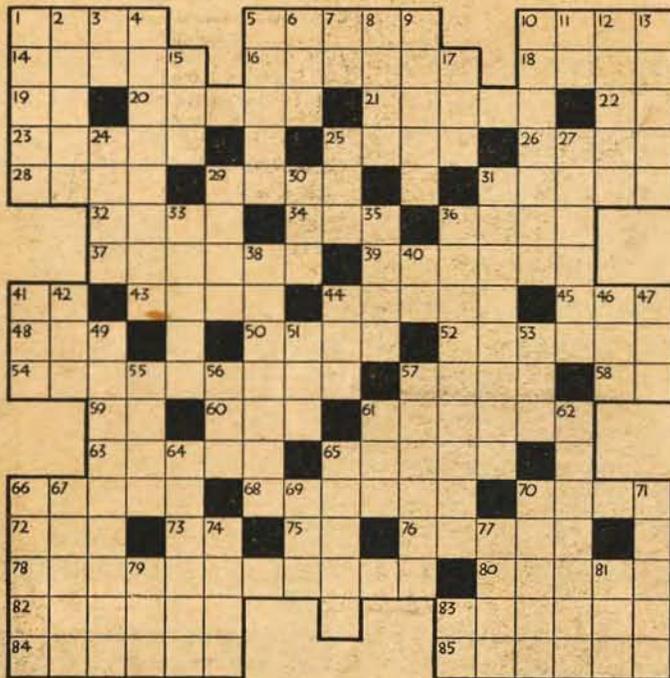
"With radios and fly-cops and dames that tell lies with an innocent smile, how can a guy get an even break?" whined Tommy Wilson.

But the turnkey only told him to "tell it to Sweeney."

## In Next Week's Issue of RADIO GUIDE: "EARMARKED"

The shooting of Officer Murphy and the young garage attendant might have been a perfect crime—if a slain bandit hadn't had his picture taken, years before, in a school group—if the same dead gunman hadn't a pair of lop ears—and if radio had not been on the job to help apprehend the murderers. You will find action, mystery, suspense, tragedy and a perfect solution, in "Earmarked," next week's complete, true story of the part radio plays in catching crooks. Order your copy now from your favorite news-dealer.

## Radio Guide's X-Word Puzzle



### DEFINITIONS

- HORIZONTAL**
- 1—Max Baer leads with it
  - 5—the Old Maestro leads with it
  - 10—leading these wins a trick, unless trumped
  - 14—Mahomedan's God
  - 16—one type of cooking utensil
  - 18—Byrd is near it
  - 19—Georgia (abbreviated)
  - 20—rings out
  - 21—morass
  - 22—musical note
  - 23—radio travels through it
  - 25—impale
  - 26—a nasty grin
  - 28—back end
  - 29—pedal extremities
  - 31—merits
  - 32—gain altitude
  - 34—color
  - 36—woven
  - 37—comes in
  - 39—befall
  - 41—he usually pays and pays
  - 43—high wind
  - 44—places in position
  - 45—stitch
  - 48—a brew
  - 50—a college or seminary official
  - 52—to an Englishman, this word means fight
  - 54—lean (speaking of a horse)
  - 57—skin
  - 58—railway (abbreviated)
  - 59—as
  - 60—nickname for Lillian
  - 61—skill
  - 63—rings (a bell)
  - 65—a town with plenty of night life
  - 66—short for stenographer
  - 68—wild, but harmless, animals
  - 70—old-time slang for potato
  - 72—like radio job, it's free
  - 73—short for Abner
  - 75—third note, diatonic scale

- 76—to an advertiser, radio is one of these
  - 78—members of the House of Hanover
  - 80—the last name is Nelson
  - 82—belonging to Miss Rich
  - 83—beliefs
  - 84—most exposed
  - 85—ropes with a running noose
- VERTICAL**
- 1—a type of beer
  - 2—overjoy
  - 3—flemish (abbreviated)
  - 4—diminishing at one end
  - 5—beautiful lady
  - 6—answer (abbreviated)
  - 7—the late Edison's first two initials
  - 8—city in Russia
  - 9—more up-to-date
  - 10—there are two ways to do this for radio: fan letters and buying the sponsor's product
  - 11—company (abbreviated)
  - 12—Irving Berlin's wife
  - 13—screeches
  - 15—possessive pronoun
  - 17—statute
  - 24—member of popular radio team
  - 25—all right for pigs
  - 27—man's name
  - 29—sense; touch
  - 30—belonging to Edward
  - 31—each Orphan Annie program is one of these
  - 33—diamonds of the sky
  - 35—jet black
  - 36—renders free from germs (optional spelling)
  - 38—somewhat red
  - 40—plural ending
  - 41—dance step
  - 42—everyone
  - 44—stuff up
  - 46—ever
  - 47—sour
  - 49—from the east
  - 51—elongated fish
  - 53—twice five
  - 55—blessing
  - 56—unwell
  - 57—women's quarters of wealthy orientals
  - 61—do a certain kind of hand-work
  - 62—precious stones
  - 64—bread comes in the shape of —
  - 65—king of ancient Troy
  - 66—East Indian title of respect
  - 67—dowagers love this adornment
  - 69—French for friend
  - 70—measurements
  - 71—garb
  - 74—of highest quality
  - 77—girl's name
  - 79—single
  - 81—these two words turn single to married
  - 83—Carrie Lillie (initials) of WMCA

### SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S X-WORD PUZZLE



The solution to this puzzle will be published in next week's issue, in which you will find another absorbing puzzle