

The Musical Murderer

"Calling All Cars"

By Moorehead Green

Once Again Radio Plays Its Part Nobly in Trailing a Desperate Killer Who Sang While He Killed

Two men walked stiffly in the semi-darkness. Keeping just one pace behind them was a third—a handsome, smiling young fellow who walked with hands shoved into the pockets of his well-tailored coat. Dead leaves rattled in the gutters of this little side street of Decatur, Illinois. It was a still, clear night in November.

"All right, you punks—turn in this junk yard just ahead," said the man with his hands in his pockets.

One of the two in front twitched his shoulders convulsively.

"Wh-what are you going to do with us?" the twitching man gasped. He didn't venture to turn his head when he spoke, but the blond young man's pleasant face went bleak. It was as if Mr. Hyde's scowl peered through the smile of Dr. Jekyll.

"Kill you—if you don't shut up!" came the short reply. The three turned into the deserted junk yard without further discussion.

But once among the stacks of rusty scrap-iron, the piles of old tires and the odds-and-ends that loomed in the semi-darkness of the yard, the young fellow's good humor seemed to return. Pulling a pistol from his pocket, he began to sing "O Sole Mio" in a tender voice. Only he couldn't remember the words, and had to fill in with "ta-tya-ta-ta" and "la-la-la-la." The other two men stood with faces turned toward a ragged, rusty wall of junk. Their hands were in the air, while the singer searched their pockets.

"Aha!" he said gaily, as he took revolvers and police badges from them. "This is what I get for heisting a coupla night watchmen—gats an' two bits o' tin. Well, I can use 'em in my business!"

From the pockets of the silent men he took money, watches and keys. From his own he pulled a large roll of adhesive tape, with which he bound the wrists and ankles of the pair. They made no protest, even when he forced strips of tape across their mouths. They sensed that this smiling young man who sang while he robbed, might be just as willing to kill while he sang.

"O sole mi-o-o!" intoned the busy bandit tenderly. "La-la-la-la-la. I'm sorry to have to do this to you. But I'm going to get married, and I need dough." The two watchmen said nothing, which was not remarkable, since their lips were sealed with tape. This tickled the gunman's sense of humor, and he laughed.

The cops'll never get me,"

he confided, as he pulled a ring out of his pocket and held it up so that it gleamed in the light from a street lamp. "I'm an escape artist," the orator went on to his silent audience. "I can do anything Houdini ever did. I'm going to put on a one-man crime wave—then vanish. I never stay in the same place long enough to get caught. I got this ring by slugging a housemaid in Indiana—taped her, like you guys are. Tomorrow I'll be in another state. Well, I gotta be going. Adios, fellows!" And with a graceful wave of his hand, this extraordinary robber walked out of the junk yard, leaving two astounded men very grateful to see the last of him, despite the discomfort and indignity of their positions. He was humming his little love-song as he left them.



Stein as he looked when he was leaving the courtroom during a recess in his trial



Members of the Chicago police who followed the three-gunman's trail. (Left to right) Sergeant Smuczynski, Officer Trecker, Sergeant Olson and Sergeant Sprague

Still humming, he strolled a couple of blocks to a traffic light. Here he lounged, perfectly at ease, and waited. A car came down the block, stopped for the red light.

The smiling bandit stepped forward. The motorist saw him coming, but there was nothing alarming in his appearance. This youthful, well-dressed chap—probably a college boy—no doubt was going to ask for a ride. He did.

"I want to go to Chicago," said the "college boy."

"I'm not going to Chicago," answered the motorist. "Oh yes, you are," announced the lad with the smile—nonchalantly flipping out a pistol. They went to Chicago.

With the utmost casualness, fresh and smiling after

the long ride, the gunman dismounted from the car at the corner of Michigan Avenue and 26th Street, in Chicago, and waved goodbye to his victim—whom he had robbed, of course. Within two minutes the infuriated motorist was on the telephone, calling the police. Within another two minutes a radio car had been dispatched to the scene. But the lad with the three guns was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile, back in Decatur the wires were humming. The watchmen had been found and released. One of them remembered the thug's boast about slugging and taping a housemaid in Indiana and stealing jewelry, and immediately the energetic Decatur police chief got in touch with Indiana authorities. Soon came word that, just a few days before, the home of Cornelius O'Brien, of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, had been robbed of \$7,000 worth of jewels. The maid, who had been slugged and bound with adhesive tape, identified her assailant as a young man named Charles Stein, a native of the town who, at the age of 14, had been sent to the reformatory for stealing.

Hardly was this information obtained, when the Chicago police wired Decatur on the complaint of the kidnaped motorist—and the stage was set for the next act in the dramatic struggle between the police and Charles Stein, the adhesive-tape bandit who liked his work so much that he sang while doing it. And this man who boasted that he was as slippery as Houdini, didn't take long to get started on his one-man crime wave.

It was the following night, just after midnight. The cash register at the White Way Bar at No. 414 South State Street, Chicago, was heavy with the day's takings. But Abe Weinstein, the proprietor, wasn't worried about hoodlums. His busy restaurant stood in the heart of Chicago, right on the main street—one of the best policed streets in the world. And besides, he had a gun under the bar, just to be on the safe side. Furthermore, he catered to a good class of trade—like that nice blond boy who was just finishing a steak dinner, for instance.

The nice blond boy grinned as he finished his meal. He got up, patted his middle, nodded amiably at Abe and strolled to the cashier's wicket humming "O Sole Mio." He put his hand in his pocket as if to reach for money. Next instant the cashier saw the round, black muzzle of a pistol.

"This is a stickup," said that nice boy, Charles Stein.

Abe Weinstein clamped tight his sagging jaw, reached under the bar and started shooting. Stein wheeled and returned the fire. Shot for shot they matched, until both guns were empty—and miraculously both men were still on their feet, unhit!

Outside, many people were passing. One man dashed to the window, peered fearfully in and ran away. A crowd began to gather, at a respectful distance from the door. Could Stein escape? He wasn't even trying to escape!

O sole mi-o-o!" sang this madman tenderly, reloading his gun! And without even bothering to look behind him to see if anybody was coming into the place, he emptied the gun again. As he backed through the door, he didn't hear the hollow groan that came feebly through the partition at the back of the restaurant—where the cook, Broomell, lay dying with one of Stein's bullets in his throat. No doubt if he had known this, Stein would have laughed at it as a good joke on himself—shooting at one man and killing another!

"Calling all cars—Calling all cars—There has been a holdup and shooting at (Continued on Page 25)

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414 South State Street, a restaurant. Go to 414 South State Street . . ."

The police radio alarm—that marvel of 20th Century science, made possible by diligent and honest research workers, was broadcast before Stein could have gone a city block. Dozens of people pointed out the direction in which he had gone—but once again the man who could vanish like Houdini, had done just that.

He did it again the next night from a restaurant on North Halstead Street—and the night after that he burglarized a store and an apartment in the same building, and was away before the radio dragnet could close around him. So far this laughing killer had committed a crime a day—like a sort of devil's Boy Scout doing a daily bad deed. Now he really went to work.

That same night—after his double burglary—Stein was standing under the roaring tracks of the elevated railway at Lake and Wabash Streets in Chicago, holding up a tabloid newspaper—but not reading it. He was looking over it at a handsome, maroon-colored Buick sedan with a Wyoming license. A well-dressed, respectable man and woman were just getting in.

"O sole mi-o-o," sang the blond killer as he stepped forward and threw his paper away. He gave one swift look around. The bright and busy corner was thronged with cars, taxis, pedestrians. Overhead the "L" rumbled again. A traffic-policeman on the opposite corner blew his whistle.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Stein, just as the lady was closing the door of the sedan. In front of her face he thrust one of the badges he had taken from the night watchman in Decatur. "What is your name, sir?"

"Rouse—John E. Rouse," replied the puzzled but law-abiding citizen behind the wheel. He did not doubt Stein was an officer. Stein squeezed in beside Mrs. Rouse—flipped out his gun and pressed it into her side.

"This is a stickup, see?" he snapped. "Drive—or I shoot!"

On a dark and lonely road on the outskirts of the city, where he had made them drive, Stein bound both man and wife with adhesive tape, after robbing them. "I'm working pretty hard these days," he told them, with great good humor. "You see, I'm going to get married, and a guy needs dough when he's getting married, don't you think so? O sole mi-o-o, ta-tya-ta-ta!" To the strains of this touching little lullaby, the musical murderer carefully tucked husband and wife in with their own automobile rug.

The First Weak Link

"This'll keep you snug and tight all night," he said and drove happily away in their car. He was singing "ta-tya-ta-ta" at the top of his voice as he and the Buick vanished down the road in the darkness.

But Stein had made his first real error. He didn't double-tape his victim.

Rouse became frantic. A night of exposure in November weather—what might that not do to his wife? Madly he tugged at his bonds—quickly freed himself and Mrs. Rouse. As a result, the radio alarm went out hours before Stein expected it.

"Calling all cars—calling all cars—be on the lookout for a maroon Buick sedan, stolen by an armed bandit. Calling all cars . . ."

The maroon Buick drove smartly up to a gas station on West 95th Street. "Fill 'er up!" Stein said pleasantly to Ed Danford. "And shell out!" he added, jerking up his gun when the tank was full. "This is the life," he said as he drove away. "Tell 'em Houdini the second got your o-day. O sole mi-o!"

And so another radio call went out: "Calling Car 34—Calling Car 34—Go to 1608 West 95th Street. A bandit in a maroon Buick sedan has just held up a gas station at 1608 West 95th Street. All cars be on lookout for . . ."

So Stein headed east on 95th St. And in a few minutes—after Ed Danford, the gas station attendant had been inter-

viewed—Car 34 was nosing along behind; many blocks behind, but still on Stein's trail. It was a slim clue, but Sergeant Florian Smuczynski, who was in charge of the radio squad car, followed a route which he thought the bandit might have taken through that part of town.

Far up ahead of them, Stein suddenly parked. He had noticed a dimly lighted tavern and decided that money might be there.

The proprietor and seven customers glanced at the door as Stein entered. He came in smiling and humming, looked the place over swiftly and jerked out his gun.

"All right, boys," he said and chuckled. "Line up." With their hands in the air, they obeyed. Stein took them one by one and, with amazing deftness, lifted watches and money. He was just taking the cash from the till, when, far away but coming closer, sounded the wail of a squad car's siren.

Stein stopped dead. He knew that he had left the stolen car in the street with the engine running, parked on the wrong side. He sensed that by now, a description of the car must have been broadcast. Suddenly he laughed.

"I'm too smart for 'em!" he said exultantly. "Here, you guys—get into that little room over there—" He pointed to a small back room that stood open.

"We can't all get in th—" began the proprietor.

"Get in there!" rasped Stein, poking unmercifully with the hard muzzle of the gun. The siren was coming closer now. All eight men were trying to get into the tiny room. Stein put his shoulder against the last one, shoved, and closed the door upon them.

A Genial Barkeep

"If one of you makes a peep," he shouted, "I shoot through the door!" Working with almost superhuman strength and speed, he pushed barrels and boxes against the door. "O sole mi-o-o-o!" he sang as, leaping behind the bar, he donned a white apron, snatched up a glass and a towel. The siren wailed outside.

Stein was polishing glasses when—as he expected—the police came in. He looked up, smiled.

"How are you, fellows?" he inquired blandly. "If there's anything you want, make it snappy. I'm just closing up." Nodding a greeting to this "barkeep," two policemen walked to the back of the saloon, peering. One—Officer John Trecker—stayed at the door.

Stein came from behind the bar. Humming casually, he tried to pass Trecker. The policeman thought this strange.

"Just a minute," he said, still with no thought that this might be the man they were seeking. "Where are you going?"

"Get out of the way," snarled Stein, "or I'll give it to you!" He reached for his gun. Trecker leaped on him—the other policeman came running and Stein dropped, stunned with a gun-butt.

Radio had caught Stein—but it wasn't through with him yet. So far, there was nothing to connect him with the State Street murder. On the morning that he was being taken to Felony Court—while he was actually in the squad car—a radio call came for that particular car, directing its officers to bring Stein to the office of the Chief of Detectives.

There, Stein was confronted with the evidence that his fingerprints had been found on a ketchup bottle and a water glass in the White Way Bar, where Broome the cook had been murdered.

Stein confessed. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 99 years for murder.

It came out at the trial that he had been an escape artist—as he had claimed—with a circus. Also he had served time in the Indiana Reformatory and the Montana penitentiary. He was 24 years old.

"You are a dangerous man," the judge told him, in passing sentence. "I have no doubt that right now you are scheming how you will work your way out of the penitentiary."

Stein just grinned. As they led him

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away he was still humming "O sole mio." He has a long time to hum it!

The name and identity of the girl he intended to marry never were disclosed.

In Next Week's Issue of RADIO GUIDE

The Bandits of Burr Oak

They held up a bank, those three desperados, and got away with a fortune.—But they didn't count on the power of Radio—nor did they realize that a man cannot be buried in sand and stay alive! Read this thrilling story in RADIO GUIDE, issue dated Week Ending September 8.

Name-the-Stars Entries Swamp

Competitors—as well as judges—are waiting impatiently while scores of tabulators are busily engaged in separating the thousands of entries received in RADIO GUIDE's "Name the Stars" competition.

From every state in the union, as well as from Canada and many foreign lands, these entries have come in by the myriad. So voluminous has been the response to this contest that it has been necessary to engage an extra force of trained workers to sort and compile the answers received. Two and sometimes even three shifts are working day and night to prepare the returns for the judges, into whose hands this tremendous total of solutions soon will be placed.

Many of the solutions are strikingly interesting. Large numbers are presented uniquely—in the style of electrical displays, mechanical devices, and other moving or decorative forms. While this ingenuity is appreciated, the rules of the contest are such that no special consideration can be given in such cases.

A striking example of this cleverness in presentation is furnished by a large display prepared in the form of a giant copy of RADIO GUIDE, which opens to reveal the solutions to the many puzzles, and which lights up electrically.

Another interesting device is made of metal, somewhat in the form of the Eiffel

Tower of France. It stands several feet in height, and the solutions are hung on brackets which revolve on a central swivel.

Another device, extremely intricate, revolves when propelled by an electric motor. It carries advertising messages which turn and change on cylindrical wooden rollers.

Judging of these and the tens of thousands of other entries will go forward at an early date—just as soon as the tabulators have completed their work of preparing this colossal mass of material. Announcement of the winners will be made in RADIO GUIDE in an early issue.

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