

64 SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE

scream my head off all over the ~~place~~. (All show alarm.)

start

CARGAN. (To MAX, after a pause) So you tried to cross me, eh?

MAX. Certainly I tried to cross you. Why shouldn't I? You're around crossing everybody, ain't you? (Rises.) I've stood for your loud talk long enough, Cargan. I've been wanting to call you for the last two years. You're a great big bluff, that's all you are, and I'm going to get even for that punch you took at me, do you hear? Now you shoot any more of that killing stuff at me, and I'll go after you like a wild bear! You're never going to kill anybody, you haven't got the nerve; but I have, and the next bluff you make at me will be your last! (Sits.) It's your fault I'm mixed up in this affair, and the best thing you can do is to get me away clean, do you understand? (Smashes table with fist. Pause, then looks at HAYDEN.) You didn't think you were going to get that franchise for two hundred thousand, did you, Hayden? Why, this man would have bled you for half a million before the bill went through, and then held you up for hush money besides. I know what I'm talking about. He was going to rob you, Hayden, and I dare him to call me a liar! (All look at CARGAN, who swallows the insult in fear of MAX's attitude.)

HAYDEN. (After a pause) Cargan, is it true that you were going to rob me of this money?

CARGAN. (Turns to HAYDEN, after a slight pause) Well, if you want to know—yes, that's what I was going to do, rob you; just what you deserve. You were trying to rob the city, weren't you? You're just as much a thief as I am. If I'm a crook, it's your kind that has made me so—you, with your rotten money, tempting men to lie and steal! (Settles back in his chair.) Big corporations such as yours are the cause of corrupt politics in this country, and

you're just the kind of a sneak that helps build prisons that are filled with the poor devils that do your dirty work. You're worse than a crook—you're a maker of crooks. (*Turns to HAYDEN, leans forward and points at him.*) But I promise you, Hayden, that if I go up for this, you'll go with me! It's your fault that I entered into this thing, and, by Gad! I'll get even if I have to lie over a Bible and swear your life away! (*Turns, facing audience.*) Rob you! Humph! You've got a hell of a gall to yell about being robbed, you have!

PETERS. (*After slight pause*) I hope the prison catches fire and you're all burned to a crisp!

MAGEE. (*Laughs*) You know, my suggestion was to start a conversation, not a rough house.

HAYDEN. (*After a slight pause*) This woman who took the money—who is she?

MYRA. A newspaper reporter.

BLAND. On the "Daily Star."

CARGAN. The sheet that has fought me ever since I've been in office. They've got me this time, sure!

MAX. (*After a pause, looking nervously at MAGEE*) How much longer are you going to keep us here?

MAGEE. That's for the telephone to say. I'll release you as soon as I'm sure Miss Norton is safe and sound in Reuton. (*All turn toward MAGEE, surprised.*)

BLAND. Then you're not going to turn us over to the police?

MAGEE. Certainly not. Why should I? (*Movement of relief from all.*)

PETERS. (*Gets up*) Because they're a lot of crooks. (*All turn toward PETERS.*) Oh, how I'd love to be on the jury!

MAGEE. Sit down, Hermy. I need a little target practise, and remember, there's no law against killing ghosts! (*PETERS sits.*)