him that, in any case, McHugh would have had a key, would scarcely have raised that infernal racket at the door.

He examined the wall opposite more closely. There was just one hiding-place —between the open door and the side of the theater. Whoever had knocked must lurk there.

He took a step forward, grasped the door, and swung it shut. A figure darker than the wall shrank back. The light was insufficient to show him more, at first, than the form of a woman.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The woman did not reply. Then, before Quaile had seen her face, the truth came to him.

"Why do you hide there, Miss Morgan? Come out, please."

SHE stepped away from the wall, but still she said nothing, and, on his part, words were difficult. Instead of gratitude for the release she had brought him, he experienced a sharp regret. The disclosure of the young actress's identity for the first time offered a substantial reinforcement of McHugh's suspicions. For why should she have come at this hour? How could she have been so sure of his danger? On the other hand, the very fact that she had drawn him from that danger was in her favor. Her proximity, her continued silence, were eloquent advocates.

"Why are you so silent? Why did you come here at this hour? Why did you knock as you did at the door?"

She shuddered. At last she spoke:

"I heard the footsteps, and a shot, and something like a groan. I've been afraid to ask. I—I—you're not hurt?"

He shook his head.

"No one was hurt, as far as I know."

But he questioned if the groan he had heard at the last could have been the result of the shot. If so, plenty of evidence must remain in the theater.

The possibility encouraged him. He began to reach out again for a reasonable explanation of all that he had experienced.

"Then," she said, "it was you who fired the shot?"

"Yes."

"Why?" she asked.

He attempted a laugh.

"An accident."

She turned away.

"You won't tell me the truth."

She faced him immediately again, with an air of accusation.

"You don't even thank me for coming when I did."

He was more than ever convinced of McHugh's mistake. She would not have had the courage to assume such an attitude.

"I do thank you," he said, "with all my heart."

"What were you doing in there?" she asked.

With difficulty he made himself follow McHugh's sarcastic advice not to let any one pull the wool over his eyes.

"Doesn't my question come first?" he said.

"You mean—"

"About your coming here at this hour."

She gestured impatiently.

"I guessed when I saw you prowling about the house during rehearsal that you were planning to take chances with Woodford's. Your manner later proved it. And after the others had gone I waited on the sidewalk some time for a taxicab. When I left you hadn't come out of the alley. Of course, it was none of my affair; but at home the thought of any one alone down here obsessed me. I might as well confess it. The place terrifies me as it does Dolly—as it did Mr. Carlton, and does you and the others. I am sure there's something going on here, Mr. Quaile, that we can't understand. It has proved itself dangerous."

Her voice faltered.

"It has made me say and do things unlike me—coming this way, for instance. But I couldn't bear the thought of any of you alone here, taking chances with what frightens me so."

His heart responded to her halting confession, but she hurried on defensively:

"It made no difference who was here; I felt I had to come. And you found danger. I know. Something happened that made you afraid, or why did you fire your pistol?"

HE tried to see her eyes. He longed to throw reserve to the winds. He wanted to talk now at random about an emotion he scarcely understood. His answer was pitched low. His tone, he felt, was an avowal.

"Suppose I was afraid? Isn't it unkind to remind me of my cowardice?"

"Would a coward have gone in there alone at night?"

He reached out quickly and grasped her arm. Uncalculated words were in his mind, crying for expression.

She sprang back, freeing her arm. Her quickened breath was audible.

"Wait," he urged her. "I was about to say things— You're probably right: they're better unsaid now. Perhaps you'll try to explain my impulse by my gratitude. Something did happen in the theater. I was glad enough to get out. You gave me my opportunity. By every law of reason, there's somebody inside. As you say, he's dangerous. I don't pretend to understand his magic, but that door is his only way out, and we haven't seen anybody leave."

"You're not going back!" she said quickly.

He did not yield again to his impulse.

"Not alone."

"Then why should I wait?"

"Because," he answered, "I want you to help me."

"You're too sure of a man," she said. "You're forgetting Mr. Carlton."

"I'm doing my best to forget everything except common sense," he answered. "I'm going to try to find the source of all I heard and saw in that house."

"I've no faith," she said, "but I'll help you. What do you wish?"

"As you see, I can't leave here. I want to watch that door. Would you mind telephoning McHugh for me? Tell him to hustle right down."

She nodded.

"That isn't bad. Let him take some of the responsibility."

"Then," he directed, "I want you to bring back the first policeman you can find. We'll put it up to him. We'll switch on every light. We'll search the place from top to bottom for that limping trickster and his cat, and, by gad, we'll find them. Don't you see? We must find them."

But she failed to share his enthusiasm.

"You won't go in until I get back with a policeman?"

He was honest.

"I've no desire to enter that place alone again."

"Then I sha'n't be long."

He watched her graceful figure go down the alley and into the lighted street.

He braced himself against the wall opposite the iron door, and, his hand on his revolver, waited.

It was pleasant to recall the girl's recent companionship. The new problem she had brought to him had a little modified the horror he had experienced in the theater. He could look forward with a real hope to the approaching search. If his bullet should have struck a man!

IT was nearly a quarter of an hour later when Barbara conducted into the mouth of the alley a policeman—an elderly fellow, a relic, Quaile guessed, of the less sophisticated days of the force. He came up to Quaile and looked about with a slightly confused manner.

"You sent for me," he said. "The lady didn't quite make herself clear. Talked about a man hiding in there, then didn't seem so sure."

"It was difficult," Barbara put in. "Maybe you can understand."

Quaile attempted to explain.

"I've had a queer experience," he began.

He nodded at the closed door.

"I was alone in there—quite alone, I thought. I heard some one walking around."

"Couldn't you see who it was?" the policeman asked.

Quaile cleared his throat.

"There were no lights."

The policeman considered.

"This is Woodford's Theater," he commented, as if he had said a great deal.

"What of it?" Quaile asked.

The man lowered his voice.

"I read in the papers about that actor Carlton's dying inside. First and last, I've heard a lot of talk about Woodford's. Now, let me get it straight. You didn't see this man, but you must have felt him when he tried to stop you."

Quaile knew what the policeman was driving at. It was difficult to believe that the dread of Woodford's had run so far.

"I didn't feel him," he answered; "and, if you don't mind, I prefer not to be put on the witness-stand before I get to court."

"Seems to me," the policeman said bluntly, "we're three nervous people. I don't mind saying I've heard too much about this building to like it. That's all talk. As the lady says, it'll do no harm to go in and take a look around for your man."

He grasped the handle of the door and pulled. He turned, a little surprised.

"You must have locked it when you came out. Where's the key?"

QUAILE could not believe his ears.

"What are you talking about?"

"This door is locked," the policeman said.

"Nonsense!" Quaile cried.

He sprang forward and tugged at the handle; then stepped back, bewildered.

"You didn't lock it?" the policeman asked.

"No, no," Quaile answered. "I left the key on the inside."

He remembered how the door had stood open until he had swung it shut to discover Barbara's shrinking figure. It offered testimony, apparently beyond dispute, that there was indeed a man in the building. He spoke of that to the policeman, who could only agree.

"Then you'll have to break the lock," Quaile said. "Try your night-stick."

But the policeman shook his head.

"You don't own the building?"

"No."

"Or hold the lease?"

"No."

"Then you'll have to get me authority. I won't break in without it."

Quaile tried to urge him; but Barbara interrupted:

"He's right."

"Then what about McHugh?" Quaile asked her. "You got him?"

"Yes. He hadn't gone to bed. He said he would start right away. He shouldn't be long now."

McHUGH didn't keep them waiting. He stormed through the mouth of the alley, pausing just inside.

"It's dark as Egypt. Quaile! You there? Come, lead me up."

Quaile resented the shallow stratagem. He knew that the manager desired to talk to him apart from Barbara. It was wiser to obey, so he hurried down.

"Well? Well? Quick! What's happened? What's the girl doing here?"

In a few words Quaile told him of the sound as of wind, of the limping footsteps through the darkness, of the failure of his light, of the pallid ambush in the passage.

"It was like a figure in cold white flame. Then she came or I don't know—"

"She came, eh?" McHugh snorted. "How did she guess?"

Quaile paid no heed to the question.

"I fired at the thing, McHugh. A few minutes afterwards I heard a groan. I thought it was meant to frighten me, but I might have hit. The queerest thing—the door's been locked from the inside as we stood in the alley."

McHugh found a cigar and bit on it.

"Fine! Fine! Then I guess maybe you did hit. I knew you'd do well, my boy. Now we'll get somewheres. Who's that? There's somebody with the Morgan girl."

"A policeman," Quaile said.

"That's good. You're bright, Quaile. Come on. Looks as if we had something up a tree at last."

He grasped Quaile's arm and strode to the policeman.

"I'm Arthur McHugh," he announced. "Break that lock if you can. Maybe you can't unless you've got some loose dynamite about your clothes."

"Do my best," the policeman said.

He raised his night-stick and took hold of the door-handle. Then he started back, crying out. The door swung lazily back.

"Thought you said it was locked," McHugh grumbled.

"Tricks!" Quaile muttered. "Deliberate mockery!"

"I didn't hear any key turned," the policeman said, "but we know he's there."

The strange and derisive incident angered Quaile.

"Then let's get him."

McHugh struck a match, and the policeman and he entered.

Quaile stepped to the sill. Barbara, after a moment's hesitation, joined him.

"You needn't, you know," he said. "If you'd rather go—"

"I want to stay," she whispered. "I want to see."

They watched the match cast huge, distorted shadows. The progress of McHugh and the policeman made a hollow sound which loosed many echoes. It had little in common with the limping steps Quaile had heard. Then the manager was at the switchboard, and light flashed against the tawdry walls and exposed the void of the auditorium.

Quaile took a step forward.

"The curtain, McHugh!"

"Why, yes," McHugh drawled. "Seems to be up, just as I left it."

He directed the policeman to search the auditorium and the galleries.

"Try every door," he said. "Search every corner."

He strolled back to Quaile.

"Thought you said the curtain was down. You been dreaming?"

"The whole thing seems a nightmare," Quaile answered. "The door, too; but I've witnesses of that."

"So you have," McHugh mused. "That's no dream, anyway."

FOR the first time he spoke to Barbara, facing her with a brutal abruptness:

"What you doing here?"

Quaile studied the girl anxiously, expecting an awkward and insufficient excuse. The rapid ease of her reply, therefore, astonished him.

"I guessed Mr. Quaile was coming ghost-hunting to-night. I couldn't resist the temptation. I hoped he might let me join him, but I got here too late."

McHugh chewed thoughtfully at his cigar while he considered her face. It expressed only surprise at his manner. At last he took the cigar from his lips and smiled genially. His attitude no longer threatened an inquisition. Quaile had an uncomfortable feeling that both Barbara and the manager were masked.

"Nervy girl!" McHugh grinned. "I like nervy girls myself. Glad to know there's one in the company who isn't afraid of Woodford's spook."

She smiled placidly back at him.

"I'm much more afraid of you—naturally."

"What's that? Oh! Now maybe you'd better run home and get your beauty sleep."

He waved his cigar.

"Not that you really need it."

"I'd like to stay and see the excitement," she said.

With quick daring she placed herself on unassailable ground.

"Then perhaps somebody will see that I get home."

McHugh didn't disguise from Quaile his gesture of distaste.

"If that's the way you feel, all right."

He drew the stage door shut, locked it,