



The officer doubled up with sudden pain  
as the bolt of energy hit his stomach...

**They knew he was a killer, and yet he carried no weapons. They didn't know that—**

# **SOME DO IT WITH A LOOK...**

*By P. F. Costello*



**W**HEN THEY brought this prisoner in, the cops were slobbering mad. They had seen their dead.

Old Joe Glotz, still a patrolman after twenty-eight years on the force, lying on the sidewalk with a bullet through his stomach, deader than a doorknob.

So the police, who hate nothing worse than they hate a cop-killer, had some provocation. They are human and it seems to be a human trait to kick the next dog that comes along after you have been bitten, and not to try too hard to get the dog that did the biting. Any dog will do.

What they brought in and booked under the name of John Robert Howard certainly looked like the human variety of plain alley cur. About eighteen, he had long tangled black hair, and an acne rash on fuzzy cheeks that had not yet known the edge of a razor. He wore a ragged sweater, a fancy pair of pants that had apparently been salvaged out of some ash can, tennis shoes, and no socks. Blood was still running from a cut on his forehead, one eye was almost closed, his sweater was torn, and they had him manacled between two plainclothes detectives, Brantwell and Cox. Brantwell was a great lumbering ox of a man, about six feet two and weighing about 220, every pound of which was mean. Cox

was a bantam, but what he lacked in size, he more than made up in sadistic impulses.

Of all the things that could happen to me, the last thing on earth I would want to happen would be for these two detectives to catch me in some law violation that a ten-spot would not square. Brother, I would sure go quietly.

Looking at the condition of their knuckles, I had a pretty good idea of what had happened to this cur kid and I wondered what his body looked like under that torn sweater.

They crowded him up to the desk. The sergeant on duty, who was not a bad guy if you bought him a cigar once in a while, frowned at the marks on the kid. "You expect me to book him like that?"

"He resisted arrest," Cox said, indignantly. Probably the local strong arm squad was using this alibi back in the stone-age but it's still good. At least it's still used, though not so often around this particular police station any more. "Name is John Robert Howard, age eighteen, no address, he said."

The desk man wrote it down. "We're booking him for doing in Joe Glotz," Cox continued.

So far as the desk sergeant was concerned, this did it. After that charge, he didn't have any sympathy left.

There had been some excitement around headquarters when the flash went out over the radio, "Officer in need of assistance." But we had known nothing more about the situation until they brought in this kid. But every newspaper man who had ever covered the night police beat will know what happened the instant that call went out. Nothing gets a cop's teeth so badly on edge as that "Officer in need of assistance" call. Every cop figures that the time may

come when he is the officer in need of assistance, when he is down and a killer's gun is blazing at him, and he likes to figure that even if he goes along, his buddies will collect something for him. Anyhow, whatever the reason may be, they always try to collect something.

When Cox said, "We're booking him for doing in Joe Glotz," the gin rummy game in the pressroom broke up. The photographer went first, the rest of us followed. Maybe it wasn't big news but it was always good for a front page splash—Cop Killed. There would be pictures of the cop's body, his weeping wife, his kids.

**U**P UNTIL now, Brantwell and Cox had been so mad that they had forgotten this was a picture-on-the-front-page proposition. You should have seen them straighten themselves up and put fighting grins on their face when the photog came running.

The kid, in between them, kind of cringed down.

"I didn't do it," he said, over and over again, as if he hoped somebody would hear and believe him. But nobody did.

"It was like this," Cox spoke. He was speaking to us, now, to the working press. "We got the flash, see, and we was on the scene in maybe two minutes. Officer Glotz was down on the sidewalk. He just had the strength to point up an alley. 'He's up there, boys, go get him.'"

You could see his chest expand six inches as he spoke. "We went in there and we got him. He was hiding behind an ash pit. We brought him out."

That's the way he told it, I wonder how it actually happened. He made it sound as if a couple of Siegfrieds had gone in against a dragon, but I can't imagine these two bully boys going up a dark alley looking for an armed

killer. I can imagine them hearing a noise in an alley and waiting in hiding until a kid came out and they were able to tell for sure it was a kid, and then jumping on him with both feet. That picture doesn't strain my imagination even a little. But this going into a dark alley and facing a gun—

Only it developed that the kid didn't have a gun. "He must have thrown it away," Brantwell said. "We got him dead to rights. Hiding behind the ash pit, he was, not twenty feet from old Joe's dead body. And he resisted arrest. Put that in."

"Only I didn't do it," the kid protested. "I didn't do anything. I just heard a shot and got scared. I hid—and somebody ran past me. Honest—"

"Shut up, you!" Brantwell said. With his free hand, he hit the kid across the mouth.

"Okay, boys," the desk sergeant said. "The basement ain't occupied right now. Probably you'll want to talk to him down there, since he don't seem to want to tell the truth."

A suspected cop killer doesn't get much sympathy.

The last I saw of Brantwell and Cox they were dragging the kid down the basement stairs. We didn't follow them, knowing we wouldn't be welcome. They didn't want any witnesses. We filed the story. Back in the press room the gin rummy game started up again. The first muted scream came from down below.

"They've tied his hands behind his back and strung him up on a door," Fentiger said. Fentiger was a Star man, and a little on the nervous side. "Now they're beating him across the stomach with a baseball bat." This was not exactly news to any of us in the press room, but Fentiger seemed to want to talk and we let him.

This baseball bat across the

stomach is not standard practice and it is not likely to happen to you. The honest citizen caught in mild wrongdoing gets pretty decent treatment from the cops as long as he doesn't shoot off his mouth too much. He can yell to his alderman and to his lawyer. But when a kid comes in, wearing poor clothes, with an obvious background of poverty...

The scream came again. We played gin rummy. I discarded two aces in succession and Fentiger grabbed both of them and yelled "Gin." There were no more screams.

A couple of bully boys in blue who had been loafing in the press room went down to get in on the confession and maybe hit a lick or two of their own. They came back up the steps on the dead run, heading for the desk sergeant. He listened to them for a moment, then all three lit out for the basement. We went along. The fact that the prisoner had confessed was worth a subhead.

The sweat room wasn't impressive, it was just a big room beside the furnace. It had a concrete floor and walls made of brown tile and a big closet with a heavy door. The closet door was open. The kid was strung up on the door all right, his whole weight borne on his hands, which were tied behind his back. This treatment was old, they haven't thought up anything new in this line in several centuries, or needed to.

The kid was alive, I could see the rise and fall of his chest, but he was unconscious; fainted, I suppose, from the pain.

Brantwell was there, on the floor. The bat lay just beyond the reach of his outstretched fingers, as if he had been getting ready to strike another blow with it when something had happened to make him lose interest in this sort of activity.

Or in any other activity.

Brantwell was dead.

COX WAS across the room, huddled up against the tile wall as if he had tried to run and had got so far when something had reached out and had tapped him on the shoulder, the long arm of the law perhaps, only it wasn't any law that men have written into any of the statute books.

Cox was dead too.

From where I stood, I never saw two prettier corpses, two men who were such logical and beautiful candidates for the attention of an undertaker. I felt like cheering. Maybe I'm part ghoul deep down inside, maybe it's my duty as a citizen to stick up for the cops—and I *am* willing to stick up for a lot of cops I know—but I never saw a more pleasing sight in my life than these two detectives—dead.

On the door the kid moaned and recovered consciousness. His eyes were wild. His gaze came down to the two bodies on the floor and to the faces staring up at him.

"I—I didn't mean to kill them," he moaned. "But they were hurting me so bad—" He passed out again.

It got so quiet you could hear the sweat dripping off a cop's chin and hitting the floor.

Upstairs, somebody who sounded like a lieutenant yelled for the desk sergeant, but nobody seemed to notice the yell. The cops were looking at each other and at the kid on the door and at the two bodies on the floor. They had seen dead men before, they knew one when they saw him, or two, for that matter. They knew Brantwell and Cox were dead. But the desk sergeant checked. He dropped down to his knees and felt for a heart beat in Brantwell's body. He kept right on feeling.

You could see the wheels going round in the sergeant's head. Brant-

well and Cox were dead and the kid had said he hadn't meant to kill them. This meant, if words mean anything, that he had killed them.

But he was up there on that door, in the process of getting his guts beaten out. He had no weapon, there was no way for him to use a weapon if he had had one. Therefore his statement that he had killed them meant nothing. It was torture talking.

*But Brantwell and Cox were dead.*

We could assume the kid had been driven nuts by torture....

But Brantwell and Cox were dead.

We could make one more safe assumption—that we were nuts.

But we knew better. We were no nuttier than usual.

The pattern, no matter how we twisted it, would not fit the fabric of the facts. A kid being tortured and the two cops who had been torturing him—dead. These were the facts. If he had killed them, how had he done it?

One of the cops crossed himself. "The evil eye..." he whispered.

They were running down the same old blind alley again. You get a pattern where the facts don't fit together and immediately you jump into superstition to explain something that is not otherwise explainable. For half a million years, in moments of strain and stress, the human mind has been running down this blind alley.

"I knew a feller once, who knew a feller who had the eye...." The cop was building it up. In a few more moments he could have built it up to the point where all of them believed that the kid up on the door was the devil himself.

The human mind demands a pattern it can understand. If the pattern cannot be produced because all the facts are not available, the mind creates a pattern of its own.

This is insanity but having a label for it doesn't help the facts much.

"Where the hell is the desk man?" the voice up the stairs roared again. Probably the sergeant didn't really hear it this time but he responded to it. Walking like a man in a dream, he went out the door.

**WE** LEARNED later that the lieutenant wanted him to book a man who had just been brought in, a hop-head who was also a burglar and who had been caught with a gun in his pocket.

Here is where I got to be a hero of sorts. I untied the ropes that held the kid over the door. I dug the keys for the cuffs out of Brantwell's pocket and unlocked them and threw them as hard as I could against the wall. Then I picked up the kid and carried him up to the cell block and put him in the first empty cell.

The cops and the press men followed right behind me. They didn't try to stop me, they didn't try to do anything. They were a little on the uneasy side.

The kid moaned as I laid him down. His arms had almost been pulled out of their sockets and he might have some broken ribs. Brantwell might have got a little high with that bat.

They had already sent for the medico who doubles as the coroner in our city administrative set-up and he would have looked at the kid. I said to hell with that and went out and called my own mind and medicine man, Dr. Earnest Calvard. Something in the tone of my voice must have told him that I wanted him badly. He came right away. Police Chief Ermal Lindquist was not in the station this night and nobody else objected to Dr. Calvard seeing this patient.

Dr. Calvard made a quick examination. "What happened to him?"

he asked quickly.

"A little case of crucification," I said. I told him what had happened. His lips closed together in a line like a knife. Dr. Calvard was a young fellow, fresh out of medical college, but he had brains under his hair and he had something else which I liked—a warm human compassion.

"There may be internal bleeding. He has to be removed to a hospital at once."

"Sure," I said. It was all right with me. It was all right with everybody, except one man, and he had just arrived—Police Chief Ermal Lindquist.

Lindquist had been a cop for as long as a man could remember. He had been police chief for twenty years and he figured he owned the department and a good chunk of the city as well. Come to think of it, maybe he did. I knew of four bookie joints that were paying him protection money and I don't know how many slots were operating in our fair city, which meant more money running through his paws. During prohibition, he had been a detective and he had banked his entire salary. Of course, he didn't get to keep all his take, politicians above him took their cut, a horde of small fry below him also knew where the body was buried and had to be paid off. But he had kept enough of it to buy two apartment houses and a big farm down state.

Cox had been his son-in-law.

Also, my paper had been riding the chief. We had published lists of bookie joints that were open, we had run the addresses of the ice cream parlors where the kids were playing the slots. Because of this, he loved us about as well as he would have loved a hole in the head. When he learned I had carried the kid upstairs and had called my own doctor and was asking that the kid be taken to the hospital, that was all there was

to it for him.

"He killed a policeman, didn't he? Hell, no, he's not going to any hospital! He's going to stay right here, under double-guard, until he is brought to trial. Our own doctor can work on him if he got a little bunged-up resisting arrest."

Well, that is the way it is in this world sometimes. I wonder if there is another world somewhere. If it exists, I would kind of like to go live in it. I'm pretty sick of this one. Dr. Calvard tried to raise the roof but it didn't get him anywhere.

**A**T THIS point, the coroner came up the stairs and reported that Brantwell had died of a heart attack and that Cox had died from the same cause. Of course, the chief already knew that these men were dead, but something about the coroner's report seemed to set him off.

"Three policemen dead, and all because of that damned kid! I'll fix that son—"

A purple tinge appeared on the chief's jowls. He snatched a nightstick from the hands of a cop and headed toward the bank of cells at the rear.

We followed him. Nobody tried to stop him, nobody tried to argue with him, nobody tried to tell him he couldn't do what he so obviously intended to do—finish the job that Brantwell and Cox had started.

The kid had come to. He was sitting up in the bunk, his face and eyes sick. The chief opened the cell door and walked right up to him. He had the nightstick behind his back. His face was beaming.

"My boy, what have they done to you?" His voice dripped oil, it dripped false sympathy and false compassion.

The kid responded. A little of the fear went out of his eyes and his thin,

worried face lightened.

*Thwuck!*

The chief pulled the nightstick from behind his back and hit the kid across the side of the face. Not too hard, the chief was an old hand at this sort of thing. He didn't want to knock the kid out yet, this would spoil the fun too soon.

"Where's the gun you shot Glotz with? Where is it?" *Thwuck, thwuck,* down came the nightstick twice.

I was sick, sicker than I had ever been in my life, and I started forward. One of the bully boys in blue shoved me back against the wall.

The kid screamed. "Stop it, please, oh stop it, you're hurting me."

"I'll kill you, you little son—, if you don't tell me what you did with that gun."

They needed that gun. If they could place it in the kid's possession, they wouldn't need any other evidence to railroad him straight to the gas chamber.

*Thwuck!*

The kid had thrown himself back on the bunk and had tried to curl up into a ball. Hell, the chief didn't care what part of the kid he hit, head, arms, legs, feet, any part would do.

"Stop it," the kid begged.

The chief didn't stop. Then, suddenly, he did. The kid had drawn himself back as far as he could get. He didn't do anything, there wasn't any glare of light from his eyes. All he did was look—straight at the chief.

Lindquist was lifting the stick to hit again. He dropped the club instead. His fat jowls sagged. He grabbed his middle with both hands and turned and started to run. Obviously he didn't know what he was doing or where he was going. He ran headfirst into the wall.

Butting his head against the wall didn't hurt him though later the coro-

ner wrote up the death certificate in a way that indicated it did. No. But something else had hurt him. He was already dying when he ran into that wall.

To my mind, running into the wall was the desperate below-conscious-level action of a man who has taken his death wound and knows it and whose legs are frantically trying to carry him away from a fate he knows he cannot escape.

**H**E HIT the floor like a sack of potatoes falling from a truck. Even after he was down, his legs still continued to try to take him away. Even beyond death, his legs were faithful. Too bad he wasn't as good a man as his legs were good legs.

Five or six cops were looking through the bars into that cell. Not a one of them went to help the chief in this moment, not one made a move to try to pick him up. Which, I guess, indicates what they thought of him.

The kid got up from the bunk. He looked at the body of the chief there on the floor, the legs still kicking in an effort to push this carrion away from death. His face was a mask of horror. His mouth opened itself automatically and it looked as if he was trying to scream, but no sound came from his lips.

The chief hadn't bothered to lock the door when he went into the cell. Why should he? He had five or six of his best boys outside in the corridor. No prisoner would be likely to escape past them. Or perhaps the chief had left the door open in the hope that the kid would try to escape, in which case he could be gunned down. This is an easy way, sometimes, to solve a case.

But this prisoner did escape. He ran out of the cell, along the corridor, and out the front door of the police

station. No cop tried to stop him or took a shot at him.

I guess maybe they had something else to think about just then.

Later that night they put out a tag on him, giving his name, age, and description. Presumably they started looking for him, but I have a hunch they didn't look very hard. News of what had happened here, and the suspicion of what might happen to any cop luckless enough to pick up this kid, traveled faster than teletype tickers.

Whether they looked for him or not, they didn't find him. A couple of days later, they quit looking entirely. Somebody fired a test shot from the gun taken from the hophead the lieutenant had arrested and the slug matched the one they had taken from the body of old Joe Glotz. Which proved that the hophead had been caught in a burglary and had shot his way out and had fled along the alley where this kid, this John Robert Howard, had probably been scavenging in trash cans.

Oddly enough, even with the evidence of the matching bullets, they didn't use a single baseball bat on the hoppy in an effort to get him to confess. Fact is, the next day somebody shoved all the bats into the furnace. And I don't believe they ever again used a door for any purpose except to go into the next room.

Even cops can get ideas.

The kid? Even if the cops lost all interest in him, I didn't lose interest. Nor did Dr. Calvard. When the police stopped looking for him, we started.

We didn't find him. But we found the hole where he had lived. It was a shack down close to the city dump, in one of those sections where you always hurry if you have to pass through. It was made of tar paper and odd pieces of board and sheet

iron roofing. His neighbors hadn't seen him recently. Conditions inside the shack indicated he had not returned to it after he had escaped from the police.

He was scared to death when he lit out from the police station and he probably thinks the cops are still looking for him.

We went into that shack. There was a bunk. No sink, no wash basin, no toilet. The walls were lined with shelves and the shelves were filled with books and magazines.

The books he had in there scared me. They weren't the books you could expect to find in this kind of a shack. Freud, Jung, Adler, Mesmer, some of the Hindu philosophers, translations of obscure works relating to primitive practices and beliefs, hundreds of them.

**E**VERY ONE of them contained somebody's idea as to how the mind operated. Every one was dog-eared, under-lined, and showed evidence of hard, persistent study. The kid must have studied them, but we don't know what he had gotten from them, what conclusions he had reached, what ideas he had formed.

We think he had reached one conclusion, how to kill by the application of sheer mental force. Sure, I know that every competent scientist will tell you this is so much nonsense, but Brantwell, Cox, and Lindquist didn't die by accident. The kid killed them. We don't know how but he did it. He hadn't wanted to do it, he would have taken almost any other course if he had had any choice, he would have let these men live, but when he was pushed into a corner, set upon and beaten, when to his mind his life was threatened—and his life *was* threatened in that basement, don't ever let anybody tell you otherwise—he reached out and killed three men.

We would like to know how he did it. We don't want to kill anybody, at least Dr. Calvard doesn't, though I could nominate a few who are in need of this treatment, but we would like to know how this force works. Dr. Calvard thinks that the force that can kill can also heal. He wants to know about that. He's a healer, it's born in him.

Which brings me to the reason why this story is being written. Do you remember I mentioned that the kid's shack was filled with books and magazines?

Well, it was. One of those stacks contained a complete file of the magazine you are now reading. Apparently the kid had loved this kind of stuff, he had devoured it, he had saved the magazines, he had read the stories over and over again.

Do you get it now? He's gone, he's lost. We don't know where the hell he is and we don't know any way to find him, except this. Wherever he is, we know he is going to be reading this magazine. He'll read this story. And while the names have been changed, he'll know what is meant.

So, John Robert Howard, when you read this story, will you please come back?

Wherever you are, wherever you are, John Robert Howard, come out, come out.

This is my message, this is the purpose of this story, to reach a kid who is scared to death and to tell him that he doesn't need to be afraid, that while there are some pretty bad people in this world, there are also some pretty decent people here and there, and that at least one of them, meaning Dr. Calvard, wants to talk to him, to know him, to be friends with him.

No court of law, no basement room, no baseball bats, await you, John Robert Howard. Just a chance to be

friends with a grand guy, and maybe, who need help, even as you and I.  
in the long run, to help a lot of people So, wherever you are....

THE END

## HELICOPTER HOPEFULS

By

DALE LORD

**I**T IS HARD to find a science-fiction story whose setting is in the not too remote future which does not at least mention helicopters. In fact, it is taken for granted that these peculiar looking aerial bugs are the vehicles of the future. And if you talk with present day designers they assure you that unquestionably the helicopter is the future's automobile.

But we already have helicopters. Why aren't they in common use?

Helicopters aren't really new stemming as they do from the early autogyros of the Twenties. We see innumerable pictures of these odd-shaped aircraft doing all sorts of work for the military; we see them employed as mail-carriers in cities and we see them used wherever exploration of isolated areas must be made, in the tropics and in the arctic. Yet we don't see them employed by private citizens even though they have a million advantages over an ordinary light plane. Why not?

Probably the best answer to that now is—they're still too expensive, and they're still somewhat experimental. Their design

hasn't yet been frozen. Technicians however are beating their brains out to produce a simple helicopter capable of being mass-produced and fool-proof enough for the average man. And they're succeeding. We shall see an amazing expansion in numbers of helicopters within the near future.

The military services have demonstrated their practicality. The ability to travel fast through the air, the ability to hover motionless over a given spot at any height, and the ability to land vertically in one given spot without any runway cannot be duplicated by any sort of aerial vehicle, not even a blimp. With these advantages—and eventual cheapness—the helicopter is bound to be almost as common as the car when the price and complexity details are licked—as they will be.

It is interesting to note—as so often happens—that science-fiction writers have established even long ago, this acceptance of a technical gadget which is still in the process of development. It will be just one more thing that the boys will be able to gloat over—"see, I told you so..."

## STELLAR PINCUSHION

By

CONRAD KYLE

**S**CIENTISTS have clearly pointed out that the dangers of a meteoric collision for an interplanetary rocket are practically insignificant. For one thing the frequency of the collisions is extremely low; for another the rocket is moving relatively slowly, and for a third the meteors are very small. Thus conquering the solar system won't be hampered by meteorites.

But the matter of interstellar travel, which will eventually come up, is a horse of another color. In order to reach even the nearest stars, a matter of some four light years, a hypothetical rocket, by building its velocity to that of one third that of light, could make the trip in something around twenty-five years! Such a trip is feasible—it refers of course to a round trip.

Knowing however the density of matter in space and the speed of the rocket—fantastically high—it is possible to calculate approximately what the chances are of its being hit. Small particles would strike about three times a second, larger ones

about three times a minute and still larger—very dangerous ones—about three times an hour! Thus just on that basis the rocket would pulverize in short order. The damaging effect of meteor versus rocket goes up—just like auto crashes—as the square of the speed. Twice the speed, four times the damage and so on!

It is apparent then that from this analysis, no conventional rocket is going to be able to do the trick. Fortunately there is the remote possibility of devising some sort of energy screen, the only saving device since no material thing will be able to withstand such collisions. This too is highly theoretical and hinges on a lot of science we haven't yet come to.

But judging from the progress of science we can't discount the chance of striking on such an invention. It's within the realm of reason—it is the one thing which might make interstellar travel possible. We've got to have something. Man must reach the stars!

★ ★ ★