

# MICKEY SPILLANE

THE MIKE HAMMER COLLECTION



***I, THE JURY***

***MY GUN IS QUICK***

***VENGEANCE IS MINE!***



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*She twisted away and there was a loud whispering of cloth and the gown came away in my hands. She went staggering across the room stark naked except for the high-heel shoes and sheer stockings. She rammed an end table, her hands reaching for the drawer, and she got it open far enough for me to see the gun she was trying to get at.*

*I had mine out first.*

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Introduction by Lawrence Sanders

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# Mike Hammer Novels by Mickey Spillane

*I, the Jury*  
*My Gun Is Quick*  
*Vengeance Is Mine!*  
*One Lonely Night*  
*The Big Kill*  
*Kiss Me, Deadly*  
*The Girl Hunters*  
*The Snake*  
*The Twisted Thing*  
*The Body Lovers*  
*Survival ... ZERO!*  
*The Killing Man*  
*Black Alley*

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## Mickey Spillane: This Time It's Personal

If you have never read a Mike Hammer novel before, how I envy you. You are about to take the definitive wild ride of American mystery fiction, and will meet the most famous tough private eye of them all—Mike Hammer—not in a watered-down movie or TV show rendition, but via the gritty, mind-boggling real thing: the unmistakable, electrifying prose of Mickey Spillane.

And—if you have read these novels before, perhaps a long, long time ago—you may be surprised to discover that Spillane isn't just the remarkable entertainer you remember, but a distinctive literary stylist ... if not an "author" (a word he despises, always reminding us that he is a "writer," and proud to be one), that his work nonetheless belongs on the same short shelf as that of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

I'll give you the literary lowdown a few pages from now and make the "case" for Mickey Spillane and Mike Hammer as more than a mere entertainer and the pop-culture phenomenon he created. First, I want to get personal—and that's fitting, because at the core of Spillane's success is the personal nature of his storytelling. Mike Hammer is always motivated not by a client who walks in the door, but the murder of a friend. He is a detective, yes, and a much better one than he is ever given credit for; but he is, first and last, an avenger.

Something personal is at stake at the heart of every Spillane novel, particularly the Mike Hammer novels. And Hammer himself is (as Spillane has frequently said) "a state of mind;" with only the barest references to physical description—Hammer is "big," he's "ugly"—Spillane presents a character so vivid, whose voice is so readily identifiable, that for five decades filmmakers have been frustrated to recreate this famous character satisfactorily on the screen. It's *I, the Jury*, after all—emphasis on the "I." With Hammer's idiosyncratic yet natural voice, Spillane merges his hero's mind with the reader's in a manner that makes a Hammer yarn both immediate and intimate. And like the early Beatles, Spillane knew that using first-person pronouns in his titles would emphasize the personal nature of his hero's quest.

I started reading Mickey's Mike Hammer novels when I was thirteen—and that's the age I revert to whenever I read a Spillane novel. How vividly I recall encountering the clerk behind the counter of some drugstore in some town along a family vacation route, circa 1960, when I wanted to buy the Mike Hammer paperback *One Lonely Night*.

"Are you old enough to be reading this?" the clerk asked, eyeing the naked, trussed-up dame on the cover.

"I'm sixteen," I lied.

And the guy shrugged and took my thirty-five cents. That, and my sanity, was all it cost me to become a Mike Hammer fan for life.

I had already read Hammett and Chandler, and Spillane seemed to me then their peer. I still feel that way today—and it still gets me into trouble. For over four decades now, I have found myself in the unlikely position of being perhaps the chief defender of one of the most popular writers of our time. Because of my boldly expressed high opinion of Mickey Spillane, I have been involved

screaming matches; I have nearly been in several fistfights; and I have been dissed and dismissed because of the taint of Spillane on my own work. As beloved as Spillane is—and no other mystery writer has touched readers in so deeply personal a manner—so in some quarters is he roundly despised.

And yet Mickey Spillane—born in Brooklyn on March 9, 1918—is undeniably one of the most influential writers of twentieth-century mystery fiction. And after fifty years of critical pummeling, he is now ... finally ... widely acknowledged as the master of the post-World War II hard-boiled private-eye novel.

The 1948 Signet reprint of his 1947 E.P. Dutton hardcover, *I, the Jury*, sold in the millions, as did the six tough mysteries (all but one a Hammer) that soon followed. A veteran of World War I, Spillane connected with other returning GIs by providing entertainment that in its violence and carnality reflected a generation's loss of innocence; but Spillane was also a veteran of comic book writing, and he delivered these tales in a visceral, visually hard-hitting, direct manner.

Spillane's impact on the mass-market paperback industry was immediate and long lasting, his success soon imitated by countless authors and publishers. Gold Medal Books, America's pioneer "paperback original" house, was specifically formed to tap into the Spillane market. The new level of violence and sex found in Spillane's fiction influenced not only other mystery writers, but virtually every branch of popular storytelling. His detective Mike Hammer provided the template for James Bond, Dirty Harry, Billy Jack, Rambo, John Shaft, and countless other fictional tough guys.

This omnibus collects the first three Mike Hammer novels—novels that turned publishing on its ear.

So perhaps it would surprise you to know that the most recent Spillane novel, *Black Alley* (1996), is only the thirteenth Mike Hammer book thus far. The Hammers represent a little less than half of Spillane's novelistic output—hardly a huge body of work—and yet Spillane's sales exceed 13 million copies, leading to the popular misconception that he is a prolific writer in the vein of Erle Stanley Gardner or Stephen King. An international sensation, Spillane was at one time the fifth most translated author in the world.

Spillane's success made him—and Mike Hammer—a media star. There was a Mike Hammer radio show at the end of that medium's "golden age;" a daily comic strip (ending abruptly following criticism of a panel depicting a man torturing a captive woman); gritty movies (significantly, director Robert Aldrich's influential 1955 film noir *Kiss Me Deadly* and the 1963 *The Girl Hunters*, in which Spillane starred as his famous hero—both now available on home video in glorious widescreen); and a popular TV series in the 1950s and 1980-90s, starring Darren Mc-Gavin and Stacy Keach respectively.

Along the way Spillane quit writing about Hammer, twice—in 1953, after his surprising conversion to the conservative Jehovah's Witnesses sect; and again in 1970, out of apparent boredom. Occasional movie star Spillane has become an immediately recognizable American pop-culture personality, due largely to his successful series of commercials for Miller Lite in the 1970s and 80s, in which he spoofed Hammer's tough, womanizing persona.

Always an innovative storyteller and stylist, Spillane controls the reader by the commanding presence of his central characters, via an intense yet seemingly effortless use of first-person narration. From the moment his first novel hit the paperback stands, Spillane touched the psyche and libido

the reading public and influenced the shape of adventure and mystery fiction. Raymond Chandler and Philip Marlowe, for example, did not sleep with a woman (on the printed page, at least) until Hammer had blazed that sexual trail.

As Spillane scholar James Traylor has noted, the Hammer novels revealed the darkness underneath that 1950s Norman Rockwell surface, particularly the darkness inherent in the archetypal frontier hero, of which Hammer was a modern urban extension. Mike Hammer was perhaps the first widely popular antihero: a good guy who used the methods of the bad guy in pursuit of frontier justice, a vigilante who spared the courts the trouble of a trial by executing the villain himself.

Hammer remains the most misunderstood of American “tough guy” detectives. From his first novel, Spillane has been a social historian, painting an America whose postwar world did not live up to expectations; whose returning war heroes (Audie Murphy comes to mind) were passionate, righteous, yet flawed, even disturbed. Spillane’s novels have always concerned themselves with political corruption, lust for money, and such social evils as drugs and prostitution. Spillane’s vision is of postmodern America, after World War II had destroyed her innocence, when its population woke up screaming from the American dream.

It has been my privilege—getting personal, once again—not only to meet Mickey, but to get to know him. Because of my reputation as his defender, I was asked at a mystery conference in 1981 to be the liaison between guest Spillane and the staff. We spent hours talking and have since spent time at each other’s homes, collaborated on several projects, and—this is still astonishing to me—are good friends. One of the most amazing things in my life—and there are any number of those—is receiving the occasional social phone call from Mickey Spillane.

The creator of Mike Hammer is my son Nathan’s godfather, and is as kind and gentle a man as Mike Hammer is mean and rough; but he is, I promise you, every bit as tough as his creation. I would never cross him—and yet I know, if anyone ever did me wrong, Mickey would be there to put things right.

These three novels speak for themselves, but I will say a few words about each.

*I, the Jury* is perhaps the most traditional hard-boiled mystery of Spillane’s career, lean and swift with the opening sequence—in which Hammer swears vengeance—and the classic shocking closing—in which Hammer takes vengeance—the most typically Spillane aspects. But from the very start Mickey was writing fight scenes of uncompromising brutality—no one writes action sequences better—and the alluring presence of beautiful willing women keeps the novel steamy, even after all these years.

The opening of *My Gun Is Quick* (1950) is a rare passage that Spillane—who rarely discusses his craft—singles out as a favorite ... his “once upon a time” invitation to the reader to sit down and “vicariously” enjoy an extraordinary tale. What follows—in addition to hard-hitting action and sensual romance—reveals Spillane’s working-class instincts, his identification with society’s dregs where a prostitute represents nobility, while the upper class stands for ... something else.

*Vengeance Is Mine!* (1950) reveals Mickey at his fast-paced best, with a tricky mystery, action, sex, and perhaps the best “socko” finish of any Spillane novel. Mickey has hit his stride here, as Mike Hammer and his beloved secretary, Velda, race through a fever-dream Manhattan, and this book represents—if there is any such animal—a “typical” Spillane novel. As Frank Sinatra once said, after listening to the playback of one of his own tunes, “If you don’t like that, you don’t like ice cream.”

Again, Spillane's pride in his craft comes through when he singles out this novel as a personal favorite because he had managed to save the surprise ending until the very last word.

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For those of you meeting Mike Hammer for the first time, if any of these surprise endings do not surprise you, it's only because so many other writers (and moviemakers) have—in the intervening years—stolen them. Rarely has it been noted that Mickey's endings—with Hammer's elaborate confrontation scenes with villains, in which every twist and turn of the twisty, turny plot is revealed and explained—connect the writer with the more complicated solutions of nonhard-boiled practitioners in the Agatha Christie mode. The Spillane surprise ending is a combination of stunning revelations followed by Mike Hammer's personally rendered justice upon the villain ... always exciting, never pretty.

Yet, after all the talk is over—whether about sex or violence or more literary matters—what these books are about is friendship, about loyalty in a world where disloyalty is common currency.

Mike Hammer is about to enter the room where his best friend—a guy who gave an arm in combat to save him—has been murdered. The world's toughest private eye will shake the rain off his hat, and the ride will begin.

Hold on.

—Max Allan Collins  
Fall 2000

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**Max Allan Collins** is the author of the Shamus Award—winning “Nathan Heller” historical detective novels, the most recent of which—*Angel in Black*—explores the Black Dahlia murder case. Like Mickey Spillane, Collins has written comics, notably the comic strip *Dick Tracy* and the *Batman* comic book. An independent filmmaker in his native Iowa, Collins wrote and directed the cult favorite thriller *Mommy* (1995) and *Mommy’s Day* (1997), both of which featured Mickey Spillane in rare acting roles. Collins is also the writer/director of the award-winning documentary *Mike Hammer’s Mickey Spillane* (1999) and (with James L. Traylor) wrote the Edgar-nominated *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane and Mike Hammer* (1984).

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I,

## THE JURY

*Dedicated to my wife*

---

## CHAPTER 1

I shook the rain from my hat and walked into the room. Nobody said a word. They stepped back politely and I could feel their eyes on me. Pat Chambers was standing by the door to the bedroom trying to steady Myrna. The girl's body was racking with dry sobs. I walked over and put my arm around her.

"Take it easy, kid," I told her. "Come on over here and lie down." I led her to a studio couch that was against the far wall and sat her down. She was in pretty bad shape. One of the uniformed cops put a pillow down for her and she stretched out.

Pat motioned me over to him and pointed to the bedroom. "In there, Mike," he said.

In there. The words hit me hard. In there was my best friend lying on the floor dead. The body. No, I could call it that. Yesterday it was Jack Williams, the guy that shared the same mud bed with me through two years of warfare in the stinking slime of the jungle. Jack, the guy who said he'd give his right arm for a friend and did when he stopped a bastard of a Jap from slitting me in two. He caught the bayonet in the biceps and they amputated his arm.

Pat didn't say a word. He let me uncover the body and feel the cold face. For the first time in my life I felt like crying. "Where did he get it, Pat?"

"In the stomach. Better not look at it. The killer carved the nose off a forty-five and gave it to him low"

I threw back the sheet anyway and a curse caught in my throat. Jack was in shorts, his one hand still clutching his belly in agony. The bullet went in clean, but where it came out left a hole big enough to cram a fist into.

Very gently I pulled the sheet back and stood up. It wasn't a complicated setup. A trail of blood led from the table beside the bed to where Jack's artificial arm lay. Under him the throw rug was ruffled and twisted. He had tried to drag himself along with his one arm, but never reached what he was after.

His police positive, still in the holster, was looped over the back of the chair. That was what he wanted. With a slug in his gut he never gave up.

I pointed to the rocker, overbalanced under the weight of the .38. "Did you move the chair, Pat?"

"No, why?"

"It doesn't belong there. Don't you see?"

Pat looked puzzled. "What are you getting at?"

"That chair was over there by the bed. I've been here often enough to remember that much. After the killer shot Jack, he pulled himself toward the chair. But the killer didn't leave after the shooting. He stood here and watched him grovel on the floor in agony. Jack was after that gun, but he never reached it. He could have if the killer didn't move it. The trigger-happy bastard must have stood by the door laughing while Jack tried to make his last play. He kept pulling the chair back, inch by inch until Jack gave up. Tormenting a guy who's been through all sorts of hell. Laughing. This was r

ordinary murder, Pat. It's as cold-blooded and as deliberate as I ever saw one. I'm going to get the one that did this."

---

"You dealing yourself in, Mike?"

"I'm in. What did you expect?"

"You're going to have to go easy."

"Uh-uh. Fast, Pat. From now on it's a race. I want the killer for myself. We'll work together as usual, but in the homestretch, I'm going to pull the trigger."

"No, Mike, it can't be that way. You know it."

"Okay, Pat," I told him. "You have a job to do, but so have I. Jack was about the best friend I ever had. We lived together and fought together. And by Christ, I'm not letting the killer go through the tedious process of the law. You know what happens, damn it. They get the best lawyer there is and screw up the whole thing and wind up a hero! The dead can't speak for themselves. They can't tell what happened. How could Jack tell a jury what it was like to have his insides ripped out by a dumbass? Nobody in the box would know how it felt to be dying or have your own killer laugh in your face. One arm. Hell, what does that mean? So he has the Purple Heart. But did they ever try dragging themselves across a floor to a gun with that one arm, their insides filling up with blood, so goddamned mad to be shot they'd do anything to reach the killer. No, damn it. A jury is cold and impartial like they're supposed to be, while some snotty lawyer makes them pour tears as he tells how his client was insane at the moment or had to shoot in self-defense. Swell. The law is fine. But this time I'm the law and I'm not going to be cold and impartial. I'm going to remember all those things."

I reached out and grabbed the lapels of his coat. "And something more, Pat. I want you to hear every word I say. I want you to tell it to everyone you know. And when you tell it, tell it strong, because I mean every word of it. There are ten thousand mugs that hate me and you know it. They hate me because if they mess with me I shoot their damn heads off. I've done it and I'll do it again."

There was so much hate welled up inside me I was ready to blow up, but I turned and looked down at what was once Jack. Right then I felt like saying a prayer, but I was too mad.

"Jack, you're dead now. You can't hear me any more. Maybe you can. I hope so. I want you to hear what I'm about to say. You've known me a long time, Jack. My word is good just as long as I live. I'm going to get the louse that killed you. He won't sit in the chair. He won't hang. He will die exactly like you died, with a .45 slug in the gut, just a little below the belly button. No matter who it is, Jack, I'll get the one. Remember, no matter who it is, I promise."

When I looked up, Pat was staring at me strangely. He shook his head. I knew what he was thinking. "Mike, lay off. For God's sake don't go off half-cocked about this. I know you too well. You'll start shooting up anyone connected with this and get in a jam you'll never get out of."

"I'm over it now, Pat. Don't get excited. From now on I'm after one thing, the killer. You're a cop, Pat. You're tied down by rules and regulations. There's someone over you. I'm alone. I can slaughter someone in the puss and they can't do a damn thing. No one can kick me out of my job. Maybe there's nobody to put up a huge fuss if I get gunned down, but then I still have a private cop's license with the privilege to pack a rod, and they're afraid of me. I hate hard, Pat. When I latch on to the one behind this they're going to wish they hadn't started it. Some day, before long, I'm going to have my rod."

my mitt and the killer in front of me. I'm going to watch the killer's face. I'm going to plunk one right in his gut, and when he's dying on the floor I may kick his teeth out.

---

"You couldn't do that. You have to follow the book because you're a Captain of Homicide. Maybe the killer will wind up in the chair. You'd be satisfied, but I wouldn't. It's too easy. That killer is going down like Jack did."

There was nothing more to say. I could see by the set of Pat's jaw that he wasn't going to try to talk me out of it. All he could do was to try to beat me to him and take it from there. We walked out of the room together. The coroner's men had arrived and were ready to carry the body away.

I didn't want Myrna to see that. I sat down on the couch beside her and let her sob on my shoulder. That way I managed to shield her from the sight of her fiancé being carted off in a wicker basket. She was a good kid. Four years ago, when Jack was on the force, he had grabbed her as she was about to cross a Dutch over the Brooklyn Bridge. She was a wreck then. Dope had eaten her nerve ends raw. But he had taken her to his house and paid for a full treatment until she was normal. For the both of them it had been a love that blossomed into a beautiful thing. If it weren't for the war they would have been married long ago.

When Jack came back with one arm it had made no difference. He no longer was a cop, but his head was with the force. She had loved him before and she still loved him. Jack wanted her to give up her job, but Myrna persuaded him to let her hold it until he really got settled. It was tough for a man with one arm to find employment, but he had many friends.

Before long he was part of the investigating staff of an insurance company. It had to be police work. For Jack there was nothing else. Then they were happy. Then they were going to be married. Now this

Pat tapped me on the shoulder. "There's a car waiting downstairs to take her home."

I rose and took her by the hand. "Come on, kid. There's no more you can do. Let's go."

She didn't say a word, but stood up silently and let a cop steer her out the door. I turned to Pat. "Where do we start?" I asked him.

"Well, I'll give you as much as I know. See what you can add to it. You and Jack were great buddies. It might be that you can add something that will make some sense."

Inwardly I wondered. Jack was such a straight guy that he never made an enemy. Even while on the force. Since he'd gotten back, his work with the insurance company was pretty routine. But maybe a different angle there, though.

"Jack threw a party last night," Pat went on. "Not much of an affair."

"I know," I cut in, "he called me and asked me over, but I was pretty well knocked out. I hit the sack early. Just a group of old friends he knew before the army"

"Yeah. We got their names from Myrna. The boys are checking on them now."

"Who found the body?" I asked.

"Myrna did. She and Jack were driving out to the country today to pick a building site for the cottage. She got here at eight A.M. or a little after. When Jack didn't answer, she got worried. His arm had been giving him trouble lately and she thought it might have been that. She called the super. He knew her and let her in. When she screamed the super came running back and called us. Right after

got the story about the party from her, she broke down completely. Then I called you.”

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“What time did the shooting occur?”

“The coroner places it about five hours before I got here. That would make it about three-fifteen. When I get an autopsy report we may be able to narrow it down even further.”

“Anyone hear a shot?”

“Nope. It probably was a silenced gun.”

“Even with a muffler, a .45 makes a good-sized noise.”

“I know, but there was a party going on down the hall. Not loud enough to cause complaints, but enough to cover up any racket that might have been made here.”

“What about those that were here?” Pat reached in his pocket and pulled out a pad. He ripped a leaf loose and handed it to me.

“Here’s a list Myrna gave me. She was the first to arrive. Got here at eight-thirty last night. She acted as hostess, meeting the others at the door. The last one came about eleven. They spent the evening doing some light drinking and dancing, then left as a group about one.”

I looked at the names Pat gave me. A few of them I knew well enough, while a couple of the others were people of whom Jack had spoken, but I had never met.

“Where did they go after the party, Pat?”

“They took two cars. The one Myrna went in belonged to Hal Kines. They drove straight up Westchester, dropping Myrna off on the way. I haven’t heard from any of the others yet.”

Both of us were silent for a moment, then Pat asked, “What about a motive, Mike?”

I shook my head. “I don’t see any yet. But I will. He wasn’t killed for nothing. I’ll bet this much whatever it was, was big. There’s a lot here that’s screwy. You got anything?”

“Nothing more than I gave you, Mike. I was hoping you could supply some answers.”

I grinned at him, but I wasn’t trying to be funny. “Not yet. Not yet. They’ll come though. And I’ll relay them on to you, but by that time I’ll be working on the next step.”

“The cops aren’t exactly dumb, you know. We can get our own answers.”

“Not like I can. That’s why you buzzed me so fast. You can figure things out as quickly as I can, but you haven’t got the ways and means of doing the dirty work. That’s where I come in. You’ll be right behind me every inch of the way, but when the pinch comes I’ll get shoved aside and you slap the cuffs on. That is, if you can shove me aside. I don’t think you can.”

“Okay, Mike, call it your own way. I want you in all right. But I want the killer, too. Don’t forget that. I’ll be trying to beat you to him. We have every scientific facility at our disposal and a lot of men to do the leg work. We’re not short in brains, either,” he reminded me.

“Don’t worry, I don’t underrate the cops. But cops can’t break a guy’s arm to make him talk, and they can’t shove his teeth in with the muzzle of a .45 to remind him that you aren’t fooling. I do my own leg work, and there are a lot of guys who will tell me what I want to know because they know what I’ll do to them if they don’t. My staff is strictly ex officio, but very practical.”

That ended the conversation. We walked out into the hall where Pat put a patrolman on the door to make sure things stayed as they were. We took the self-operated elevator down four flights to the lobby and I waited while Pat gave a brief report to some reporters.

My car stood at the curb behind the squad car. I shook hands with Pat and climbed into my jalopy and headed for the Hackard Building, where I held down a two-room suite to use for operation.

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## CHAPTER 2

The office was locked when I got there. I kicked on the door a few times and Velda clicked the lock back. When she saw who it was she said, “Oh, it’s you.”

“What do you mean—‘Oh, it’s you’! Surely you remember me, Mike Hammer, your boss.”

“Poo! You haven’t been here in so long I can’t tell you from another bill collector.” I closed the door and followed her into my sanctum sanctorum. She had million-dollar legs, that girl, and she didn’t mind showing them off. For a secretary she was an awful distraction. She kept her coal-black hair long in a page-boy cut and wore tight-fitting dresses that made me think of the curves in the Pennsylvania Highway every time I looked at her. Don’t get the idea that she was easy, though. I’ve seen her give a few punks the brush off the hard way. When it came to quick action she could whip off a shoe and crack a skull before you could bat an eye.

Not only that, but she had a private op’s ticket and on occasions when she went out with me on a case, packed a flat .32 automatic—and she wasn’t afraid to use it. In the three years she worked for me I never made a pass at her. Not that I didn’t want to, but it would be striking too close to home.

Velda picked up her pad and sat down. I plunked myself in the old swivel chair, then swung around facing the window. Velda threw a thick packet on my desk.

“Here’s all the information I could get on those that were at the party last night.” I looked at her sharply.

“How did you know about Jack? Pat only called my home.” Velda wrinkled that pretty face of hers up into a cute grin.

“You forget that I have an in with a few reporters. Tom Dugan from the Chronicle remembered that you and Jack had been good friends. He called here to see what he could get and wound up by giving me all the info he had—and I didn’t have to sex him, either.” She put that in as an afterthought. “Most of the gang at the party were listed in your files. Nothing sensational. I got a little data from Tom who had more personal dealings with a few of them. Mostly character studies and some society reports. Evidently they were people whom Jack had met in the past and liked. You’ve even spoken about several yourself.”

I tore open the package and glanced at a sheaf of photos. “Who are these?” Velda looked over my shoulder and pointed them out.

“Top one is Hal Kines, a med student from a university upstate. He’s about twenty-three, tall, and looks like a crew man. At least that’s the way he cuts his hair.” She flipped the page over. “These two are the Bellemy twins. Age, twenty-nine, unmarried. In the market for husbands. Live off the fatta the land with dough their father left them. A half interest in some textile mills someplace down South.”

“Yeah,” I cut in, “I know them. Good lookers, but not very bright. I met them at Jack’s place once and again at a dinner party.”

She pointed to the next one. A newspaper shot of a middle-aged guy with a broken nose. George

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