

CARLINO. I wonder if this place is bugged! (*Calling sharply.*)  
*Lisa!*

MIKE. Sh—Shut up!

CARLINO. (*Calling.*) Come out, come out from wherever you are! (*A long pause as though they really expected a reply. Carlino picks up his sandwich and starts to take an enormous bite when there are three knocks on the hall door. . . . They both freeze, turn to the door and then to each other.*)

MIKE. Who is it? (*No replay. Carlino suddenly panics. Mike snaps his fingers and points to the door. Carlino tiptoes upstairs and gets behind the door, putting on his knuckle-duster. Two more knocks. Carlino unlocks door. Roat opens door and peers in. He holds over one arm a dilapidated piece of carpet [about six feet long] and has an airline bag in one hand.*)

START

ROAT. (*To Mike politely.*) Good evening, Mr. Talman.

MIKE. You've got the wrong place . . .

ROAT. Oh, have I? . . . Then could I be interesting you in a rug for your bathroom? I'd be giving this away at six ninety-five, but for you, sir . . .

MIKE. No rugs, thank you.

ROAT. Then if I may just deliver my message . . .

MIKE. Who from?

ROAT. From the party who phoned you not half an hour ago.

MIKE. Then why the hell didn't you say so?

ROAT. Thank you, Mr. Talman.

MIKE. That's not my name. (*As Roat enters he deliberately bangs the door back against Carlino and then closes it. Carlino's hand goes to his nose. Roat speaks to Carlino without looking at him, but as if he knew he was there all the time.*)

ROAT. Oh, I beg your pardon—I had not idea you were there. (*Carlino follows Roat, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. Roat spreads the piece of carpet D. C.*) Now I'll be candid and honest with you, gentlemen. Strictly speaking, this is not my carpet. I discovered it in a pile of junk in that torn-down building at the back of here. And seeing as it's a little damp and a bit cheesy . . . a dollar seventy-five and I'll be on my way.

CARLINO. Let's have the message—and then take that stinking thing out of here!

MIKE. Where's Lisa?

ROAT. I beg your pardon, Mr. Talman.

MIKE. Let's get this straight, Buster. My name is not Talman! And I've never heard of such a person.

ROAT. But it's a grand name, don't you think? *Good old Mike Talman! . . . Don't you think it suits him fine . . . (Turning.) Sergeant Carlino?*

CARLINO. Sergeant—who?

ROAT. And you will be Sergeant Carlino. *(A pause.)*

CARLINO. Hey, come on, who the hell are you?

ROAT. I am Harry Roat Junior and Senior—from Scarsdale. *(Carlino and Mike glance at each other, mystified.)*

CARLINO. Okay, Mister Roat Junior and Senior—the message and out! *(As Roat talks on he lights a cigarette from a gold case and lets the ash grow long and [later] takes from his zip-bag an empty baby food jar with a screw top which he carefully uses as an ashtray. Mike and Carlino stand listening, occasionally throwing each other a glance. Later, as they talk Roat rises and paces around, paying no attention to the other two but taking in every detail of the room. Mike and Carlino move around him like chessmen, always keeping him in between them and with one of them always blocking him from the stairs.)*

MIKE. Who sent you here?

ROAT. The message, Children, is that once upon a time there were two small con artists. I believe they've just come out of jail, poor fellows. *(Looking at Mike.)* One of them was tall and rugged and he'd drop in on a housewife when she was alone and pretend to be an old friend of her husband's. The other— *(Turning to Carlino.)* —would turn up a little later as a police detective. But the real brains of the outfit was a beautiful and talented girl. She could be young or old, French, Italian or Katie from Kansas . . .

MIKE. Where is Lisa?

ROAT. Both men fell for her and would make little passes when the other wasn't looking . . . *(He laughs.)* . . . and with a quite pathetic lack of success. Finally she got bored with them—made an anonymous phone call to the police and then disappeared, taking their loot with her. As they say there's no one quite so gullible as a con man in love.

CARLINO. Who sent you here? . . . And who are you? *(No reply. Amused and pleased by their curiosity, Roat simply looks from one to the other.)*

MIKE. If Lisa told you all that, why isn't she here?

CARLINO. Where is she? (No reply.)

MIKE. Are you working for Lisa . . . or is she working for you?

(A pause.)

ROAT. We are now all working for Lisa. (A pause. Carlino turns to Mike, encouraged and hopeful.)

CARLINO. You said on the phone—a quick and easy grand.

ROAT. That is correct.

MIKE. Plus the two thousand each that Lisa already owes us.

ROAT. You shall have it.

CARLINO. When?

ROAT. Tomorrow night. If we succeed. If we fail—nothing.

MIKE. Why didn't Lisa come here herself?

ROAT. Perhaps she was a little shy of meeting you again before she could give you your money.

MIKE. So when do we see her?

ROAT. Tomorrow night—with the merchandise. . . . Well?

CARLINO. Look—we don't even talk till we get two-fifty each—

ROAT. (Surprised.) Lisa told me to give you five hundred each and the balance on delivery. Any objections? (Carlino puts out his hand for the money.) But first—may we have weapons on the table?

CARLINO. (Innocently.) Search me, I'm clean.

ROAT. Your brass-knuckles?

CARLINO. What brass-knuckles?

ROAT. In your right pocket . . . I cannot negotiate in an atmosphere of mistrust . . . (Carlino crosses L. and drops his brass-knuckles onto table.) And your little razor-blade, Mr. Talman. (Mike takes out a one-edged safety razor-blade [wrapped in cardboard] and drops it on table.)

CARLINO. And how do you protect yourself? (From his pocket Roat takes a thin ivory statue of a girl. It is about five inches long and could be a small flashlight.)

ROAT. Geraldine protects me. Isn't she beautiful?

CARLINO. What does she do?

ROAT. This! (A thin switchblade springs out.)

MIKE. (Calmly.) Then may we have Geraldine on the table too?

ROAT. We may not. (The blade disappears and Roat returns knife to his pocket and also the razor blade and knuckle duster.)

CARLINO. Why the hell not?

ROAT. Because she is the referee. (Roat hands them each a wad of

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