

The Robert Walker Story

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Part 1

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In all respect to my family, whom I have shamed and humiliated time and time again, I am at a loss just where to begin my story. There are things which sound so fantastic that one could not possibly understand without giving you some kind of a background of my early childhood.

I have reached the dead-end where there is no turning back. Ahead lie just years and years of the same monotonous gaol routine. I have made my own bed, and I have to accept it.

Every day you will hear tell of the bed of roses — mine is a bed of thorns of my own making.

I was born at Lang Lang, Victoria, on October 21, 1911.

My father was killed on active service in 1917. I had seven sisters and two brothers. I was the baby.

I was never brilliant at school; I could just seem to make the necessary marks required for a pass in the yearly examination. What I lacked in the classroom I gathered on the sportsground. I was tough—and I could punch.

I was very fast for a big boy—5ft. 11in., 175lb.

My professional value was a dime, but I was a good, safe investment as a mean, vicious, tough, street fighter.

If I had been raised in the Fitzroy Narrows it would immediately give me the excuse to cry I was a dead-end kid and never had a chance.

No, sir. My family was a good, highly respectable one, that did everything that was humanly possible to make me a success.

On numerous occasions at the start of my screwball life they ate their humiliation and shame in their endeavor to forget the past and start me off afresh.

I thought it was smart to lie, fool, and deceive my own, who had given me their all so that I may proudly unfurl my banner.

Outside myself, there was one person I could never ever fool. My second eldest brother had me figured.

He gave me chance after chance, and the thing he hated most of all was a liar, and I was it—first class. I could always manage to be out of a job. If the job was good, I was quick smart to find why it wasn't.

My brother was ambitious, 24-carat, and a regular guy. He took an interest in my every move, found excuses whenever possible to save my dear old mother from worry.

While I was still asleep from rushing around the night before, chasing some local bobby-soxer, he would arise, do his exercises, and be away to his job.

He would never fail to see that there were cigarettes left in some convenient place for me to find, with a little pocket money for car fare left on the dressing-table.

When the family sat down to dinner that night he would be interested to know if I had any luck. He'd help me out with my excuses to my mother and sisters (how times were bad, how I would eventually find something that suited me, and I agreed). But he knew I would find a job in the local poolroom, pushing balls around the table with a stick, shooting the bull with the same brand as myself.

I found plenty of jobs on street corners, but not the kind that would take me on to a decent, respectable career.

I found debauchment.

One day I meet two real smarties. We talked things over, ganged up, and went to work immediately.

I started my career on a Friday afternoon on the Flinders st. tramway stop. This was the job I had been looking for. I was my own boss. I worked when I wanted to work. No one could fire me.

I was a hook—a pick-pocket. Business was good, but profit was bad.

The three-way cut kept us constantly on the alert for a customer. I was dissatisfied with the set-up from the start — but you pay for experience . . .

WE were in the Royal Mail Hotel, eye-balling around. The bar was packed. The guy standing next to me peeled a pound from a roll, showing part of a "brick." He paid for his drink, replacing the crisp stuff in his hip pocket. We went into action.

After the kill, we met, as we always did, in the casualty department of the Melbourne Hospital. I can see the scene quite vividly. We went into the toilet to divide the stake — John, Willie, and myself.

I had my back to the door. Willie, who had taken the roll (while we pushed up), produced four "spins" and four "ones," tilted his hat, gazed at the ceiling, and said: "Now, let's see. That mug had twenty-four pounds. Three goes into twenty-four eight times" (which is brilliant calculation, and is perfectly true).

"O.K., Bob, there's yours," he said — and handed me eight pounds and a toothpaste smile.

I was mad. I took the eight, returned the toothy smile, and said: "And here's yours."

I hit him with a vicious left hook. He went down and never moved. He was out cold. I can see the notes he had in his hand as they slowly fluttered and drifted to the floor.

John gasped and stood amazed. "Bob — what's the matter?" he whispered.

"Shut up and sit down," I told him.

I picked up the money, searched Willie, and found a neatly folded "brick" in his fob pocket. I gave John eleven pounds, and Willie a terrific kick in the face—the smile was gone—and walked out.

It was my first practical experience with a lash-man.

Some people study in universities and colleges for proof that there's honor among thieves.

I found my proof in the toilet of the Melbourne Hospital. Honor among thieves!

What a fallacy!

This was the life—plenty of money, wine, women, and song. I was at my best —drifting and floating like a nice big bubble.

"Crime does not pay" — that's another fallacy. Crime pays handsomely — until you get caught.

One day my bubble burst.

I had followed a woman on to a tram stop. I had seen her put quite a piece of cabbage in the handbag hanging on her arm. I was about to withdraw my claw from the bag with the stuff that keeps me so perpetually happy, when Detective-sergeants West and Lambell withdrew the woman, the "stuff," my claw, and me to the gaol house.

After being grilled and charged, I was thrown into a cell on my own to percolate. Something was definitely wrong.

This was not my plan but, why worry? I would lie my way out of it somehow.

It just went to prove there was no justice, I told myself. If those two would-be tough-looking jacks had minded their own business, I would have been in St. Kilda by now with a nice, warm, cute little job.

I was sure going to have trouble explaining this miscarriage of justice to the folk at home. My brain was working like a tin of worms for some reasonable, logic excuse to beat the rap.

It failed. And that big, young, tough guy — that I thought was me—huddled up in the corner of that rotten cold cell to await the morning.

I cried.

My mother and brother told the Court I had a good home, food, clothes, and money. Just the truth.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Would the Court please give her son a chance to live this terrible thing down?

I felt a heel.

I was fined £20 or a month in the Big House.

My mother paid the fine, thanked the police for their courtesy—and, lovingly, with dignity, tendered me her arm as we descended the court's steps.

My mother died while I was in America. The doctor's diagnosis was natural causes. The doctor's a fool.

My mother died from disappointment, disgrace, worry, and a broken heart.

My family, particularly my brother, rose like gladiators in their renewed efforts to assist and cleanse their fallen. I showed my appreciation by being a Jekyll and Hyde. The law kept breaking through. In 1931 they really turned on the heat.

Under a heavy barrage of assaulting police after stealing from the person, I retreated to the Big House for six months' hard labor.

If it is possible to complete this story, it will definitely be a miracle. On account of my gaol record and police reports, I am being constantly watched. I don't know at what minute I will receive a strip search.

Just the getting and concealing of the writing paper is a task, on its own. On different occasions the screw on my cell block will walk down quietly and look through the spy hole in my door to see what's going on.

It is Tuesday, the 6th of October. Rita, my wife, has just been to see me.

God, it makes me feel good and warm inside to see her.

I have a million things to tell her, but words just won't come, I stand and gape like a monkey.

I put on a tough front and agree with everything she says, making sure I smile at the right thing at the right time—"Yes, sure; yes, sure; that's right, Rita."

Before I seem to get in the visiting box, the screw is saying, "O.K., Bob — your time is up."

That first term I ever did, they put me to work building up the gaol wall, which had fallen down with age on the Bell st. side of The Farm.

Except for a few fights with other crims, which I paid for with a little bread and water in the labor yards, I wore my six months down. I had made one definite resolution—never to be a "hook" again.

In February, 1932, the gates swung wide and they turned me loose. There were no good guys or hot mammas there to meet me. Surely all those good people whom I had treated so good with that stuff that was so hard to steal hadn't died?

Maybe they were sick? If so, the hospitals must be awful busy.

As I hurried towards the corner to get a car, a woman rose from a seat and came to meet me. It was my mother. She spoke to me as if I had just come up the street from work, instead of from the Big House.

It blinds me with tears now I know what a heel I am.

We went home. My room was just the same as if I had left yesterday — my clothes neatly cleaned and pressed, shirts, ties, and shoes in their right places.

No one said anything about being a heel, nothing about the Big House. I was theirs, they were mine, the cake on the table bore the words, "Welcome Home." It was more than a heel could stand. I made some kind of a speech at the table, telling them I was going away to Sydney to live on my own.

My brother looked me dead straight in the eye, while my sisters cried.

I kept off all tram stops and well away from crowds (which was the hook's bread and butter).

Then I met a guy like myself — a good family and a home, but a thief at heart.

He had served part of his apprenticeship as an engineer and knew how to use tools. So we went into the shop-breaking business.

Smash and grab, payroll snatches, anything that produced that good clean crisp stuff that was a necessity to my way of living.

When you've got cabbage to burn you want to play, and I was a playboy first class. . .

I met a dame and grew to like her very much, and she was costing me plenty. But what did I care? Soon as I was short of cabbage I would rob some other joint.

I went to her place one night. She was crying and had a black eye. I was mad and wanted to know what happened. She told me not to worry. It was only a sucker who came and did it because she wouldn't let him in.

I told her to forget all about suckers as I would always see she wasn't short of cabbage. A week later she had another shiner and her excuse didn't sound too good. As a matter of fact, it would be best if I didn't come to her apartment any more, she said, but she would come to mine any time I wanted.

The alarm bells were ringing in my head, so I made a few inquiries. The first thief I asked looked at me amazed.

"What? Don't you know she keeps a — — ? a man— I should say, an animal?"

I was mad, but said nothing. I got drunk and stayed drunk for a week. I was happy now because I knew there were guys lower than myself.

You can't get any lower than that kind of man or a police informer.

I am not referring to honest people. The law is stern and is their protection. There has got to be law and order, otherwise even a thief wouldn't be safe!

The informer I'm talking about is a thief who sells and betrays his own kind.

I'm a murderer — five times over—and a heel, and I know it. I am not looking for excuses or outs. But I'm not one of the above.

I'll now tell you how I murdered a man-animal, and loved it. The only thing I'm sorry for even now is that he died too quick.

I was on my own and went up to a "two-up" game at Muttony Burke's in the laneway, between Bourke and Little Collins sts.

It was only a small place, frequented by the underworld in general. Eventually it was my turn to spin.

I took the bat, placing five pounds in the centre — that showed I was backing myself for five pounds that the two pennies would fall heads.

Mother Luck was right at my elbow that night, and I headed them nine times in succession.

I was about as popular as a pork chop in a Jewish kosher, and a loud-mouthed guy called Hassick kept giving me a hard time.

There wasn't much cabbage left, so the game broke up, and 20 to 30 of us walked down to Bourke st. corner.

This guy Hassick, whom I had never seen before that night, asked me for a "brick" in a stand-over manner. I said no.

I walked up Bourke st. to the Broadway Cafe in Exhibition st. Hassick and another guy followed, calling me a lot of dirty names. I sat at a table where there was another crim.

Hassick walked back and forth outside, looking in the door of the cafe at me. The crim, who knew me, asked what was wrong.

I told him. He said : "Cop this. You may need it."— and handed me a gun under the table. I took it, a .25 Colt automatic — slipped it in my pocket and walked out. I walked up to the Bourke st. corner. Hassick and the other guy overtook me.

We had words, and I told him I had a gun and unless he took off I would shoot him. He laughed like as if I was Bob Hope, cracking jokes.

I didn't like his laugh one little bit, so I pulled the rod and fired. Now I don't know who was the most amazed, him or myself. The way he had been talking, I had expected some kind of resistance, but he took off so fast with such a horrid scream, I'll swear to this day Dillard couldn't have caught him!

I had no chance of talking things over with that guy. I have seen the Brooklyn Dodgers make some spectacular slides for home base, but Hassick's dive into the Broadway Cafe was magnificent.

I planted the rod and "went into smoke."

Hassick refused to talk and the law was at a stop.

After a few days I came out of smoke and heard, on the grapevine, that Hassick's buddy, Johns, was looking for me with a gun. So I went into smoke again.

Johns was a big tough guy who made no secret of what he was going to do, but by what I heard Johns was a great orator and just as great an imposer on women.

When he couldn't find me after a few days he pepped up his talks to such an extent that every Jack in Melbourne knew I had shot Hassick, even though Hassick wouldn't "sing."

Johns used to go the Palestine Club. I watched the joint closely from an old broken-down joint across the street. My patience was rewarded.

On a cold, bleak night after I had been watching for some time I was about to quit when a cab stopped and Johns got out and went in.

I suddenly felt good. I sprinted to the corner and took up watch from a car I had parked there.

In the early hours of the morning another guy and Johns came out, and walked towards Fitzroy, going through the gardens. I followed slowly in the car.

At the corner of Gore st. and the main drag—I think it's Nicholson st. — they stopped to talk.

I slipped the safety catch off my rod. I could hear them laughing.

They called good night, and both turned up Gore st.

The small guy left Johns and crossed the road on to the opposite side.

I swung the car around into Gore st., passed Johns and stopped at the kerb of the footpath, about 50 yards ahead of the way he was coming.

The engine was running and so was my heart, with about the same beat as Hassick's feet to the Broadway Cafe!

I held a handkerchief to my face as if I was blowing my nose, holding the ice-cold rod in my right hand, and waited.

I could hear Johns' footsteps drawing nearer. He was whistling softly, "Night and Day."

With two quick steps I walked out and confronted him. I never spoke.

The last strains of "Night and Day" faded in a long sigh as I fired. The rod kept barking as I held the squeeze on the trigger and followed his slow twisting body to the ground. He got the lot. Seven.

"Dominus Vobiscum," — I quite clearly remember crossing myself. I don't know why. I guess I figured that automatically forgave me my crime.

I left the scene of the crime in that car nearly as fast as Hassick had left me.

I hated Johns and I am not one bit sorry for rubbing him out. But I am a little sorry he died so quick.

I threw the rod in the Yarra River and "went into smoke."

I was "in smoke" for about a week at a place in Russell st., only two blocks away from where every "Jack" operated from.

One of my back teeth was aching. When I could stand it no longer I put on a pair of dark glasses and went around into Bourke st. to a dentist, who said he could fill my tooth right away.

He was working on my tooth when a voice from the doorway asked him if it was O.K. to change his appointment from that morning to the afternoon. He replied: "Why, certainly, Mr. Casey."

I shrunk to about the size of a peanut. It was Detective-Inspector Casey from Homicide.

I was sure pleased when he walked out.

A little later, after listening to the latest on the grapevine, I walked into Russell st. and gave myself up to the same Mr. Casey.

After being grilled for several hours I was charged with shooting with intent to murder Hassick and held for the Coroner's Court on Johns.

I beat both raps.

Part 2 – The BRAIN and the THING!

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I WAS running around, thieving and having a swell time.

One day I went to a sporting club in Lonsdale st. to try and sell a diamond ring I had knocked off, and I saw a well-dressed guy coming out.

I shall call him "The Brain."

Now "The Brain" was one of the most likeable persons I have ever talked to. He asked me to get in his car and take a ride.

He wouldn't buy the ring, he said, because he thought it was "hot"—stolen stuff.

He wanted to know all about me in a nice, kind, friendly way, gave me a sprat—a hundred pounds—and told me "Crime does not pay."

I was very impressed and liked him more than any man I had ever met.

I asked him to join me in a drink, but he declined, saying he never drank, and drinking was just a bad habit for suckers.

So carried away was I by his sensible talk, his winning smile, and the logic of what he said that I quit smoking and drinking for seven months!

"The Brain" was sharp as a tack. He met me frequently and treated me as if I was his own brother—always the best of advice, a little money if I was short, and the same helping hand if I was ever in trouble.

Although he never did anything except within the law, he was a swell guy to meet, and it felt good to be in his company.

If you were in his company when the law came by and wanted to know where you were working, or what you were doing, "The Brain" would explain how you had gone astray, but were trying to mend your ways, and why not give you a chance?

If the Underworld had trouble among themselves, like fights and quarrels, he would rush right to the scene immediately and pour oil on the troubled waters.

Now, if you have one small bit of intelligence, you will naturally ask, what the hell did "The Brain" get out of this? Then I would have to counter with the question, "How would I know?"

The mere fact of me being in the Big House for life shows you I know nothing, and I don't profess to know.

In all my years of association with "The Brain" I never knew of him to do anything—not even S.P. betting—that was against the law.

If I did not give you a full picture of this genius, you could not possibly understand the fantastic circumstances that sent me to the Big House for my life.

"The Brain" was a man who loved, and got great pleasure out of being in good standing with the Underworld, especially "the strength."

He was a born philosopher.

He learnt early in life the wisdom that "The tongue is mightier than the sword."

"The Brain" would have been a mighty man in the Korean dispute. He knew the philosophy of the "Run with the hare and chase with the hound" scheme.

He once told me Snowy Cutmore and Squizzy Taylor were dead only because he couldn't get there in time to pour oil on the troubled waters! Tears came to his eyes, and I kind of choked up a little myself.

"The Brain" was always home in bed by 9 or 10 p.m., and up at 6 a.m. sharp. He loved his dear old mother.

I have seen him break down and cry so brokenly when she was very sick that once I got out of the car and walked away because I was crying, too.

I once thought I had reason to kill "The Brain," who was staying in Sydney on a holiday. I went to the place in Coogee where he was staying to do so.

He answered the door. I covered him with the rod, and told him to step out and get in the car. He did so, and I told him to drive down to the Cliffs.

But we never even got started.

By the time "The Brain" got through talking—which was about two hours—I really felt like putting the rod to my own head and blowing the works. Just to show me he had no ill-feelings about me for coming to kill him, he drove me down to the shop and bought me a double chocolate ice-cream.

Yes, sir, "The Brain" was a great guy.

I WENT back to Melbourne and carried on with my thieving and shop-breaking.

Although I was a thief and a gunman, I always sought the company of "square heads" (men who have had no trouble with the law).

With one "square head," whom I shall call "The Thing," I became great friends. The Thing had been shot in the foot. He claimed that The Brain had got a gunman to shoot him in the foot because he had accused The Brain of seducing his girl friend.

The Brain strongly denied having anything to do with the hiring of the gunman who shot The Thing, treated the seducing as a joke.

The Thing was a Walkie Talkie. On many occasions he went to The Brain for financial assistance, and got it, but he never let up slandering him with everyone.

This led to a lot of controversy, and one tough hard to beat in a street fight—guy called Johnnie Devine—had several fights with The Thing for slandering The Brain.

The Thing was a good street fighter, too, and the four fights they had ended in no-decision verdicts.

Now I was considered a good friend of both The Brain and The Thing, and I only knew Johnnie Devine to nod to. I played no part in this dispute whatsoever.

Time and time again I told The Thing when he spoke about it, "Why in the hell don't you forget it?"

Devine and myself passed each other on the street on numerous occasions and nodded to each other just the same.

The Thing's little girlfriend—a square head,—who was the base of the all this controversy, was over-sexed.

If there were any of the boys in St. Kilda she hadn't seduced, it was only because she hadn't met them yet.

ONE day in the city, a friend told me that Johnnie Devine would like to see me at the St. Kilda station that night.

I met Devine and we went into a cafe for coffee. How would you like to pick up a little easy money, Bob? He asked me. I said I would, and was all ears.

He told me there was a horse-trainer in Caulfield who was "going bad." The trainer had his gear — saddles, &c.—insured for a thousand pounds.

This trainer wanted someone to break into his place, take a few things (and he would be willing to pay that someone £150), so he could collect the insurance.

Now, if I wanted to go with him the following night and do the job, it would be an easy £75 apiece.

Devine told me there was nothing to it, because he had a utility motor-truck, the trainer and family would be out.

Devine would leave the stuff at his place, and after the trainer collected the insurance he would give him the gear back.

What did I say? I said Yes.

WHEN I went home to bed that night my brain was working like a tin of worms, I was trying to figure it out from all angles.

Seeing the job was so easy, why did he come to me? He had plenty of friends of his own, why put such easy money my way?

Why ask anyone at all?

He could do the job himself, without sharing the spot and a half. Why single me out for such a please-take-me job?

Always the suspicious type myself, I could reach no logical answer to fit the case.

The alarm bells in my head started to ring. Was Devine going to take me for a one-way ride? If so, why?

I MET Johnnie Devine at the arranged place in a light overcoat, with my hands in my pockets, and a gun in my hand.

I told a person whom I thought was my good friend to tail us in his car, in case what I thought might be right.

(1) Everything was O.K., and Devine was on the level.

(2) Devine was going to take me for a ride, and bathe in the notoriety of killing me while I took a Turkish steam bath in Hell.

(3) The Brain had brought me ice-cream to keep me nice and cool for the kill.

Don't let anyone tell you Bob Walker wasn't smart.

Peep in through the spy-hole in the door of my Iron Lung, and see for yourself!

Yes sir, real smart.

DEVINE seemed excited and nervous as we drove off, up Inkerman rd., towards Caulfield, in his truck.

So was I. As we drove along I took my gloves out and put them on, watching Johnnie out of the corner of my eye all the time as he was driving.

I only brought my gloves, what did you bring? I asked him.

"Only my gloves, a jemmy, and a flashlight," he said.

As we turned right out of Inkerman rd. towards Caulfield I saw the headlights of my good friend's car following some distance behind.

We turned into a big road—I forget the name—and parked at the kerb, near a street light, on my side of the truck.

I had my hands in the pockets of my overcoat, the rod in my right hand. I released the safety catch.

Johnnie nodded to a house on my side of the street and said: "There she is."

To look would have meant taking my gaze from him. I never turned.

I said: "Johnnie, have you got a gun?"

He jumped, and said, "Why, of course not, Bob! What's the matter?"

He had his hands on the steering-wheel.

My good friend had parked his car about 200 yards behind us.

I told him briefly what I thought — and that I had brought a rod.

He said: "God, Bob! You're a suspicious fella! I've had no trouble with you, and I only asked you to come because I think you are a good, solid guy.

"Just because I think The Thing is a —, and have had trouble with him, that's no reason why you and I should be bad friends!

"I haven't got a gun— search me and see for yourself," he invited.

I felt just a mean, suspicious heel — yet I did reach over with my left hand and search his pockets. The automatic was in my right hand.

Devine was right. He had nothing.

Then, just as I was about to recline back in my seat, I suddenly put my hand in the driver's door pocket.

I felt a big rod there.

At once I fired at Johnnie. The slug hit him in the neck, but the rod jammed on the second bullet.

Devine hurled himself out the car door and raced down the road towards where my good friend was parked.

I grabbed Devine's gun from the door pocket and took off after him. I fired a few shots at him, but he never stopped.

The loss of blood from the wound in the neck had weakened him, and I caught him just by my good friend's car, as he vainly tried to jump a house fence.

"You dirty, treacherous —!" I told him as I fired what was left, in his big .45 Colt revolver.

Lights were snapping on, and people were rushing out of houses everywhere. Devine was lying in a heap of blood on the ground. I turned to run towards my good friend's car, to make my getaway and proved once again that "honor among thieves" is a fallacy.

I jumped fences, ran through seven back yards, and didn't stop until I reached Caulfield railway station.

I boarded a train without a ticket and rode it to Flinders street, leaving that station through the gate they always leave unlocked for baggage.

I hurried across the bridge to that good old Yarra River, then — plop, plop, and the two "hot rods" were gone!

If only the Law could put that old river in the witness box to testify, what tales it could tell . . .

The next day the newspapers screamed the public's indignation at such a diabolical thing happening in Caulfield.

Devine, was in the Melbourne Hospital under police guard, with one foot in the grave. I lived to see the day I was in the same position as Devine.

Devine refused to talk so the Law was at a stop.

Life went on.

The Thing went out of his way to be father, son, and friend when he heard on the grapevine that I was the one who had did the shooting.

For some reason I didn't like him any more. He talked too much.

It was phenomenal the things I was doing without the Law catching up with me. I could tell you lots of things that would make your hair stand on end, but I won't.

From the beginning to the end this story is true.

No matter what I stole, I took it immediately to "the Fence"—a man who buys stolen property. I knew an extra good one. I trusted him and he trusted me.

He asked me one day if I wanted to earn £2,000 cash. I said, "sure!"

He took me down to Hardy Brothers, the high class jewellers in Collins Street, between Elizabeth and Queen streets, Melbourne, and pointed out a small tray containing about 50 diamond rings.

He said he had a buyer for them immediately—and my bit would be two Grand.

There are auction rooms right opposite. I watched the shop from there.

The rings went in the window by 10 a.m., but the traffic was too heavy to use a getaway car. Just up from Hardy Bros., towards Queen Street, about 20 yards, was an entrance through a building leading into a lane that run into Little Collins St.

Where the passageway led into the lane there was a big fire proof door, held open by a catch. I closed the fire proof door and measured the clearing distance between the closed door and the back step leading up stairs.

It was 3ft. 4in.

I cut a piece of wood that length, tried it and found it locked this big door perfectly.

All was set to go, so I went into smoke for two weeks and grew a heavy growth of beard.

I put on a lot of old working clothes, took a neatly wrapped "lunch" in newspaper (that was a house brick) drove to Little Collins St. and backed the car into the small lane way at the back of Hardy Brothers.

I left my good friend waiting at the fire proof door with the wooden stick wrapped in paper, to stop fingerprints.

The street was crowded as I walked around to Hardy Bros. I could feel the butterflies crawling around slowly in my stomach.

I took the wrapped brick by one end, walked up to the window and struck it a sharp downward blow. It seemed to me as if an atomic bomb had exploded.

The butterflies had gone.

I grabbed the tray that was wanted and another tray with it and raced towards the escape I had planned.

But the unforeseen happened.

As I turned sharply into the building running at full speed I hit a young man coming out head on. The impact was so severe I spun around and my feet gave from under me. Three and half million people seemed to have formed a choir, singing "Stop thief!" I came off that sidewalk faster than your Mother-in-law getting out the last word. The diamond rings were strewn everywhere.

As I raced through the doorway only a few yards ahead of my would-be captors my friend slammed shut the big door, bringing to a close Act 1 of the Hardy Bros. drama.

As my friend drove towards Spencer St. I did a quick change act in the back seat into my good clothes.

A quick shave in the barbers . . . and 20 minutes later I was standing with the crowd outside Hardy Bros.

They're saying it was the biggest robbery in years . . . "he just breaks the window, takes what he wants and walks away." "And there's the bloody police standing right there talking and doing nothing," "that's the trouble with this Government, etc., etc."

On this occasion I got completely away, but the police suspected me and watched my every move.

Once I was arrested and was to have been charged with loitering with intent. But I jumped from the police prowl car and escaped.

Melbourne was too "hot" for me. I had to go to Sydney.

I robbed more places in Sydney than I can remember. Got caught in a smash and grab at an old gold shop and was sentenced to two years' gaol.

I was taken down to Central police station for a line-up before the lights.

As they took me into the police station, handcuffed, I broke free, ran through the back part of the lockup, through the Court, which was hearing some case, and right into the arms of four

Jacks, who were on their way into the Court I had just run from.

Result: An extra six months' hard labor.

From the time I entered Parramatta gaol till the day I was released I was never out of some kind of trouble.

THERE used to be a place in William st., Sydney, called the Fifty-Fifty Club. It was run by "Phil the Jew." It was run to cater for tired business men, who had plenty of dough, and wanted to relax, and receive treatment from some nice glamor girl.

I wasn't a business man, I wasn't tired, I never had handfuls of dough, but when I got out of Parramatta gaol, I was definitely an emergency case for treatment.

I said I was a New Zealand business man, was shown to a table. I ordered a bottle of beer and a bottle of Aspros.

I FIRST met big Jerry Lynch in the shower room at Parramatta gaol. A little guy called Bronco was the next in line for the next vacant shower.

Lynch, who was behind him, wanted to take his position so he could get in to the shower, where he could talk to someone he knew. But Bronco wouldn't change places because he wanted to pass some message on, too.

Lynch called him a dirty, profane name, and tripped him with his foot as he stepped down to take the shower box. Bronco fell heavily and Lynch gave a 250-pound laugh.

The Screw walked over and wanted to know what the hell was going on. Bronco said he had slipped. And big Jerry raised his laugh another fifty pounds.

I was next in line behind Lynch. Lynch asked me wasn't that funny. I agreed.

It sure was.

He was still laughing as he stepped down the same step to take the next vacant box — but his laugh ended as he crashed to the floor after I tripped him.

He didn't think that was funny at all! In fact, he promised, there and then, to "even things up" some time.

THAT "sometime" came a few months later. I was drinking in a "beerhouse" up by Moore Park when Jerry Lynch and two of his buddies came in.

He began at once to make a lot of wisecracks about "some people who thought they were smart," and declared that if there was anything he hated it was "people who couldn't mind their own business."

I said nothing. But my brain was racing like a tin of worms. I could see it was only a matter of time before the attack started — and I was on my own.

Then the doorbell rang and in walked the Law! — The Consorting Squad, Detectives Aldridge and Mitz and Detective-Sergeant Boswell. They looked everyone over and came straight across the lounge room to me.

"What are you doing here Bob?" said Boswell. "Why, I'm just having a nice quiet drink, sir," I replied.

As they were facing me I saw, over their shoulders, big Jerry Lynch quickly take something from his coat pocket and push it down in the space between the cushion and the arm of the lounge chair he was sitting in.

The Law told me to stand up. I did so, and they searched me down. I had nothing.

They stood all the women on one side of the room and all the men on the other. I noticed immediately that big Jerry moved as far away from the chair he had been sitting in as possible.

Seeing I had already been searched I moved over and sat on the elbow of the chair Jerry had left.

The Law arrested one of Jerry's friends for carrying a gun, booked five or six for consorting, and walked out.

I dropped into the chair Lynch had vacated, slid my hand down the side space, got the colt 25 calibre he had hidden there, and put it in my outside coat pocket after slipping off the safety catch.

I made big Jerry Lynch sit down, pour himself a beer, and tell his story all over again. This time it had a different ring.

The crowd laughed. They had to, because I was the one that held the key to the joke — the gun.

I always claim that big Jerry had a very poor sense of good humor and simply rushed to his death in an attempt to appease his pride and humiliation.

After I had walked out of the "beer house," leaving big Jerry to his discomfort, he told all Sydney what he would do to me. To shoot me would be too good for me. He was going to beat my face and body up so good that not even my good mother would know me.

You take a walk down around Surry Hills, where big Jerry ruled for years. Take a good look at some of the guys he did beat up good.

I think you will kind of understand then just what big Jerry meant to do.

I went back to Melbourne to see my mother, who was sick, and treated the whole thing — from gaol to "beer house" — as one big joke. I went to Adelaide, robbed a few joints and arrived back in Sydney.

I met a guy a little younger than myself and we became very good buddies.

We were drinking up in Usher's lounge one night about nine p.m. Usher's is a high-class hotel, but as long as you behave yourself and put your cabbage on the line and nobody knows who you are, all is well.

A guy who was a little under the weather at my table asked me who I was. I told him I was a bookmaker from Melbourne.

He said: "Well, well now! You must know your way around?"

I told him that was so, so he asked me if I knew where to get him a young lady.

I told him if you want a young lady to drink coffee you'll meet one right here. But if your interests go wider than coffee, I can help, but it will be more costly.

He said he knew what he wanted and had brought the necessary to arrange for same.

We took him to a night club in Bondi, where a little later in the evening he passed out — and so did I — with £840 that rightly belonged to him!

My friend and I decided to go to King's Cross to celebrate and we called in at the Top Hat Cabaret.

We checked our hats and were shown to a rear table and lounge. The Top Hat's patrons consisted of people from all walks of life — square heads and hustlers alike. There were respectable business men and women, bookmakers, thieves, and doubtful girls.

At a table on our right, towards the dance floor, were seated six girls and three men. One of the girls was a dame, who had tried to shake me down in William st. — Veronica.

She smiled, so I went and asked her to dance. She said, "Certainly, Tommy."

She was very close and friendly, and told me she was sorry she had put her racket on me, as she had never dreamt that I was Bob Walker, from Melbourne.

Veronica told me the party she was with consisted of a few square heads, and the rest were all young, half-would-be smarties.

I bought them drinks, and Veronica told them I was "Tommy the woolbroker, a very wealthy young boy."

I was back at my table, with my buddy, feeling very pleased with myself, when—

Big Jerry Lynch walked in.

Part 3 – Death struck in a cabaret

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23443894>

With Jerry Lynch were eight tough-looking, well-known yeggs.

They took the second table on the right of mine towards the dance floor.

It's imperative that you understand the position of our tables, as it plays a very important factor in what follows.

Mine is the last and the table farthest away from the dance floor — No. 1.

Eight feet away on my right — towards the dance floor — is Veronica's party and table No. 2.

About the same distance away to the right again is Lynch's party and table No. 3.

The same distance to the right again is some other party at table No. 4, then you're on the dance floor.

You walk right across the dance floor to the left to reach the check room, the rest rooms, and the stairs, which run down one floor to the exit. There is no back entrance.

To dance or to go out I have got to walk up a narrow passageway and pass big Jerry's table and party.

Immediately Jerry Lynch and his garotters saw me they went into a huddle. The butterflies began a mad flutter in the base of my stomach.

I have heard many a story about fear, but I have never yet read one that fits the fear I have felt on numerous occasions. And this was a high spot in fear.

Big Jerry rose as if to come towards my table. There was an argument and loud voices, and the waiter came and spoke to them.

Jerry sat down again.

They all went into a huddle again. There were more loud voices. They seemed to agree on whatever was said.

Big Jerry turned his chair slightly so that he had my table under constant sight.

About four of their party had not checked their coats, and they lay in a heap on a chair nearest Veronica's table. I said to my buddy: "Can you fight?"

He was white, and murmured something about he would do the best he could.

One of the guys at Veronica's table got up and came to my table for the menu. As he took it he dropped a note on the table in front of me. It was from Veronica. It read: "Bobbie,

please be careful, they have got a gun on the chair with their coats."

My brain was racing the butterflies.

I poured myself and buddy a good slug of whisky, and wrote on a piece of paper.

"Thanks! But tell me more. Did you see the gun?" I raised my eyes and watched Veronica as she got it, read, and started writing again . . .

An empty large cigarette box fell on the floor near my buddy's chair, and he picked it up. A note in it read "Big Jerry is going to beat you up. I saw the big gun his friend had. That's what

they were arguing about. They put it under the grey coat on the chair in case the police come in. Call the waiter, Bobbie, and tell him to get the police."

I forgot about my buddy and poured myself another slug of whisky.

I could see the grey overcoat on the bottom of the chair nearest Veronica's table.

All at once I picked up two empty beer bottles—one in each hand — rose, and walked up the aisle towards Big Jerry's table.

Jerry rose to meet me as I came up the passageway.

I turned sharply into the space between his and Veronica's table and smashed one of the bottles over the head of the nearest man, who was sitting with his back towards me.

I hurled the other bottle at another man who was facing me, and the place was in uproar.

I grabbed the chair that held the coats and pulled it in between myself and Big Jerry, who was rushing towards me. As I pushed the chair on the shiny floor towards him with my left hand, I reached in under the grey coat and got the gun.

Newspapers said he was shot with a sawn-off shotgun. That's not true. It was exactly the same type of shot pistol that you see at the pictures—the kind that was used in the eighteenth

century when two guys fought a duel, and the barrel was not sawn off.

I didn't even know it was loaded.

I cocked one trigger with my thumb and fired point blank at Big Jerry. The fighting look on his face died away.

I cocked the other trigger and fired again.

Big Jerry Lynch crashed louder than the Wall Street stock exchange in 1929.

One tough street fighter, who was with Lynch, was so petrified with fear he just couldn't move as I walked towards him.

The attack had happened so quickly and was so vastly different from what had been planned.

He was the only one standing in my path. I took that good, old fashioned, faithful gun by the barrel (he made no attempt whatever to defend himself) and I knocked him cold with the butt of the gun.

Some women had fainted and others were hysterical as I placed the empty gun under my coat and walked across the dance floor towards the check room.

The woman attendant saw me coming and ran back into the check room. I can even now tell you the number of my check and the exact words that were said:

"Can I get my coat and hat, please, lady?" I asked, as I placed the check card No. 72 on the counter.

"I never took anything! I just keep the two children!" she cried out—and fell to the floor in a faint.

I walked in and took my coat and hat and walked, down the stairs into the fresh, cooling air.

I crossed the road and got a taxi to Central Railway station. I walked into the railway station and out another entrance and took a taxi to the Manly ferry at Circular Quay.

On the way to Manly I dropped the gun into the nice cool waters and went into smoke with some good people I knew at Dee Why.

THE homicide squad were at the Top Hat Cabaret a few minutes after I left.

Big Jerry Lynch had one foot in the grave but refused to tell the Law who had shot him. The waiter and a few half-square-head people from Veronica's table told the Law it was "Tommy-the-wool-broker," dressed in a brown suit.

There was a crim. in Sydney called Tommy Duval. He had posed as a wool broker some time before the shooting. He dressed in brown. He had had trouble with Lynch on two occasions and had terrorised some people recently at a "beer house" with a sawn off shot gun.

The drag net was cast, and Tommy was arrested.

Big Jerry died and, the rap was murder.

I WAS getting a glorious sun tan, and some very nice, pretty young women were admiring me at Dee Why, where I was John Cooper, now the bookmaker from Melbourne, on vacation.

I came over to Randwick on my own one Saturday night, robbed a bookmaker of £3,000 and went to Coolangatta, near Tweed Heads, on the border of N.S.W. and Queensland.

For two months I basked on the beach.

THE charge against Tommy Duval failed and Superintendent Prior, in charge of the C.I.B., made the following statement to the Press: "I now know for sure who murdered big Jerry

Lynch, but unfortunately, through lack of substantial evidence, I can't make an arrest."

The family of a girl I was mixed up with in Queensland made trouble, so I sent her back home and got off the train myself at Lismore.

I attempted to rob a jeweller's store there for £2,000 worth of diamond rings. I got away with the rings all right but the Law was a lot smarter than I thought and got away with me!

I stood my trial before Judge Clancy and was sentenced to two and a half years' hard labor at Parramatta gaol.

I ended up in a heck of a lot of trouble at Parramatta and lost all my remission, so they sent me to Long Bay State Penitentiary.

They turned me loose about August, 1939.

I can remember the cold, bleak day, as the gates opened wide and I was free.

I sat by the outer small gate and watched as five or six trams went by, just thinking.

I crossed myself and swore they would never get me back to that gaol house again.

I was going to work for a living.

I had an entirely new outlook on life. I never had any grudge against anyone except myself. I really wanted to go to work and forget the past.

I went down to Melbourne to see The Brain—told him I had reformed, and asked him if he would help me to get a job. He was amazed, and told me to see him in a week's time.

He gave me a sprat — £100.

I got a job with Harry Brown [not a real name.— Ed.] as manager of an hotel in Spencer st. He told me: "I think you're smart, but you have started off your life on the wrong leg. I'm going to give you a chance to prove what I think is right.

"If you rob me of one penny piece you will be like the birds of the air that foul their own nests.

"I'm honest—and I expect you to be the same.

I know who you are and what you have been.

I was going to give you a job as barman—but now I have spoken to you, for over two hours, you can have the manager's job."

In the hotel business Harry was a genius.

The first Monday I was there I was called to the office, and the receptionist told me: "Mr. Walker, this is our banking day. I'll tell you what you do. The money is already made up, so you take this Gladstone bag to the E., S., and A. Bank, in William st.

"They will check it and give you a receipt in this book."

I went to the bank and checked in £1,200!

One day —, one of the best boxers in his class Australia had seen, came in.

He had been drinking, and was a little under the weather.

We talked for a while, and he left.

When he'd gone, our ex-fighter "bouncer" said, "Have you ever seen his red-headed girl friend, Rita Adams?"

I said No.

He said: "You ought to see her. She's pretty swell."

I had been working at the hotel for three weeks when I decided to have a talk with Harry.

I was worried. It was a Monday night and I asked him if he could make arrangements for someone else to do the banking. He said: "Why, what's the trouble"" '

I told him there were people who would get to know that I took the money to the bank and were liable to pull a hold-up. I explained that Detective Eddie — had pulled me up in

Collins st. that day and had searched me for a gun.

There was a gun in the office, but from the first banking day I had told the women in charge I wouldn't need it.

Detective ___ had looked in the Gladstone bag I carried, saw the money — and laughed. "When are you going to get some of your pals to pull a fake hold-up, Bob," he asked me.

I told him to go to the devil, and went about my own business.

But I explained to Harry that it was possible that someone would pull a hold-up and I couldn't do a thing about it.

It was only natural, I told him, that he would think I had instigated the robbery, and I would be out of a job and no one would ever give me the chance again to live down my past.

Harry was a man, and as sharp as a tack. He looked me right in the eye and said: "Now, see here, Bob. I could easily get someone else to do the banking, but that wouldn't clear your case at all. If I did send someone else and they were robbed it would still look bad for you.

"So, I'll tell you what to do: I pride myself on being a good judge of character. When I gave you the job I trusted you, and I still do.

"No one knows you haven't got a gun, so just put your hand in your outside coat pocket as if you have. I will gamble this hotel that there is not a crim in Australia crazy enough to try and rob you if they think you have got a gun.

For the next six months that's just what I did. What looked to be a gun was a box of safety matches.

Part 4 - Rita, the woman in my life . . .

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23443928>

ONE night a sporting man invited me to a party in Albert Park. It was Saturday night, so I decided to go. Margo, my girl friend, was going to some family affair at her sister's place.

I was to meet her at midnight at the St. Kilda railway station, so I went to the party on my own.

There were a lot of racing people there. I met Rita Adams.

She was tall with shoulder length, curly auburn hair, bluey green eyes, and strong, even white teeth. It was a fairly warm evening and she wore a green dress with a Peter Pan collar.

She was nowhere near what you call beautiful. She wore very little make-up, was quick witted, and had a marvellous personality.

She was a swell dancer and torch singer, with a low husky voice that keyed up your imagination as you watched her tall, slim, exciting body swing to the music's rhythm.

The competition was very keen, but I was very persistent . . . I was never so attracted to anyone as I was to Rita Adams.

She said I could take her home. I immediately forgot all about Margo who was waiting for me.

Rita lived up in Collins st. by the Oriental Hotel. She said she was sorry she couldn't invite me in as it was so late, but if I would like to come up that night she would make me some coffee.

I rang Rita the next morning at 10 o'clock to say I would be coming.

She had a cute little place and was wearing one of those take-it-easy house frocks. She made some swell coffee in the percolator.

We talked and the radio was softly playing "South of the Border." So I asked her to dance . . .

Margo rang the next day and said: "Bob, are you sick?"

I said: "No! I'm in love" — and hung up the receiver.

I saw Rita every night for the next two weeks. The way I felt about her was something I could never explain even to myself.

We were married in St. Michael's Church, North Melbourne, in 18 days.

We had a small wedding breakfast at Navaretti's and went to live in Spring st., near Collins st.

On the auction block as a housekeeper Rita would have sold for a dime. But, reauctioned within three months, you would have made a lot of money on the deal!

Rita cut down our overhead expenses 100%. Without a lot of time and mess she could dress a dish with the tastiest looking covering that ever covered a plate.

We moved to a better and cheaper apartment in East Melbourne. When I walked down the street with Rita on my arm I was happy and proud because she had what millions of good-looking women will cry about and tell you can't be done— accomplished the impossible without getting housemaid's hands and looks.

My mother came to see us —and fell in love with Rita, too. The world was good.

Rita was the best giver of good advice I have ever met. In the three years and two months we were together she did everything that was humanly possible to steer me right.

She gave me quite a few shocks at different times by telling me her opinions of people, but the biggest shock she ever gave me was in Spring st. just after we were married.

The Brain came to our apartment to meet her.

He brought a nice little wedding present — £100 in cash— had coffee, talked for a few hours, and left.

I was very happy. I asked her what she thought of him.

She looked me right in the eye and said: "I loathe him!"

I told her about The Brain getting me my present job and about all the different things The Brain had done to help me at times when I needed help. (I didn't tell her about the time I went to Sydney to kill him.)

No matter how I argued I couldn't change her mind.

She could only see him as a lighthouse that flashed out villainy.

I recalled that night that my mother—the only other woman I have truly loved— felt the same way about The Brain.

I was getting practical experience from one of the best hotel men in Australia and was learning a little more about the hotel business each day.

With a few new ideas I had of my own there was absolutely no doubt in my mind that I would be able to be a big success in some small hotel of my own.

I knew my criminal record would stop me from holding an hotel licence, but after getting some legal advice, I was informed that would not stop my wife from being the hotel licensee.

When you had the people I knew to pull the right strings it was easy to get into some good little hotel.

Now what I needed was the necessary capital to buy into one of these small places and I would never be able to save it out of my wages. I wasn't going back to crime again because that meant the Big House — so the only way I could raise enough for a hotel business would be by gambling.

No matter what gambling game you play, if you play long enough, the house that runs the game will get the lot. That's a fact.

Take a small two-up game. The ring-keeper takes two shillings in the pound from whoever wins. So you don't have to be a mathematician to figure it for yourself. If you play long enough the ring-keeper will have the lot.

I was in a very complicated position. If I left my job to open up a gambling house, that would look bad to the Law and my connections, when my wife made application as a licensee. And an excellent character reference was essential. When my mother came to visit us, that would

be the first thing she would ask: "Why did you leave your job when you hadn't got a better one to go to?"

As I lay in bed of a night I would think and think . . .

I had been with Harry for about six months and was getting on fine. One Monday as I was about to leave for the bank he called me into his office.

"In future I am going to send somebody else to do the banking, Bob," he said.

I was very indignant. I demanded to know why.

I said: "What's the matter? Don't you trust me any more?"

"That's not true — I do trust you, Bob," he said quietly. "Okay — I'll tell you. Take a look at this letter.

"In the past week I've received two from the same person."

They were both typed, signed "A Friend," and were addressed as strictly private. They had been sent by registered mail.

They said the writer of the letter was a "crim." who liked Bob — that's why he was sending this warning to Harry.

He claimed he knew two gunmen from Sydney who had watched and knew for sure that I did not carry a gun on my trips to the bank.

Their intentions were to rob and kill me too, as they didn't like me, anyway. It was against the writer's principles to inform the Law so he sincerely trusted Harry could do something about it.

"So now you must understand it's best to let somebody else do the banking," Harry said.

I said "Okay, Harry, but I will do the banking today for the last time. I hope they do pull their hold-up today, as I am going to take the office gun."

I took the money to the bank and nothing happened. When I came back I explained to Harry that seeing my own kind—the underworld—couldn't give me a break to live down my past I was giving a week's notice and resigning my job.

He was very upset and asked me not to do that, but I insisted.

So the next Monday rang down the curtain on the screwball life of James Robert Walker as hotel manager.

HARRY gave me a month's pay and the best character and ability reference that one could possibly get anywhere.

I decided that the guy who wrote and gave him the tip about the hold-up was a pretty good fella.

So I went to the Alexandra Hotel and had two drinks — one for myself, the ex-manager, and one for me again, because I considered myself a pretty good fella for thinking up the idea of sending the anonymous letter!

I HAD a clean slate everywhere and could go right ahead and open up a baccarat game, to get the necessary capital for my own little hotel.

Maybe you are inclined to think this story is too descriptive. If so, you must remember I'm not an author. I'm a convicted murderer who is trying to the best of my ability to explain angles that are essential to your understanding of my screwball life.

There are times as I lie in my iron lung, I have a fear that if I am able to complete and get this story out of the Big House it will be changed. If my wife, or the publishers did this, I would consider that a mean, low trick, as you wouldn't understand the real me.

I am only giving facts that can be checked and rechecked.

I lay my cards on the table and told Rita what I intended to do.

I told her I was going to open a baccarat game right in our own apartment. Did she mind? These are her exact words: "Bob, I married you because I love you. We are two out in this marriage, your good and bad times are mine, too."

I had a cabinet-maker make a baccarat table with a cut-in curve for the croupier. It was 20ft. long by 6ft. wide, with comfortable sitting room for 24 players.

My idea was to have only 24 good, financial players, have a good, free supper on hand at all times, and a good private hire car service to drive them home when they wanted.

I picked out a croupier whom I thought I could trust, bought him a new dinner suit, and told him if he was honest and on the level he would get a brick— ten pounds — a night.

I also hired a young Chinese waiter, cook, and a cleaner, and Rita was the hostess.

I passed the word around town amongst the right people, and started the game one night with eight players. Within a week I had more than the required 24, and had to refuse admission to many more.

THE baccarat game had been in full swing about two weeks. The betting was increasing, and so were the profits.

My game was strictly on the level, and the word was soon passed around.

In baccarat the croupier takes the percentage for "the house" from whoever wins and places it in a locked box on the table in front of where he sits.

There were times when I couldn't watch the game always, so I would have to trust my croupier to do the right thing.

One night we played from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and I figured roughly the house would make about £125. When my clientele had departed I sat down opposite my croupier to open the locked box.

I kind of loved that little locked box and caressed its lid with my warm hands, because it was the thing that would eventually unlock the door to my future legitimate business.

The croupier's nickname was Darkie. He was a handsome sort of fellow, and watched me with his nice dark, forlorn eyes as I counted the money.

It was £76, and I was a little disappointed. As I gazed at that little box suspiciously I heard the alarm bells in my head faintly ringing, so I looked into those big, dark, forlorn eyes.

"How much, Bob?" my wife asked.

"We had a good night, Rita. We got 76 nickers," I said.

Darkie said: "I tipped we would take about 80 or 90 quid."

I said: "I won't pay you today, Darkie. I need £150 to lend to a friend of mine this morning, so I'll have to borrow a little somewhere myself.

"Have you got any money on you until tonight?"

He looked at me with those sad eyes, and said: "Gee, Bob, I've only got seven pounds with me — but you can have that if it will help."

My wife was humming "Blue Orchids." She never said a word, although she knew I always kept £250 in a thermos flask in case we were raided by the Law.

The siren in my head was wailing: "Either the little box or those big, sad eyes have clipped you." I decided I trusted the little box.

"Come around here, Darkie, and don't look so sad," I said.

He got up from his chair and came to where I was sitting.

"Strip all your clothes off and put them on the table!"

He turned white, and those big, sad eyes turned sadder and bigger.

"But, Bob—" he wailed.

I chopped his talk off, "Get them off before I beat them off you," I told him.

He slowly started to undress.

In his right sock were three, separate, tightly crushed-up ten-pound notes.

I took the £37, the dinner suit, and shirt, told him to put on his shoes, and took him out on to the first floor, back-landing stairway. I knocked him down the stairs.

"Now you get back here in a week's time or I'll pump you full of bullet holes," I yelled.

Little did I know then that that no-good chiseller would be one of the reasons why I was to get myself pumped full of .25-calibre steel pieces.

Part 5 - The man who thought he just couldn't lose!

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23438899>

'THE MARK FOY' CHALLENGES 'THE GAMBLER'

Just like you judge the form of a race horse, the Underworld judges the form of any well-known personalities who circulate around in this city.

There was one sporting man whose name rang good no matter where you went.

He would have nothing whatsoever to do with anything that was crooked or against the Law. He was just a good, regular, honest guy whom you liked immediately, as he looked you straight in the face with clear, blue eyes.

I have known this man for a long, long time, and I can quite honestly say I have only ever heard two men slander him — with false and malicious accusations behind his back.

One was "The Thing," who still lives, and the other was James Coates — "The Mark Foy" — who is dead.

I shall call this good character "The Man."

For the time being I was my own croupier.

It was The Brain who first brought Coates—"The Mark Foy"—to my game. Coates was very elegantly dressed, smoked a big cigar. He had a very engaging personality.

He talked like a high pressure salesman, with an unlimited vocabulary. He had a real boyish face (the nickname "Mark Foy" is Underworld slang for boy).

I thought he was very well named, and liked him.

Rita loathed him.

On the fourth night he came he stayed to have a talk with me when the game had ended. He told me in a nice way that he knew the game I ran was on the level, but if I should ever need anyone to "touch" it—to rob the players by trick, marked cards, &c.—he would only be too pleased to help me, as he was a first-class card sharper.

I told The Mark Foy I was making plenty of money from the game as it was and was quite satisfied to continue that way.

When he had departed Rita said: "Do you want to know what I think right now? The Mark Foy is the perfect type The Brain would have for a friend. Birds of a feather flock together. They would be the best pair of treacherous so-and-so's this side of the equator!"

I wish I had listened to her.

I was in bed one morning and heard the front-door buzzer. Sad-eyes was dead on time!

"Hello, Darkie — how are things? Have a cup of coffee," I said.

I didn't say one word about our previous trouble, and sad eyes was mighty pleased to know he had a job again.

I enforced one rule strongly. No matter how much money you had lost you couldn't bet "on the cuff"—credit—with anyone.

It was money on the table, or no bet.

Some baccarat games served the cards from a kind of box, known as "the shoe."

I had Darkie serve them straight, from where they lay on the table under everyone's view.

A lot of gamblers just won't play with the shoe, on account of false bottoms, skidding sides.

When the game first starts the croupier takes six packs of new cards, breaks the cellophane wraps, and throws three packs to each end of the table. Six players take a pack each and shuffle them. They then pass all cards to the croupier, who shuffles all six packs together.

He then stacks them in a line, face down in front of himself, covering them with a handkerchief (some players who shuffle a pack of the cards will mark certain cards with the fingernail on the edges), so no one can see what cards are coming up to be drawn.

The croupier collects all the used cards after each hand. When the lines of cards are exhausted, he repeats the same performance with six new packs of cards.

There was one player who came to my game who was the biggest and best bettor of them all.

He had a beautiful home and wife, but did nothing else but gamble.

He was nicely dressed, very quiet, hardly speaking a word more than was necessary. He could win or lose £1,000 in cash without blinking an eyelash. Never in any kind of trouble with the Law, he was a very likeable character.

Seeing he plays a very important part in my life's story, I shall call him "The Gambler."

YOU now have the stage all set for another act in my screwball life.

I would like you to go over each player's character in your memory—"The Brain," "The Thing," "The Mark Foy" (James Coates), "Darkie," "The Gambler," "The Man," "Rita" (my wife), and me (a self-confessed thief, heel, and murderer, now serving life without remission).

Oh, and last but not least, "The Man" and "The Law."

It was in the early hours of the morning. The game had ended, but there were still about 10 or 15 cards left under the handkerchief.

Some of the players had left the table, but there were still a few having a talk before departing.

The Mark Foy said to The Gambler: "What about you and I playing those last few cards before we go?"

The Gambler agreed.

They played a few hands, while some more players departed. Then the cards ran out. They were about even on their betting.

"Just put up a few more cards, Darkie, and see who Mother Luck favors for the last couple of hands," said Coates.

Darkie took two packs from his side, broke the cellophane seal, and laid them straight on the table, saying: "You fellas are never satisfied."

From the time they started afresh with the two new packs of cards, The Mark Foy's luck was phenomenal.

He never lost a hand.

He won what cash The Gambler had —about £ 400 odd — and he asked me if he could bet on credit if The Mark Foy would accept his I.O.U.'s.

The Mark Foy said he was willing to do so. As they were the only two now playing, I agreed.

By the time the two packs of cards were used The Gambler owed The Mark Foy £1,250.

The game then broke up.

As I unlocked "the little box" it seemed to smile knowingly. The count showed a very good day.

One week later my apartment was raided by the Law.

As I watched the big cop unlock my good little box the lid gave a sharp, disagreeable squeak, as if to say: "Well, I've done my best. It's up to you now."

I was fined £50 for keeping a common gaming-house, and all my clientele were fined a "brick" apiece.

I went and had a long talk with The Man and told him the exact truth — not one word more and not one word less.

I told him I had definitely quit crime for all time, what my ambitions were, why I had run the baccarat game, and how much I had salted away.

He gave me a job as his change clerk. I received a "brick" a week.

It doesn't sound much now, but a tenner a week in 1941 was quite a good weekly wage. Especially when you take into consideration that I was only required to work at two or three sports meetings a week, with all expenses paid.

The Mark Foy (James Coates) hadn't paid the house percentage to my little box the night he won the £1,250 from The Gambler.

It had been understood that night that he would pay me as soon as he collected what The Gambler owed him.

I saw him at the races one day and asked him to pay. He claimed he had not collected from The Gambler yet because of financial difficulties.

He said he was meeting The Gambler the next morning in the lounge of a Collins st. hotel. He would call for me in his car, and I could come with him to the meeting, when maybe he could fix me up.

From the moment I met The Gambler in the lounge that day the alarm bells began a soft ringing. He seemed to be very worried, surly, and abrupt—and not one little bit pleased to see either of us.

"I haven't got the money, so you can do what you like about it!" he said, and walked out.

"He seems a bit shirty this morning," said The Mark Foy, "but as soon as he can pay me I'll see you get your cut."

I sensed there was something out of line.

A few days later I went into a Greek barber-shop in the city to get my hair cut. I had known this barber for a very long time.

Before he was married he gambled quite a good deal himself, so it was only natural he knew all the city's gambling gossip.

"I hear The Gambler is all burnt up over being 'touched' (robbed or cheated) by The Mark Foy," he said.

I asked him, quite innocently: "Where were they playing?"

He looked uncomfortable. "I'm sorry I brought that conversation up, Bob," he said, looking at me closely.

The bells in my head started ringing again.

"What in the heck's the matter with you?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "it's the talk around the clubs that you, The Mark Foy, and Darkie 'touched' The Gambler down at your game for quite a few coconuts."

"Who told you this?" I demanded.

"It wasn't just one person, Bob. As you know, all the Greek and Italian gamblers come in here, and they talk.

"The Gambler told a Greek friend of mine that he had not noticed it at the time, but had realised when it was too late that the two packs of cards used had not been shuffled and were stacked.

"He claimed it was about the only time in his life that he had failed to shuffle a deck of cards. He also claimed that he would just naturally expect that kind of deal from The Mark Foy, but he never thought you would touch him. He was even doubtful about you until you came to see him with the Mark Foy. Then he knew for sure.

"He told my great friend that he wouldn't pay you."

I ASKED the barber which club The Gambler went to, and he named a club in Lonsdale st. I paid the barber and walked out.

I rang The Mark Foy at his home. His wife, Edie, answered the phone. She said he wasn't in, but he would be home before 6.

I told her to tell him I would be out to see him at 8 that night.

I took a taxi to Darkie's home in St. Kilda.

He wasn't home either. He had gone to Adelaide a few days before . . .

I went home. I was so mad with myself, I told Rita nothing.

At The Mark Foy's expensive mansion in Toorak rd that night, he was in—and so was The Brain.

"Did you and Darkie touch The Gambler?" I challenged him.

"Heck, no, Bob ! You know I wouldn't do that in your place. He's only squawking about being touched because he is going bad, and doesn't want to pay.

"You can go over to St. Kilda and ask Darkie yourself. He's too afraid of you to do anything like that! And you know yourself they were two new, sealed packs of cards.

"I've heard a little of this gossip myself, and I knew you would hear the same thing sooner or later. But I thought you would be too smart to take any notice of that kind of talk.

"I am your friend — and friends don't do that kind of thing.

"The Gambler will be up at the club in Lonsdale st. at 12 — so why don't you take a walk up and tell him he shouldn't say those kind of things to strangers?"

I said: "Yes—that's just what I'll do." (But I thought: "I think you're lying. And if what I think is true I'll make you sorrier than you'd believe possible.")

The Brain gave me a pep up talk about how one must never get confused with facts and doubt your own friends. Why, it was just like turning against your own mother.

Didn't Taylor and Cutmore kill each other only because he couldn't get there in time to explain some little thing that even a child would understand?

Yes, The Brain was right.

I was confused—but not too confused — as I watched them drink their glasses of ice-cold milk.

With one eye, I appeared to see them as the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

With the other, I could see Judases with 30 pieces of silver . . .

I went home and lay down for a while, to try and get my brain back to something like normal.

Twenty minutes after midnight I was standing at the foot of the steps that led up to the club, in Lonsdale st. In a few minutes I'm about to be shot in the right leg, so let's pause while I give you the true facts, of which I was then ignorant.

Two new packs of cards had been opened by Mark Foy and my croupier, arranged in the right winning sequence, resealed in new cellophane, and kept in readiness, by Darkie, with the good packs.

The Gambler had been touched, but it was too late when he knew. When The Mark Foy went to collect the twelve hundred and fifty, The Gambler told him that he wanted his four

hundred in cash back immediately, otherwise he would let Bob Walker know they were touching the game.

The Mark Foy is between the devil and the deep sea; he knows for sure The Gambler wouldn't tell me himself, but he does know that it's only a matter of time till I hear the gossip elsewhere.

He knows if the pressure was put on Darkie he would talk, so he decided the key to the whole situation was diplomacy.

This, then, is what he did.

He told The Gambler he didn't know the cards were fixed till I winked at him, then he knew why he was having such phenomenal luck.

It was myself and Darkie who were doing the touching, but he knew when he did collect the money he would have to turn it over to me, as the four hundred he had got in cash would be considered his share.

HE went on to tell The Gambler: "Now to prove what I say is true I'll bring Walker with me to ask you when you are going to pay.

"You know what kind of a fella that Bob Walker is.

"If you tell him you won't pay 'cause the cards had been fixed, he is going to get mad and tell you that's a lie. When he gets mad he is liable to kill anyone, so just let your friend here handle the whole thing."

The Mark Foy told The Gambler he would see him in the Collins st. hotel next Thursday, and show him how easy it was to fix these little things up.

He then went straight to Darkie at St. Kilda and told him Bob Walker had found out about the touch, and was looking for him.

"So take this £50 and go into smoke, till I fix things up," he said.

He drove over to a house in Richmond to have a long talk with a young guy called Walkerden, nicknamed Scotland Yard.

I had never seen or spoken to Scotland Yard in my life, so the facts I give you I was to learn later on.

I have questioned numerous crims when in the Big House who knew Scotland Yard intimately.

Scotland Yard was a short, stocky young guy who "knew everything"; hence the nickname, Scotland Yard.

He was quietly spoken, just worshipped the £. s. d., and was a made-to-order victim for a high-pressure talking salesman. I don't know what took place between Scotland Yard and The Mark Foy.

But I do know The Mark Foy gave him £150 and a lot of colossal promises to have my address changed from East Melbourne to the City Morgue.

Part 6 – 'I was shot by a gun for hire...'

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23449198>

As a hired gunman, The Scotland Yard wasn't worth 150 pennies. As a stooge for The Mark Foy and others he was worth a lot of money.

To get to the club in Lonsdale st., you walk up three flights of stone steps and knock on a big fireproof steel door.

I did that, and a small trapdoor was opened.

I told the doorkeeper I wanted to see The Gambler.

There were the alarm bells ringing in my head as I stood on the landing and waited.

The door to the club opened and a stranger walked out.

He was short and stood with his hands in the pockets of his rainproof coat.

The door had closed again, and he just stood there, looking down the stone steps.

I paid no attention to him as I leaned against the landing rail and waited.

"Are you waiting for The Gambler, Bob," the stranger asked.

"Yes," I replied.

He eyed me off.

"He'll be down in a minute," he said.

I moved to pass him.

He didn't move.

He fired from inside his right-hand coat pocket.

I felt a sharp pain in my right thigh.

"Did that hit you, Bob?" he asked.

I didn't wait to reply.

I took off like the Santa Fe express.

I ran down the three flights of stairs, got a taxi, and went home.

Rita was putting a bandage around my leg when the front door buzzer sounded.

"Who's there?" I called.

It was The Mark Foy.

He said he had been on his way home and thought he would drop in to see if I had seen The Gambler.

"Never mind if I've seen The Gambler. Drive me over to St, Kilda, will you?" I urged.

"Why, sure, Bob, but what's the matter? You look real mad," said The Mark Foy. On the way to St. Kilda I told him what had happened.

He was absolutely dumbfounded.

"I can't understand it at all," he said. "What do you think yourself, Bob?"

"It was some guy who knew me, and knew I was waiting to see The Gambler," I mused.

"He couldn't have wanted to kill me, as I wasn't even looking at him, and he didn't even bother to take the gun out of his pocket.

"He could have walked over, put the gun at my head and blown it right off."

THE MARK FOY drove to a friend's place of mine in St. Kilda and I got a big .45 Colt revolver, fully loaded.

On the way back to the city The Mark Foy stopped at a public 'phone-box in St. Kilda rd.

Eddie, his wife, was a little sick, so he would just have to ring, saying he would be a little late.

When I got back to the club it was in darkness, with all doors locked and barred.

I went home to bed.

There was nothing in the newspapers the next morning, as the Law had no idea that a shooting had taken place.

There was a sports meeting in the country that day, so I went to work for The Man just the same.

I was walking with a slight limp.

"What's the matter with your legs, Bob?" The Man asked me.

"Just a touch of rheumatism," I replied.

When I got home that night The Mark Foy was there to give me the latest news.

The Gambler had not even been at the club when I went up to see him.

The guy who had shot me was some gun-crazy little guy who thought he would get a lot of publicity and a lot of notoriety.

"What are you going to do?" The Mark Foy asked me as I let him out the front door.

I told him I had not made up my mind yet.

That night I lay back in bed and talked it over with Rita.

I could see the position I was in very clearly if I found this Scotland Yard and shot him.

I was going to be involved in a lot of trouble, have all my future plans messed up, and end right back where I started— in trouble with the Law.

Rita and I both thought the only sensible thing to do was to just forget the whole thing.

And that's just what I did.

The Mark Foy came and told me that The Gambler was very friendly with this Scotland Yard, so why didn't I shoot the both of them, as he could arrange for them to be together very easy.

When I told him I wasn't interested in who was friendly with who and wanted to forget the whole thing, he was more disappointed than the kid who never got a Christmas stocking from Father Christmas.

You can see from this story I've told you why my attitude didn't suit The Mark Foy.

The further the plot went, the deeper he involved himself with his own rotten, lying intrigue.

He knew that sooner or later I would hear the truth about the whole affair, so would The Gambler; then he would end up the enemy of all.

A new licensee had taken over an hotel in Lonsdale st., but they also had another small hotel in the country which I understood they were willing to lease. I made arrangements to see them one night and have a look. I took Rita with me.

We were sitting in their office talking for about an hour when the phone rang.

The licensee told me a Mr. James Coates wanted to see me outside the front door for a moment.

I went out to Lonsdale st. where The Mark Foy was waiting.

He seemed very excited, and told me Scotland Yard and The Gambler were waiting outside my home in East Melbourne to shoot some when I came home.

"How did you know I was here?" I asked him.

He said he had been driving around the city looking for me, and had met a fella who had seen Rita and myself going into the hotel.

"Heck, Bob, you had better be careful; have you got a gun?" he asked

I told him, "No, I haven't."

He said he knew where he could get one in about 20 minutes, so he would go and get it.

He would wait outside the hotel in his car until Rita and myself came out.

In 15 minutes the phone rang again. It was The Mark Foy saying he would like to see me on my own for only a minute.

Although the alarm bells were ringing quite loudly in my head, this time I went.

As I stepped out the door on to the footpath The Mark Foy was standing in the gutter with his back resting on an old car.

As I walked towards him Scotland Yard stepped from behind the car with a gun in his hand and fired.

I felt the burning stab as it tore through my chest.

In desperation I spun round and dived for the hotel door.

It was locked.

I heard the bark of the gun again and felt the pain as the burning hot steel seemed to nail my arm to the wooden door.

Fear and panic stepped in and took charge of me.

I hurled myself from the door and ran towards the centre of the roadway.

I now felt the worst pain of all as a bullet shattered my kneecap.

I crashed to the roadway on my back.

I looked up and saw Scotland Yard about three yards away firing at me again.

I had often wondered what I would do when death stared me in the face. I found out from practical experience.

I screamed. I guess it was the heel in me still trying to cry its way out.

I could feel Rita holding my head in her lap as I tried to moisten my burning hot mouth with my tongue.

It was a photo finish between the ambulance and the law—and death was an even-money favorite.

"Who shot you, Bob?" the homicide squad asked.

I refused to talk.

They rushed me into the emergency operating theatre.

I had been hit three times.

One bullet had passed right through my right lung, one hit my elbow and went down through my arm and out my right hand.

The third had gone in my right knee and lodged at the back of my kneecap.

It has caused me no end of trouble and pain ever since as I developed rheumatoid arthritis.

I really don't think it is possible to have a complaint that could be more painful.

Death, the even-money favorite, just lost.

The next day I heard the sisters tell the nurse I was to be moved down to the police ward.

Apart from my wife Rita, who visited me twice a day without fail, I had four visitors—my mother, The Man, Maurice — (my tailor), and the Law.

Yes, sir, it sure takes a shooting to find out who is who while I was laying there in bed.

I used to kill The Mark Foy—mentally — three times a day.

After being in hospital for 10 weeks I was discharged on crutches, and went to live in an apartment at Bondi, Sydney.

For four and a half months I did nothing but lay on the bed.

One day I was able to do without the crutches and walked on my own.

Rita would massage my leg every day, and would raise Cain if I failed to give it the daily exercise.

I grew to love Rita very deeply.

When the winter came we moved to another apartment in Pott's Point, and bought a Persian cat—which I never ever liked—and a little fox terrier dog.

We called the cat Caesar and the dog Lucky.

I joined the Waterside Workers' Union, medal number 2834, and went to work for a real good guy called Jack Burgess.

I would work four or five days a week and do a little gambling on the side at different two-up games.

We were never ever short of money and had a swell little home.

By this time, through different sources, I had learnt the whole truth about Darkie, The Mark Foy, and Scotland Yard.

I could never ever bring myself to hate Scotland Yard, as I kind of just seemed to think of him as a gun for hire, but I really grew to hate and loath The Mark Foy and Darkie.

Time and time again I would mentally chop up both characters with an axe.

Scotland Yard's best friend now was The Brain.

Every one in the underworld was figuring that sooner or later I would take a gun and try to kill Scotland Yard.

There was nothing further from my mind.

I never said anything to anyone, but I let them think that, cause I was racking my poor little brain on how I could kill Coates without getting pinched by the Law.

I told Rita I was going to Brisbane for a few days, but I took a 45 Colt, got on the plane and flew to Melbourne.

I stayed at a friend's place out in Newmarket.

One afternoon I went to a house in Punt Road — I knew from a friend that the Mark Foy was sure to be there.

He wasn't, but The Brain was.

He was very pleased to see me and we got to talking over old times, and about me getting shot.

"You know, Bob, I just can't understand how, and why, Scotland Yard shot you," he said.

"He is such a nice young fella, doesn't drink, or smoke, and thinks the world of his dear old mother.

"I just can't understand how you and Scotland Yard ever got to fighting each other."

Then I made one of the many big mistakes of my life.

I told him the truth.

How the whole trouble had started at my game in East Melbourne, what the Mark Foy and Darkie had done to the Gambler and how the Mark Foy had paid Scotland Yard £150 to rub me out.

The Brain was amazed, so I thought.

THE Brain said: "I never ever dreamt the Mark Foy would do that. Are you dead sure of your facts?"

Cause if you are that explains why the little fella, Scotland Yard, keeps hinting to me that he doesn't trust him.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I won't let anyone know that I've seen you, but I'll have a talk to the Mark Foy, and sound him out.

"I'll also see The Gambler and Darkie, separately.

"And if the facts add up like you say—which I haven't any doubt they will, cause I don't trust that Mark Foy myself, as I have always found him out in a lot of unnecessary lies—I will explain things to Scotland Yard, in such a way, that he will realise how the Mark Foy could do the same thing to him, as he did to you.

"I don't want to know where you are staying, so don't tell me. Stay in smoke, but ring me morning and night at 8.

"Now you take notice of your old friend, Bob, I know this Scotland Yard best of all. You would be surprised what could happen in a week.

(I was).

"How is Rita keeping?" the Brain went on. "I'm glad you married her, Bob; that's one girl I liked immediately we first met.

"You know, Bob, I've been very worried lately. My poor old mother has not been too well."

A big tear trickled down his cheek.

"I would just seem lost, if she departed now," he whispered.

"It's not for us to forget how our dear old people worry, Bob," he said.

"Now, you take yourself. Did you come here with a gun in your pocket to kill the Mark Foy?"

I nodded a yes, and his eyes were dry cleaned instantly.

"Don't be such a damn fool," he said. "Just look at the shame and worry you would cause your poor old mother if you were arrested for murder. It may even kill her.

"Where would we be if we were both motherless? Mine from sickness, and yours from worry." The tears were trickling down both cheeks again.

"Bob, haven't I told you before that the tongue is mightier than the sword," he pleaded. "If you let me do the talking, and handle this thing with tact, I'll bet Scotland Yard will kill the Mark Foy himself when he knows the true facts. (The Brain forgot Scotland Yard had a mother, too!)

"You go home, relax, and ring me each day like I say.

"For your mother's sake, Bob, will you promise me you won't carry a gun while I am mediator?"

As The Brain put his hand on my shoulder and watched me anxiously, I promised.

When I rang the next morning he told me he had talked with the Mark Foy and was seeing The Gambler and Darkie that day.

I went to see my mother.

As I was going in the front gate, my next eldest brother — who had once done everything to start me right in life — was coming out.

"Hello," I said. He stopped, looked me straight in the eye, turned, and walked on.

My mother was very pleased to see me, and asked did I see my brother going out.

When I said no, she said he had only gone to the chemist to get my medicine.

"That's him now," my mother said, as we heard a car stop.

I tried to look happy, too, as he walked in.

"Well, well, well, just look who's here," he exclaimed as he covered the floor in two strides and claimed my hand firmly.

HE kept up a running conversation till it was time to depart.

He insisted that he drive me home.

As soon as the car started he never spoke a word.

He drove around the first corner and stopped.

I got out of the car, closed the door and tried to walk away in a devil-may-care style, but each step was like lifting a block of lead.

My brother was a man and a half.

Part 7 – Deadly rendezvous in Lonsdale street

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23447394>

WHEN I rang The Brain that night there was a message to say to ring at noon the next day without fail.

I did. The Brain sounded very pleased with himself.

He claimed the Mark Foy was about to make a one way trip to somewhere.

He had seen Darkie, The Gambler, and Scotland Yard separately, and now that they knew the true facts they were all howling crook on the Mark Foy.

He said we were all one happy little family and were going to have a little talk.

"Meet me at 10.30 sharp outside the club in Lonsdale street," he said.

"I'll bring the Gambler, Darkie, and Scotland Yard down and you and Darkie can verify what I have told The Gambler about him being touched by the Mark Foy.

"When I told Darkie about this meeting with you, he was scared.

"But after I told him about your promise to me as mediator he agreed.

"Scotland Yard wanted to get at the Mark Foy right away.

"We can sit and talk in the old blue and white taxi. That's better than talking up at the Club."

At 7 that night I took a taxi to see my friend the Greek barber.

He was out, so I bought a few newspapers, walked up Russell Street to Little Lonsdale Street, down to the Swanston Street entrance of the Melbourne Hospital.

I sat in the casualty admittance ward reading.

After a while I walked through to the men's toilet on the way out. I stopped and gazed down at the exact spot where years before I had found out honor among thieves was a fallacy.

It was a little warm inside the hospital, so I walked out and sat on the small stone seat inside the iron spiked fence.

There were a few high shrubs between myself and the hospital fence, but I had a good view of the club's entrance.

A taxi—which I found out later belonged to Scotland Yard's buddy — stopped outside the club's door.

I wasn't a bit interested as I thought it had brought some gamblers to the Club.

Three passengers and the driver got out and stood talking for about a minute.

They were The Brain, Mark Foy and a little short guy whom I did not recognise.

The driver went into the club entrance.

The Brain walked towards the hospital side of Lonsdale Street, got into a car and drove away.

The little short guy got back into the back seat of the taxi and sat down.

The Mark Foy crossed to the hospital side of Lonsdale Streets—he passed only 20 feet from where I was sitting behind the hospital fence.

He crossed Swanston Street, walked on down Lonsdale Street towards Elizabeth Street about 50 yards and got into a parked car.

I looked at my wrist watch. It showed 9.40.

I could not see directly into the car the Mark Foy had got into, so when it did not drive away I figured he must be talking to someone.

If I had known what I knew only a few hours later, the Mark Foy would have died in that car as he sat chewing the end of his cigar.

As the minutes ticked off slowly on my watch, the Mark Foy's car did not drive away and the little short guy remained sitting in the taxi.

Quite a few guys had entered and left the club, but the driver had not come back.

My watch showed 10.10.

Knowing how the Mark Foy could prattle, believe it or not, I still did not suspect a thing.

At 10.25 the set-up remained the same.

I had been doing a lot of thinking myself by now.

I had come to the conclusion that the Mark Foy had been tipped off there was going to be a meeting — I guessed it would have been Darkie — and was hanging around to see if I was going to meet Scotland Yard and the others.

As soon as The Brain arrived I would let him know the Mark Foy had not gone away, but was still in the car just down the street.

Ten thirty, 10.35. . . .

The Brain was always very punctual on appointments and he had emphasised the 10.30 sharp.

Ten forty, 10.43—and then it hit me.

It had the same effect as a heavy punch to the kidneys.

My legs felt dead and I wanted to be sick.

My hand trembled as I lit a cigarette.

The drawback made me dizzy and the smoke tasted like hell.

There was no possible doubt about it now.

It was a Plant, a Kill Plant and I was the Fertilizer it was waiting for. Yes sir. The Brain was right again.

The tongue was mightier than the sword especially if the swordsmen were all like me.

The little short man sitting in the taxi was Scotland Yard, (Walkerden).

The Mark Foy was going to watch the fun — he loved a good joke — or drive the getaway car.

I could even hear The Brain telling the story — the same thing as the Squizzy Taylor and Cutmore one, only different names — "It never should have happened. I just got there too late to pour oil on the troubled waters."

The tears would be in his eyes, and of course his mother would be sure to be mentioned.

At 10.55 I hurried into hospital and rang a friend.

I told him where I was and what I wanted in a hurry.

My watch showed 11.04 as I hurried back to take up my position behind the hospital fence.

At 11.10 the Mark Foy got out of the car, walked up to the taxi, spoke a few words to Scotland Yard, then walked back and got into the car again.

Maybe they both agreed that I had made some mistake in the "kill time," and would get along to fertilise the plant at 11.30.

It was now 11.30 and the plant was just the same; 11.45, still no change, but where the hell was my friend, who said he was coming by taxi right away?

The Mark Foy got out of his car, walked up Lonsdale st. and was talking to Scotland Yard.

A car parked opposite the taxi, on the hospital side.

The Brain got out and walked across to the taxi.

About seven or eight gamblers came out of the club and stood not far away.

I heard a footstep behind me. It was my friend.

He had had trouble getting a taxi.

He was shaking like a leaf in a storm as he handed me the gun. He disappeared a lot faster than he had come.

I came out of the hospital the same way as I had gone in, ran up Little Lonsdale st., and walked quickly down Russell st. to the Lonsdale st. corner, where a cop was standing.

An empty taxi came cruising down Lonsdale st., going towards the club.

I made a snap decision, and got into the front seat.

"Drive down here slowly and turn left into Swanston st.," I told the driver. "I'm looking for a friend."

I thought when Scotland Yard and Co. saw me pass slowly and turn into Swanston st. as if I were going to stop they would walk around the corner to speak to me.

I was wrong again. As my taxi came nearly to a stop, awaiting the green light, I saw Scotland Yard and another man jump into their taxi.

Just keep going slowly, I told the driver.

As I looked back through the rear window, I saw the other taxi swing around the corner following us.

My driver caught the green light at the Bourke street corner, and at my direction turned slowly left into Bourke street, going towards Russell street.

I was going to stop, but two cops were standing nearby.

I told the driver to turn right into Russell street, and we went slowly towards Little Collins street.

The other taxi was right behind us, so I told the driver to turn right into that nice, quite deserted Little Collins street — and stop.

This was the ideal spot for a little fireworks, and not a cop in sight.

I cocked the big 45 Colt, in my left inside breast pocket, and had my left hand on the door handle, to get out fast.

I was wrong again — as we slowed to turn into Little Collins street, Scotland Yard's taxi speeded up and continued on up Russell st. towards Collins st.

Scotland Yard leaned out the right hand back window and fired four shots in quick succession.

Three of the bullets went crashing through the left hand window where I sat.

All were near misses for myself and the driver.

"What was that?" the driver cried as he went to stop.

"Just someone throwing stones, but don't let that worry you. Keep going," I

"comforted" him. He never said a word as he drove me down to Spencer street.

And he said nothing as I put a pound in his hand and walked away.

But he sure had plenty to say to the Law.

His photograph and the bullet holes in his taxi window were on display in the newspapers the next morning headed "Gang War."

They said nothing about mediators or sick mothers.

It didn't take the Law very long to find out what was cooking.

I got the tip they wanted to have a little talk with me, so I took the plane back to Sydney.

I went to work again on the dock for a few months, but The Brain and the Mark Foy were ever in my thoughts and it was wearing me down.

The Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Ile de France, Aquitania and Nieuw Holland were making up a convoy to take the Diggers overseas.

After a lot of refusals and constant trying, I signed on the Queen Mary as kitchen porter.

We took the troops to Suez Canal — one of the old-time warders who still works in the Big House today was one of the many troops I knew and met on the Queen Mary trip, which took two months.

I paid off on the return trip.

The first underworld news I heard after arriving back in Sydney was that the Brain, Mark Foy and Scotland Yard were just one big happy family.

By now the Japs were coming in and seamen were wanted.

But the Law was making it very difficult for a convicted person with a criminal record to leave Australia as a seaman or even a soldier.

I found out I had a chance to go overseas on an American ship from Brisbane.

As I left Central railway station that night, Rita kissed me and said she had a feeling she would never see me again.

I arrived in Brisbane and went on to Townsville.

There was an American Liberty ship at the dock.

I went aboard and asked the captain for a job.

"Where are you from?" he asked me.

"Sydney, sir," I said.

"What's your name?"

"James Robert Walker."

"Have you got your passport and gear with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"O.K. Sign here and report to the chief steward."

I left Australia in March, 1943.

When the ship arrived over at the States I was told to report to the captain's office.

Two small men in Palm Beach rigs said: "We are F.B.I. agents, Bob, and we are just doing a little checking on a report from the U.S. Consul from Down Under.

"We just want to let you know, bud, we know as much about you as you know about yourself. Now the only person who is going to cause you trouble here is yourself.

"Keep your nose clean and everything's O.K."

In three days I had passed all the tests, was issued with a social security card, a shipping card from the National Maritime Union and U.S. Coastguard, seaman's papers, and Coastguard passport.

After being ashore 30 days I shipped on another Liberty ship as a wiper in the engine-room, destination India.

In September, 1943, I was back in New York, and after 30 days ashore I shipped for Murmansk, Russia.

WE spent three weeks in the north of Scotland, going through all kinds of drill for the "Death Run," as they called it.

There were two convoys of 48 ships each, sailing only a few days apart.

Sixteen ships out of our convoy of 48 were lost.

We were stuck in Murmansk for three months — the subs were so bad we couldn't get out.

On the trip back to Glasgow we lost six more ships.

By the time we arrived back in New York my nerves were in bad shape.

As I explained earlier, you would have to suffer from rheumatoid arthritis to know just what pain was.

One day in New York, after my return from Russia, I was having a swell time, but no matter how good the fun was, I couldn't stop my thoughts from returning to Down Under.

I bought a dress circle ticket, and entered the Mayfair Theatre on Broadway.

The movie was swell, and I was beginning to feel more like my old self, when I was suddenly overtaken with the worst attack of pain in my right knee I had ever had.

Well, Smartie, do you see where you ended up, I told myself.

Remember all the things your mother and family tried to do for you?

You had a wife who really loved you, and you still weren't satisfied, were you?

Did you think you could beat the strongest and best equipped organisation in the world — the Law?

These were my thoughts, as the pain got so bad that I thought I would scream.

I took a deep drag at my cigarette as I got to my feet and walked down the aisle to the balcony rail.

The rail was about as high as my chest. I grabbed it with both hands, and vaulted into the darkness below.

I remember hearing a woman's scream, and I remember spinning in space, then oblivion.

Part 8 – My Mission Was Murder

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23445439>

WHEN I opened my eyes 11 hours later I was in bed on the ninth floor of the Bellevue Hospital, New York City.

I had fallen 27ft. into the stall seats below and the scoreboard read: Concussion, a double fracture of the left ankle, and a fracture of the right ankle, three broken ribs, and severe laceration to the back.

After three days I was moved to the sixth floor of the United States Coast Guard Merchant Marine Hospital.

I was not allowed to have a pillow and was on a kind of bed board on account of the injury to my back.

I was under Dr. McShirraley, about 50, the most understanding person I've ever met.

How's Jimmy today. Fine, thanks, Doc. (But I felt like heck itself.)

On the third day I couldn't speak.

The Doc. came over close to the bed and looked at me for a long time.

He pulled up a chair, put his hand on mine and sat down.

You've got a heck of a lot of things tied up in there, Jimmy — he tapped me on the chest — and they have got to come out.

I'm your friend, Jimmy, and I want you to know that your troubles are my troubles, understand?

He took my hand and shook it firmly.

I burst into tears.

I couldn't have stopped myself for a million dollars.

He lit a cigarette and put it in my mouth. I took a few draws.

Whether it was just being a stranger in another country — I like to think it was just one of those cases where we both liked each other — he was just like a father to me.

After two months in the Marine Hospital, I was taken to the Merchant Marine Convalescent Home, Port Washington, Long Island . . .

And so back to health.

A lot of people wonder whether I "followed" crime over in the States.

Well, in the 10 years I was away from Australia I only tangled with the Law once. In 1946, in Baltimore, I served 90 days in the Baltimore State Penitentiary, Maryland. It was for serving on the picket line in the seamen's strike.

Out of hospital, I was soon back on the ships.

Shore leave I made dice time.

If I was lucky—the most cash of my own I have ever had in a lump sum was \$82,000 — I would take the plane to Cuba, do all down through the West Indies.

Then, when I was nearly broke, I'd go to the American Consul, show my American seaman's papers, and ship out again.

One day in New Orleans I went into a gambling joint— it was only my second night ashore— with \$1,600. I came out 50 minutes later with four dimes, one nickel, a half-packet of cigarettes, and no matches.

I walked up Canal st. feeling like the boy who had just shot his father.

The next morning I was the first customer at the "hock shop" on the corner of Canal st.

I raised \$400 and went to another joint.

Gambling is legal and wide open 24 hours of the day in New Orleans—at 3 o'clock that afternoon I drove away in one of the gambling joint's cars with \$26,000.

That was the only time I overstayed my shore time in the States. I saw quite a few cities, and had a swell time in general, but I was broke and on the rocks in 20 weeks.

I spent four months at the training school in New York, and passed for my third assistant engineer's licence.

In 1952, I was in the dough again and took a Swedish tanker, so I would be able to pay off in England.

I was in Germany for about four months, and it was in Bremen Hospital (I'd had another bad attack of rheumatoid arthritis in my knee) that I decided to return to Australia.

I arrived in Fremantle on December 12, 1952.

I stayed in Perth for a while, and then went to Boulder City, where I received quite a lot of "interesting" mail.

SCOTLAND YARD (Walkerden) was dead.

He had got the works in Lennox st., Richmond, while pumping up a flat tyre on his car.

The Brain had arrived just a few minutes too late to explain to poor Scotland Yard that the flat tyre was one of the oldest booby traps in the underworld.

What a pity he didn't know, and it never would have happened.

With all the money the Brain's got, wouldn't you think he would buy a good reliable wrist watch.

Scotland Yard's mother is dead, too.

Both the Brain and the Mark Foy were very impressive as they followed Scotland Yard's remains to their resting place.

He was buried right on time.

The Brain was seen to check his watch.

The Mark Foy had got a lot of very annoying calls at his house, such as the fire brigade, the homicide squad, the doctor, the ambulance, the undertaker, and the City morgue.

The Mark Foy was like the three little pigs in one, but one day the big bad wolf really did come.

He was on his way down the street from the safety of his heavily fortified home when death claimed his little fat body.

I still to this day have the greatest of admiration for the faith and confidence the Mark Foy had in his ability to talk and convince people that what he said was right.

His assassin fired four or five bullets into the Mark Foy and he fell to the ground, bleeding profusely.

Even as death came dancing in happily to take charge of that little fat body, he looked up at his assassin and gasped: "If you will just listen to me one moment, I can easily explain this silly mistake."

MY mother was dead and buried.

She had spent the last years of her life writing endless letters to shipping companies in the United States, seeking some word of her son.

If only her son would write, just one word, she would die happy.

As the family gathered at her bedside, her big dark eyes searched their faces.

"Bob's a good boy, you know!"

I can quite vividly see my next eldest brother immediately rise to the occasion—"why sure, mother, we all know and understand that Bob's a real good boy."

I can see the little verse he hung on our bedroom wall:

"A few more flowers on the path way of life, and fewer on the grave at the end of strife."

I replaced the letter in the envelope and walked out of Boulder City along the dusty road, forever seeking some escape from myself.

I sat down on an empty tin can at the back of the deserted Great Boulder Gold mine and cried.

Crying one day, happy and laughing the next sounds just like a person without balance at all, doesn't it?

When they tell me I'm sane, it only tends to deepen my perplexity.

I admire and love sincerity and honesty, and I cry for the qualities that I lack, yet I repeat and perform the things that I loathe and despise.

How can I expect anyone to understand me, when I can't even get to understand myself?

Kill me, kill this life, this flesh and blood, kill this thing that makes me tick, crush me into oblivion, because this is not the me I want to be.

It's the other me, my mother's me for which I am ever seeking.

Some people live in fear of death. I look forward and bid it welcome with a wide open door.

Believe it or not, this thing called death is very elusive.

It's just as hard to grasp and hold as the right things I have always wanted to do.

I am laughing and really happy.

I have just received a letter telling me The Brain is a very changed man over the last few years.

He has given up the star role as mediator.

He has given up practically everything except his money.

He has more money now than is necessary for one person to have.

He's got something else he wants to give, but it happens to be one of the things millions are trying to get rid of themselves.

The Brain is suffering from an incurable disease, and all his money can't do one thing about it.

I decided there and then to accomplish the impossible.

I knew a way of blasting that disease right out of his entire system.

My wife, Rita, was living with a man called Thomas Fogarty.

He was a housebreaker, a showman, and did a little cheap thieving on the side.

He was a swell guy on beating up anyone who he knew for sure wouldn't retaliate.

He carried a gun on numerous occasions/and had openly bragged what he would do to any who didn't quite satisfy his slightest whim.

He, was also known as "Slasher Tom," and I have personally seen four people who will carry the scars of his razor and broken beer glasses to their graves.

I had only written to Rita, my wife, three times - without sending any forwarding address for return mail - in 10 years, but I would always send her money c/o the G.P.O.

If I was broke and unable to send money, I would always make up for the lapse when I had money again.

Many a present of clothes, jewellery, furs, and perfume I have sent with some American seaman who I knew was calling at Australian ports.

I knew Rita loved nice things, and I loved Rita from the day we met.

I had written and told my wife I would always support her, but that I had no intention of ever returning to the land of my birth. So far as I was concerned she could have her freedom.

When I had read the letter about the type of man she had chosen I was very disappointed.

But I just put the whole affair out of my mind.

She had made her choice, and that was that.

Call it what you like, think what you like, but I had come 12,000 miles for one thing, and only death would stop me carrying it out.

The following day I left Boulder City for Melbourne.

I wish to pause here before I give the details of my shooting of Thomas Fogarty.

The reader will have no interest, but I sincerely trust the true facts will catch the interest of the jury who heard each witness swear without shadow of doubt what they saw.

Particularly, the way I left the scene of the crime, by walking down Barkly street, towards St. Kilda Junction, very slowly.

There were only a few minor lies I told.

The fundamentals of my story were true.

On the evidence presented to the jury, it arrived at the only possible honest verdict.

Guilty.

Gentlemen who sat on my Jury, you, whom I thanked for your time and consideration and your verdict, these are the true facts.:

I arrived in Melbourne on Friday, 'March 6.

I stayed the night at the YM.C.A.

On Saturday I went to a certain suburb and spoke to a man I shall call "The Fix."

I then went to the city and spoke to several friends.

They told me all the gossip and news which I made out I did not know.

I heard the Thing still lived in St. Kilda, drank a lot and still cried tales of woe and talked just as much.

"Where could I see the Thing," I asked.

"Go to Barkly street, where he lives, I was told.

I met the Thing in the bar at the --- Hotel, St. Kilda, bought a few bottles of liquor and went to Barkly street to have a talk about old times.

I drank on my own as the Thing was sick and not drinking.

It was there that I first learned Rita, my wife, was living with Tom Fogarty in Barkly street.

While sitting in the kitchen my wife crept up behind me, and, placing her hands over my eyes, said "Guess who's got you?"

We kissed and had only a short talk as she was going somewhere. I drank on and stayed at the Barkly street house that night.

MY wife called again on Sunday afternoon. We went to St. Kilda beach and then to her apartment in Alma rd.

She told me Johnnie Devine, whom I had once shot, had come back from South Africa.

He was a very sick man suffering from T.B., she said.

He had gone to live at a house in Barkly st., and had sent the Thing to tell her he would like to see her.

Knowing that Johnnie Devine and the Thing had hated each other, I thought it was strange, but never asked Rita any questions.

She said Johnnie Devine told her that he didn't hold it against me for shooting him.

"If Bob should ever come back to Australia." he said to Rita, "will you please see that he gets this letter himself."

Rita took food to Devine frequently before he died.

She gave me the letter.

It only confirmed what I had known for years.

The Brain and the Thing would use you for what you were worth, then sell you out for a dime.

I told Rita I was going away in a few days. She told me she was living with Thomas Fogarty.

I asked her what he did for a living. She said he was a showman, and worked here and there.

I asked if she gave him any of the money that I sent her. She said no, and added that seeing we had been parted so long, there wasn't any need to send her any more money as she was quite able to support herself.

She told me about a married woman she knew in - st., South Yarra, where I could get a nice room and plenty of good food, but I claimed I was all right.

She never mentioned one word to me about her troubles with Fogarty, and, as I left the apartment, she just reminded me of a small child who was hopeless lost, but trying to look brave.

On Tuesday, the 10th, I went to - st., South Yarra, and gave Mr. and Mrs. - a ten-pound note for board and lodgings.

Seeing I was Rita's husband, Mrs. - didn't want to accept any money at all, but her husband ' solved the problem by saying he would buy the kids a present. Mr. - was one of those happy, talkative guys who kind of made a stranger feel at home.

That afternoon I saw The Fix, who gave me a sawn off shotgun in a small canvas case and two full packages of cartridges.

I wrapped the gun and cartridges together in some paper, gave him a brick (£10), and hurried home. I hid the gun in the package under my wardrobe and went to bed.

The next day I saw another man, gave him £25, and told him what I wanted done.

After thinking the matter over, he said it would be very hard, but he would see what he could arrange. He said he thought he had an idea how to get the Brain at Barkly st. with the Thing at the same time.

"As you know, Bob," he explained, "the Brain and the Thing don't like each other, and it's going to be very tricky to bring them together without arousing their suspicions, especially the Brain."

I gave him the go-ahead sign to try.

It's an awful thing when you are trying to kill time.

I would have a few drinks, then walk the length of my large bedroom time and time again..

In that one week I must have covered miles and miles.

The first day I was out at South Yarra, I told Mrs. - that if my wife Rita should ring or call, would she be kind enough to tell her I had never come there.

Mrs. – was one of the most obliging women I have met for some time. She did everything to get me to eat food she had prepared.

I would eat a little, but was glad to get back to my room for the pace up and down.

On St. Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17, I telephoned my friend, who told me The Brain and The Thing would be at Barkly st. that night about 7.45.

He told me he would meet me in a car on the corner of Toorak rd. and Chapel st. and drive me down.

Jury men, you heard my story at the trial, you heard the witnesses' story, you visited the scene of the crime and saw the layout

Now here's that inside story.

Whether you believe it or whether you don't, I don't care, but it's true.

Early that morning I went to my room, took the package from under the wardrobe and unwrapped it.

I broke open one package of cartridges and loaded both barrels of the gun.

I took a handful of loose cartridges, and dropped them in my outside coat pocket.

Then I walked out the front door carrying the little gun case by the handle and the two packs of cartridges in a whisky bottle paper bag.

I walked down the laneway to where some men had just quit digging a hole in the road...

Part 9 – Fogarty Sees My Ghost

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23438240>

I PLACED the gun case and the package of cartridges under a wooden plank and went back to my room.

I was sitting on the bed having a whisky when Mrs. - asked me to come out and have supper.

I went out into the kitchen and said I had been called away suddenly and was leaving that night.

After saying good-bye and kissing the kids I walked down to the hole in the road, picked up the gun case, and left the package of cartridges just where they were under the plank of wood.

I met my friend, who drove me to the corner of Fitzroy and Princes sts., St. Kilda.

He parked the car in Princes st., just up from the corner of narrow little Peterson st., which runs from Princes st., to Barkly st.

Then he turned to me and said: "Now listen to me, Bob. I know you are going to do something hot. You haven't asked me to wait, but I want you to know that if you should need a car to get away in, you will find me right here."

I said: "Thanks a lot," got out of the car and walked up Peterson st. to Barkly st.

I crossed Barkly st. and sat down in the gutter under the lamp post where the witnesses said they all saw me.

I placed the canvas gun case right at the side of me on the footpath, and unbuckled the two little leather straps on the flap.

From where I sat I could see the entrance of ——'s house in Barkly st.

My intention at the time was this:

The Brain would come by car. As soon as he walked into ——'s place to knock at the door, I was ready to slip the shotgun out of the canvas case, follow him in the house and kill him and The Thing, too.

I WENT to light another cigarette and found I was out of matches.

A man walking past gave me a full box.

After waiting quite a while, I began to wonder if The Brain was going to keep the appointment.

The light I was sitting under flicked on, but I could still see quite clearly across to the other side of Barkly street.

Suddenly my attention was attracted by a woman running out of a house on the opposite side of Barkly street.

She was running up Barkly street and was being quickly overtaken by a man.

She had just crossed Peterson street when he caught her.

"Rita," he called. "Let me go, Tom," she cried.

It was then and only then I knew it was my wife.

I never moved. They were arguing.

He held her wrist and was trying to drag her back the way she had run.

I caught several tense exchanges.

I still had not moved.

But thoughts flashed through my mind.

That's Fogarty! Sure that's his form! Just keep calm and look after your own affairs! She's over 21!

The very words my mother had taught us all flashed through my brain — "Give me to mind my own business at all times, to lose no good opportunity of holding my tongue."

I heard Rita cry out: "Tom, you're hurting me."

I picked up the case, pulled the shot gun out, dropped the case right where I sat.

I cocked both barrels and held the gun waist high with my fingers on the trigger, as I got to my feet and crossed the road.

I never stepped behind any car.

I stepped on to the footpath.

Fogarty was still in the same position and I was only about two feet in front of him when I spoke.

He looked up, at the same time releasing Rita's wrist.

She fell sideways on the car, parked at the kerb's edge.

Fogarty had the most fearful horror-stricken face I have ever seen.

He put out both his hands towards me and stepped back as if I were a ghost and he was pushing me away.

"No, no, no, not me," he cried.

There was a flash of flame. It came from his right hand.

This was the first time I knew he had a gun.

In a flash I pulled the trigger.

He threw both his hands to his middle and spun around.

The little gun hit the front top part of the car's mudguard with a distinct metal clang.

As I fired the other barrel I sub-consciously thought — that's a little American Derringer.

Fogarty bounced off the mudguard of the car and fell flat on his stomach.

People were screaming everywhere, a car pulled to a stop.

I walked back across Barkly street to the lamp post where I had first been sitting to see if it was The Brain arriving.

I was right at the entrance of the blind passageway — I never knew at that time Rita had run in there.

People who were in the passageway screamed and ran inside doors.

The car I was looking at moved off again. It contained two women.

Now listen to this, Jurymen.

I walked back across Barkly st. into Peterson st., passing only 6ft. from where Fogarty was lying.

If I had walked down Barkly st. towards St. Kilda Junction — like all those witnesses swore — I would have been arrested within minutes, as all kinds of people were running from that way up towards the scene of the crime.

I walked down Peterson st. to Princes st. and got into my friend's car — he was still waiting.

I told him: "Drive where I tell you."

At the same time as I reloaded the shotgun I slipped off my coat and he tucked my trouser tops into my socks, as if I had just been riding a bicycle.

We drove up Princes st. to Alma rd., down Alma rd. to High st., and then down High st. towards St. Kilda Junction.

About 100 yards from St. Kilda Junction I told my friend to stop and wait.

I carried the shotgun wrapped in my coat as I walked through the hallway of a block of flats.

I crossed the backyard to a 6ft. tin gate—the back gate entrance to —'s house in Barkly st.

I heard the sound of the ambulance as it raced to Fogarty's aid.

Then I heard the Thing's voice quite clearly.

As I did my best to get over the locked gate quietly, I heard him shout: "I know! I know! I tell you the writing's on the wall. That Walker's mad, he never forgets. He is liable to come here. Locks won't stop him."

I made a noise on the fence, then heard running feet and the slam of the front door.

I went back to the car, drove away, and went into smoke.

It was when I read the newspapers the following morning that I became very puzzled.

How come the Law had not made any mention of Fogarty's gun?

There was some definite reason, but I failed to figure it out.

By nightfall, after going to several places in the city, I knew it would be impossible to find The Brain.

As we drove past the Albert Park lake on our way to Balaclava I got out of the car and threw the sawn-off shotgun, still loaded in both barrels, with the remaining cartridges, into the water.

That night I had a presentiment that the Law's dragnet was about to close.

Next morning it came to me all of a sudden I'd put some money under the wardrobe in my room at the South Yarra house.

Not wanting to involve the people who had given me accommodation in any trouble, I made a decision.

I put one brick (£10) and the handful of silver in my friend's hand and told him to drive to South Yarra.

I went in the back gate of the house, after saying goodbye to my friend two streets away.

There wasn't anyone home, so I got my £50 from under the wardrobe and sat down to wait for it to become a little darker before leaving.

I heard a deep, hearty laugh, the kitchen door swung wide open, and Mr. and Mrs. — walked in.

The laugh died as suddenly as the music on the radio when you cut the switch.

"Hello, Bob; it's good to see you again," Mrs. — said.

"What a pity you have got yourself in such trouble." Mr. — just stood there.

"Yes," I said, "these kind of troubles do happen, but you needn't be worried, as I only came back to get some money I left.

"I'm just about to go to the Law and give myself up."

Just then there was a knock at the door, and who should walk in?

It was the Law.

Eight police, under the leadership of Detective-sergeant Mathews, with drawn guns, came in the front and back doors.

After searching me and the house carefully they took me to Mr. William Donnelly, head of the Homicide at Russell st.

"Hello, Bob, you really have got yourself into serious trouble," Donnelly said.

I was held and questioned for about four hours. I was also lined up with civilians, and identified by witnesses.

I did not make, or sign, any statement.

All evidence given by the Law at my trial was verbal.

The way I was questioned and treated while in custody at the C.I.D., the Coroner's Court, and my trial was a credit to the Homicide Department.

I felt very sick early the next morning when they charged me with murder and locked me up in that little dim lit cell.

To think I had come back 12,000 miles and failed in my mission.

The thing that started to worry me at that very moment was the information I had learnt last night while being questioned by the Law.

"Well, Bob, there's one thing you won't have to worry about — the Labor Party won't hang you," they told me. They thought they were telling me something good, and I thought what a fool I was not to check on that Party angle before I threw that gun in the Lake.

I was lying back in my cell feeling very depressed when the guard came in.

"Are you Bob Walker?" he said.

"Yes, sir," I replied, "but I wish I were Mandrake right at this very moment."

He laughed and said: "Well, here's some good strong coffee, tooth brush and paste, soap, comb, clean handkerchief, cigarettes and matches. When you have washed and had your coffee, I'll take you up to see your wife, who brought these things in for you."

I felt good and warm inside immediately.

I looked through the heavy grilled door, across the passageway, where the cop stands, to see my wife Rita in the grilled visiting box.

We just stood and looked at each other for so long the cop said:

"What's the matter, are you both deaf and dumb?"

Rita murmured: "Bob, I just don't know what to say, but I want you to know that no matter what happens, I'm still your wife."

Part 10 – Hang Me – Let Me Find The Me I Ever Wanted To Be

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23439627>

RITA went on : "It's through my trouble that you are here, and I want you to know, Bob, that your troubles are my troubles till the day I die.

"I have been and seen Mr. Frank Galbally, the lawyer, and have given him Fogarty's gun.

"I know now that I did the wrong thing by taking it away, but I was so demented at the time I never realised that."

Rita never missed coming to see me every day, and it would be impossible to recall all the little and big things she has done to assist me through.

Toilet gear, changes of clothing, warmer underwear, food, cigarettes, books, magazines, letters . . .

While I was waiting in the Metropolitan gaol for my trial, an old drunk with the shakes asked me if I were Bob Walker.

"Yes, Pop, what's your trouble?" I replied.

He dug down and gave me a note. It read something like this:

"There are only two persons I trust. That's you and myself.

"Your case looks black and I think you are down the drain.

"If what I think is so, please know that I have not forgotten what you did for me years ago.

"As you know, and told me years ago, you can't trust a crim.

"Now, if you go down the drain, you had better start making your plans early.

"For communications I suggest you start getting yourself on a good standing with drunks. They are coming and going all the time and will do anything for a drink, so make yourself friendly.

"If you have got any message now, just tell the old fella, he will be out in a few days and I will give him enough — through another old drunk out here — to get drunk and take a message right back. So long for now."

The note was signed "The Fix."

I thought the idea was brilliant.

Instead of walking on my own, if there were a drunk in the remand yard — which there generally was — I would walk and talk with him.

The conversation would always be liquor and I would make sure he was never without a cigarette, matches and a good strong drink of tea with sugar.

I am very glad I went to war and travelled the world as it had given me plenty of topics that would hold and grip the drunk's imagination.

I immediately began to organise my underground communication system.

When the day came for me to go to trial, old Col. shaved me as if I were the President of the United States himself.

I did feel good and warm inside.

I had a fair trial.

Then I heard: "The prisoner will stand.

"Have you anything to say before I pass sentence upon you?"

"No, sir." (The butterflies were speeding up.)

"You shall be taken to the gaol whence you came," — (You've handed it out to others so stand up like a man and take it.)

"At a time prescribed by the authorities you shall be hanged by the neck till you are dead."

Look at the tense faces right here of the Press with their pens poised, I told myself.

They want to write that you cried for mercy, that you were yellow, that you collapsed and were carried sobbing from the Court. You broke your mother's heart, you disgraced your good family.

Remember the words your good mother taught: "If I cannot win, always make me at least a good loser. When it's appointed me to suffer, let me, so far as humanly possible, take example from well-bred beasts and go away quietly to bear my sufferings by myself."

The judge continued : "And that your remains be buried in the precincts of the said gaol whence you came. And may God have mercy on your soul."

O.K., now fool them all by telling them the truth. That that is the very thing and the only thing for which you have been forever seeking.

Thank them for this thing they fear and dread, death.

You have done the wrong thing all your life and you know it. Tell them you have fought this other me, the me you despise, but that you are so hopelessly lost in your fight that you feel sick.

Tell them that to find and to be the you you have always wanted to be, you will go to the Hill and take your allotted punishment.

I thanked the jury, prosecutor, my attorney, and the judge for their fairness, consideration and time.

I asked the judge if he would mark my papers so that the legal sentence he had given me be carried out.

On my arrival at the Metropolitan Gaol, I was locked up in the Death House.

The "iron lung" (cell) I was placed in has a steel grille.

Outside sat a guard, who watched my every movement.

He never left me; it's a 24-hour service.

The next morning at 6.45, I was dressed in prison garb and taken to an exercise yard known as the Death Yard.

I immediately asked for, and was granted permission to write to Cabinet. I wrote that there was no possible doubt, whatsoever, that I was the man who killed Thomas Fogarty.

Seeing that I had a very fair trial, and as I had no intention of appealing, would they be kind enough to have the death sentence carried out.

I had just finished writing this application when the guard informed me that my wife was waiting to see me.

When you are having a visit, they clear all the other prisoners out of the building, and you speak through the steel grille of the death cell.

Rita was very upset and a little hysterical. Mrs. —, whose family I had stayed with at South Yarra, was supporting her by one arm.

They burst into tears. "Now don't tell me you came all the way out here to cry," I said.

I felt mighty proud of Rita as she dried her tears, and, smiling, told me how she would be able, between her friends and mine, to raise enough money for a new trial.

It took me a long time to convince her that nothing would induce me to appeal.

Although she said O.K., she never let up each day she came to see me, trying to see me to lodge an appeal.

She brought me all the little extras I was allowed, while Cabinet was considering my case.

The Government doctor and psychiatrist, after questioning me and examining me for over a week, declared in his report I was perfectly sane.

The Law's report was very, very bad, but the truth.

The gaol report was the only possible one they could send. I was a very clean and exceptionally well behaved, respectful prisoner.

It was some weeks later, on the grapevine, that I got the tip.

Cabinet wanted to grant my request but was afraid of the controversy it would cause.

The easiest way out was to stick to its policy to abolish capital punishment.

Result: Life imprisonment without remission.

O.K., gentlemen, if that's the way you want it.

But this is one man your Big House won't keep for 28 years.

I immediately started to plan my break in earnest.

Some months later I was informed of Cabinet's decision and was transferred to the Big House — Pentridge.

My little iron lung, number 142 in B division, was to be my home for the rest of my life, so they thought.

B division is where all the big sentence men are housed.

My little iron lung home is on 6 tier, that is the tier where all the lifers are housed.

It is considered the hardest place to escape from.

It's the usual thing for a man serving a long term to become friends with some other long-timer and walk with him.

They put me to work on the sewing-machine in the boot shop, and the guards watched with interest to see whom I was going to walk with.

I knew what kind of men were housed in this B division, and I knew I wasn't trusting anyone; so I walked on my own.

I went to Mass every Sunday.

In three months I had the cleanest and best iron lung in B division.

Rita came to see me every month, and that was the only real time I was happy.

I had a bad attack of asthma and went to see the gaol doctor. "Aren't you the prisoner who wanted to die?" he asked,

"Yes, sir."

"As soon as you get sick you want to live again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not much use me giving you medicine if you want to die, is it?"

"No, sir."

"Well don't shake and get nervous; we won't let you die."

"Thank you, sir."

He gave me 10 tablets.

THE new Inspector-General of Prisons, Mr. Whatmore, is an educated, intelligent man.

His modern ideas must have made a big cut in the overhead expenses.

But I would say that many of the warders hate him, as his system does away with all their old-fashioned ideas.

The gaol had been in the same groove since the 18th century.

Part 11 – Pentridge – As I Saw It

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23461151>

I HAVE seen things deliberately done in the Big House by some warders to antagonise the prisoners to riot.

How foolish and ridiculous, you say!

Listen, you would stand agape at the things that have been instigated by certain warders to prove that Mr. Whatmore's ideas won't work.

Two of the electric hot boxes on rubber wheels that were introduced by the Inspector-General nearly a year ago still stand in the storeroom.

He bought three, one for each division—A, B, C.

They use one in A division, where first-time prisoners are housed.

You file past the box and get your food served on your plate steaming hot.

In C and B divisions this is the system:

The food is dished up into the old-fashioned dixies, some with ill-fitting lids, some without lids at all.

It is then placed on wooden carrier racks, covered with a blanket, and carried to C and B divisions about 10 minutes before the prisoners leave the works for their meal.

When you pick up your dixie and it's stone cold with fat floating on the top, I don't care who you are, it makes you mad and discontented.

In the five months I've been here I can honestly say that 80% of the trouble could be traced back to cold or bad food.

I've seen prisoners pick up their stone cold food and hurl it on to the floor.

Result: Labor yards for misconduct.

LET me give you a brief outline of the way the Big House operates.

Then you will have some idea of why the food situation is the root of all evil.

For breakfast you get one slice of bread two inches thick, with some beef or mutton fat stuck to one side. You are not allowed a knife to cut and spread the bread evenly.

You get a large dixie full of hot porridge—the cooks, who are prisoners, fail to stir it while it is being cooked. It's common to get pieces as big as a golf ball. You get a spoon to eat the porridge.

You also get one cup of hot tea—the only difference from a hot cup of water is the slight brownish color.

That is your breakfast, on which you are to do four hours' work.

There is no sugar, no milk.

At midday, you march from the works back to your division and get the following:

One slice of bread two inches thick—without the fat; a dixie which contains about 12oz. of meat, two or three potatoes, a piece of pumpkin or turnip, and some gravy, and a cup of hot "tea."

You are allowed a knife and fork to eat dinner.

By the way, the 12oz. of meat includes fat and bone.

Since I've been here, I've only had a green vegetable once.

You are only allowed to have the knife and fork in your possession for 10 minutes.

The guards take and count the knives and forks whether you have finished your meat or not.

Then the cry: "Everyone out in the yard, everyone out in the yard."

By 12.20, rain or shine, all prisoners are locked out in the exercise yard.

The only shelter is a tin roof on four wooden poles, and it is impossible for 150 men to keep dry when it's raining.

A and C Division are allowed to stay in their cells if they want to, or when it's raining, but B Division must go out into the yard.

I am doing life, and yet have not got time enough to eat my dinner before I am ordered into the yard.

On Saturdays and Sundays and public holidays, when you are not working, you spend the seven hours out in the yard.

Now please don't misunderstand me about the exercise-yard racket.

On a fine day it is simply a pleasure to be out there.

You can walk about, play hand ball, or sit in the sun and listen to the radio.

But to be forced out in the yard on a cold, wet day is cruel.

I have heard of plenty of escapes being planned, and I claim that the escape seed is handed to you by the prison authorities.

This gaol belongs to the people.

It's a thing you must have to keep law and order.

You pay good money to keep up this place, so don't you think you're entitled to know just what you are paying for?

You have had Royal Commissions into all kinds of things.

Why not demand one into the Prisons Department?

I can assure you that you would be startled by the facts.

Back to the food: At 4.15 you receive your evening meal.

A paper cone containing 2oz. of sugar, a dixie containing hot porridge, and a cup of hot "tea."

On Thursdays, in lieu of bread, you get two buns; on Fridays you get a slice of fruit pudding.

Dry "tea" can be bought any day of the week for 10/ a pound.

Sugar sells at 8lb. for 10/. All the very choice cuts of beef are sold any day in the week at 5lb. for £1.

Jam sells at three tins for 12/. Butter is 10/ a lb.

Everything you can name in the way of food has a price, either in money or tobacco.

If you have money, you can live on the best.

If you can't get any you have to live on the gaol rations.

Don't misunderstand me. You won't ever starve or go hungry. The bread and porridge will take care of that, but you will learn to hate those who you believe, are selling you food for money.

It is rumored that Mr. Whatmore—who is trying to change all the rotten old-fashioned system—is going to open a gaol canteen, so that a prisoner will be able to buy from his weekly wages his own tobacco and toilet necessities, like nearly every other gaol in the world.

Some of the prison officials are very strongly against this, as it will cause them a lot of extra work.

Yet it would do away with the five and ten pound notes that come into the gaol in tubes of toothpaste and cigarette papers.

There are plenty of good, honest warders and overseers in the Big House who hate graft, but there's nothing they can do.

It's a prison offence to make a charge against a warder, and who would believe a criminal, anyway?

Let's switch around, reader.

Try to picture yourself as a prisoner in the Big House doing time.

You're housed in B Division.

You know you're in here through your own fault.

No matter how dumb you are, you know you have to abide by the rules.

It's a Sunday morning and you have just got the breakfast I described.

It's raining and cold as you and another 149 prisoners stand up on a long table out in the yard to get nearer the roof and huddle together close together to try and keep dry —unless you were lucky to get a place to stand on the table you know you are going to get wet.

Now you hear the guard's voice: "Who wants to go to Church?"

You want to go to Church; you want to go anywhere to get out of the cold and rain.

It's nice and warm as you sit back in church, and as the priest starts his 20 minute sermon you kind of wish he would keep talking for the next two or three hours, so you could stay warm and dry.

As you listen to the kind old priest tell you, Thou shalt not steal, you know he speaks the truth, so you silently try and figure things out sensibly, but it doesn't add up right.

Then you hear the voice of the old priest again, Crime does not pay.

Having a good sense of humor, you smile to yourself, for at that very moment you know a certain warder is selling your food rations with impunity to other prisoners for money.

Back you go to the exercise yard, but you have lost your position on the small, narrow table, and don't feel in the best of moods as the wind whips up the rain around you for the next two hours.

Part 12

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23459736>

AT 11.20 a.m. you file into the division, and you fight to control the rage within you as you feel the cold mess of the food dixie you have taken from the carrier tray.

You go into your cell and put it on your table.

You're afraid to lift the lid and see what you have got, as you fear for your control.

Then you would be charged with attempting to riot, and lose all or part of the remission from your sentence.

As you take your pannikin back to get it full of that hot, watery stuff called tea, some other prisoner who likes you says: "Mate, go and get yourself a good strong cup of tea; it's cold today."

He has got some dry tea and sugar in the palm of his hand.

You're afraid to thank him as he tips it into your pannikin.

Your rage is gone now and you know if you thank him your voice will sound kind of husky, but now you feel good and warm.

Not outside, but deep down inside.

You give him the smile that's been your alibi for so long, and hurry away to make your real tea.

ON your way back to your cell you hear the abuse of other prisoners, so you know what you will find when you open your dixie.

And it's all stone cold. I defy you or any other human being to sit in that cold cell for the next two hours without thinking evil of the persons in charge of the Big House.

It's 1.10 p.m. when they open your cell door again, and you hurry out to get the best place at the table, and then you huddle together in the rain and cold till 3.25p.m.

You're speaking evil, thinking evil, against the system. That's where I say the persons in charge of the prison hand you the escape seed to plant and flourish in your mind.

After all, if you do fall in your bid for liberty, at least you will be locked up in your cell at the labor yard, out of the wind and rain.

Your food ration cannot be any less than you are getting, as it all comes from the one cook house. So you actually are only going to lose your remission and tobacco.

Your tobacco comes in bulk, and is made up into what they call 1oz. packets.

You can buy 12 packets for £1 any time you like to show the color of your money.

Now let me take you for a little walk across to the metropolitan gaol, right next door.

You have never been inside a gaol in your life.

The food situation is exactly the same, and although you have not yet been convicted of the charge you are being held on, you are only allowed a 2oz. packet of tobacco a week.

Before you have been there more than 24 hours you will be approached and asked do you want to buy 6oz. of tobacco for £1. And listen to this: You will go out into the remand or trial yard, rain or shine, and shelter under a 15ft. by 10ft. roof on four poles, with no table or seats at all.

Years ago there used to be two wooden benches and a wooden table to seat about 12 men. There are generally 30 to 40 men in the remand yard. Some years ago it got so cold in the yard that prisoners set fire to the table and benches to force the prison guards to lock them up in their cells.

Now there is no seat at all.

No matter how wet the weather, you are not allowed to stay in your cell. You can call the guard what you like, but he won't lock you up.

But on the first sunny day he will lock you up in your cell as punishment for the abuse you gave him on the wet day.

Let's return to B Division in the Big House.

I go back to my work at the boot shop, and I am suddenly brought back to reality by a harsh voice demanding what the heck are you doing there?

I look up from my machine to see a guard who has walked in unexpectedly and caught a prisoner frying up his cold dinner.

The prisoner is an old man with a battle-scarred face doing three months.

You can see by his expression that his brain is working overtime.

Without blinking an eyelash, he whispers in a falsetto voice: "You see, sir, I was just a little anxious to see what this stuff looks like when it gets hot and sizzles."

"Get on with your work, and remember that if you ever bring your dinner down to work again I'll make you sizzle in the labor yard for a few weeks," says the guard.

"Thank you, sir; I won't do it again, now that I have seen what it looks like."

As the guard went, another—more junior—said it was a pity the food situation couldn't be improved.

"That's easy if they want to," I spoke up.

He smiled pityingly. "Surely you don't think they could rectify such a big thing just like that"— he snapped his fingers, and looked at me as if I were a little child — "do you, Bob?" he asked.

I stopped working and looked him right in the eye.

"Look, Boss"—that's what you call all guards when you address them — "I don't think at all. I know from experience, and the solution is so simple it would make you laugh."

"I would like to know," he replied.

"O.K. Boss, here it is." And I told him—America once had the food system they have right here in Pentridge.

Graft and corruption became so bad they called for a Grand Jury inquiry — a Royal Commission without the miles of red tape. The Grand Jury found the cause of all the trouble was food and cigarettes.

It ordered the prison authorities to find a new way of handling and distributing the rations.

After years of different systems they found one that was foolproof.

Prisoners and guards are both satisfied now.

I served 90 days in the Baltimore penitentiary as a busboy—messman—and this is how it works.

They have a canteen in the gaol where you buy your cigarettes, soap, razor blades, chocolate, and matches, &c., from your gaol wages. The only things you are allowed to receive from outside are books and magazines.

The Fix sent back an answer, and an idea suddenly hit me . . .

All food is weighed and cooked under strict supervision, and is placed in hot boxes at the entrance of each mess hall.

Now, readers, please study this carefully, and you will see for yourself why this system is foolproof.

As you fall into the mess hall you take a knife, fork, spoon, two plates, cup, and a paper tissue.

From the moment you enter, silence is strictly enforced.

You are allowed 30 minutes to eat.

You must eat and drink everything you allow the messmen to put on your plate and in your cup.

You are allowed to tell them what you don't want.

For instance, one dinnertime they are serving roast beef, potatoes, cabbage, gravy, stewed prunes, and sliced bread.

You don't like potatoes or stewed prunes, but you like a vegetable.

When you get to the messman serving the potatoes you tell him no potatoes, you tell the cabbage messman you want a lot, you refuse the stewed prunes, and only take one slice of bread.

You fancy only half a cup of coffee, poisonous stuff, so you take only half a cup, and refuse the spoon of sugar which is offered you.

You take your meal to a wooden table.

The pepper, salt, and water jugs are on the table.

When everyone has passed through and has been served, the hot box is wheeled down the centre aisle of the tables.

If you can eat more, you raise your right hand and state what you want; if it is there you get it.

After you have been in the mess hall 25 minutes a bell rings. That means you have only five more minutes to have your plates, cup, and cutlery ready for inspection. The guard walks down the aisle of tables and inspects your plates and cup. You are not allowed to leave any crusts of bread. Bones from the meat must be picked nice and clean, and coffee drunk.

You must eat every particle of food you took. All food that has not been eaten at a meal is saved and used in some way or other for the next meal.

I have seen 1,260 men file through at each meal, and not a crumb is wasted.

You never hear a prisoner say he's hungry or ask for a cigarette.

Prisoners in America are allowed to write one letter each week and to receive all mail that comes for them.

Here in Pentridge you are allowed to write and receive only one letter each month— that's been the rule since 1902.

Do you believe in the 1902 idea of throwing all prisoners into the same gaol together?

Well, let me tell you this.

Whether you have one conviction or are an habitual criminal with 50 convictions, whether you are housed in A, B, or C Division, you are confronted by sex offenders.

I have seen things which have nauseated me.

How Australia can be so far behind other countries in the segregation of sex prisoners from other prisoners is beyond my comprehension.

When my death sentence was commuted to life without remission, I was taken before the Deputy Governor, Mr. Fox, to be told where I was to work.

Walker, it's my duty to inform you that you will be staying with us for the rest of your life, he said.

Thank you, sir.

You broke the law and put yourself on my hands, he went on. You should have thought about those things at first and you wouldn't be here.

Sit down—pull your chair up further towards that light, I want to get a better look at you.

He gazed at me for quite a few moments in silence. He appeared to be trying to see right into my chartroom, to see just what course I was navigating.

But I had my chartroom shutters closed.

Now, which shop would you rather work in — the boot shop or the tailor's shop?

The boot shop, sir, I replied.

I'm going to put you in the boot shop, Walker. If you take my advice you will assist us in every way possible to keep this home of yours in clean running order, Mr. Fox said.

Within a week of my arrival in B Division I was approached by different long-time prisoners with ideas of escape.

Many of these prisoners were stool pigeons, but, no matter who they were, I gave them a plain, straight-out no.

The chief warder in charge of my division, Mr. Jack Maguire, called me into his office one day.

Those clear blue eyes never blinked as they gazed into mine.

I immediately closed the door of my chartroom as I gazed right back.

How are you settling down, Walker? he asked.

I'm doing the best I can, sir.

For the short time you have been here, Walker, you have certainly done your best with your cell. Mr. Fox and I were looking at it the other day. It is certainly the cleanest and best kept in the division.

Thank you, sir, I replied, as I matched his gaze.

I like a prisoner I can look straight in the eye like yourself, Walker.

And I like a warder I can do the same thing with, sir, I replied.

My advice to you, Walker, is to give the best cooperation.

I walked in the exercise yard on my own.

Plenty of prisoners tried to make friends, but I gave them all the chill treatment.

But I would always stop and talk to a drunk as soon as he spoke.

One day my hunch paid off.

I got an answer back to a message I had sent out to The Fix.

Could I get up any closer to work where the chief overseer parked his car night after night?

I lay in my iron lung thinking.

Early one morning the idea hit me like a Joe Louis left hook — get yourself locked up in the labor yards.

It seemed to me that as I liked working in the boot shop so much I would be put in the tailor's shop if I got into any trouble — when I came out of the labor yards.

Seeing it's going to be Christmas in another few weeks, I'll get drunk and get myself locked up.

Tomorrow I'll have to find a safer hiding place for my story.

Part 13 – The Men I Planned To Kill

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23446009>

Yes, it worked.

I am now a pillowslip maker on the machines in the tailor's shop. Let me tell you the score.

On December 27 I was able to buy four bottles of vanilla extract — it's about 50% alcohol — for £2.

It was a Sunday afternoon. I got over into one corner of the yard on my own and took a big swallow from one of the bottles.

It burnt my throat and tasted like heck, but I managed to keep it down.

After another slug at the bottle I began to feel pretty good.

A young prisoner sat down near me.

He is a very quiet kind of guy with big, dark eyes.

He had sat near me before for hours and not said one word.

But sometimes he would ask about some foreign country.

He is the only prisoner I have spoken to who omits crime from his conversation.

After I read The Time magazine which my wife sends me every week, I give it to him.

I took another slug from the bottle, and after a few moments he said: "Say, Bob, does that medicine taste as good as it smells?"

I laughed.

Do you want to try it, I asked.

His big, dark eyes looked into mine; they were sparkling with devilment.

I could do with a drink of that kind of medicine, he replied.

I gave him a bottle, and that's how it started.

We invited another guy to join our Christmas party.

When the bell went saying it was time to go into our cells, the three of us went into one cell, and I wedged the door closed from the inside with a small piece of wood.

The guard heard the knocking and ran down.

Dropping the small trapdoor, he said, "What's going on here?"

"Surprise party, boss," we said and broke into song.

We were rough and ready guys, but oh, how we could harmonise.

It was a surprise, all right, but the guards couldn't do a thing about it.

The way the door was closed, it was impossible for them to force it open.

In the morning we opened up and came out feeling very, very sick.

We were taken before the visiting magistrate and each sentenced to 30 days' extra imprisonment and 30 days in the labor yards, breaking stones.

On January 17, I was released from the labor yards and sent back to work.

Yes, it worked the way I hoped it would.

Now I'm sitting at my machine in the tailor's shop running up the side of a pillow-slip.

I'd got what I wanted.

Coming out through the grille of the shop to muster for dinner, I smile to myself as I rest my hand on the front mudguard of the chief overseer's car which is parked there—WZ425.

One day I am taken up to Mr. Fox.

As I enter his office he dismisses my escort and tells me to take a seat.

He fixes his blue eyes on mine as he asks, "Well, Walker, how do you like your job in the tailor's shop?"

I hate it, sir.

Well, Walker, you're going to hate that job for the rest of your, life if you don't get some sense.

You refused the good job Mr. Maguire offered you, then you got drunk, so what can you expect?

I want to help you, so why not be sensible and show your appreciation by assisting us to help you?

Thank you, sir. I would like to help the authorities, sir, but there's not very much I can do to assist you.

Now, now, Walker.

He put his hand over the top of mine and smiled like President Eisenhower.

You and I are going to be good pals, Bob. Next week I'm going to give you the writer's job in the brush shop.

I got to my feet and shook his hand strongly and firmly.

Thank you, sir, I said as I left his office and went back to my pillow-slips.

As I lay in my iron lung thinking that night, I knew that talk with Mr. Fox was to change the whole course of my life once again.

Time and time again as I lay charting my new course I appealed to myself not to allow hatred to take the place of reason.

No matter which course I charted, death was the ultimate destination.

What a pity Cabinet was afraid to slash red tape and set aside its no-hanging policy for just one genuine request for death.

There have been two angles to my attempted escape.

I have changed my plans time and time again, to avoid two things:

(1) Shooting down some warder or cop, who were only doing their job, to stop or capture me.

(2) Running to friends outside and involving them in trouble by asking for help and concealment.

After nights and nights of debating with myself, I gave up the idea of escaping entirely.

I am going to die in my right place—the Big House.

Nil desperandum—here is my final plan, and only death will prevent me from carrying it out as I want it.

I am going to rub out eight men.

It grieves me not to be able to give you a detailed description of each one's reaction, as they stare death in the face.

These are the eight, or should I include myself and say nine, who will get theirs:

- Deputy Governor Ernest Fox.
- Chief Warder Jack Maguire.
- Warder McCluskey.
- Warder Ronald Rooke.
- Prisoner William O'Meally.
- Prisoner Maxie Skinner.
- Prisoner Dusty Shean.
- Prisoner Dessie Walsh.

I do not know yet just which warder I shall hold as hostage while I am giving this little rub-out party.

But I shall do everything possible to avoid hurting or killing any other warder or prisoner while the party is taking place.

With a hostage I know for sure they will connect my call on the phone to my wife before I rub myself out.

On my visits, my wife always tells me of the little home we will have in 20 years' time.

I would like to tell her I am sorry I have upset her plans.

Yes, my wife Rita has really proved her quality. She has stuck to the old ship.

She is always telling me how the years will soon slip by, and I say sure, sure.

Little does she dream that while she is planning a little home for the future, I am planning a little massacre for the present.

If I do manage to catch her home for the call, and she tells me she still loves me, although I have done wrong, I shall die happy.

I got a drunk to plant a piece of coal on Mr. Matthews car. The next day it was still there.

But something new had been added. The coal had a piece of string tied around it.

I immediately sent a message tied to another piece of coal.

This piece never came back.

But in its place was an empty cigarette box containing a duplicate key for Mr. Matthews' car.

Yes, sir, The Fix is a great guy.

I am now in a position to get a gun delivered right to my door at my own convenience.

Personally I think that's perfect service for the old Big House.

I am now the assistant writer for Mr. John Buck in the brush shop.

In my opinion he is in the same category as Mr. Barry and Mr. Hudson, the other two overseers I have worked for.

All good, clean, honest working guys, who have a job to do, and do it properly and humanely.

Just recently we were given an issue of one spoonful of powdered milk a day.

It was very nice to be able to mix it with water and pour it on my porridge.

Within a week, believe it or not, the ration was much smaller, and it sold on the gaol black market at 10/ a pound.

Seeing we were working longer hours under the 1954 system, Mr. Whatmore decided to give prisoners a hot supper at 4.30 p.m.

It's still stone cold, and you eat it with your fingers.

We can't get a knife and fork—they're locked up here in the division, and I claim it's only because it's the extra work to collect, count, and lock them up again.

If you put down a request to see the inspector-general about this matter, you're told you can't see him, so you're back where you started. Unless you pass a special act in your Royal

Commission granting immunity from prosecution, persecution, loss of jobs, and remission, you will never learn the true facts.

No warder or prisoner is going to incriminate himself by telling the truth.

Well, readers, you're the taxpayers, so that's entirely up to you.

Mr. Whatmore installed a good canteen a few months ago, where you buy your tobacco from your gaol wages. But you are only allowed to buy a cheap brand, which costs you 3/3 for two ounces, so the graft with good tobacco still goes on.

By the time you read this I'll be dead, but I know for sure a few will die with me.

You have, I know, a very brief, badly written story of my life.

I don't blame anyone but myself.

I look forward to my Big Sleep—death—with eagerness.

I can practically hear the coroner now as he reads his verdict.

James Robert Walker did wilfully murder, and then, while of unsound mind, commit suicide.

Well, readers, if I am of unsound mind now, then I have been of unsound mind all my life.

Still, you have read the story, so set your bias aside, weigh the facts, add or subtract what you will, but let your opinion be an honest one.

Can you tell yourself the thing I was for ever seeking and could never understand?

WHAT MADE ME TICK?

James Robert Walker,

Prisoner 562,

Iron Lung 142,

B Division,

Pentridge, Coburg,

Melbourne.

April, 1954.