

DAILY SHORT STORY

Silent Witness

By Frank Bennett



He knelt before the safe and set to work

SPIKE EVANS, gambler and ex-convict, stopped before the rough, pine door of John Reeve's lumber office. Slowly, noiselessly, his fingers found the chipped, porcelain doorknob. He twisted it, pushed, and the door opened without a sound.

The gambler's close-set eyes fastened on an old man in a wheel chair who was reading a newspaper in the glow of a hanging kerosene lamp. He shut the door and as the latch rattled, the old man dropped the paper to his lap and spun the chair around to face the door.

"Sorry, Reeve, if I startled you," Evans said unapologetically. The old lumberman's right hand groped for an electric bell. "Ring the bell till the battery's dead," Evans grated. "I rapped Banton over the head and tied and gagged him. Even if he comes to, he can't help you."

THE old man pulled his hand away from the button and gripped the arms of his chair until his knuckles whitened.

"I know that tomorrow's pay day and that you've got the money, over \$6000, in your safe," Evans went on harshly. "I also know that dead men tell no tales. Slitting your throat will repay me with interest for that time you had me run out of town."

No sound came from the old man in the wheel chair. His face, except for the burning eyes, was expressionless.

"Don't you wish you could talk?" Evans barked. "Too bad that, after that pile of lumber fell on you 10 years ago, you were never able to talk or walk, ain't it?"

EVANS'S eyes shifted to a small, old-fashioned safe. He crossed the room, knelt before the safe and set to work, slowly turning the dial, listening for the fall of the tumblers.

Suddenly, he looked up, an angry snarl on his yellowed face. "It ain't got time to fool around like this." Drawing a slip of paper and pencil from his pocket, he rose and handed them to the old man. "Here," he grated. "Write the combination down for me."

The cripple wrote one word. "No." The scar on Evans's face whitened. "Oh, you won't, huh?" he snarled. He drew a slender-bladed knife, started toward the door.

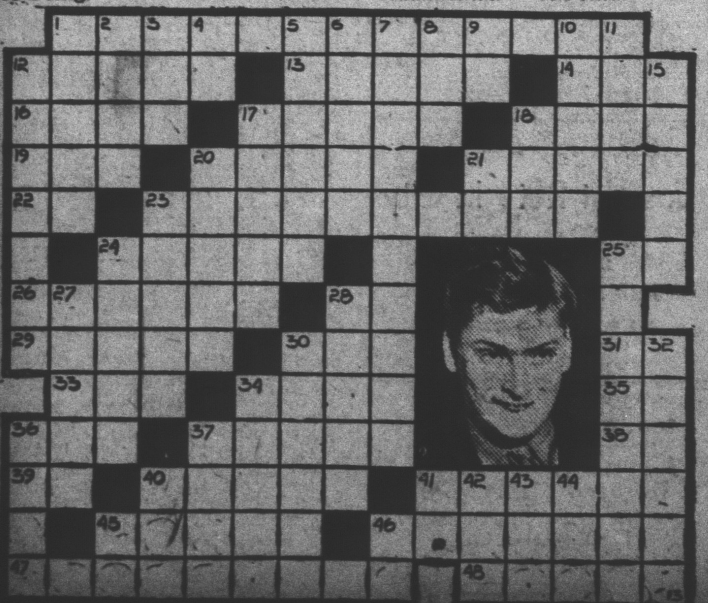
"You'll either write the combination, or I'll slit Banton's throat as well as yours!"

He glanced back over his shoulder and saw old Reeve motioning him to return. Grinning, he went back to the wheel chair and watched the old man write down a series of numbers on the slip of paper. He jerked the paper from the trembling old fingers and hurried back to the safe.

IT took the gambler only a few minutes to get the money and stow it in a small black bag which he had brought. This done, he rose and glided back to Reeve. The old man died quickly and silently.

HORIZONTAL Answer to Previous Puzzle

1 Brilliant young concert violinist.	EDWARD RIVIERE	8 Mesh of lace.	9 You and me.
12 Heavenly body.	EDWARD RIVIERE	10 Simpleton.	11 Pattern.
13 Parts in dramas.	EDWARD RIVIERE	12 Principle of heat.	15 Peevish.
14 Period.	EDWARD RIVIERE	17 Measures.	18 Was victorious.
16 Related by blood.	EDWARD RIVIERE	20 Edge.	21 Not in scale.
17 Musical composition.	EDWARD RIVIERE	23 Declaims.	24 Food.
18 Metal string.	EDWARD RIVIERE	25 Rosary.	27 Rich milk.
19 To permit.	EDWARD RIVIERE	28 Idiots.	30 Deep purple.
20 Virus.	EDWARD RIVIERE	32 Lent.	34 Sudden terror.
21 Chambers.	EDWARD RIVIERE	36 Young sheep.	37 Irrational.
22 Bone.	EDWARD RIVIERE	40 Afternoon meal.	41 Mother.
23 He will be in years for two.	EDWARD RIVIERE	42 Circle part.	43 Hurray!
24 Kelp.	EDWARD RIVIERE	44 Sash.	45 Therefore.
25 Beside.	EDWARD RIVIERE	46 Point.	
26 Frostings.	EDWARD RIVIERE		
28 Feet.	EDWARD RIVIERE		
29 Box.	EDWARD RIVIERE		
30 Ratite bird.	EDWARD RIVIERE		
31 Morinda dye.	EDWARD RIVIERE		
32 Being.	EDWARD RIVIERE		



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With Major Hoople



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—



WASHINGTON TUBBS II



ALLEY OOP



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



TARZAN AND THE LEOPARD MEN



Batogo, leader of the advance guard of the Leopard Warriors, looked out upon the two white men. Neither of them, he knew, was the white giant he sought, but at any rate they would provide a welcome addition to the feast of his cannibalistic clan.

With his small scouting detachment he was eager to set upon them at once, before the main body of warriors arrived, for a quick victory would reflect great glory upon him and win Lullini's favor. Now, with a flourish of his steel talons, he gave the command.

OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



—By Blosser



—By Crane



—By Hamlin



—By Martin



—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



... That lone shot resounded through the forest. Tarzan heard. His every sense and muscle sprang immediately to attention. "Stay here," he said quickly to Gringo. "I shall see what's going on." And he sprang forward toward the deadly conflict.