

ringing, but he paid no attention to it. The news Terhune had given him and now this false call, had unnerved him.

The detective took him by both skinny shoulders and shook him.

"Brace up, man! This may be the very chance I want—ring through to Hazel Farm and ask if their foreman phoned you just now. Don't say why, or anything about the crate."

Cyril Falkirk did so, and five minutes later they were informed no call had been sent to the post office that morning.

Paul Terhune's hands clenched behind his back as he spoke sharply to the postmaster.

"Lend me an old suit of your clothes, and your car, and I'll keep the appointment in your place."

Falkirk looked at him as one in a daze, then nodded agreement. He was quite willing to let someone else take the risk.

The Waiting Killer

It would have been hard to have recognised Paul Terhune as he drove the ramshackle, open car out of Herndon a little before three that afternoon.

The clothes he wore had seen many years of service, and were patched in several places. His hat was a battered straw one which hid most of his face. The car was as shabby as himself.

Leaving the little township behind, he hardly knew what to expect. That it was a trap set for Cyril Falkirk, he was certain.

It was a lonely spot, remote from anywhere. Long ago he had left the main road and had bumped over an earth track for the past mile.

This was obviously the place.

True to his part, he got out of the car and peered around the foot of the gateway, as though seeking something, but his hand was never far from the automatic which he kept hidden in his overalls.

Suddenly there was a crack amongst the bushes at his rear. Paul Terhune's hyper-sensitive senses detected it, whereas an ordinary man such as Cyril Falkirk might not have noticed. For that reason he did not turn round at once, but leaned on the gate, pretending to gaze into space.

After a while he struck a

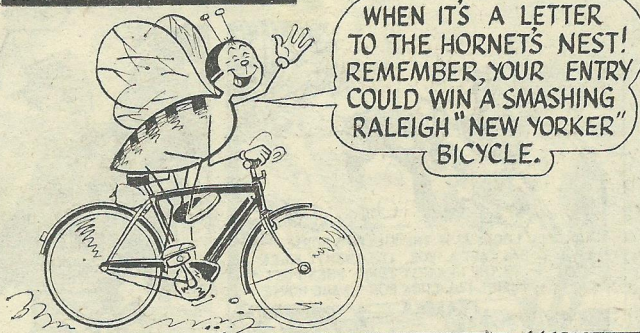
match to light a cigarette, but in the hand which held the match he had a small, concave mirror. With its aid he could see behind him.

The bushes were moving. Someone was emerging. He glimpsed hair, and caught the glint of teeth. Whether it was a human being or an animal which was coming out, he could not yet tell. He stared intently.

In a few moments the mystery of whether the murderer was a human being or a gorilla would be solved. It was an effort of will to keep still and not to turn his head.

The branches parted. He saw something dark, and at that very moment a cyclist came speeding loudly

HARRY THE HORNET SAYS:—



down the lane which he had recently travelled.

"Hi, Falkirk! What be you a-doin' here?" sang out the newcomer, putting on his brakes.

Paul Terhune muttered under his breath. An interruption was the last thing he required. The branches fell into place as the would-be attacker drew back. The motorcyclist put on his brakes and dropped one foot.

Paul Terhune bent over his cigarette as though shielding it from the wind.

"Hello!" he grunted, as far as possible copying the tone of the postmaster. "I'm waitin' fer Minch. If you see him, tell him I'm here."

"Sure!" drawled the other, and drove off.

The British detective waited, blowing out clouds of smoke. He had fooled the motorcyclist, who was evidently a local man.

As far as he knew, the unknown attacker had never seen the real Cyril Falkirk. He would not know one person from another. As Terhune had come in answer to the phone call, it would be taken for granted he was Falkirk.

Ten minutes later he moved,

pretending to be lost in thought, but missing nothing. He tinkered with his car, pretending to have trouble in getting it started. He was giving the unknown every chance to attack.

Nothing happened. Birds had perched in the bushes where the movement had previously taken place. He knew from this there was neither man nor animal hidden there.

The would-be killer had got scared and had gone away. The attack had been abandoned.

Paul Terhune silently cursed the unknown motorcyclist who had come along at the wrong moment. He went over to the bushes and carefully parted them. Then he bent to examine the ground. He was looking

He adjusted his tie, buttoned his jacket, and made sure his automatic was back in its accustomed place.

The din outside was continuing. One of the dogs seemed anxious to climb the tree, and the cat was spitting boldly at it, conscious of the fact that its position was unassailable.

"And they say the country is quiet—" muttered Paul Terhune, opening the door which led to the little office where the instruments were placed. "Is that call through yet, Falkirk?"

Cyril Falkirk made no reply. He was over in the corner, before the instrument board, with the ear-phones over his head.

He was bending forward as though taking a call, but the only thing which showed all was not well was the fact that he was facing the other way!

His body was faced to the instrument board, but his distorted face glared over the back of the chair in the direction of the detective in the doorway.

Just then a draught of air blew open the door at the end of the office. It could not have been fastened. He was certain he had closed it when he had come in.

He took one look at Falkirk, and knew there was no need to bother about him any more. The same hands that had committed the other murders had twisted the life out of Falkirk.

Alongside, on a shelf, stood a green-painted safe which was used for storing postal forms and other official documents.

It was still locked, but its sides had been pushed in until they nearly touched. It was as though the safe had been crushed between mighty hands.

Brr-rr-rrrr! went the telephone apparatus, and very gingerly the detective took the phones from the dead man's head.

"Yes, this is the Spring City police depot speaking. Who wants us?"

Paul Terhune licked his lips.

"Tell Lieutenant Staunton that Paul Terhune wishes to speak to him from Herndon," he said, and his voice sounded very weary.

He had never felt so helpless in all his professional life.

NEXT WEEK—A police cordon closes in on the killer!