

## THE UNSEEN STRANGLER

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"They couldn't have intended to kill me, or they'd have made a better job of it. They would probably have strangled me. That means they only wanted to keep me out of the way for a time. Why?" A sudden thought flashed into his mind. "Hargreaves!"

Horror gave him strength to run. It had dawned on him the unknown killers might have delayed his return to the yacht in order to get at Max Hargreaves and add him to their list of victims.

Panting for breath, the detective came at last in sight of the yacht. There was nobody on deck, but the dinghy was alongside the bank.

Fearing the very worst, Terhune tumbled into the dinghy and rowed swiftly to the cutter. As he bumped alongside, a voice hailed him from a porthole.

"Who's that? Is that you, Mamoud, or—Terhune?"

The detective sighed with relief. The face that appeared at the porthole was that of Max Hargreaves. He was still alive.

"Yes, it's me, and I was worried stiff about you," gasped Paul Terhune, as he climbed to the deck and stood there shakily.

He must have looked pale and ill, for Hargreaves gave a cry of dismay when he came up the hatchway and saw him.

"And I've been worried about you! What has happened to you?"

The first thing Terhune saw when he arrived in the cabin was a copy of a local paper, turned to the report of the attack on Keith Burton.

Hargreaves saw Terhune glance at it.

"Isn't it ghastly?" he croaked. "That's another of the expedition, away. When you didn't come back, I thought maybe they'd got you as well."

"You promised to be back by midday. I was nearly frantic. I sent Mamoud to look for you, and have been sitting here with a gun in my hand all the time. The fiends have tracked me down here to Hampshire."

"Not necessarily, so! They may only have come for Burton. They must have known he was landing last night. How they did that is a mystery to me...

but what time did Mamoud leave here?"

"About two o'clock."

"And it's now four-thirty. He must have gone all the way to Southampton. He must have passed me as I lay in the ditch."

"The ditch!" For the first time Hargreaves seemed to notice the caked mud on the other's clothes. "What happened?"

"Someone gave me a nice gentle tap on the head as I was coming down the lane,"

weapon and glared wildly at the hatchway.

It was only Mamoud, calling for the dinghy to be brought across. He said he had been all the way to Southampton, had made inquiries at the police station, and had learned Terhune had left several hours earlier.

Hargreaves made a quick decision.

"I'm not going to risk stopping here any longer, Terhune. We've got to move."

"But I'm tied up with this job in Southampton, and can't leave," insisted the detective. "I can't keep running about

go round to Lymington and find an anchorage there.

This meant a move of no more than nine miles, so Terhune did not object. They raised anchor as the sun went down, and headed for the mouth of the creek. Once away from the shore, they found a good sailing breeze.

They anchored at Lymington less than two hours later, and the detective went ashore to telephone Woods to ask if there was any improvement in Keith Burton's condition.

Directly he heard Detective-Sergeant Wood's voice at the other end of the line, he knew something had gone wrong.

"We've been trying to find you for the past two hours," growled the Yard man. "I sent a special messenger to Beaulieu for you, and he reported the yacht had gone."

"Yes, Hargreaves got the wind up again and insisted on moving. But what's happened?"

"Plenty!" came the grim reply. "This afternoon the doctor visited Burton at three o'clock and found he had improved slightly. He even hoped he might regain consciousness this evening. And as there was a policeman still in the room, he allowed the nurse to go off duty for an hour."

"Yes, yes?"

"At four o'clock she returned to the room, and found the policeman on the floor—dead. Burton was still in bed, also dead. Both had been strangled. The policeman had evidently been done-in first."

The receiver suddenly became heavy in the detective's hand.

It was obvious the second attack on Burton had been to prevent him making a statement if he recovered consciousness. The policeman had merely been slain because he was in the way.

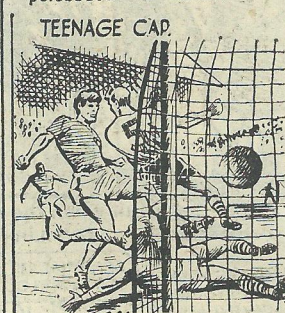
"Oh, and there's been a message here from the Lancashire police for you," said Woods, as an afterthought. "They say they've been to the home of Larry Bailey, and he is not there. His relations say he never arrived there after leaving Demster's place. They weren't even expecting him. His story of visiting a sick brother must have been false."

Paul Terhune's eyes glowed hopefully. Perhaps this was a new line to follow.

NEXT WEEK—Warren Demster's safe is opened. What will the detectives find in it?



George was only fifteen when he joined United's ground staff and after only a week in Manchester he went home. But United were determined not to lose such a fine prospect and George was persuaded to return.

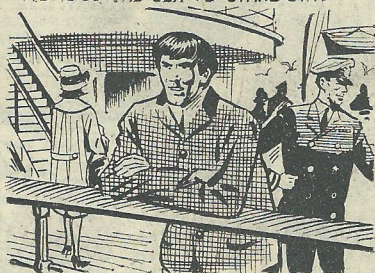


TEENAGE CAP.

### SPORTING STARS OF TODAY GEORGE BEST

Born in Belfast nineteen years ago, George Best first attracted the attention of the senior scouts while still at school. However, it was Manchester United who managed to persuade him to take the trip across the Irish Sea.

#### ACROSS THE SEA TO STARDOM.



George starred for both the United's and Ireland's youth sides, and then, in September 1963, when only seventeen, he made his league debut on the right wing. Soon George was gaining more international honours—at Under-23 level. In April 1964, George gained his first full cap, helping Ireland beat Wales 3-2.

With his fine ball control and accurate shooting, George looks like becoming one of the top forwards in Europe. Already he has represented club and country in big-time matches abroad and it seems certain that further honours are assured for this talented youngster.

said the detective grimly. "I lay there in the ditch for two hours or more. I expect it was a sneak thief of some kind. Most of my money had gone when I came round."

He lied about that, for he did not want Hargreaves to think the killers had been so near the yacht.

Max Hargreaves swallowed hard, and fetched a drink for them. His gun was never far from his hand, and when there came a cry from the bank a little later, he snatched out the

country. Stop where you are, and if you wish I'll get Woods to put two men permanently on guard here."

But Hargreaves would not agree to that. He said the presence of police would only make his presence more conspicuous. He wanted to up-anchor and sail down to Weymouth.

When Paul Terhune flatly refused, and said he would leave the ship if it went that far, the terrified man compromised by saying they could