

DEATH

Max and Deek were hired to write murder stories for a crime magazine. They could not think of anything to write even after they had spent a night with Death by the side of the road.

By The Side Of The Road

By SAINT DYNE

There was no doubt in Max's mind nor that of Deek's either. The girl was dead. Their flash light revealed that she had been strangled to death for it showed horrible marks on her throat. Her face still held fear and pain in its death mask and made the two men shudder to realize how she had died.

"Gosh, and on a lonely road at this time of night," muttered Max as if thinking out loud what a terrible fate this pretty girl had met.

They had been driving to Chicago and had just stopped for a little sleep before continuing on the highway. It was not unusual on a long motor trip. Often this time of night, or morning, for it was nearly three, drivers pulled to the side of the broad dual highway, and rested unafraid.

Deek had insisted he heard a blood curdling scream just as he was about to doze off.

"It's coming from back in that direction," he said as he pinched his companion, Max.

"Doggone if it ain't," replied Max immediately coming to life. "Somebody's getting murdered, sounds like."

"Well, what're we waiting for?" said Deek getting a flash light out of the pocket and opening the door at the same time.

They followed the last weak strains of the hysterical scream toward a side road and proceeded cautiously down in what they thought might be the direction.

The last cry of pain and horror seemed not too far away so they slowed their steps and flashed their light around with care, peering into the under brush at intervals where it appeared to have been parted.

Then, suddenly they came upon the still warm body. Whoever did the deed had not taken time to cover up. She lay almost on the dirt of this side road, her legs extending into the weeds which grew close to the edge and her lovely hair in the powder-fine dust of the little-used country road.

They were looking around now for something or someone, when they heard the motor of their car start up and they realized it was being driven off at a high rate of speed.

"Well, I'll be!" said Max, knowing it was too late to run after the car even to catch one last glimpse.

He's taken our car! And we so He's taken our car. And we so conveniently left it wide open for him." Deek's face bore the look of utter disgust.

Now they not only had a dead body on their hands but no car with which to rush into the city and notify police.

"Wait here. I'll go to the road and flag a car. Someone will pass in a few minutes," Max said, adding the last phrase to comfort any hesitance Deek might express at being left with a dead girl for company.

But the resourceful Max was sadly disappointed as he returned fully half an hour later. These Chicago people were wise to lone men standing by the road-side at this hour. Rarely did they even slow down to see what was the

matter when confronted by a wildly waving figure. They rather increased their speed.

"Hell, no one trusts anybody these days. Not one car stopped, and I'll bet a hundred guys passed me. It'd be too bad if someone were dying and needed to get into the city to the hospital."

"Well," volunteered Deek who had seated himself beside the murdered girl whom he had covered with his coat, "you can't blame nobody. Death often occurs by the side of the road and especially at about this hour. We got a good example right here."

He pointed with the flash light and they both stood looking into the girl's face once again.

"Not a bad looking girl and young too. Probably her 'honey' got mad and gave her the works." Deek resumed his road-side seat and went on, "Guess we'd better wait until it's daylight. Then someone might see we're not the killing kind."

"Guess I'll take a seat too. If dawn doesn't come soon we'll have to put out this light. It's almost gone now. Then, the three of us will have a good time hoping that whoever drove our car away really was the killer." Max stretched his long legs and rested his back against a tree.

"The fool must have been mad at the girl. Mad as the dickens too. Did you notice those marks on her throat. He had some huge hands too. Marks all around her neck."

Deek volunteered a little information he had gathered for he had a guilty feeling that they should begin to think seriously about what may have happened since they obviously were the only ones to have heard the scream and found the body.

Any idea of sleep had left them and they were beginning to shiver in the cool winds that preceed a late September dawn. Max played with a dry twig he had picked up and seemed to be thinking. Finally he said, "Big guy, he was. You can tell from the marks his hands left. He must have weighed 200 pounds, was about 6 feet two."

"Sure, he was every bit of that," Deek added. "She's about 5 foot 7. A girl that height would pick a boy friend about 6 foot one or two."

"Think I'll look for some foot prints in the dust. Dirt's pretty dry. We haven't had any rain in the Middle-West for a few weeks." Max got up carefully and flashed the light within an area close to the body.

"Yep. Here we are. Some dern good prints." Max assumed the air of a detective as he squatted close by and examined the foot prints.

"I wear a size 9. This must be an 11 or 11½. He was a big boy."

Deek rose to view the shoe shaped in the dust. Then he started peering around in the half light of the coming dawn for anything else which might be a lead to the murderer's identity.

Max went closer to the body and removed his coat from over it.

"The ladies nearly always have a purse, a ring or a watch something to start on the trail of as to whom she might be." He was looking as closely as he could without touching the girl.

"One thing we know she died

around three o'clock. Although I forgot to look closely after that guy drove away with our car."

Deek was beginning to get angry again about the murderer taking the car although he knew it was useless to cry over the situation.

It was almost dawn now. They must have been there two hours with no one but the murdered girl. Both of them were becoming impatient and to say the least both men were tired.

"May as well wait a little while longer until it gets light enough for someone to realize we're in distress." Deek took his seat again and started to summarize his findings.

"You can tell by the size of those murdering hands and the foot prints, he was about 6 foot two. Bet he was a dark sort of a man, real dark. She's fair and looks like the kind who would arouse jealousy. He caught her wrong and got even with her. Bet he ditched his own car somewhere around in these woods and drove ours back to town. He'll probably hit it over across the State line into Indiana and run it over a cliff. Then he'll steal another car and hide out awhile."

"Yeah, that's the way these Chicago guys operate. She's a pretty kid, swell clothes too. Look at them fine stockings. He's bound to be a man who knows how to commit murder and get away." Max yawned and looked at his watch.

"I'll start out here toward the highway and see who's smart enough to pick us up."

"Oh no you won't smart guy. Get 'em up high!"

Max discovered a man had come up behind them and was forcing him back against a tree. Deek was still sitting down, looking up in disbelief at the tall image which had so quietly appeared.

He was about 6 foot 2 or three. He was large with a big head, a dark complexion and black piercing, evil eyes. He had a gun. The men knew instantly here was the murderer.

"Take it easy boys. If you behave I'll let you stay around long enough for me to get my bill fold I dropped around here. Then you know what'll happen? I'll leave you right here to figure it all out again while I follow those wonderful ideas about a clean get-away I heard you forming when I came up."

The tall man bent over the girl's form, moved her body slightly, and retrieved his bill fold. It was large, black and bulging with money.

He had been careful to keep his gun alert and pointed on the astonished Deek and Max. As he rose and began feeling for his

hip pocket to replace his bill fold, Deek lunged at him from his position by the tree. In a flash Max was upon the murderer who fell under Deek's weight into the dust.

The two men beat the criminal soundly and then took his gun, giving him a head blow which would keep him quiet for awhile. Work-like mad, they disarmed the man, went through his pockets for anything else with which he might "start something" on the trip to the Chicago police if he should "wake up." They then dragged him to their car which he had parked on the highway a little closer than he had found it.

"How come we didn't hear him drive up?" Deek was talking as he opened the car door.

"I don't know. But I'm sure glad he did." Max seemed very pleased. "We've got our 'boat' back, we know where body is and we got the guy what done it! Let's get going. Here's where the police take over."

"Yeah, man. A dead dame by

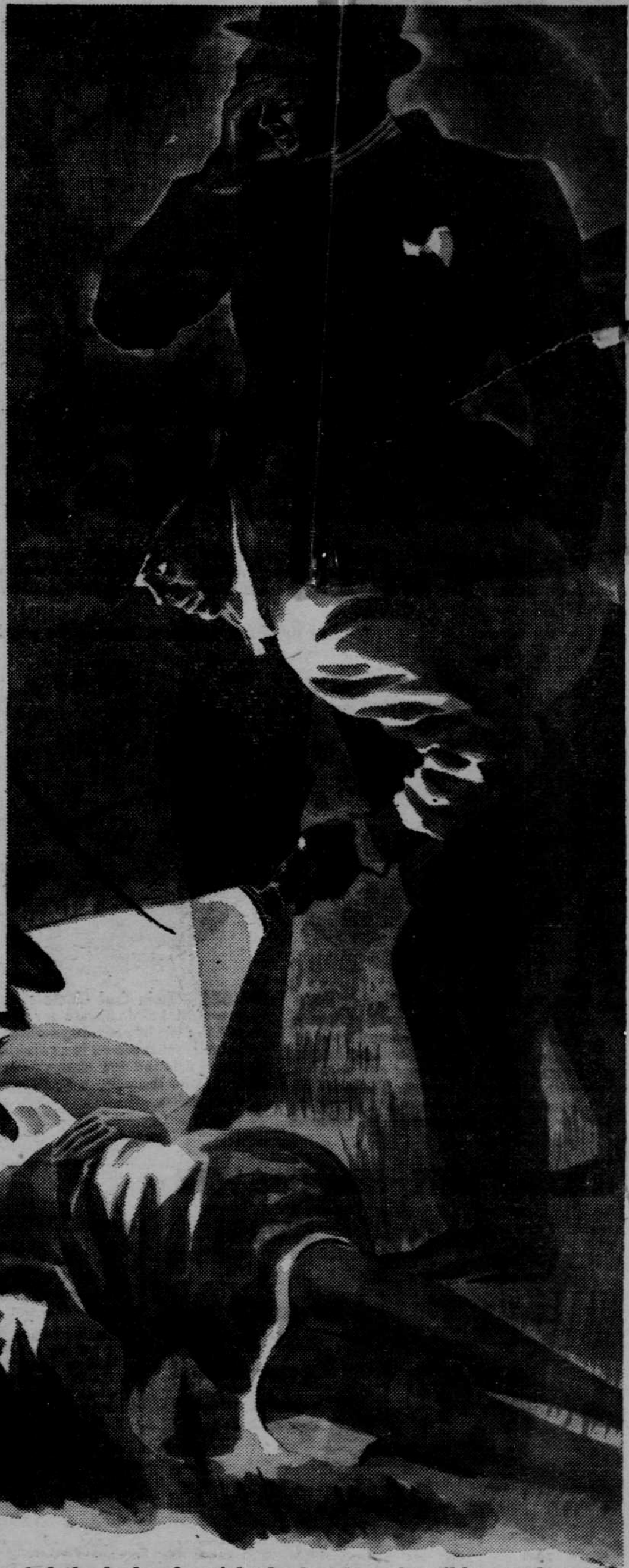
the side of the road, a stolen and returned car, with the murderer walking right into our hands. That's a full night for any man."

"We'll give it to the cops all in one package, killer included. We don't have long now either. Got to be on the job at 8:30. At the True Crime Magazine Publishing Company they tell me you gotta be on time for work. And this is our first day on the staff." Max was talking and thinking out loud again.

Deek, sitting in the back seat with the still unconscious murderer's head on his lap and his gun in his hand, stretched his legs out full length and said, "First day, new job, and I'll be too tired to think of anything to dope out to write up."

Max added as he increased his speed to 75, "These editors want you to come up with a new murder angle every day. Dern if I can think of any after all I've been through in the last few hours."

The End



The beam of the flashlight revealed the body of a girl who had been horribly murdered.