

# FROM NOW ON

By FRANK L. PACKARD  
AUTHOR OF "THE MIRACLE MAN"  
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**THIS BEGINS THE STORY**  
Dave Henderson, the child of the streets who has made a name for himself as a professional burglar, is in a shabby street in Philadelphia. He is looking for a place to hide out. He has a small side window in the shed, and it gave just light enough to enable him to see. It was many years since Mrs. Tooter had kept any pigeons, or anything else, save the bare threads of her life together; but the old pigeon coop was still here at the end of the shed, just above the door that opened on the lane. It wasn't anything very elaborate, just a sort of ceiling platform, boarded in, and with a little door in it. Standing on the ground, he could just reach up to the door, and he opened it tentatively. Yes, it would serve excellently. It was instantly accessible at any time, either from the house or from the lane, and certainly Mrs. Tooter's long-forgotten shelter for her hygienic pets was not a thing to excite sus-

icionless, shrouded in one of the portieres. The room was empty. The door leading from the library, he could see as he peered out, was closed. From the other side of the door, muffled, there came a laugh, the murmur of voices, indistinctly little sounds. The set, straight lips relaxed a little. The way was quite clear. The chances in his favor were mounting steadily. The family was undoubtedly at dinner. He made no sound as he stepped quickly now across the room. The rich, heavy pile of the velvet rug beneath his feet deadened his footsteps. And now he reached the massive flat-topped desk that stood almost in the center of the room. It was the most likely place, the natural place, for Tydemann to leave the money. If it was not here—again there came that de-bonair shrug—well, then, he would look further—upstairs in Tydemann's bedroom, if necessary—or anywhere else, if necessary. One thing only was certain, and that was that, having started on the job, he would get the money, or they would get him—if he couldn't fight his way out. It was quite natural! Of course, he would do that! What else would he do? He had always done that. He had been brought up to it, hadn't he? Win or lose—he had always played win or lose. Cold feet and hot hedging was piker stuff—and that was in Bookie Skarvan's line, too, not his!

Keen, alert, his ears were sentinels against the slightest external sound. He was gnawing now in a sort of grim impatience at his lower lip, as he pulled open drawer after drawer, slipping hurriedly now. The Western summer evenings were long, and it was a little late, and every minute he stood there was courting discovery. The edge of the chisel slipped in between the sill and the window-sash, and with the leverage the window was raised an inch or two. His question was answered. It had not been locked at the top. And now his fingers came into play again—under the window-sash. There was not a sound. The window went up easily and silently, and with a little, agile spring Dave Henderson swung himself up over the sill, dropped with a soft pad to the floor, and stood ma-

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He retreated to the window, lowered himself to the ground, and regained the street. The thing was done. He was in possession of one hundred thousand dollars. There had not been the slightest difficulty or obstacle. He jumped an air under his breath as he went along. It had been very simple—more so even than he had expected. It had been almost tame!

To be continued tomorrow  
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**CHAPTER II**  
THE HEFT  
T WAS in front of a shabby frame house in a shabby street that Dave Henderson stopped the car. It was five minutes after 6. He lifted up the seat, and, leaning down, surreptitiously conveyed to his pocket a cold chisel from the car's complement of tools. Lacking any of the accessories of a professional burglar, he substituted for a steel jimmy, a small, sharp, cold chisel. He replaced the seat, picked up the little black handbag, alighted, entered the house, and from the dusty hallway, through the door, stepped through into a room on the right. He closed the door behind him, and stood surveying his surroundings in a sort of half-grim, half-quizzical contempt. It was possible that old Tooter upstairs, on hearing the car, and hearing him, Dave Henderson, enter the house, might come down in the other hand, it was quite equally possible that old Tooter would not. It was, however, wise to wait a few minutes and see. That was part of the game. Dave Henderson was supposed to be here in his room while some one else made that little raid on Martin K. Tydemann's library. If, therefore, Tooter should come down, and find no one—A shrug of his shoulders completed the obvious deduction.



Dave Henderson, silent as a rat, made his way into the hall

His eyes traveled around the room. Then he saw home—that is, if he could claim a home anywhere, this was his home. It was dingy, comfortless and uninviting. There was only one window that faced the street, and the window was inadequate, and the light seemed to be imbued with a nigardly hesitation about coming in at all—which was perfectly just, as well. The furnishings weren't out of any prize collection! He dug his hands impulsively into his side pockets—and, one hand encountering the chisel, he smiled with a kind of cool, composed satisfaction. Between his barren and God-forsaken hole and his bit of steel there had been born a connection that was both intimate and pertinent. For nine years, ever since he had run away from school, the kind of existence this place stood for had not changed. It was the reason why he had put the chisel in his pocket.

The room had served its purpose better than any other place of like circumstances and surroundings would have served—he had, indeed, chosen this particular room very carefully—but the place had always got his goat. He had had to have a room somewhere, he had taken it here. There were many reasons why he had selected this one. It was cheap; and it was among the only class of places with whom he had ever had a chance to associate—he hungers on of the race tracks, the dance-hall crowd of the Barbary Coast, the night world of Frisco. He knew every one here—he knew the crooks and the legs of the underworld. The latter had come and again even tried to inveigle him into active membership in their fraternity. They wanted him. They had even paid him the compliment of telling him he would make the slickest crook in the United States. He had refused. The game didn't look good enough. It was all piker stuff. It wasn't morality that had held him back. . . . his morality was the morality of his environment. . . . nine years of it. . . . as far as he could make out it was simply a question of what- ever you do don't get caught. And he had the sense of the upper crust playing at morality, too. Sure, he knew what morality was—he had seen a lot of it in his nineteen years!

He stepped abruptly out into the hall. "Heh, Tooter!" he called. "Tooter!" A door opened somewhere above. "Hello!" snapped a gruff voice. "It's me," announced Dave Henderson. "I heard you!" grunted Tooter. "I just came in for a wash-up," explained Dave Henderson. "Come up in Skarvan's car. I'm going back tonight." "All right!" Tooter grunted again. "How's the wife?" The only answer was the closing of a door upstairs. Dave Henderson smiled pleasantly, and re-entered his own room. When it came to sociability Tooter was a star! Well, so much the better! He had no complaint to register on that score—especially tonight! He crossed to where his trunk stood upright, and at the lower end of the trunk, opened the lid, and lifted out the tray, and from somewhere in the lower recesses possessed himself of an automatic pistol and a generous supply of reserve ammunition. With this in his pocket, he took up the tray again, and sitting down on the edge of the bed, unlaced and removed his shoes. And now Dave Henderson, silent as a rat in his movements, his shoes tucked under one arm, the black handbag under the other, made his way out into the hall. The car standing in front of the house was mute evidence that he was still in his room. Later on, when he returned, in the course of an hour, say, he would call up to Tooter again to say that he was going. It was a perfectly good alibi!

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