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1961

THE DICTAPHONE

(A Short Story)

by

LARRY WILSON



THE BULL MOOSE PRESS
P.O. Box 1330
Chibougamau, Que.
Canada

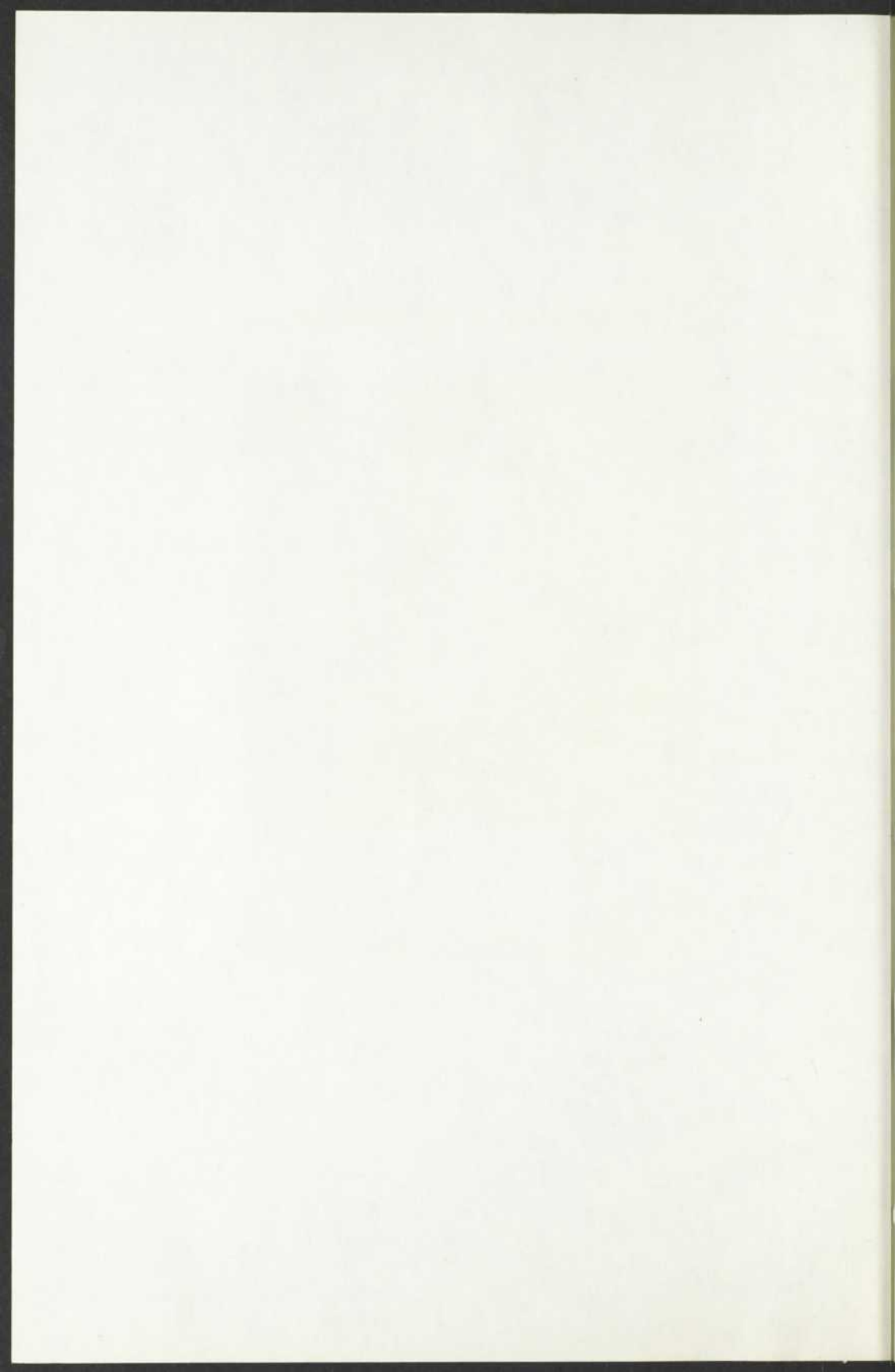
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* ("Larry Wilson" is the pseudonym of Lawrence M. Wilson and was registered as such in the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec, District of Montreal, on September 19th, 1958.)

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Price: \$1.00

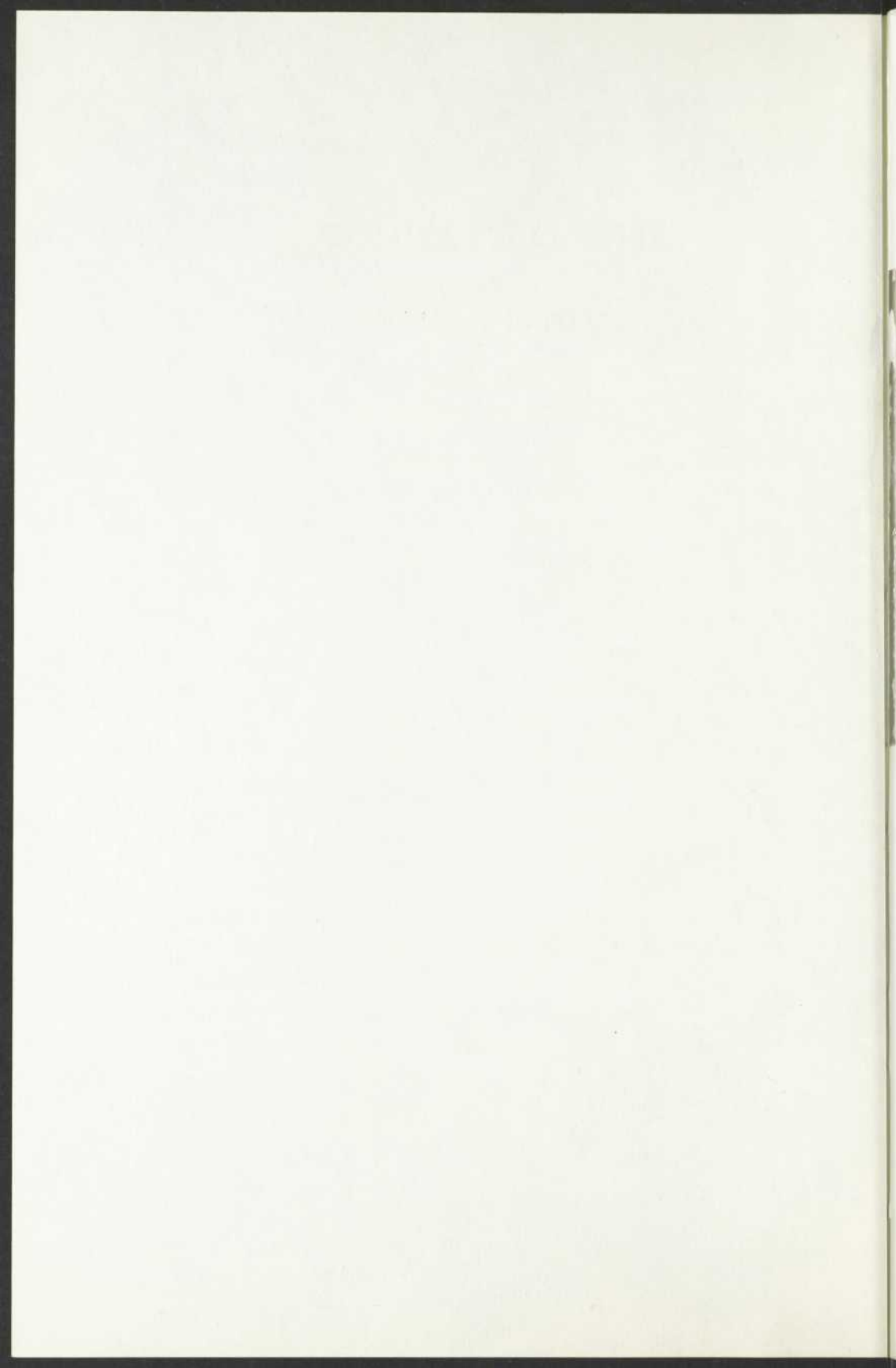
Printed in Canada

Bull Moose Press
26/6/61

C 813.54
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FOR GENEVIEVE

With the compliments of
Lawrence H. (Larry) Wilson
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THE DICTAPHONE

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The moment Detective Leo Quisi acquired a Dictaphone, he had reached the pinnacle of his ambition. Of a moronic and sadistic nature — his reading was confined to Krafft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis" — Detective Quisi now possessed an instrument which could place the unwary at his mercy.

The Dictaphone, completely silent when in operation, was enclosed, with batteries attached, in a sound-proof box with but a tiny receiving microphone inserted in the lid. It was capable of recording conversations within a radius of fifty feet for a period of twelve hours, non-stop. A flip of a switch would put the machine into operation.

Without divulging this acquisition to his police confreres or to his wife, Detective Quisi experimented with the Dictaphone in the privacy of his locked study at home. He set the encased machine in motion and placed it in a suitcase which he closed and locked. Even with his ear glued to the side of the suitcase, not the slightest purr could he hear. He then spoke a few sentences in a low tone, opened the suitcase, removed the reel and played it back on a tape-recording machine. Every word he had uttered was recorded as clear as a bell!

So armed, Detective Quisi proceeded to satisfy his vicious lust for power in the hope that it would bring him both promotion and wealth.

Quisi first tried out the Dictaphone on his superior, the Chief of Detectives. Entering the Chief's office one afternoon he casually placed the suitcase in a corner of the room and propped a sporting rifle against it.

"Mind if I leave this here, Chief?" he asked. "I've lost my locker key and I'm leaving on a hunting trip tonight." The busy Chief nodded okay and Detective Quisi left the room. At quitting time he retrieved the suitcase, brought it to his home and, from the tape-recorder, heard every word that had been uttered that afternoon. His small pig-eyes shone with delight as he listened to the confidential information that had been spoken by the Chief of Detectives in his unmistakable heavy-toned accent.

His next move was to leave the locked suitcase behind the cigar counter in a cheap one-table pool hall frequented by underworld punks, and operated by a dope peddler who acted as a stool-pigeon for Quisi in return for protection. The following morning in his study Quisi heard — via the tape-recorder — a conversation between two moronic youths who were planning their first bank holdup. Detective Quisi now had the exact place of the proposed robbery and the exact time — 3 p.m. But what was more important to Quisi was the statement made by the punks that they would carry in their pockets harmless toy pistols, not regulation revolvers.

At 2.45 p.m. Detective Quisi entered the bank, informed the manager that he wished to open an account, and proceeded to fill in the necessary forms at a table directly opposite the paying teller's cage.

At three o'clock on the dot, Quisi saw the two youths, hands in pockets, approach the teller's cage and demand money. Quisi drew his loaded gun and shouted: "Hands up!" As the startled punks whirled around, Quisi shot each through the heart, killing them instantly.

The local newspapers reported this cold-blooded and cowardly murder with banner lines reading:

FEARLESS DETECTIVE IN GUN DUEL WITH HOLD-UP THUGS!

LOCAL SLEUTH KILLS TWO BANDITS IN BANK ROBBERY!

Quisi was immediately appointed Assistant Inspector of Detectives and a prominent senator, before a huge gathering, pinned the Medal of Valor on his breast. (*No mention was made of the toy pistols.*)

At a civic banquet given in his honor, Quisi said: "I was protected from the bullets of the assassins because I am a religious man and spend many hours each day in prayer. God is always on my side in time of danger."

As a gesture of appreciation for Quisi's bravery, a well-known philanthropist donated a large sum of money to a local police charity fund and gave Quisi *carte blanche* as to the distribution of the funds. The Assistant Inspector immediately misappropriated several hundred dollars which he spent on articles for his own private use.

But the sleuth wasn't satisfied with small-time dough — he craved *big* money — and his cunning brain devised a sure-fire method of blackmailing prominent citizens without detection.

Quisi carried the suitcase into Lucille's Rendezvous — a brothel he frequented "on the cuff" unknown, of course, to his virtuous wife — and left it with the madam overnight. The following day he learned the name of a prominent judge who had enjoyed himself, while in his cups, with under-age girls.

Later that day, Quisi entered the privacy of the judge's chambers and informed His Honor that a morality squad detective had kept Lucille's Rendezvous under surveillance for some weeks and that he was about to write a report — based on evidence obtained from fifteen-year-old girls — which would involve the judge. With a solemn face Quisi added that he had a high regard for the jurist and that he didn't wish to see him come to harm and, he added, he thought he could "fix" the morality squad sleuth who was in dire need of funds to pay off a mortgage.

Without hesitation, the judge shelled out plenty in small bills, as Quisi had smilingly suggested. The Assistant Inspector was going places !

Quisi also blackmailed a number of prominent politicians and business men in the same manner, and each week he deposited wads of five and ten dollars bills in a large safety deposit box, for he was too smart a criminal to accept cheques or bills of large denomination.

Quisi hit the bedrock of infamy when he paid professional homosexuals, to "frame" innocent and sexually-normal citizens, with the usual shake-down results. The detective also installed a "midnight-babe" in a sumptuous apartment and spent many nights of debauchery away from home after telling his trusting wife that he was on the trail of a counterfeiting gang.

The chink in Quisi's armor, however, appeared suddenly one day when the judge, who had been bled white by incessant blackmail and was on the verge of nervous prostration, invited the Chief of Police to his private home and divulged his folly and Quisi's blackmailing racket.

The head of the police force alerted the Chief of Detectives who had a private investigator "tail" Leo and rent the apartment adjoining Quisi's "love-nest" and, while the blackmailer and his babe were dancing in a night-club, enter the place with a *passee-partout* key and secret a microphone in the bedroom. A hidden wire ran to the investigator's apartment where a recording machine was in constant operation.

Within forty-eight hours, the Chief of Detectives had a complete record of Quisi's blackmailing methods of operation for Quisi frequently boasted to his girl-friend about his methods of obtaining information — A Dictaphone in a suitcase !

The head of the Detective Bureau also learned that Quisi wished to marry his illicit bed-partner and would soon do so. "I'm sick and tired of my dull, stupid wife," came Quisi's voice through the tape-recorder, "and I'll have one of my stool pigeons frame her on an adultery charge. After the divorce we'll get married and live in Florida. I've got plenty of dough cached away in a safety deposit box."

The Chief of Detectives had Quisi's every movement followed and in short time he had the address and number of the safety deposit box where the blackmail money was hidden.

A few days later Quisi was asked to appear in the private office of the Chief of Detectives, who said: "I have a very important assignment for you, Leo, and you are to leave immediately with my assistant, Inspector Johns, and drive straight to the Hotel Fountain in Bruno-ville (about 100 miles away) where we have information that an organized gang of bank robbers are planning the biggest holdup on record."

"Could I pick up a change of linen at my apartment, Chief?" asked Quisi.

"You are to leave *immediately* in a car now waiting in front of this office," said the Chief, sternly, "and you are not to telephone anyone — not even your wife — nor are you to speak to anyone en route to your destination. This is a highly confidential assignment and you are not to leave your Hotel Fountain bedroom under any circumstances until I telephone you. You will have your meals sent up to your room. Understand?"

"Yes, Sir," said Assistant Inspector Quisi.

The Chief saw Quisi and Johns to the waiting car and away they went.

A few hours later the Chief of Police, the Chief of Detectives and a locksmith called at Quisi's apartment, where they were cordially greeted by the sleuth's wife.

"I regret to inform you, Mrs. Quisi," said the Chief, solemnly, "that I have come on official business and I have a search warrant which permits me to search this apartment."

Mrs. Quisi was aghast.

“Where is your husband’s study?” asked the Chief.

“There,” replied Mrs. Quisi pointing to a locked door, “but I haven’t a key to open it.”

“I’ve made arrangement for that,” said the Chief, signalling the locksmith to go to work.

In a few moments the locksmith had opened the study door, the suitcase with Dictaphone enclosed and the drawer where Quisi kept his tell-tale recording reels and the police officers heard, via the tape-recorder, the most damning evidence in the annals of crime.

Mrs. Quisi, standing at the doorway, was sobbing hysterically. “Frame *me* on an adultery charge!” she cried. “The vicious brute! And to think that I always considered him an upstanding and noble husband! I shall leave him immediately.”

Placing the reels in his brief case, the police chief instructed the locksmith to leave the room and took Mrs. Quisi firmly by the arm. “You will come with me to headquarters, madam,” he said, “while the Chief of Detectives remains here.”

After they had exited, the head of the Detective Bureau set the Dictaphone into motion and spoke very clearly for several minutes. He then switched off the machine and placed a piece of paper on it with these words written in a clear, bold hand: “*Assistant Inspector Quisi! I have spoken a message into your Dictaphone. Play the reel back on your tape-recorder. The Chief of Detectives.*”

He then returned to headquarters where he telephoned Quisi in Brunoville and ordered him to return to his apartment and await further instructions.

Late that afternoon, Quisi jauntily entered his home, called aloud for his wife and, receiving no reply, made for his study.

His brain reeled as he read the note laying on top of his Dictaphone and, with trembling fingers, he inserted the reel into the tape-recording machine.

This is what he heard:—

“LEO QUISI! THIS IS THE CHIEF OF DETECTIVES SPEAKING. WITH THE CHIEF OF POLICE AND YOUR TRUSTING AND VIRTUOUS WIFE STANDING IN THIS ROOM, I HAVE PLAYED BACK EVERY WORD RECORDED BY YOUR DICTAPHONE AND THESE REELS ARE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS. WE KNOW NOW THAT YOU MURDERED, IN A MOST CALLOUS AND COWARDLY FASHION, THE TWO BANK HOLDUP PUNKS FULLY AWARE THAT THEY WERE ARMED WITH DUMMY TOY PISTOLS. WE ALSO KNOW THAT YOU OBTAINED EVIDENCE IN LUCILLE'S RENDEZVOUS WHICH PERMITTED YOU TO BLACKMAIL SOME OF OUR MOST PROMINENT CITIZENS, AND THAT YOU PAID HOMOSEXUALISTS TO FRAME PERFECTLY NORMAL AND UPRIGHT CITIZENS. MY ASSISTANT HAS OBTAINED A SEARCH WARRANT AND HE HAS OPENED YOUR SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX AND SEIZED MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS OF YOUR BLACKMAIL MONEY. YOUR KEPT MISTRESS

HAS CONFESSED EVERYTHING AND WE ARE AWARE THAT YOU WERE ON THE POINT OF FRAMING YOUR WIFE ON AN ADULTERY CHARGE SO THAT YOU COULD OBTAIN A DIVORCE.

“YOU ARE THE VILEST SUB-HUMAN IN THE HISTORY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND IF THE IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE WE POSSESS IS EVER MADE PUBLIC OUR POLICE DEPARTMENT WILL BE BRANDED AS THE MOST INFAMOUS ORGANIZATION ON RECORD AND IT WILL RESULT IN A MUNICIPAL CRISIS OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE. YOU ARE A MURDERER, A COWARD AND A BLACKMAILER AND YOU ARE ON THE NO-RETURN ROAD TO THE GALLOWS. THERE IS NO AVENUE OF ESCAPE! YOUR APARTMENT HOUSE IS SURROUNDED BY FIFTY PLAIN-CLOTHES DETECTIVES WITH ORDERS TO SHOOT YOU ON SIGHT SHOULD YOU ATTEMPT A GETAWAY. IF YOU DECIDE TO SURRENDER, YOU WILL LEAVE YOUR APARTMENT WITH YOUR HANDS UP AND ENTER YOUR CAR WHERE THREE DETECTIVES, WITH LOADED REVOLVERS, AWAIT YOU AND YOU WILL BE DRIVEN TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS WHERE YOU WILL BE ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH MURDER. *THERE IS, OF COURSE, ANOTHER WAY OUT.....*”

Silence.

Assistant Inspector Leo Quisi, sweating profusely and trembling violently, switched off the tape-recording machine as his infamous career crumbled into dust. Tears

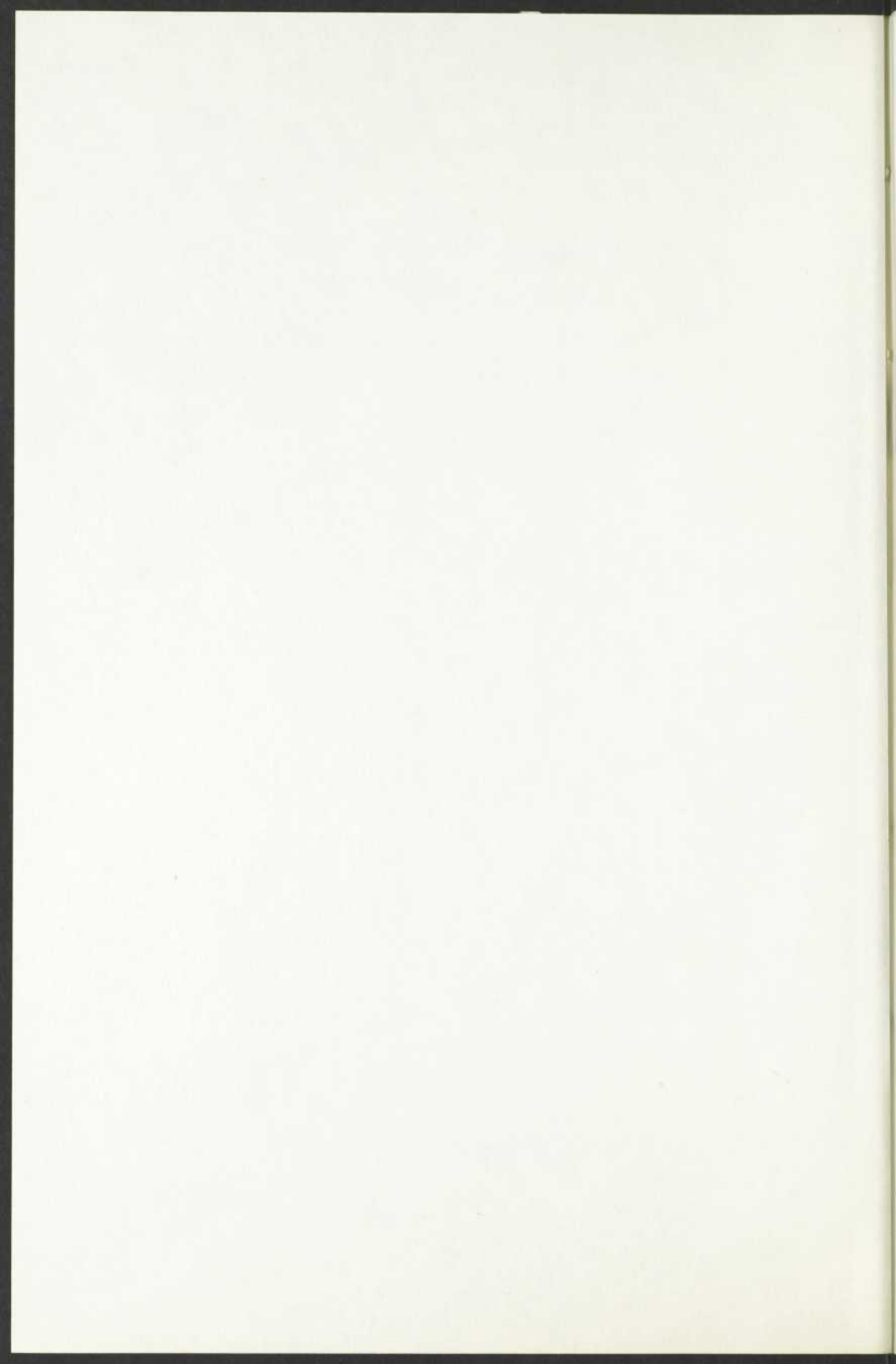
flooded his face and his hair stood stiffly upright as his bulging, terror-stricken eyes stared into eternity.

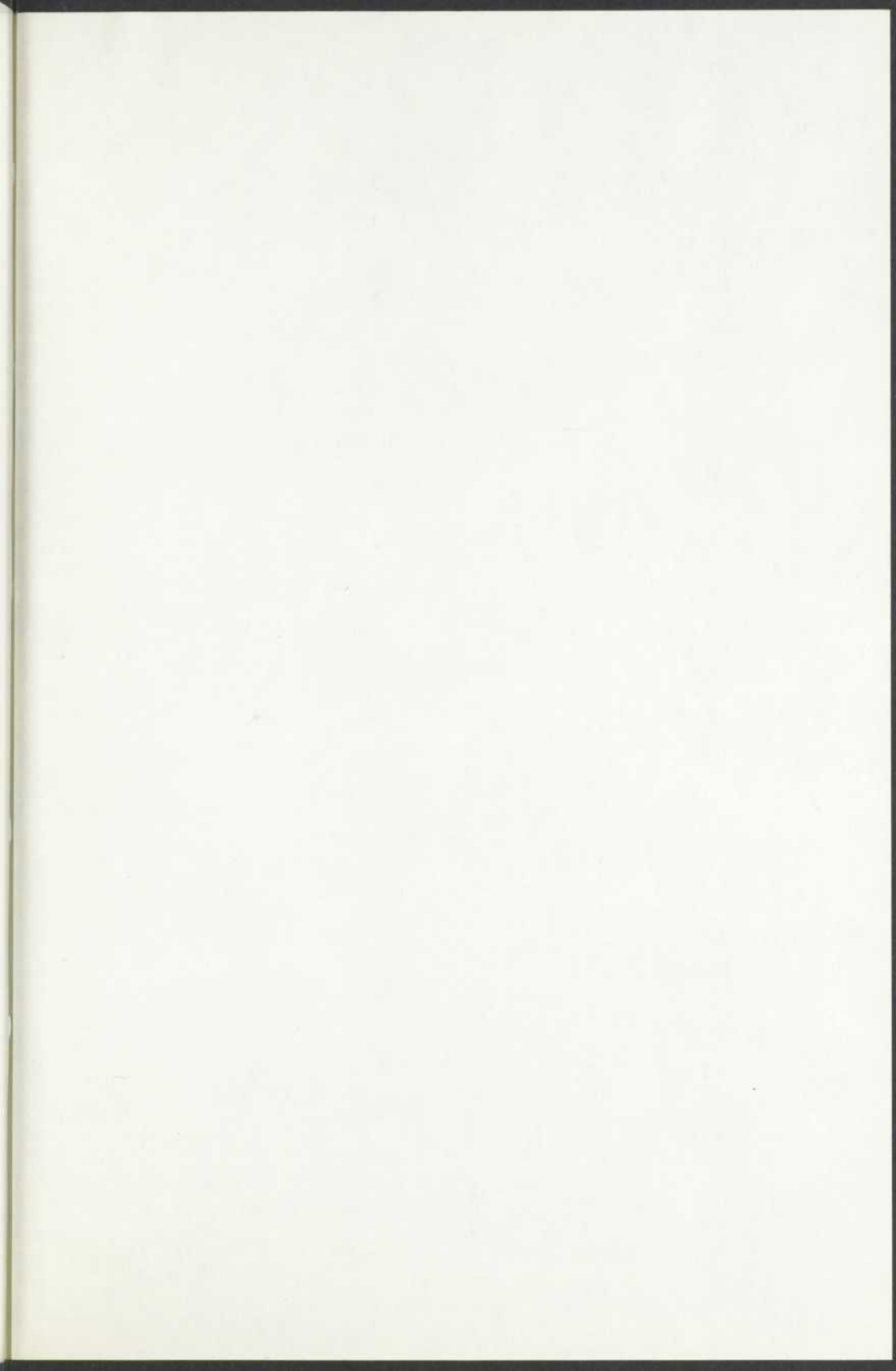
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The gentle, soothing tones of the parish church bell, calling the faithful to evening prayer, permeated the room as Assistant Inspector Leo Quisi fumbled for his revolver...

FINIS











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