

maybe our tycoon was burning both ends of his candle. Then I realized he was too much in love with his actress to fool around with anyone else. It had to be someone else. And there *was* someone else who was bound to be with Miss I. whenever she had a show to put on."

"Her manager. Why, natch."

"He knew his star would spend her free time with Rettjer. So he flew his own gal pal out for company. I don't know how much of a jackpot she hit out there, but when they all got back to New York, the sound of dropping coins began right away. Because by then Joyna had read a report from a private eye saying that her father was going to make a hundred-thousand-dollar present to his new love. The kid got blood in her eye, started to send those menacing messages."

"'But wear the sables once and I——'"

Don put a finger across her lips. "I hate the sound of 'em almost as much as Miss I. did. To me they mean the end of ol' Press. To her they meant sleepless nights, tortured days. Hadley saw his prize talent being shot to hell, a nervous wreck. He couldn't order Rettjer to hold off sending the damn coat. He couldn't get her to agree not to wear it; she thought too much of Rettjer. Hadley was as much at his wit's end as Miss I. So he dreamed up a kind of screwball practical joke. He'd arrange to have the coat snatched, just as it was being delivered . . . and held until they could find out who was trying to scare the bejeezus out of Lily I. His idea was to have no roughhouse, no tough stuff at all. The coat was to be returned later, with the explanation that it had all been a gag."

"But the plan backfired?"

"Hadley might have known it would. He'd asked Gretchen Chadbourne to get her brother for the job, since brother Arny had served time as an expert in the hijack line. Arny was to get a thousand bucks and out of that he was to get someone to help him. He got that juvenile monster who nearly beat my brains out. When Max got his share of the payoff . . . for trailing My around to get a line on My's habits . . . the bastard went out and got loaded with heroin. So by the time Press and My got to the Buckinghurst, Max was ready to blow a fuse.