



# The Radio Cop

Vic Whitman





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The Radio Cop  
by  
Vic Whitman

## Chapter I: Gangdom Challenges

Patrolman Tom Jennings, who claimed he had a flair for poetry, described him thus:

A talking fool with a voice like a dove  
And a face that only a mother could love,  
Small and ready to fight at a nod  
Was Officer Cates of the wave-length squad.

Which, after all, wasn't so far out of the way. For certainly young Dave Cates, official announcer for the police division of radio station KYK, was far from being an Adonis. He had a measure of pugnacity, and he had a splendid voice.

Cates was talking now before the microphone in the police room over the studio of KYK. Smoothly his voice went out to the world:

"The rush order on the new uniforms for the men of the Dolliver Street detail has been filled and the uniforms have been sent out. Orders are that they be put on as soon as received."

Not particularly interesting to thousands of the idly curious who chanced to be tuned in, but decidedly interesting to listening police details all over the great city. To them the code dispatch meant this:

"Big Ed" Margolo is free, having been acquitted of the murder charge against him.  
Dolliver Street detail must guard against resumption of gang war between Margolo  
and "Red" McGuirk.

As the announcer was about to go on talking his alert ears caught the buzzing of the muffled telephone bell in the adjoining room.

"Please stand by for one moment," he said, and stepped into the phone room.

"What is it, Henry?" he inquired. "More dope from headquarters?"

The telephone operator grinned. "Headquarters—my neck!" he grunted. "Just another dame callin' up to rave about that voice of yours. Wants to know if you'll send her an autographed picture of yourself."

Dave Cates shrugged. It almost seemed that nature atoned for her lavishness in giving him a golden voice by crediting him with a bulldog jaw, a wide mouth, and a pug nose that sported five freckles. His eyes, level and blue, were his only redeeming feature.

It had been his eyes as well as his voice that had induced Captain Henessey to recommend that he be put on the pay roll as the first radio officer the department ever had.

But there it ended. Cates longed for the life of the cop on the beat, but his physical qualifications were below standard. In his heart he kept locked away an ideal of romance, but it hardly seemed likely that the ideal would ever materialize. They all liked his voice, but they turned away from his face.

"Tell 'em to go jump a fence," said Officer Cates. "This is no picture gallery we're running here, nor is it a lonely hearts department. If those babies think they're kidding *me*, they're tuning in on the wrong station."

He turned on his heel to go back to the broadcasting room, but paused as the phone rang again. Henry plugged in and took the message, then spun around in his chair and jerked off his “ear muffs.”

“Some guy just called in to say if you didn’t lay off broadcastin’ you’d get bumped,” he said excitedly. “He—”

“You’re kidding!”

“The hell I am! He meant business, too, by the way he sounded.”

Young Officer Cates wasn’t particularly surprised. The code warnings had proved very successful in producing quick action on the part of the police and checking activities on the part of the criminals. It was only natural to suppose that, sooner or later, the warning would come.

“The son of a gun!” he said slowly.

But he was not afraid. The sudden tenseness of his stocky body was merely the tenseness of a fighter before the gong. Some excitement might even develop out of this warning. An anticipatory glint appeared in the blue eyes.

“The son of a gun!” Cates repeated. “Tell him to go jump two fences, Henry.”

Casually Cates sauntered back to the microphone.

“Police division of station KYK still going strong,” he said lightly. “It gives me great pleasure at this moment to acknowledge a phone call. This call just came in from an unknown gentleman who suggested that we stop broadcasting, while the stopping was good. I don’t like to disappoint the gentleman, but this division will continue to be on the air at the same time every night.”

And so was the challenge of organized gangdom caught up and hurled back by a stocky, freckle-faced officer, who was more than willing to prove himself.

Calmly he continued with the various messages. That he was no longer broadcasting in code, the police knew by his utterance of the word, “classified.”

These items were numerous. A lady had lost a tan-and-white collie dog somewhere between 13th Street and Southland Road, and would pay a substantial reward to any one returning the dog.

A young man in a gray suit was now at headquarters awaiting identification. The young man was a victim of amnesia—didn’t know his own name or anything about himself.

Finally, some heartless crook had stolen the pocketbook of an old man who was on his way from Maine to California to see his dying daughter. Any small contributions that would help to put the old man on his journey would be welcomed.

Then Dave Cates glanced at the electric clock on the wall, above the green light.

“And so this brings to an end our broadcast for this evening,” he concluded. “This is the police division of station KYK signing off at exactly eight thirty. Good night.”

Cates stuffed the sheets of paper into his pocket, lighted a cigarette, and went out to the elevator.

The elevator boy grinned admiringly. “Evenin’, Mr. Cates,” he said. “I heard you broadcast three nights ago. Gee, it must be swell to be an announcer, and have nothin’ to do but talk.”

Officer Cates grinned. “It might be worse, Billy,” he admitted. “Yes, it might be a whole lot worse.” To himself he added, “And it might be a heck of a lot better.”

Cates emerged from the elevator at the ground floor and went into the street, moving with the brisk step that characterized him. At once, a nattily dressed young man detached himself from the passing throng and stepped up to Cates. The young man’s right hand was casually thrust into his topcoat pocket.

“Don’t make any funny moves or you’ll get drilled,” he cautioned, low voiced. “See that car at the curb? Well, hop into it.”

The little announcer stiffened with the chill that went over him. Evidently they were losing no time in making good their threats. Cates knew it would do no good to make a break, for the young man would shoot instantly and melt away in the crowd. His eyes, dark and menacing, gave that warning.

Cates eyed him steadily. "What car?" he asked, trying to gain time.

"You know what car!" snarled the gunman. "This green limousine here. Get goin'."

Officer Cates shrugged. He stepped toward the car. Then a miraculous thing happened.

## Chapter II: Practicing for Death

A girl who had been anxiously studying the face of every man coming out of the building hurried to Dave Cates. All in a second he saw the radiant smile on her face, caught a glimpse of her lovely, hazel eyes and the infinite grace of her step. She hesitated not a second but came directly to him, a charming little figure, a bit shorter than himself. To his utter stupefaction she threw both arms around his neck and kissed him on the lips. Then quickly she took his arm and led him into the crowd.

So astounded was Cates that he didn't notice the way she kept between him and the gunman, who had recognized the girl and was scowling, baffled. Cates didn't even stop to wonder why the gunman didn't shoot.

"Well, for the love of Mother Machree!" he stammered, completely at sea. "Are you an angel or have you got the wrong guy?"

She glanced up at him, but made no answer. White of face from the strain of the ordeal through which she had just passed, she piloted him toward headquarters, four blocks distant.

Gradually the radio cop recovered his wits. "Sister, I don't mean to be too curious," he apologized, "but there's a little too much static in the old dome for me to get this thing right. How'd you happen to step in there when you did? Were you wise to them? And why didn't that guy shoot?"

Still no answer, only a pleading look from the hazel eyes. Then swiftly she turned and hurried away.

"Hold on," called Cates, concerned. "I haven't learned a thing yet. Here, wait a minute, sister!"

But she did not heed. For a moment he was tempted to overtake her and demand an explanation, then decided against it. Whoever she was, she had known there would be an attempt on his life.

But why should she run a risk in saving him? The question fairly shouted for an answer, but gratitude would not allow him to ask what she very evidently did not want to answer.

There were other things, too. Officer Cates became aware that his heart was beating at twice its usual tempo. Faint perfume still trailed about him, and there was a cool fragrance on his lips that had never been there before.

"Right on the old pan, she kissed me," Cates murmured in awed tones. "Right on the old pan, and I let her get away without even finding out her name. Well, what do you know?"

For such was the make-up of the stocky announcer that the kiss of an unknown girl could concern him more than the threat of a gunman. Sighing profoundly, his alert eyes dreamy, he proceeded on to headquarters.

Captain Hennessey, granite-jawed, shrewd-eyed veteran, looked up interestedly.

"Hello, Dave," he said, and leaned back in his chair. "What's all this you broadcast about being pegged?"

Cates nodded.

"That's right, captain," he confirmed. "They almost got me, too. They would have if it hadn't been for the cutest little jane I ever saw in my life. Honest, she was about so high, and she was all dolled up like a million with a fur around her neck and sort of a satin dress and little high-heel shoes. And say, captain, you'd ought to see her eyes. The way—"



“That’s enough,” interrupted Captain Henessey, recognizing the symptoms. “You’re giving no public address now, lad. Confine yourself to the facts.”

So, as briefly as he could, the radio cop told his superior of the incident.

Captain Henessey rubbed at his ear and pondered. “H’m,” he said. “I’d like to talk with that girl, Dave. Maybe she knows something about this gang situation.”

“How does it stand now?”

The captain’s mouth was grim. “Bad enough. Here we go and drag Margolo into court on a murder charge and a lily-livered jury throw the case out because they say the evidence isn’t conclusive enough.” His big fist banged down on the desk. “Evidence—hell! They would have had enough evidence if they hadn’t been scared of the gang’s power.

“Now Big Ed’ll be giving us the horse laugh, and he’ll pull more stuff than ever. The first thing he’ll probably do is to go after McGuirk, and we’ll have a gang war on our hands.

“But I don’t mind McGuirk so much. He could be worse. It’s Margolo I want to get, and I’d give a lot for a man who would see him in a shooting and then have the nerve to go into court and testify.”

Dave Cates gazed ruefully at the bulletin board. Now more than ever he wished he could qualify for active service.

“Margolo is sore because McGuirk’s cutting into his business, isn’t he?” he asked.

Captain Henessey nodded. “Yes, and that means there’ll be more shooting.”

“Where does Margolo usually hang out?”

“Well, he spends a lot of his time at the Salon Quintesse, that road house out by Syndicate Park. He’s got an apartment in the new Donahue block, too, but I don’t think either of those places is his official headquarters.

“Margolo’s a cagy cuss and he keeps moving from place to place. No telling where he’s located now.”

The captain looked suddenly at the small figure of his radio announcer. “What does this chap look like who pegged you?” he asked.

Cates described the man at some length.

“Sounds like ‘Slim’ Fiske of Margolo’s crew,” commented the captain. “By the way, Dave, what are you going to do about this threat? Take a little lay-off?”

The radio cop drew himself to his full height of five feet seven.

“Cut it out, captain,” he said.

Captain Henessey hid a grin. It was Cates’ first test, and the lad had met it as the captain expected.

“Just as you say,” he answered. “But for a while I’ll assign a man to cover you when you come out after each night’s broadcast. Now run along. I’m busy.”

As Dave Cates walked up the stairs to the top floor barracks where he slept, he considered things. Not a doubt that he was in for trouble if he continued to announce. Even with an officer covering his exits, they’d get him sooner or later. This was not a pleasant prospect—particularly since he had looked into a pair of hazel eyes and had received the soft touch of red lips. Not at all a pleasant prospect to contemplate.

No, he intended both to live and to stay on his job, and the only way to combine the two things was to get the gangsters before they got him. Dave Cates stopped short, rubbing at his bulldog jaw.

He'd considered this idea before, of course—for what young man connected in any way with a police department hasn't dreamed of putting a stop to the most flagrant lawlessness in his vicinity?—but hitherto he had never considered it seriously. Now, under the menace to his life, the thought was no longer audacious.

Turning the matter over in his mind Cates went to his locker and took from it his shoulder holster and the big police gun. He adjusted the holster under his left arm, cast a casual glance at the sleeping forms of men who were to go on duty with the midnight shift, and went into the shower room.

A long mirror was there. Dave Cates stood before it. From a lounging position he yanked out the gun and leveled it. A dozen times he did this, and then practiced drawing from all sorts of positions, reclining, walking, bending almost double.

“Getting faster at it, anyway,” he told himself.

This was his nightly habit and had been since he became radio officer. He was still young enough to thrill to this secret practice; and yet old enough to realize that some day the acquired deftness and speed might stand him in good stead.

Every afternoon he practiced assiduously at the short-range targets down in the basement of the building. Officer Cates of the wave-length squad was not only very quick on the draw, but very adept at knocking the neck off a bottle fifty paces distant.

Twenty minutes later he put on an old topcoat, drew a cap well down over his eyes, and went out into the street to catch a southbound car.

Everybody seemed to think that Big Ed Margolo would go after McGuirk at once.

Dave Cates thought differently. “Margolo's no dumb-bell,” he mused, glancing at a youth of about his own size and general appearance who sat across the car. “He'll figure they're watching him close and lay off for a time. In that case I'll watch him closer than ever.”

Cates observed that the other occupant of the car was regarding him with more than passing interest. “Humph. Wonder who that guy is? He's givin' me the once-over like he wanted to know my family history.”

### Chapter III: Strategy

At Syndicate Park, the end of the line, Cates swung off the car. The park glittered with hundreds of colored lights, people sauntered about laughing and talking, and through the trees sounded a male voice singing nasally to the tempo of a dance band:

“I wanna be loved by you, by you and nobody else but you,  
I wanna be kissed by you alone.”

It was coming from the Salon Quintesse. Perhaps tonight Big Ed would be here celebrating his release from “stir.” Cates walked to a spot near some chauffeurs who were watching the gay crowd inside the hall. He had no especial plan of action, save to trail Big Ed constantly.

Sooner or later, Cates reflected, the gangster would pull a fast one. Cates wanted to be at hand when that happened.

Now and then hard-faced men strolled through the grounds, but they gave not a second glance to the small, inoffensive young man who stood looking through the big windows.

Young men like that were common outside the Salon Quintesse, drawn there by a wistful desire to listen to the smashing jazz and enviously to watch the dancers.

The music stopped. Cates could see the dancers going to their tables. A hum of conversation sounded. A woman’s silvery laugh rose above the tuning of a soprano saxophone. No one seemed to know that the life of a radio cop had been threatened. Had they known they would not have cared. Things are that way in places like the Salon Quintesse.

The music started up again with a preliminary tinkle of a piano. Now some one had appeared from the entertainer’s room and was dancing. It was a girl, small and exquisite.

Dave Cates edged nearer the window, and started violently as he saw her face. Smiling radiantly, dipping, whirling, gliding, the dancer was none other than the girl who had kissed him.

“Well, I’ll be a seagoing brook trout!” murmured Cates.

His first thought was that she was connected with Big Ed Margolo’s gang. Paid entertainers and gangsters frequently run together. Then he dismissed the thought as unworthy. Had she been connected in any way with Margolo she would not have risked her life to save some one she didn’t know.

On the other hand, how had she known about the “ride”? And why hadn’t Fiske shot? Doubts beset the radio cop; doubts that increased when he realized it was not a certainty that Margolo had ordered his death.

Frowning, Cates watched the girl float about the room as effortlessly as a bit of down caught up by a vagrant breeze. Lovely, fascinating!

Dave Cates sighed, and his mouth twisted into a sad little grin. No sense in letting the ideal blossom over her. It would only fade and die if he did. She was a little princess of terpsichore and he was just a police radio announcer with a face that only a mother could love.

Some one was standing by his side. He glanced indifferently around and beheld the youth of the street car.

“Say, d’you know Mr. Margolo when you see him?” the boy inquired.

Dave Cates was on his guard instantly. “Suppose I do?” he demanded.

“Well, it’s this way.” Plainly the boy was flustered. “I—I—say, you work for him, don’t you?”

Cates took a moment before replying. “Maybe.”

“I thought so. Knew I’d seen you with Slim Fiske.” The boy sighed, relieved. “I’m to start drivin’ for Mr. Margolo next week,” he announced importantly.

“Yeh?”

“That’s right. One of his men hired me. Me, I ain’t never seen him, and I thought if you’d point him out I’d see if he’d come through with a little advance pay. I’m broke flatter’n a flounder.”

The nimble brain of Officer Cates digested this. So Margolo had made the mistake of hiring a driver who liked to give information about himself. This information was valuable.

Cates smiled. “I see, kid,” he said. “Now if I were you I’d let Ed alone tonight. He’s in there all right, but I wouldn’t bother him.”

“But I gotta eat,” said the boy desperately. “I used my last nickel for car fare out here.”

The radio cop chewed at his lower lip. “That’s tough, kid,” he sympathized. “I’ve been that way myself. Tell you what I’ll do. I got ten bucks I can spare till you get your first pay from Ed. But don’t say anything to Ed about it because he don’t like to be bothered with such things. You get me, don’t you?”

Cates drew a ten-dollar bill from his pocket and handed it over.

“Say, there ain’t nothing wrong with you!” declared the youth warmly. “Don’t worry, I won’t say nothin’ to Ed.”

Alone, Cates grinned, confident that no one of the men from the Bureau of Criminal Investigation could have handled the matter any better. At least he had provided an entering wedge to the Margolo gang, even if he didn’t know just how he could use it.

His alert eyes sparkled. There was a real kick in this kind of business, entirely different from standing before a microphone and relaying messages.

Still there was pity mingled with his satisfaction. That boy had no business driving for Big Ed Margolo. But perhaps he had been compelled to take the first job offered.

Dave Cates determined to keep an eye on him. “The kid looked hungry,” was his thought, “and hunger has made many a crook. Maybe if I can nab Margolo in time, the kid won’t have any record against him.”

He cast a glance at the Salon Quintesse, turned and walked to the car line.

Those who expected to see Margolo make immediate war upon Red McGuirk were disappointed. Never had the gangster been so quiet. With his inactivity, the percentage of crime in the city dropped until a pedestrian could stroll the streets with comparative safety. The general public reached the conclusion that Margolo’s recent trial had shaken his nerve. Not so the police.

“It’s only the calm before the storm,” observed Captain Hennessey. “When Margolo gets under way he’ll raise more hell than ever. I’ve seen these birds before and I *know*.”

Nightly, Dave Cates stood before the microphone, talking to the world. No more attempts were made upon his life, but he wasn’t fooled by that. Eventually the gunmen would seek him out again. He’d have to get them before they got him.

Each night after the broadcast he went in search of Big Ed Margolo. Everywhere the gangster went, he was followed by a little man with pulled-down cap and turned-up coat collar.

Cates’ size alone probably saved him. The torpedoes who “covered” Margolo never paid any attention to him. It is doubtful if they noticed him.

One evening, Margolo came out of his apartment and summoned a taxi. Dave Cates, lurking in the shadows half a block away, took the next taxi along. Margolo drove to an old house out on River Street, far from the business district. When he came out of the house, he tried a key in the door. Apparently satisfied, he rejoined his companions and the taxi drove off.

Dave Cates had a sudden hunch. He took the number of the house, and ordered his driver back to the city. Two blocks from police headquarters he alighted. Not even a taxi driver should know that he was in any way connected with the police.

With all the enthusiasm of a terrier puppy he burst in upon Captain Hennessey.

“Margolo has just rented a house out on River Street,” Cates said rapidly. “Don’t know what he’s going to do, but it’s a cinch he didn’t rent the place to live in. Now listen, captain. There’s an old vacant garage out back of the place. Can’t I have a microphone put up in there?”

Captain Hennessey studied the eager face. “What do you want to do—commit suicide?” he asked finally.

“Nobody’ll get wise,” the radio cop declared. “Honest they won’t. There’s a back entrance to the garage where I can go in and out, and I can have the lights dimmed so nobody’ll notice. It’s the chance of a lifetime to keep an eye on this guy, and maybe something good will break.”

Cates’ eyes gleamed as he warmed to his theme. “Suppose Margolo should pull something funny while I happened to be at the mike? It wouldn’t be so tough, would it? Sure, and I can broadcast there just as well as anywhere. Furthermore—”

Captain Hennessey raised both hands. “Shut up!” he roared. “Do you think I’ve nothing to do but listen to you talk? Get out of here, and I’ll see what can be done about it with the commissioners.”

## Chapter IV: Dragnet

The following night the gangsters gave proof they had not forgotten the radio announcer of the police division. Dave Cates, his work finished, came through the street door, and stopped to light a cigarette. His lighter slipped through his fingers and dropped. As he bent to retrieve it, a fusillade of shots came rattling from a passing car. The bullets chipped the stone masonry above his head. Had he been standing he would have been riddled.

“Baby boy!” he gasped, drawing to shelter. “That was too darn close!”

People crowded around, staring at him with curious eyes, but he didn’t wait to be questioned. As quickly as possible, he got to headquarters.

Such news travels like lightning. Captain Hennessey was raging.

“Damn their hides!” he roared. “I’ll teach ’em to take pot shots at the men of this station! So help me, I’ll put out a dragnet and bring in every crook in town. They’ll find out before I’m through with ’em just how healthy it is to get cocky.”

No doubt but that the sturdy captain would keep his word. The opening gun of the crime war had been fired and heard around the town. Use of the dragnet would result in the apprehension of a certain number of criminals, but would it be drawn tight enough to hold that super-criminal, Big Ed Margolo?

Dave Cates shook his head doubtfully. “Go to it, captain,” he said, “and may good luck go with you.”

At that moment a small boy came into the room. “I gotta note here for Mr. Cates,” he said hesitantly.

“Right here, sonny,” said the radio cop. He took the note and glanced through it.

The note consisted of just three words: “Please be careful.”

“Mash note, Dave?” inquired Patrolman Tom Jennings, who was brushing the lint from his blue trousers.

“Be yourself!” retorted the radio cop. He looked intently at the boy. “Who gave you this?” he demanded.

“Miss Talbot on North Street,” said the youngster promptly.

Cates wrinkled his pug nose in the endeavor to spur his memory. “Talbot? Talbot? Can’t seem to place the name.”

“Anabelle Talbot,” put in Patrolman Jennings. “Sure. North Street is on my beat and I see her brother about every night. He tells me she always listens in to your broadcasts. Pretty soft for you, havin’ all these classy dames—”

“I’ll slam you one in the nose! What does she look like?”

“Well, now,” reflected Officer Jennings, “it seems to me she’s cross-eyed, knock-kneed, and—”

“Aw, go jump a fence!” Dave Cates turned disgustedly away, handed the boy a quarter, and watched him scurry away.

“I guess she’s all right, Dave,” said Jennings. “Honest, I’ve never seen her. I’ve only been on the beat for two weeks.”

They were talking as though Cates’ narrow escape was a thing far in the past. So it must be, in the big stations where an officer’s life is a thing of uncertainty. Once past, a thing is forgotten, or, at most, but lightly spoken of.

Casually the small radio cop fingered his tie and ran a hand over his sandy hair.

“Better go easy, lad,” warned Captain Henessey. “This may be just a come-on note.”

“I know,” nodded Cates. Beneath his armpit he could feel the bulge of the big police gun. “I’ll watch my step, captain.”

Standing before the old brick apartment house on North Street, Dave Cates debated with himself. Should he go in, or shouldn’t he? It wasn’t the thought of a possible frame-up that deterred him; it was the possibility that the girl of the Salon Quintesse might not care to see him. But what the deuce? Might as well see it through.

He drew a deep breath, squared his shoulders, and went into the hallway. His heart leaped as a girl came to the door and stood framed there, the light from within making a silken, wavy web of her hair.

“Pard-don me, miss,” stammered the radio cop, removing his cap. “I—I just thought I’d drop around and thank you for what you did for me.”

Then she recognized him, gave him once more that flashing smile. Gee, she was a knock-out!

With a gracious little nod the girl motioned for him to come in. Highly embarrassed, he entered.

“You’re Miss Talbot, aren’t you?” Again she nodded.

Officer Cates wondered as he saw her pick up a small tablet of paper and write upon it. Then he read the words:

“I’m sorry but this is the only way I can talk to you. When I was six years old an attack of scarlet fever paralyzed my vocal chords.”

So that was it! Shades of Patrick Henry, what a situation! Miss Anabelle Talbot was unable to utter a word. Yet she was as dainty as a breath of spring, as lovely as a rose that opens its petals to the early morning sunlight. Dave Cates had a voice of gold, but it hid behind a face that only a mother could love. Each of them was conscious of their own drawbacks and wistfully aware of the other’s best assets.

Quick compassion flooded Dave Cates, but he was far too tactful to show it. He merely nodded and said very cheerfully:

“I understand you’re interested in radio broadcasting, Miss Talbot. I wonder if you’d care to go up to the studio with me, say Friday night, and watch how it’s done?”

Promptly she wrote: “I’d love to.”

“Fine,” said the radio cop. “That’s settled then.”

What a smile that girl had! What delectable curving of red lips, and provocative little crinkles at the corners of dancing eyes!

It was an effort for Cates to force his mind to other matters. “Mind telling me how you knew these gangsters were planning to take me for a ride that night?”

A look of concern replaced the smile as Miss Anabelle lowered her eyes to the tablet.

“Every night at eleven I dance out at the Salon Quintesse,” she wrote. “Out there I frequently hear snatches of gangster talk not intended for my ears. When you broadcast the threat you received, I just seemed to know they would attempt something that night. So I hurried to the broadcasting building.

“I thought if I went up to you as if I were your sister they might not shoot for fear of killing me. Fortunately it was Slim Fiske. Others might have shot regardless, but I—I think he is an admirer of mine, for he has frequently danced with me at the Salon Quintesse. I hope you don’t think I was forward.”

“Forward!” exclaimed the radio cop. “Forward! I’ll tell the world I don’t! I think you were an angel. So that explains why Fiske didn’t shoot. But how did you know me?”

Blushing prettily Miss Anabelle went and got a picture clipped from a newspaper. When Cates had first got the job the picture had appeared under the caption: “Police Radio Announcer.”

“Gee!” he said, reddening.

As if to break the spell of embarrassment that hovered over them, the girl wrote swiftly: “Won’t you tell me something of yourself and your work?”

It is said that opposites attract. Surely this must be the true explanation of the brightness in Anabelle Talbot’s hazel eyes as she sat listening to the radio cop, and of his willingness to talk. Talking was the thing he did best and he set himself to break all records.

For an hour his voice flowed on, as he told her of the police department, of the woman who had called out the homicide squad when she mistook the scratchings of a stray cat in her cellar for the supernatural activities of her long-deceased husband, of the trials and tribulations of a radio announcer, of the joys and fears and hopes of a little officer who never made an arrest.

It almost seemed that the ideal was trying to blossom into being. At any rate, friendship came swiftly, so swiftly that when Dave Cates rose to leave he asked hesitantly: “Is there any chance of us having another talk before Friday night?”

Her answer was: “I’ll be here every evening until it’s time to go out to the hall.”

Cates wanted to accompany her out to the Salon Quintesse, but she wouldn’t permit it. Margolo’s men might become curious, and that would be bad.

Naturally the word spread, started by the grinning Tom Jennings who had learned things. Busy as they were at headquarters with the operation of the dragnet, all had time for a glance at the affair of the radio cop and Anabelle Talbot.

“If that don’t beat the devil!” observed Captain Henessey. “A talking fool and a girl who can’t say a word. Still, that may have its advantages. If the girl could talk, neither one of ’em would be able to get a word in edgeways.”

Of course Dave Cates came in for a share of kidding. No class of men enjoys their jokes more than that which preserves the peace.

Cates took their kidding in good part. “Have a good time, you guys!” he retorted. “My chance will come next and when it does—zowie!”



## Chapter V: Gunmen's Methods

Cates was looking forward with considerable eagerness to Friday night. Any man likes to have *the* girl see him at his best work, and certainly the radio cop excelled as an announcer. Carefully he planned his broadcast so that there would not be the least hesitation on his part. Everything must go like clockwork.

There is a saying about the best-laid plans. Friday afternoon Cates complained bitterly to Miss Anabelle: "Can you beat those commissioners? Never for a moment did I think they'd get around so quickly to switching the microphone to the new location. I'm not going to take you out there because the place is too dangerous, so we'll have to call off the exhibition."

Apprehension showed in the hazel eyes at the mention of danger. She wrote: "Where is the place?" Informed, she wrote again: "I understand. There will be other times, so don't feel bad about it."

When Cates had gone, Miss Anabelle gazed very thoughtfully down at her tablet, then made a memorandum of the address.

All things seemed to break that evening. The radio cop went out to the old garage early to get things ready for the first evening's broadcast.

Glancing out the window, he saw a big man come out of the house Margolo had rented, and go across the street to a drug store. A second glance told Cates that it was none other than Big Ed himself.

Immediately the cop announcer left things as they were and hurried after the gangster.

At the store Cates bought a package of cigarettes while Big Ed was telephoning. Distinctly he heard the gangster say:

"Bring my car out and make it snappy."

The nimble brain of Officer Cates began to click. Something was up or Margolo wouldn't call for his car in such a hurry. Cates moved to the magazine stand as Margolo emerged from the booth and hurried out of the store.

Suddenly a plan occurred to Cates. It was daring in conception, but the more he thought of it the more plausible it seemed. Anyway, he'd take a chance. Quickly he went into the street, and strode along in the direction from which Margolo's car must come.

There was a sharp corner there by the fruit store. Necessarily the car must come around that corner. Cates cautiously drew back into a doorway and waited.

Presently headlights gleamed. The big car slowed for the corner. Cates caught a glimpse of the driver. Yes, the chauffeur was the youth to whom Cates had lent ten dollars.

The car was the green limousine that had nearly taken Cates on his death ride. This evidence made it pretty definite to Cates that Margolo was the man who had ordered his death.

Dave Cates slid out of the shadow. In a bound he was on the running board, had yanked open the door, and was pressing his gun into the side of the startled driver.

"Drive to the Warren Avenue station," he ordered.

"What the hell!" exclaimed the youth. "Say, ain't you—"

"I am," Cates nodded, "but we won't talk about that now. Drive to the station, kid, and make it fast."

At the Warren Avenue station Cates turned the youth over to the desk sergeant.

“I’m Dave Cates, radio announcer,” he explained. “No charges against this kid, but hold him till I notify you.”

To the open-mouthed youth Cates said: “Don’t get worried, kid. We’ll talk this over later. Now peel off that livery, because I’m going to need it.”

As he dressed rapidly in the chauffeur’s uniform, Cates thanked the gods of luck that Margolo always made his drivers wear livery. In this rig, that was a very fair fit, the chances were good that he could escape detection. Cates had a suspicion that Margolo didn’t talk much with his drivers.

Out to the car, Cates ran, and started back to Margolo’s house.

The gangster was waiting impatiently with three of his men. “Long enough gettin’ here!” he snapped. “What the hell was the matter?”

“Traffic,” muttered Cates, hoping that he imitated the voice of the former driver.

Margolo didn’t appear to notice. With two of his men he got in the back seat. The third man got in front and leaned over the seat to join the low-toned conversation.

“Out by Jimmy’s,” ordered Margolo.

Cates nodded and started the car. For a moment he wondered where Jimmy’s was, then remembered it was a cafe out in the west end of the town, a meeting place for underworld leaders.

The radio cop suppressed a sigh. It wasn’t pleasant to contemplate what would happen if Margolo discovered his identity.

As the car neared Jimmy’s, the men became silent. Cates could watch Margolo in the rear-vision mirror. The gangster’s swarthy face was grim; his thin lips were twisted in an ugly snarl.

“Slow,” he commanded.

Cates throttled the car to about ten miles an hour. Thoughtfully he stared at the lights in front of the cafe. Something was going to happen, but—

Cates soon found out. A man strolled from the cafe and called laughingly to another man inside. A second figure appeared in the doorway.

“Now!” gritted Margolo.

Four guns barked. The man in the doorway pitched forward, rolled to the sidewalk, and lay still.

Horror and rage stirred Dave Cates. All in a second he realized that he must carry this thing through until Margolo dismissed him—that if he made the slightest suspicious move the four guns would bark again.

Cates stepped upon the accelerator and the big car leaped away.

“Back to the house,” ordered Margolo, his voice as calm as if he had not killed a man. Then with a hard laugh: “McGuirk won’t do no more braggin’ now.”

Cates’ face was very grim as he bent over the wheel. The low-lived murderer! Strike with deadly precision and then run from the law! Well, he wouldn’t strike much more—not if Dave Cates had anything to say about it.

At the house Margolo got out and fastened his glittering gaze upon his driver. Cates was thankful for the shadow cast by the visor of his chauffeur’s cap.

“Take this car back to the garage,” ordered the gangster, “and remember—it wasn’t out tonight. If the cops ask you, you didn’t see nothin’ nor hear nothin’. See?”

Again Cates nodded, not daring to trust his voice. As he drew away from the curb he glanced at his watch. Almost eight—time to be getting up to the microphone. That thought came to him mechanically. It is the unforgivable sin for a radio announcer to be late. What should he do?

The capture of the gunmen was of first importance. Should he go directly to the Warren Avenue station and notify the police there? No, because that was a small detail, with only one or two reserve men. It would take too long for the desk sergeant to summon the men on the street. Too, it would take too long to telephone the other details.

It was three minutes to eight. Deciding, Dave Cates pulled to the curb, leaped out, and raced back toward the old garage, careful to go by a back way so that Margolo's men would not see him.

At the doorway a small figure rose out of the gloom. Dave Cates' hand flashed to his armpit. Then, "How'd you get here?" he gasped.

Already she had anticipated his surprise, and had written her message. Barely Cates made it out: "I wanted to see you broadcast, no matter how dangerous the locality might be. Please don't be angry."

Angry! How could he be angry with her for anything? Even now a warm glow suffused him at the thought that she was willing to share danger with him. Still, because the ideal in his heart was a precious and fragile thing, he dared not hope too much.

"All right," he cautioned, "but be sure not to make any noise."

He just made the room as the faint green light flashed, telling him that station KYK had switched its power to him. He placed a chair for Miss Anabelle to one side, where she could watch, then quickly stepped to the microphone.

"Good evening, folks," he said somewhat breathlessly. "This is the police division of station KYK to which you are now listening."

He paused, and the department listeners understood that he was going into code.

Slowly, distinctly, the radio cop continued: "Bed isn't the worst place in the world after a man has worked hard all day. A sale of springs and mattresses is now taking place at 47 River Street. Wonderful bargains if bought *now*."

## Chapter VI: Vast Force

All over the great city, desk sergeants and captains took their feet from their desks as they interpreted that message. Big Ed Margolo at 47 River Street with his assistants! Definite proof that they had shot and killed someone, presumably McGuirk! Act at once! Orders went ringing through big rooms, and reserve men rushed to obey. In five seconds, police cars were racing to River Street.

Having thrown this verbal bomb, Officer Cates went on talking, calmly outlining the sub-station reports that had come in to headquarters that day. Before he had finished, blue uniforms began creeping up on the house at 47 River Street to surround it, before closing in.

As he talked, the radio cop stared out of the little window that gave him a view of proceedings. Cates became tense as he saw a squad of men go to a side door and pound for admittance. There was no response, so Officer Jake Schmaltz kicked in the panels.

At the rear of the house, another squad smashed two windows. A gun cracked sharply—another—and the battle was on. All in a second the quiet of River Street was broken by yells, shots, and the smashing of furniture.

Then Dave Cates attained greatness. After a quick word of reassurance to the frightened girl, he rolled up his mental shirt sleeves and cut loose. Now he was not only a police announcer, but a news reporter, and the biggest story of the year was breaking right under his nose. As he described the scene, there was a ring in his voice that brought his listeners up wide-eyed.

“There’s a little squabble going on out here, folks, that you might be interested in. The police are making a raid on a River Street house, occupied by Big Ed Margolo, the gangster, and a number of his gunmen. Definite proof has been established that Margolo and three of his men just shot and killed Red McGuirk, chief of the opposing gang.

“Now they are shooting down there, and there’s plenty of noise—*plenty!* Those gun flashes in the dark are like lightning flashes. They’re pretty, but they’re bad. Oh, there comes a gunman running out of the house. He breaks through three officers who are covering the door and starts on the run for cover.

“Now the officers are chasing him, shooting as they go. He turns and fires back at them. There he goes down! One of the bullets got him—in the leg, I think. The officers had every right to shoot to kill, but they didn’t. Now they’re putting the cuffs on him.

“People are around here, but about all you can see of ’em is an occasional head showing from behind a tree or from around the corner of a building. They’re still shooting in the house, but not quite so much. Ah, there’s a siren—it must be the wagon coming up. Yes, and it’s coming fast, too, by the sound of it. Oh, boy, there’s plenty of action in this row, all right!”

He paused for breath. “Please stand by, folks. I’ll be with you in a minute.”

He grinned at Anabelle Talbot, then went to the window to seek more details. Gee, if he could only be out in that scrap himself!

Absorbed as he was in the arrival of the patrol wagon, he failed to notice the man who crept around the corner of the house and paused, noting instantly the figure in the garage window.

Big Ed knew he had been framed by somebody, but he wasn’t sure by whom. That dim green glow that shaded the figure gave him suspicion. Big Ed knew something about radio. His teeth bared, and he moved toward the garage.

The radio cop was still standing at the window when Big Ed Margolo, automatic in hand, pushed the door noiselessly open. But Anabelle Talbot saw—saw the set, deadly expression on Margolo’s swarthy face, saw the glint of blue steel in his hand.

Horror made her motionless. Sudden danger sometimes will reveal many things. In the fractional part of a second Anabelle saw into her own heart and read correctly what was written there. Must she sit and see Dave killed because there was no way of warning him? She swallowed hard and lifted her white face to the heavens in agonized appeal, her lips moving.

Paralyzed vocal chords fought with the chains that bound them. Quick tears marked the terrific effort. Then the miracle happened, perhaps brought about by the working of the vast, beautiful force in a girl’s heart.

In the silence Miss Anabelle’s voice broke hysterically: “Dave! Oh, *Dave!*”

The radio cop whirled instantly and saw Margolo. Long practice before the mirror at headquarters brought its reward. Dave Cates dropped flat, his hand whipping to his left shoulder.

*Crack!*

Margolo’s automatic spat flame, but the bullet passed harmlessly over Cates’ head and thudded into the wall.

*Boom!*

Cates’ big police gun roared. Margolo spun around as the heavy slug ripped into his shoulder.

Like a flash Cates was upon the gangster. He knocked the automatic from his hand, and applied the cuffs. Adroitly he kicked Margolo’s feet from under him, and lowered the gangster to the floor.

“Oh, Dave!” faltered Miss Anabelle, one hand fluttering to her throat.

In a stride the little radio cop was beside her. He blinked, then caught up her hands and looked intently into her face.

“Holy pup!” he breathed, awed. “How’d you do it, honey? What happened?”

Now she was laughing and crying on his shoulder. “I—I don’t know, Dave. I just had to s-say something when I knew he was going to shoot.”

Officer Cates of the wave-length squad didn’t understand, but he was grateful, so grateful that he was inarticulate. The marvel of it was that the glow of reverence upon his freckled face made him almost handsome.

“Gee!” he said softly. “Gee!”

He didn’t quite know what to do. But the green light was still on, and from force of habit he moved nearer the microphone, holding Anabelle Talbot tightly in his arms. Deliriously happy, he knew not what words he spoke.

Consequently, for the next half hour, the cops in a dozen different sub-stations tore their hair and raved over a message they couldn’t fathom:

“Aw, say, honey! Don’t take on like that or I’ll be bawling, too! Honest, now, I love you like the dickens.”

Transcriber’s Note: This story appeared in the August 15, 1929 issue of “Top-Notch” magazine.

The End

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