

masse, each with weapon in hand. But as they rounded the bend to the stairs, Vincetti stopped short. For as he reached the bottom step, Mac burst out from his hiding place in the room beyond the staircase, waving a machine gun wildly.

"All right, you stinkin' worms! Thought you were gonna make me take th' rap for ya, eh? Well I don't take a rap for nobody!"

"Now Mac," Vincetti, still holding his revolver, raised his hands calmly, more in the hopes of soothing Mac than to show that he was no threat. "Settle down. Rourke must have told you what's been going on —"

"Yeah, he told me, all right! He told me all about it!"

At that moment the tension was broken by the sound of a low, droning voice speaking from behind their backs.

"Justice wreaks its vengeance upon the guilty," it uttered. "None of you shall escape this night."

The gunmen had barely time enough to tear their eyes from Mac and cast their gaze on the man behind them—the weird figure wearing the dark mask, standing opposite them in the doorway to the dining room—before the automatic poised in his upraised hand blazed. Cos and Lou both went down, each hit in the leg by two shots loosed in rapid succession. In response Dolan, Hines, and Minnelli fired back, but their strange adversary was already dodging back into the dining room and slamming the door, while Mac, bellowing, unleashed a frenzy of bullets from the tommygun.

"Look out!" Vincetti shouted, diving into the stairwell for cover as Dolan, Hines, and Minnelli spun around just as the spray of lead belched forth at them. Minnelli was cut down in an instant by a full stream from the sub-machine gun, followed immediately by Hines, Mac then setting his attention on Cos and Lou, who were trying to crawl or stagger out of the line of fire. While they died quick, ruthless deaths from the onslaught, Dawson was momentarily cowed for fear of getting clipped by the deadly barrage. Dolan had managed to duck and roll, scrambling to the other side of the staircase and then away down the hall, to circle around.

"I'll leave Dolan for you, boss," Mac announced, relaxing his trigger.