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No Orchids for Mr Blandish

Written by James Hadley Chase

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James Hadley Chase (1906–1985)

Born René Brabazon Raymond in London, the son of a British colonel in the Indian Army, James Hadley Chase was educated at King's School in Rochester, Kent, and left home at the age of 18. He initially worked in book sales until, inspired by the rise of gangster culture during the Depression and by reading James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, he wrote his first novel, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. Despite the American setting of many of his novels, Chase (like Peter Cheyney, another hugely successful British noir writer) never lived there, writing with the aid of maps and a slang dictionary. He had phenomenal success with the novel, which continued unabated throughout his entire career, spanning 45 years and nearly 90 novels. His work was published in dozens of languages and over thirty titles were adapted for film. He served in the RAF during World War II, where he also edited the RAF Journal. In 1956 he moved to France with his wife and son; they later moved to Switzerland, where Chase lived until his death in 1985.

No Orchids for Miss Blandish

Eve

More Deadly Than the Male

Mission to Venice

Mission to Siena

Not Safe to Be Free

Shock Treatment

Come Easy – Go Easy

What's Better Than Money?
Just Another Sucker
I Would Rather Stay Poor
A Coffin from Hong Kong
Tell it to the Birds
One Bright Summer Morning
The Soft Centre
You Have Yourself a Deal
Have This One on Me
Well Now, My Pretty
Believed Violent
An Ear to the Ground
The Whiff of Money
The Vulture Is a Patient Bird
Like a Hole in the Head
An Ace Up My Sleeve
Want to Stay Alive?
Just a Matter of Time
You're Dead Without Money
Have a Change of Scene
Knock, Knock! Who's There?
Goldfish Have No Hiding Place
So What Happens to Me?
The Joker in the Pack
Believe This, You'll Believe Anything
Do Me a Favour, Drop Dead
I Hold the Four Aces
My Laugh Comes Last
Consider Yourself Dead

You Must Be Kidding
A Can of Worms
Try This One for Size
You Can Say That Again
Hand Me a Fig Leaf
Have a Nice Night
We'll Share a Double Funeral
Not My Thing
Hit Them Where It Hurts

No Orchids for Miss Blandish

James Hadley Chase



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CHAPTER ONE

IT began on a summer morning in July. The sun came up early in the morning mist, and the pavements were already steaming a little from the heavy dew. The air in the streets was stale and lifeless. It had been an exhausting month of intense heat, rainless skies and warm, dust-laden winds.

Bailey walked into Minny's hash-house, leaving Old Sam asleep in the Packard, Bailey was feeling lousy. He had been hitting the booze hard the previous night and the heat didn't help. His mouth felt like a bird-cage and his eyes were gritty.

Minny's was empty when he entered. It was still early and the woman had only just got through with wiping over the floor. He picked his way over the damp, wrinkling his nose a little at the stale smell of cooking and sweat that hung about the place.

The blonde, who was leaning over the counter, gave him a smile that made Bailey think of a piano. She had worked on herself until she looked as good as any movie star until you got close to her, then she wasn't so hot. She patted her tight, yellow curls and stretched, so that her large breasts poked at Bailey through her thin dress.

'I bet you couldn't sleep,' she said. 'Ain't this heat wicked?...'

Bailey scowled at her and ordered a Scotch. She slapped a bottle on the counter and pushed the glass towards him.

'Ain't you a bright, cheery little boy?' she cracked at him. 'You been hittin' things too hard last night, I can see.'

Bailey took the bottle and glass and walked over to a table and sat down. He looked at the blonde, who was watching him with interest.

'Find somethin' to do,' he said surlily, 'and leave me alone?'

'Aw, be yourself, Clark Gable,' she said, once more spreading herself over the counter. 'What's biting you?'

'Give your mouth a rest,' he said, turning his back on her.

She shrugged and went back to her novelette. Bailey gave

himself a long drink and felt better. He leant back in the chair and tipped his hat over his eyes. He was getting worried. Riley was gut-aching about dough. If the breaks didn't come very soon, they would have to stick up a bank again. Bailey was not so keen on busting banks now that the G-men were knocking around. The bastards were always gumshoeing about, patting your pockets for rods and so on. Still, things were certainly getting tough, and they all would be on the rocks if something didn't happen soon. From where he sat he could see Old Sam snoring in the Packard. Bailey sneered at the sleeping man. That guy was just useless, all he thought about was his next meal and his next sleep. It was up to Riley or himself to find something. He took another drink and gave himself a cigarette. The Scotch reminded him that he had a stomach, and he looked over his shoulder for the blonde.

'H'yah, Gorgeous,' he called, 'c'mon over here.'

She walked over to him with her hands on her hips and stood close to his elbow, her breasts close to his face. He could smell her, and it stirred something in him.

'What about some eggs an' ham?' he said, poking at her breasts with his finger. She was too quick for him and jerked away.

'Be yer age, Romeo,' she said, tossing her head. 'You want building up before you start lying down.'

Bailey thought that was a good crack and he grinned as he watched her flounce to the stove. She broke the eggs into the pan with a practised flip and slapped a thick slice of ham on the grill. While he was waiting, Heinie came in. Bailey waved to him, and Heinie's fat face split into a rubbery smile. He waddled over as fast as his short legs would take him, and sat down gingerly in the chair Bailey had pushed forward to him. He began blotting his face with a dirty handkerchief, putting his greasy hat under the chair.

'What's new?' Bailey asked.

'Gimme a drink,' Heinie said, his little eyes fixed on the bottle. 'Jeeze! Ain't it hot?'

Bailey poured him out a stiff one and watched him drink it with narrow eyes. Heinie was a right guy all right. He had

his ear to the ground and passed it on. He was an outside man to a Society rag that ran blackmail on the side. A mighty useful guy to be friendly with.

'How you makin' out?' he asked Bailey with a friendly leer. 'Things goin' good with you?'

'Lousy,' Bailey said, tossing his butt on the floor. 'Things are getting tight an' it don't look as if they're goin' to get better.'

Heinie wagged his fat head. 'Yeah,' he said, 'you're right. It's this goddam heat ... things don't happen when it's this hot.'

Bailey shrugged impatiently. 'What you doin'?' he asked.

The blonde came over with his order and stood waiting for Heinie to make up his mind what he was going to eat. She did not crack this time, because Heinie was raw with women and she knew it. Heinie said at last that he'd have a steak. Bailey waited with impatience while Heinie talked for some time about how he wanted the steak cooked and how many onions he wanted with it. When the blonde had left them, again, he picked up the threads.

'What's doin' these days?' he asked. 'Riley is sweatin' about dough. Can't you horn us in somewhere?'

Heinie shook his head. 'Not a chance,' he said. 'I ain't been doin' a thing for weeks. Tonight is the only break I've had. I got to cover the Blandish story an' that ain't goin' to bring me in much.'

'Blandish? Ain't he the meat king?'

'Yeah.' Heinie was getting impatient for his food, he kept glancing over his shoulder at the blonde, and the smell of the onions frying was driving him crazy. 'Ain't it a knock-out how I can eat in this weather?' he went on, showing an interest in himself. 'Most guys jest fold up and drink, but it don't worry me.'

Bailey finished his ham and eggs and sat back. 'What's Blandish in the news for?' he asked.

'Aint' Blandish, it's his daughter. Ever seen her? Jeeze! What a honey! Is she the tops or is she? Listen, pal, I'd give a year's rent to lay that dame.'

Bailey wasn't interested, but Heinie, once started, was difficult to stop. He wiggled his fat behind more firmly into the chair and spread his fat little hands on the table.

'This dame's gettin' the family rocks outa hock today!' he said. 'There's to be a swell party tonight, and she's hanging fifty grand round her neck to celebrate.'

'Fifty grand?' Bailey suddenly leant forward.

'Fifty G's goes round that little white neck tonight,' Heinie said, smiling smugly. 'An' this baby's goin' to write it up for ten lousy bucks.'

The blonde came over with the steak and put it in front of Heinie. It looked good, and Heinie beamed. He patted her arm and nodded his head at her. She looked down at him with a stony eye and moved away quickly as he tried to make a pass at her. Bailey was sitting, thinking. He let Heinie get into a huddle with his food and stared out of the open door into the street. Fifty grand worth of rocks sounded like a big job. He creased his brows and wondered if Riley would have the nerve to go after them. He glanced quickly at Heinie who was eating noisily.

'Do you know if this dame's goin' straight home after the party?' he asked suddenly.

Heinie paused, his fork near his mouth. 'What's eatin' you?' he asked suspiciously.

'Jest curious, that's all.' Bailey looked at him with a dead pan.

Heinie could never refuse to talk. 'I got it from MacGowan's man-' he began.

Bailey interrupted him. 'MacGowan? ... Where does he fit in?'

'MacGowan? Ain't you heard of Jerry MacGowan?' Heinie looked quite shocked, 'You don't get about, do you? This MacGowan is one of our rich playboys . . . he's got hot pants for this dame . . . see? His man told me that he's takin' her to the Golden Slipper to hear Louis swing it after the celebrations.'

'Jest the two of them, eh?' Bailey said thoughtfully.

Heinie looked worried. 'I hope you ain't goin' to start anything' he said. 'This is big stuff, Bailey, it don't suit your type of outfit.,

Bailey grinned at him like a wolf. 'I ain't startin' anythin',' he said.

Heinie looked at him with his little eyes, but Bailey met his stare without a flicker. He looked over his shoulder and signalled to the blonde. He settled his check and got up.

'I'll be seein' you,' he said.

'You're in a sudden hurry ... ain't you?' Heinie asked, looking up at him.

'Got Old Sam outside in the wagon. He was poundin' his car, but I guess he's about through by now. Christ! What a lousy night I had. Didjer ever know such heat?'

Heinie nodded his head up and down. He felt safer talking about the weather.

'Sure the heat was bad, an' it's gonna be bad today.'

Bailey waved and walked over to the door. As he passed the blonde he aimed a slap at her, but she twisted like a lizard. 'Aw, be your age.' They both said it together, Bailey mimicking her voice. She squealed with laughter and Bailey grinned. He walked into the street. The heat hit him like a clenched fist. The haze on the road made him feel a little dizzy. He walked slowly over to the Packard. His brain was busy. So the Blandish rocks were coming to the surface again. Every little mobster in Kansas would be sitting up, licking his lips when the news got round. With Heinie, news got round mighty quick. He let everyone in on everything. Heinie had no favourites; he was a right guy all right.

Bailey found Old Sam still snoring. He looked at him with a grimace, and then turned into a nearby drugstore and shut himself in with a telephone. He dialled and began speaking with Riley. Hurriedly he explained what Heinie had told him. Riley seemed half-dead at the other end. Bailey had left him in bed with Anna, and he was surprised that he answered the telephone at all. He could tell that Riley was sore about something.

'Hold on for Christ's sake,' Riley said suddenly. 'This chippy is shouting an' I can't hear what you're sayin'... just wait a minute.'

Bailey could hear Anna's voice strident with fury and then he heard Riley's bellow and the sound of a sharp slap. Bailey grinned to himself. Riley and Anna fought all day – just for the fun of it. Bailey thought that it was the way they were made. Riley came back to the 'phone again.

'Listen, Riley,' Bailey pleaded, 'it's goddam hot in this box. Get your ears back so that I can get outa here quick.'

Riley began to beef about the heat at his end.

'Okay, okay,' Bailey broke in, 'it's hot your end, but it's murder here. Yeah! Murder! No, I ain't done murder. I say it's murder in here ... in this box. What box? ... This goddam sonofabitch box I'm in here. What? . . . Aw! Skip it, will you? No! No, never mind the heat. Just listen to this a moment, before I die. The Blandish rocks are coming out of hock. Yeah, that's what I said... the Blandish rocks .. THE MEAT KING! That's right, I keep tellin' you, don't I? Yeah, tonight. The dame's wearing them at the Golden Slipper after a big party. She is goin' there with Jerry MacGowan. What do you think?'

'Come right back,' Riley seemed suddenly alive. 'We got to talk this over ... c'mon quick.'

'Okay,' Bailey grinned into the mouthpiece. Riley was not so yellow as he thought. 'I'm on my way.' He hung up and paused while he lit a cigarette, then he stepped into the street. The air was cool after the booth and he walked with quick strides to the Packard. He reached inside and jerked Old Sam roughly out of his sleep. 'Wake up, Sleepin' Beauty,' he said, sliding under the wheel. 'Things are happenin'.'

Bailey picked his way self-consciously through the crowded tables. The Golden Slipper was doing record business. Waiters were moving backwards and forwards like well-oiled machines, carrying trays held high. The noise of incessant chatter struggled with the blare of the band. The air was thick with smoke, and it was difficult to see across the room. Bailey felt awkward and irritable. It was like Riley to give him the inside job to work.

He sat down at a small table and snarled at the waiter who looked at him doubtfully. He ordered a highball, and while the man went away to fetch it he looked round the room keenly. It was early and he knew that Miss Blandish had not arrived, but he did not know what she looked like, and he thought that he might spot the table which was reserved for her. He could see nothing in the haze, and he gave up with an irritable shrug. He was glad to have the highball to give his hands something to do. He sat there for some time, smoking and drinking and wondering how Riley liked waiting outside with Old Sam in the Packard. Then suddenly the drummer ran off a roll and the leader came to the mike.

'Just a word in your ear, folks,' he said, his voice blaring round the room. 'Miss Blandish is now arriving with our old friend, Mr. Jerry MacGowan. It's the little lady's birthday and she's here to have a good time. Give her a big hand when she comes in, folks, but don't crowd her. A little bird tells me that she will be wearing the famous pearls, so, ladies, here's your chance to see for yourself.'

Bailey screwed his head round quickly and looked towards the entrance. Every head in the room was looking in the same direction. A bright white spotlight picked her out as she came in, followed by a tall young man, who grinned into the haze, waving a hand to unseen friends. Bailey watched her as she came down the narrow aisle between the tables. He had heard about her looks and had often wondered just how good she was, but now that he saw her for the first time, he drew in his breath sharply. The light caught her thick, red hair and reflected back on her white skin. Her eyes were large and bright, and Bailey sat gaping. He had seen plenty of good-lookers in his day, but Miss Blandish caught him by the throat.

What got him more than anything else was that she looked innocent. He didn't know the word for it, but she just wasn't like any of the girls he had run into. She had everything they had, but just the one thing that they lacked was there in her. He watched her wave her hand gaily to the crowd shouting and stamping round her, and, when the row had died down and she had seated herself with MacGowan, Bailey

relaxed a little. He watched them closely, his eyes on the rope of pearls round her neck.

From where he sat he could tell that they were good, and at the same time he began to realize that this job was going to be big. They were not going to get away with it easily. He could imagine how tough Blandish would get with the cops. They would have all the State police in Kansas on their heels as soon as the news broke. Bailey found that he was sweating slightly. Perhaps they were nuts to try and pull a job like this. Blandish had millions and he'd raise hell. He gave himself a drink and tried to relax. What would Riley say if he went out and told him to throw in his hand. He shrugged to himself. He'd have to go through with it.

The band suddenly cut out with that slick precision of a well-trained troupe and let the clarinet and drums swing it. The clarinet fluttered the reed, dragging down the top register. The drummer, his eyes blank and bloodshot, jittered the gong. The floor was small and crowded, and the scrape of leather was as rhythmic as the wire brush on the trap-top. The ceiling lights were dimmed, and someone started raking the crowd with a spot. Round and round went the spot, picking out the white faces of the dancers. A girl in the middle of the floor was struggling to keep up her shoulder straps. The man dancing with her, his thumbs locked in the straps at the back, endeavoured to keep them on the move. The girl gave up struggling after a bit, and, giggling, let her peach brassière show. Over in a corner a couple were facing each other, and every so often the woman would move her body towards the man without moving her feet.

Bailey saw that MacGowan was carrying a load. He was drinking steadily, and when he danced he lurched badly. Miss Blandish spoke to him and they went back to their table. This was interesting to Bailey and he watched Miss Blandish talking to MacGowan. Obviously she was trying to persuade him to ease up on the liquor, but he was already drunk enough to be obstinate. She suddenly shrugged a little and turned her shoulder away from him. This seemed to annoy him for he emptied his glass and immediately refilled it.

The crowd were getting rowdy, and Bailey could see some of the men trying to stitch their bodies into the women as they danced. Suddenly some raw horseplay broke out at one of the tables. A college boy began shouting at his black-haired companion who leant far over the table to smack his face. He grabbed her arms and, pulling her on to the table, sweeping the glasses and plates to the floor with a crash, he smacked her yellow-satin bottom. A crowd gathered round, laughing and cheering. The girl screamed till the roof quivered. Bailey thought uneasily that the vice squad would be along pretty soon. He looked across at Miss Blandish and saw that she was already standing. She was shaking MacGowan's arm impatiently. MacGowan got up unsteadily and followed her down the aisle.

No one but Bailey noticed them leave. Bailey hurried out. His broad shoulders jostled the crowd standing on the wooden terrace admiring the moon. A drunk, turning to protest, sobered suddenly when he caught Bailey's eye. Bailey walked down the drive quickly and on to the highway. The Packard moved out of the shadows and he climbed into the back. Old Sam was at the wheel, and Riley by his side.

'They will be out in a minute,' Bailey said. 'She will be driving. The fella is stewed to the gills.'

'Drive as far as the farm we passed comin' and then park,' Riley said to Old Sam. 'We'll let them overtake us and then crowd 'em into a ditch.'

Old Sam engaged the gear and the Packard slid away. Bailey lit a cigarette and pulled a gun from his shoulder-holster. He laid it on the seat beside him. There was plenty of power under the hood, and Old Sam knew just how to feed the gas. The farmhouse was on the next bend, so he stalled the engine and ran into a deep shadow.

Riley spoke over his shoulder: 'Get into the road and watch for 'em.'

Bailey took his gun; tossing his cigarette away, he stepped on to the road. His feet crunched on the loose gravel as he walked a little way back to clear the bend. He stood on the side of the road, watching. In the distance the lights of the road-house gleamed in the darkness. Faintly he could hear the band,

swinging it hot. He waited there immovable for several minutes, then, turning suddenly, he ran back to the car.

'Okay,' he said. 'Here they come.'

Old Sam started the engine. As the hum of the approaching car came nearer, he engaged the gear. The Packard slid into motion and, as Miss Blandish drove past, they fell in behind.

'Let her get a bit further on,' Riley said, 'then crowd her.' The road was lonely and broad with heavily wooded country ahead of them. They were waiting for that. The beam of their headlights clung to the back of Miss Blandish's car. They could see Jerry MacGowan's head through the rear window. He was slumped back and he rolled with the motion of the car.

'That punk ain't goin' to give trouble,' Bailey said.

Riley grunted.

The next bend brought them to the woods. The road was pitch black.

'Crowd 'em,' Riley said.

The speedometer showed sixty. The needle quivered and then crawled to sixty-five, and then on to sixty-seven.

The Packard held the road without any roll. The wind began to whistle and the trees looked smudged. The distance between the two cars remained the same.

'For Christ's sake,' Riley said, looking at Old Sam.

Old Sam shoved the pedal to the boards. They crept up a few yards, then fell away again. Bailey leant forward, his hands gripping the back of the seat.

'Give her all you have, Sam,' he shouted excitedly; 'that dame's wise to us. In another mile she'll be in the clear!'

Old Sam clung to the wheel as the needle flickered to eighty. The gap was closing. The two cars began to sway a little on the rough surface of the road. Suddenly Old Sam saw his chance as they approached a fork in the road. He jammed on the foot-brake and flung the wheel over. The tyres screamed on the gravel and the Packard turned broadside on, skidding into the rough. Bailey was flung to the floor-boards. He felt the Packard lurch, the off-wheels rise and then slam back on to the

road. The car quivered as Old Sam released the brake and trod hard on the gas, then it bumped and tore through the shrubs. Miss Blandish kept to the road; she had to come right round the crown while Old Sam had cut through the rough and had come out ahead of her.

Bailey scrambled back to his seat, swearing hard. He savagely groped about for his gun and found it on the floor. Old Sam was forcing Miss Blandish to slow down. He zigzagged about the road so that she could not pass, gradually reducing speed. Finally the two cars came to a standstill, the Packard broadside across the road. Bailey jumped out and walked over to the other car; he poked his gun at Miss Blandish.

'Come on out,' he said. 'This is a stick-up.'

Riley didn't move from the Packard. He leant forward, his shoulder and arm out of the window, and watched. Old Sam chewed as he stared into the headlights of the car. He didn't even bother to look.

Miss Blandish couldn't see Bailey's face. He was standing in the shadow of the car, but the reflection of the headlights picked out the dull metal of his gun. She opened the door and stepped on to the road. There are ways in which a woman leaves a car. Some get out with a show of leg, others don't. Miss Blandish didn't. She stood quite still, holding on to the car door, looking at Bailey with startled eyes. She was not scared, but badly startled. MacGowan called out from the car and raised his head with difficulty. He pulled himself out beside Miss Blandish, and Bailey's arm stiffened. The gun suddenly became menacing.

'Take it easy, bozo, this is a stick-up,' he said.

MacGowan sobered up. He eased himself closer to Miss Blandish.

'You had better be careful,' he said hoarsely. 'You don't know who you are talking to.'

'Pass over the pearls,' Bailey said, ignoring him.

Miss Blandish's hands flew to her throat and she backed away.

'Cut out that stuff or you'll get hurt,' Bailey said.

As she still backed away, he walked up to her with three

quick strides. He had to pass MacGowan who lammed him on the side of the head. A sweet thing to do considering the circumstances, but he was still sufficiently drunk to be reckless. The road was uneven and Bailey's foot was off the ground, so he went over with a thud. Miss Blandish gave a little scream, not a loud one, but as if she had screamed to herself. Riley didn't move. He thought Bailey could handle it, but he did push Old Sam out of the car to watch Miss Blandish. The old man dug his .38 into her ribs, but she did not seem to see him, her eyes were fixed on Bailey sprawling on the road.

MacGowan stood still, instead of jumping in. The gun had shot out of Bailey's hands and vanished into the shadows. The blow jarred him and he crawled to his knees swearing softly and obscenely. He paused for a moment in that position, looking at MacGowan who, realizing his lost opportunity, came at him with a rush. Bailey was up to meet him and guided his feeble lead over his shoulder and smacked him across the jaw, bringing his wrist down as he did it. MacGowan reeled away, his arms flung wide to catch his balance. Bailey shuffled after him. He had a small life-preserver in his hand, which he carried tucked, up his sleeve. He drove his left into MacGowan's body and, as the boy came forward, he socked him across the eyes and nose with the life-preserver. Miss Blandish heard the bone go, quite distinctly, like the sharp note of breaking wood. Jerry folded up. He lay on his back in the road, lit by the headlights, his long legs thrashing in agony, as he held his hands to his face. Bailey stood over him and kicked at his head. He still cursed softly. He kicked Jerry very carefully, aiming with his foot drawn back, then kicking very hard. Riley leant further out of the car.

Miss Blandish made a movement as if she wanted to go to him, but the gun in her side dug deeper. She could not scream. Her tongue curled in her mouth and she could not make a sound. She could not even shut her eyes. She just stood and looked. Suddenly Riley stiffened and opened the door. Bailey was still kicking. The sound of his boot was no longer sharp; it was dull, as if he were kicking dough. Riley came across very quickly, and violently shoved him away. They

all looked at the tattered dummy that had once breathed and lived. Riley took a deep breath.

'You sonofabitch!' he said to Bailey.

Bailey began to wipe his boots in the long grass. Old Sam still stood near Miss Blandish, but his gun-arm hung at his side. He was scared. Miss Blandish had covered her eyes with her hands. She was shivering as if she were very cold, Riley went on one knee and looked closely at MacGowan, then he got up and shook his fist at Bailey. 'You bastard!' he said, his face white and glistening with sweat. 'You've started somethin' ... this is a goddam murder rap now ... you crazy rat!'

Bailey hooked his finger in his collar and jerked at it savagely. 'He asked for it--' he jerked. 'Didn't he ask for it?' He turned his head quickly to Old Sam who wouldn't look at him.

The three men stood and looked at MacGowan and then at each other, Murder was new to them, and they were scared to hell. Riley took himself in hand. He moved slowly over to Miss Blandish. She felt him coming and snatched her hands from her face.

'No row!' Riley snarled at her, almost crazy with fear that she would scream. 'You'll get it if you make a row.'

Miss Blandish was frightened. She thought he was going to kill her.

'Stay still and don't make a move,' Riley told her.

Bailey came and pulled at his arm. 'This dame's gotta go the same way,' he said, keeping his voice low, 'She's seen everything... we gotta knock her off.'

Riley pushed him away. 'Shut your mouth,' he said, 'You've done enough for tonight.' He was looking all the time at Miss Blandish, letting his eyes soak in her beauty. He ran his eyes over her figure, and although he was jittery he found himself thinking that she was good all right. He walked towards her again and she took a step back so that the blazing car-lights were behind her. The beams went right through her clothes, showing her long legs in silhouette. Riley suddenly saw her like that and became implacable with lust. He wanted her so badly, that he began to shiver.

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She waved her hands at him as if imploring him to go away, but he came on. The touch of his cold, damp hands on her bare arms galvanized her into life. She jerked away from him and opened her mouth to scream. He shifted his feet and his fist, half-closed, hit her on the jaw. She sagged at the knees and he dragged her over to the Packard. He tossed her into the back seat and looked over his shoulder at the other two. 'Shove the stiff into his car and drive it into the wood,' he shouted. 'Get goin'.'