

**Arthur Leo Zagat**



***Terror Beneath  
the Streets***

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# **Terror Beneath the Streets**



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# I. — ATTACKED THROUGH THE GLASS

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AFTERWARDS, it was known that an essential element of the terror which ran riot through New York City on the night of March fourth was its perfect timing. But to Roy Parker the fact that the Trinity Church clock hands pointed to precisely seven o'clock meant little, and for a good reason. For at that moment he was standing on the northeast corner of Broadway and Pine Street, holding Ethel Vine in his arms.

Her lithe form was tiny against his huge body. She stood on tiptoe to reach him. Yet her small hands, slim and flowerlike on his burly shoulders, could twist and mould him at will. He loved her and as in everything else he did, Parker threw his whole soul and being into that love.

Those two; and a second slender, pert-visaged girl who watched the lovers with a half-smile on her lips—and a furtive shadow of pain in her gray eyes—were incongruously alone where an hour before a torrent of shouting, laughing humanity had poured. The air that had been palpitant with the ordered chaos of the nation's business heart was hushed, and there was a brooding, almost uncanny quality to the silence that lay heavily in the deep canyons of the financial district.

Towering buildings loomed, dark and dismal, jutting incredibly high to touch the moonless bowl of an overcast sky. They seemed lifeless cliffs enormously ponderous, enormously sinister. Street lamps struggled feebly against a creeping murk that was not fog but the forerunning shadow of fog.



Halfway down the block a single square splotch of neon glare spotlighted the all-night restaurant where the three had met for supper. A block to the east the tall pilasters of the Stock Exchange Building glimmered, and the black silhouette of a lonely policeman paced before it.

"Hey, Roy," Ann Vine said dryly, "isn't it about time you finished saying goodbye? You did give me your ticket for the theater, you know, so Ethel wouldn't have to go alone, and I refuse to sit in the orchestra in this tailored suit. Besides, I seem to remember your saying something about having work to do."

"There you are!" Parker grinned at her over his sweetheart's ash-blond head. "The demon sister-in-law is getting practical again." There was gruff affection in his rumbling tones. "If Ethel would only shove you under a subway train tonight I'd take her down to City Hall tomorrow morning and get spliced."

"No you wouldn't! You'd track her to the end of the earth and send her to the electric chair with that nasty grin still on your homely mug." Ann's tip-tilted nose crinkled with pretended distaste. "That's why I've been trying to throw a monkey wrench in this affair of yours. I don't like the idea of having a famous detective in the family—just in case I decide to steal a batch of Rascomb Sloane's bonds." She shuddered prettily.

"Your boss would undoubtedly call me in on the case. And how I'd love to slip the steel bracelets on your wrists. I—"

"Stop it, Roy!" Ethel thrust away from him. "I won't have you two going on like that." White-frosted, slender and graceful as long-stemmed lily, she seemed to glow in the

dimness with an inward light. "I know it's kidding, but some time one of you will say something that hurts, and then..."

"Aw, Kitten, Ann knows I love her," Parker slid a columnar arm around the slim waist of his fiancée's younger sister, drew her close to him, "darn near as much as—*Hey!* You're shivering, Ann! Frightened of the dark, Kitten? What's the matter?"

"I—I don't know." The tiny oval of her face looked up at him; tight, tawny ringlets framing its still pallor. "I'm all jittery and nervous inside." She pressed a hand to the tender, virginal swell of her bosom. "I—maybe it's the quiet around here, but I feel as if something—something awful—is going to happen—any second."

"Why, you—" Parker broke off, shrugged. "And I called you practical! Downtown's always like this after hours."

Ann shook her head, her pupils dilated, her long-lashed lids wide. "No. It's—different tonight. Listen!"

Underlying the brooding silence, the muted roar of the city came from the north where the residential and pleasure districts were just waking to their nocturnal life. From nearer at hand came the rush of an elevated train, the melancholy hoot of a ferryboat on the Hudson, the endless *chug, chug, chug* of some unseen machine. It was all utterly familiar—and yet somehow strangely ominous.

It was Ann herself who broke the taut, listening spell that held the trio. "Oh, I'm being awfully silly," she exclaimed, wrenching out of Parker's hold. "But not too silly to know it's getting later by the minute. Come on, Ethel. We certainly won't have time to shower and change unless we get