

**THE CUTIE'S A  
CORPSE**

*Pete  
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**AMERICAN BEST SELLER**

## CHAPTER ONE

Dames! They cause all the trouble in the world. They double-cross, they two-time, they cheat, they're poison. But at the same time as causing all the trouble, they also provide a heck of a lot that a guy with normal instincts likes. Every dame is a harlot at heart, making up to a guy one minute, and using him the next for her own purposes. You just can't trust them.

So Joe Corza philosophised, and Joe had reason to know all about it. But for greedy and jealous dames he wouldn't have been in the mess he was in. His trouble was that he trusted a dame once too often. He only trusted a dame once, but that was once too often. He sat on the hard bench, looking at the two other guys sitting at the table, and philosophised. He didn't hold any hatred for the dames now—only pity, and not much of that. Maybe Tiny's way had been the right way with dames after all. Poor Tiny!

The whole business had started with a dame, and just as naturally had ended with a dame—the same dame! Joe could remember it as if it had been yesterday, even though it began some time before. In his mind's eye he could still see the provocative flouncing Alma, flaunting her sex at him under the garish light of the street lamp, giving a shake to her long wavy black hair, and eyeing him in a way that sent feverish shivers down his spine.

Joe Corza was a small-time robber. He preferred to get on with the job and collect the dough without having to use violence, but now and again a little of the rough stuff became necessary. He had a gun, but that was a last resort. He favoured a loaded stick, a lead core covered with hard rubber. That didn't attract as much attention as a gun, and was quite effective. He had used it that night, he remembered. He had cased Broden's little shop in the dingy sidestreet of Chicago's seamy south side. Broden never put his dough in the bank, so it was rumoured.

nodded, and turned back to Tiny, who was still struggling to say something.

"I done it again, Joe," gasped Tiny. "I killed her—my cutie—Ella—she's dead."

Belle Stevens gave a shudder, which Joe noticed. He waved her to go back into the kitchen, and he laid one hand on Tiny's shoulder and said: "Now start at the beginnin' an' tell me all about it."

Belle went back to the kitchen, and Joe led the shaking Tiny to a seat. He had never seen Tiny like this before. Tiny realised he had done wrong, and he was upset. The big guy's small pale-blue eyes were staring and his loose lips were trembling. His ugly face had a look of staring surprise on it. Joe said. "Now tell me about it, Tiny. Whaddya mean?"

"My cutie—she's dead—I killed her," sobbed Tiny. "I didn't mean to do it—I swear I didn't, Joe. You believe me, don't you?"

"Sure, I believe you. I'll see you get by," said Joe. "But maybe we'd better make sure she is dead. I'll come along an' see."

Joe didn't need to examine Ella. As soon as he saw the black face with the horribly twisted features he knew it for sure. Ella was in a mess. Her body was bruised and knocked and her clothes were in a bad state. Her eyes stared blankly, and her swollen tongue was still sticking out of her mouth.

"She's dead O.K.," said Joe.

"She's dead," said Tiny with a catch in his voice.

"I killed her—my cutie—my cutie's a corpse!"

"You can't do anything about that now," said Joe.

"You shouldn't have left the door open, Tiny. Anybody might've found her. I'll lock up now, an' you stay in my apartment while I fix things."

Joe locked the door and looked round to see if he was being watched, but all the other doors on that floor were shut. He led the slobbering Tiny back to the apartment and pushed the last bottle of rye into his hand.

"Drink this," said Joe. "It'll make you feel better. You leave it to me, an' I'll fix things."

"I knew you would help me," said Tiny. "You're a pal, Joe, a real pal. But whaddya gonna do?"

"An' that leaves you," said Strang, walking over to where Tiny lay sprawling. And then Strang found the gun. . . .

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That was Joe's story. He looked along at the two guys playing cards at the other end of the room. They always put two warders with a guy in the condemned cell. The warders put the cards away, and Joe felt his shaven head. It was all set for the hot seat now. The warders stood up and looked at Joe. Yeah, thought Joe, this is it, and all because of a dame. Dames! They're poison!

THE END

# ***Pete Costello***

Among the many modern American hard-hitting, tough and outspoken writers dealing with the seamy side of American gangsterdom, PETE COSTELLO stands supreme.

His reputation in the States is unchallenged and here, again for English readers, he puts his pen to paper to record in his fast-moving, exciting and thrilling style the inside 'dope' on the rackets which have shocked America and the whole civilized world.

PETE COSTELLO is not for squeamish stomachs. He is not afraid to expose the vicious and ruthless brutality of the gangsters and the sordid lives of their 'molls' and 'floozyes.'

It is a tribute to modern American progress that these rackets and hoodlums have now been largely cleaned up, but PETE COSTELLO spent his early years in a large American city and grew to manhood during the 'roaring twenties' when the thug and gangster reigned supreme. It is largely due to the exposures by him and his fellow writers that the gangsters' power is now curbed.