Chapter 1 Wednesday, August 5th, 1936. 11:15 am. Eggies Cafe, East 56th street, NYC. Philo Vance was toying with a cheese and green-pepper omelet when District Attorney John F.-X. Markham sat down at his table. I stopped at your apartment when I heard you were back in town, Vance, declared Markham, but Currie said you were having breakfast, here. How was the shareholders meeting in Chicago? The District Attorney was a tall, strongly built man of forty-some years with a clean-shaven, chiseled face beneath a neatly trimmed mop of uniformly gray hair. He was not handsome. However he had an unmistakable air of distinction, and culture. This morning he wore his favorite brown wool suit with its years of well formed wrinkles. A week of unbearable heat and tedium, replied Vance. The debonair detective was slightly under six feet in height, fit, and as spotless as a shop-window dummy in a gray tweed ensemble. Fortunately, the newspapers offered daily reports on the Berlin Olympics to keep me from going insane. Jessie Owens certainly made his mark in history - 10.3 seconds in the 100 meter dash. Markham fumbled through his suit, found a cigarette and lit it. His face in the reflected glow of the match looked grim. Those Olympic games are nothing but propaganda mechanism for Adolph Hitler and his goose-stepping goons, complained the District Attorney, bitterly. He dragged over the ashtray sitting on the edge of the table, took a long draw on the cigarette and then blew smoke toward the ceiling. Thats why Hitler had that runner with the torch open the ceremonies. It was never done like that before. Vance nodded sympathetically, still trying to decide whether the omelet was edible. Hitlers trying to impress the world with his Aryan ideology, declared the detective. He cut a small piece of the omelet, speared it with his fork and lifted the bit of food to his nose. Frankly, that man worries me. The detective frowned with disgust and set the fork down, the bite untasted. As does this omelet. He slid his plate off to one side. Adolph Hitlers types are never satisfied until they control everything, and everyone. Note my words, Markham, theres a war brewing in the back of Hitlers dirty Nazi mind. The District Attorney gave his head a mournful wag. Dear God, lets hope not. The detectives brows shot up with concern. I didnt mean to worry you. I forgot about your son being a foreign correspondent assigned to the wire-service in Spain. How are things there? Hell be okay - if those damn revolutionaries come to their senses. In the background, white-coated waiters danced among tables with trays loaded with coffee pots, plates and cups. The other customers were also active, waving hands, nodding heads, and offering up chatter to each other. Cooking smells ebbed and flowed from the distant kitchen. Speaking of revolutionaries, said Vance, I read where the Japanese military took control of their country, yesterday. The Monarchy is still holding down the fort. But its more or less a decoration to cover the Generals dirty deeds. I dont know what the world is coming to. Markham snuffed out his cigarette in the ashtray. Then he gave Philo Vance a sympathetic look. Dont tell me Willie got married while I was in Chicago? The D-A gave his head a grieving shake. Im afraid Willie killed himself, Vance. His body was found in his car, the motor was still running. He left a note. It was a little vague. Apparently, his fortunes had taken a turn for the worse and Willie could not face insolvency. Thats not like Willie, murmured Vance, gravely. Markham shrugged. Who knows what any of us would do in a situation like that? THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. ANY SIMILARITY TO REAL PEOPLE IS COINCIDENTAL.