

*mid-center rear where the image of a half-realized, blueprinted, x-rayed HOUND appears. Every three seconds the image changes, front, back, side. As the lights begin to come up we hear BEATTY'S VOICE.)*

BEATTY'S VOICE. Side view...front...rear...top...bottom...x-ray... Slow motion. Interior... exterior...lovely...lovely. That's it. Now let's check the x-ray film against the real Killer, eh?

*(A switch is clicked. The lights come full up. We see BEATTY looking at the swift images, making them change by lifting his hand and flicking a small portable radio control unit in his palm. Now BEATTY turns to kneel by a glass-covered pit, or kennel, stage front. Greenish light from some unseen thing below in that kennel plays up over his face as MONTAG, to one side, moves toward BEATTY.)*

BEATTY. Montag. Here. Come look. I think our trouble is here. This back left leg, eh? *(MONTAG kneels, lifts the glass lid, reaches down with a small wrench, adjusts something.)*

MONTAG. Try that. *(BEATTY flicks his portable radio-control box. There is a strange humming sound from beneath the floor.)*

BEATTY. Fine...excellent.

*(BLACK slides down the pole, snorts at BEATTY and MONTAG kneeling there.)*

BLACK. You two still at it?

BEATTY. Still.

BLACK. How long now?

MONTAG. Eight months.

BEATTY. Closer to a year.

BLACK. Well, you think that hunk of junk will ever work?

MONTAG. It's almost ready to leave the kennel now.

BEATTY. And then we'll send it hunting to get you, Black!

BLACK *(mocking them)*. I'm scared. What you gonna call that dumb thing?

MONTAG. Just--the Hound.

BEATTY *(rising to glance at the screen-blueprints)*. The Mechanical Hound it'll say on the copyright, though I'm tempted to call him--Baskerville! *(MONTAG and BLACK blink at him. BEATTY laughs drily.)* Learned reference number 977. Old literary dog. Burned circa 1999. *(Sighs.)* Ah, well. Just plain Hound will do. *(BEATTY does things with the control box. There are stirrings of shadow and humming sound below.)* Well, Montag, shall we give him a run?

MONTAG *(nodding)*. Sir. *(More touchings of buttons. There is a strange, low electronic growl from below.)*

BEATTY. Shall we insert an identity sensor card in the Hound's muzzle, Montag? Here we are...texture, odor, color, shape, weight, width, height of one Jameson L. Black.

BLACK *(faintly alarmed)*. Hey, now. I was just joking.

BEATTY. Joke away. Our great lovely Hound of Hades will soon be trim-fit and on the scent. See there, the blueprints, Black, eh? *(BEATTY points at the images changing on the screen.)* That muzzle, the great metal flare of nostril has ten million computerized sensor plaques tucked

away and ready to snuff the winds of the world! Its computer inserts can remember the scents, the smells, of nine thousand five hundred guilt-ridden men on the run!

BLACK. How you *do* go on.

BEATTY. Notice the feet. Eight of them! Eight! For speed, balance, mobility. The damn thing can run faster than any man, any car! (BEATTY flicks his radio-control box. We see the legs of the Hound, spidery, animate, running on the screen, blowing like dark feathers in the wind, beautiful and terrible in one.) And the mouth--oh, dear me, Black, do come see the mouth. (Closeup, on the screen, the mouth of the HOUND. ALL kneel to look down into the floor pit.) In that mouth, a tongue that is a hollow tube, a sharp needle that stings and injects novocain, procaine, into the legs of its prey.

BLACK. Why not some sort of gun?

BEATTY. Oh, that's no fun, too quick, too banal, eh, Montag? And, Black, listen to this! (BEATTY flicks his remote-control box. The HOUND bays, an incredible electronic cry-- very satisfying to the hackles.) Splendid! Yes?

BLACK (leaping back). Christ...who thought of that damned thing?

BEATTY (proudly). I did! (Standing.) When I was a boy I invented a monster on a moor. I named it the midnight Beast...and then--The Hound of the Baskervilles. It ranged my nightmares night on night when I was ten and cold in bed and loved the dark. "Hound," I'd say, "come get me!" And the Hound would come. (BEATTY nods. MONTAG makes the HOUND wail again. BLACK shivers.)

BLACK (thinking). Hey, wasn't there a...book once by that name?

BEATTY (lighting pipe). Did you read it?

BLACK. Er...no.

BEATTY (calmly). Then the book never existed, did it?

BLACK (backing down). Right. (A beat. BLACK points.) When'll that damn thing be ready to run?

BEATTY. Tomorrow. To be announced on the 9:00 A.M. News. Great stuff, eh, Montag? We'll be famous--yet! (Just as BEATTY hands the portable radio-control to MONTAG we hear alarms, bells, a VOICE.)

VOICE. First Alarm. A-1 Alarm. 790 Grinnell Street. Flammable residence. Name Hudson. Hudson, Alice. Hudson, Alice. (On the view-screen the name and address are printed out.)

BEATTY (springing up). On the double. Jump! (BEATTY and BLACK exit running. MONTAG remains looking down into the kennel pit. He touches the switch. The ghost of the great beast locomotes in slow motion on the wall. The sound of him echoes from the floor like a sad electronic ghost.)

(BEATTY sticks his head back in.)

BEATTY. Montag! (A beat. BEATTY watches MONTAG.) He runs in beauty, like the night...eh? (BEATTY and MONTAG stare at the image of the HOUND moving in its slow motion dream.)

MONTAG. ...like the night. (A very loud bell jerks MONTAG about. He runs, vanishes into the dark. The HOUND, a ghost image, remains suspended on the darkness for a long moment and then slowly fades. Then alarms and