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The girl's battered body was found in an empty lot in a Southern California city. Though Detective-Sergeant Hackett disliked (his dislike partly based on envy) his superior on the case, Lieutenant Luis Mendoza, he had to respect the way Mendoza started out to find who had killed the girl.

There were almost no clues, it seemed, even after the police had

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identified the victim—Elena Ramirez, whose hair was peroxided and who had been killed on her lonely way home from a roller-skating rink.

Then later there was the doll—a large, expensive doll that seemed to have vanished.

And, unknown to Mendoza, there was young Martin Lindstrom, big for his age, a good student, who found a spot of blood on the sleeve of his jacket and thought to himself miserably, Not again, not again. But when he brought his worries to his strict, hard-working mother, she told him to be quiet, to forget it, to get on with his homework.

Dell Shannon, whose first mystery this is, has written an engrossing, moving story of a most believable and horrible crime, and the people in the novel are people such as one might find in any Southern California town, people whose skins are varied in color and whose backgrounds are everyday —poor and middle-class, respectable and less so. And she has created in Luis Mendoza a working policeman of real distinction.

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