



*"You move a bullet and I'll put a muscle through you!" Willie said*

# No Place Likes HOMICIDE

By JOE ARCHIBALD

The question of who knocked off the bank messenger and stole the 60 grand proves a \$64 puzzler to Willie Klump!

Willie Klump, president of The Hawkeye Detective Agency, sat in his office one fine morning and took stock of his opulence. Willie had garnered quite a chunk of legal tender from his last case and after deducting bills payable, he found that he was worth approximately eight hundred and sixty-three dollars and some odd cents.

Willie was as happy as a cat locked up

in a fish market overnight. He decided that Willie Klump would go out and try living like the other half of the world lived. He would get himself a room with a real bed in it. For after all, it was not very dignified for a citizen to make a boudoir out of his office.

Willie picked up a newspaper and scanned the ads. After a while he stabbed his finger at two fine lines of type. They

said:

Neatly Furnished Room.  
Quiet Neighborhood.  
Gentlemen Only—\$3.50.

"I'll look into that," Willie said.

Fifteen minutes later, Willie was being admitted into an old brownstone edifice on East Forty-Fifth Street. The landlady was no Myrna Loy when it came to pulchritude. The eyes with which she surveyed Willie could have outstared a wolf, and her outthrust jaw was as hard as a bride's first biscuit.

"What you want?" she said. "If you're working your way through college, don't try to put the bee on me."

"It is about a room," Willie said.

"Why didn't you say so?"

"You didn't ask me."

Willie was led up to a room on the third floor. It was about the size of three packing cases and had one window.

"Well?" the landlady said. "Make up your mind, Mr.—"

"Klump. I—I'll take it."

"Give me three-fifty. What is your business?"

"I'm a detective," Willie said.

"Oh, you are? Well, I guess you can find the bathroom then without me walking my feet off. One thing I want to tell you. No cookin' in the rooms, understand? If I ever catch you, I'll throw you out on your ear, Mr. Slump."

"Klump," Willie said.

The landlady went out, and the door slammed. Willie looked over his cubicle, ran a finger across the top of the rickety dresser. It cut a big path through the dust. He tried the bed and came to the conclusion that the landlady did not allow culinary art to be practised in her hostelry because she furnished the board.

Willie sighed and looked at the rent receipt he had in his hand. Well, he could

try it for seven days. Willie left the rooming house and went over to a garage and got his jalopy. He drove to his office and went up to pack a couple of bags.

On the way back to East Forty-fifth, Willie braked his coupe and eyed the window of a leather goods store. A sign said:

Sale—While They Last. Briefcases—\$1.39

"Huh," Willie said. "I could carry one of them and crooks would think I was anything but a detective. The correspondence course said that a detective wants to hide his identity just the same as a dishonest criminal. And, anyway, it would make me look dignified to carry a leather case and people would let me in places that I couldn't get into without one."

Willie parked the jalopy and went into the store.

"I'll take one of the briefcases," Willie said.

"Okay. Going like hot cakes. Sold a hundred, I bet," the clerk said.

COMING out of the establishment, Willie met Satchelfoot Kelly, a citizen he disliked worse than parsnips. Satchelfoot was a detective on the city's payroll and he had as much regard for Willie as a horticulturist has for a Jap beetle.

"I thought you would give up," Kelly tossed at Willie. "What are you going to sell?"

"I guess you forgot it was me who captured the last public enemy, Satchelfoot," Willie said loftily. "You could not locate one of them if he set up housekeeping in Macy's window, could you? Kelly, you should give up your job. With those airedales you could clean up stamping out grass fires."

“Smart cracker, ha-a-h?” Kelly growled. “Well, when I get the characters that knocked off that bank messenger yesterday afternoon and stole sixty grand, I’ll see who laughs last. I’ll—”

“Put marbles in your mouth, Satchelfoot. That helps,” Willie said and hopped into his coupe.

He drove to the rooming house and took his personal belongings up the three flights of stairs. In the room again, Willie unpacked. He lifted an electric grill and toaster out of the bottom of a valise and sat down to think a little.

“There must be a place to hide them,” Willie said to himself.

He let his eyes stray about the room, and they finally settled on the ancient wardrobe that leaned against the wall like a canned-heat drunk. He went over there, got down on his knees and thrust a hand under it. He withdrew the hand and looked at the dirt smearing it.

“Ha,” Willie said, “she has never been under there, so that is where I’ll hide the grill.”

His hand went under the wardrobe again and he fished out a small stack of papers. They were yellow papers with figures written on them. Apparently, Willie thought, a citizen who had been stuck with the room before had tossed them there to get rid of them. They would be just the thing to put in his new briefcase as it would look very foolish to anyone if Willie should be caught walking around with an empty portfolio.

His extra blue serge suit hung in the wardrobe, Willie sat down and gave his thoughts to crime. The latest outrage in the big town was on the front pages of all the journals, and he had devoured the details early that morning.

It seemed that two or three rough characters had waylaid a messenger who had been carrying quite a lump of sugar

for the People’s Fidelity and Trust and they had tapped the currency carrier over the noodle with a hard object just as he was walking up the stairway leading out of the Fifty-ninth Street subway. The criminal character who handled the duster had been just a little too energetic and the messenger, ten minutes after the outrage, found out for certain what clergymen had been guessing at for years.

“I would like to get a lead on that case,” Willie said. “It is a pretty state of affairs when an American citizen cannot carry sixty thousand dollars from one place to another without getting killed. Well, I must go over to the office as I work much better there.”

Later, the president of The Hawkeye Detective Agency parked his briefcase in the desk in his office and took paper and pencil from the desk drawer. He wrote:

No. 1—An inside job at the bank. Somebody tipped off the dishonest persons. I will hang around the bank and see who plays horses there or who is living beyond his means. Not bad!

No.2—One clue. Before the messenger succ—surcom—died, he said he was sure one of his assassins wore a brown suit with pin-stripe. I could canvas haberdashers and find out who bought suits like that the last six months. Worth trying. Tough case though.

No.3—One suspect, the cops say. Dutch Masters. Job was his mod—modust operandy. Pulled a job just like it in Punzatawney, Pa. All crooks have own method of working. I will keep my eyes peeled for Dutch. That’s all for now.

Willie went out to get a bite to eat. He climbed on a stool in a beanery on Lexington and glanced around the place.

Willie gasped. A tough looking taxpayer tossed a half dollar to the

counter, turned around and went out. He wore a pin-striped brown suit. Willie grabbed up a paper napkin and covered his fingers with it before he snagged the glass that stood beside the plate the customer had just cleaned.

"What's the idea?" the counterman yelled. "Put that down!"

Willie flashed his badge.

"I'm goin' to take this downtown and get fingerprints took off it. I think he was a criminal. Boy, I think this is my lucky day."

"Yeah? Public enemy, maybe, huh? Don't fogit about the reward, as it was my restaurant."

TWO hours later, a big gendarme with gold on his sleeves, tried to get at Willie to choke him to death.

"Dutch Masters, huh? Why, you fathead, wasting all this time for them guys in the lab. The prints are here all right. They belong to a detective-sergeant named Mike O'Neill. He just told us he was in that restaurant and was the guy in the brown suit.

"Now you get outa here, Klump, before I lose my temper and get booked for homicide. There oughter be a law against you clucks wearing them Dick Racey badges! I'll write to my congressman about it."

Willie Klump went back to his office and brooded there until dark. Then he picked up his briefcase and departed. Willie felt as low and as much out of things as the St. Louis Browns as he got into his jalopy and drove away. He crabbed to the curb in front of a Budweiser bistro, got out of the coupe and went inside.

Before he got through the door, two citizens in a hurry to get out tangled with him and quite a to-do followed. Willie

bumped heads with one of the tavern tipplers, and they both went down.

"You clumsy creep!" a husky character yelled at Willie. Why don't you get one of them seeing eyes, huh? An airedale to lead you or carry a tin cup so's we'll know you're blind, you—"

"Now it was all an accident," Willie gulped. "I do not see any reason for getting mad."

"Slug him, Chips. Let him have it!"

Willie looked up and saw that it was a nice looking doll who was trying to prod her escort to fisticuffs.

"Ah-h, nerts with him," the male character said and scrambled to his feet.

Willie looked around for his case, spotted it and made a grab at it. He saw the testy pair of customers trot out and get into a parked sedan at the curb.

"That is an awful big handbag she is carrying," Willie said. "I'm glad she did not slug me with it."

He got up and ordered a beer. He ordered four more beers. Willie felt better when he went out.

The president of The Hawkeye Detective Agency went over to the People's Fidelity and Trust the next morning. He loitered inside the lobby for an hour or two, asked the tellers if they would like a hot tip on a good thing at Hialeah.

A bank cop ran Willie out into the street, and Willie almost caused a panic on the avenue. A woman screeched, "Holdup!", and fainted.

During the fuss, Willie got his coupe away from there and drove back to his office. There he sat down and mentally crossed the holdup and rubout of a bank messenger off his memo pad.

"I will see if something smaller won't turn up today," Willie sighed. "The mail will be in soon."

Ten minutes later the postman dropped a letter on Willie's desk. It was from Gertie Mudgett, his torch after a fashion, and Gertie had written that she would not be able to see Willie on Wednesday night. In fact, she wondered what she had ever seen in him. Satchelfoot had told her about Willie and the fingerprints, and she thought it was too silly a thing even for Willie to do and she was not going to get laughed at in public.

"That is dames for you," Willie sighed. "Well, I wish I could get in on that holdup case. Wonder what Satchelfoot knows. Ah-ha. I will go down to that tavern where Gertie likes to go and get into a booth where they don't see me. She always picks the same spot to sit in. I will eavesdrop. Satchelfoot is a loud-mouth and a bragger and he will talk to Gertie."

Willie glanced through the *Evening Times*, on the alert for news of criminal persons. One brief item caught his eye. It said that the Gs were after a firm down on Pearl Street for evading the bee that Uncle Sam puts on citizens.

It was a wholesale spice company and the paper had it that the partners, Knipp & Tucker, had held out on the treasury. The head bookkeeper of the outfit was in the toils, accused of destroying evidence.

Willie had no idea of cutting in on G-men and he turned the page and forgot about Knipp & Tucker. Latest dope on the rubout of the bank messenger was that the police were hot on the trail of the criminals and would make an arrest shortly.

"The old oil," Willie said. "I bet they don't know any more about the outrage than I do. I wish I could get a clue."

Willie ate in a restaurant on the way home to his rooming house. Willie had made a very discouraging discovery a few hours after he had been stuck for the hole in the wall. There was no electricity in his

room. The landlady was still furnishing light in the way of gas, so Willie's electrical appliances were even worse than useless.

AFTER a frugal meal, Willie went home and changed into his best serge. Then he hied to a tavern, made himself as inconspicuous as possible in a booth and waited. Sure enough, Satchelfoot Kelly and Gertie Mudgett trotted in a few seconds later. Satchelfoot was in a very bad mood as he settled down into the booth next to Gertie.

"Ain't that the way, sugar?" Kelly complained. "Just when I'm all set for a swell spree with you, they send me up to that little hick town upstate to pick up a guy who was trying to get across the border. They say he was working for a feller named Knipp and was taking something to him maybe."

"Here I was getting warm on that bank messenger murder and they cool me off like that. It seems that these two guys, Knipp & Tucker, are on the spot with the Gs, and they can't find either one right at this minute. Tame stuff, this income tax racket. Well, I gotta run, Gert."

"Aw, nerts! And here I give Willie a standoff," Gertie said. "He was better than no boy friend. I'll give him a ring, Kelly. Don't take any wooden money, huh?"

Willie crouched closer to the wall, kept his face turned away from the dim light.

"Oh, I'm good enough now, am I? Well, I will show you what I think of fickle dames," Willie mumbled to himself. "Satchelfoot still has no leads on the bank stickup, ha-ha."

Willie went out of the tavern in a hurry after Satchelfoot had powdered and Gertie had hopped to a phone booth. He sauntered toward the East River, swinging his briefcase jauntily. Up to date the gendarmes, Willie mused, had been unable

to locate the suspect in the bank messenger erasure, so he had as much chance as any taxpayer to snag Dutch Masters.

He picked up a newspaper on the way home and when he got to his furnished room he sat down and perused it diligently. Two headlines intrigued Willie. One said:

OSCAR CUPPY, KNIPP & TUCKER  
BOOKKEEPER, DENIES GUILT

The other screamer read:

SLAYER OF BANK MESSENGER STILL  
AT LARGE

Things began to happen the next afternoon. The late afternoon journals announced that Aloysius Kelly, New York detective, had been slugged in the men's washroom of the Utica railroad station and had had his prisoner stolen from him. Willie Klump hurried down to Grand Central and waited to see Satchelfoot come in. The flatfoot, his noggin wrapped in gauze, was ganged by galley slaves when he shuffled out through the gate. Satchelfoot unloaded in a hurry.

"Look, I pick up the guy and I grab his bag. In it is twenty grand worth of what he calls negoshable securities, see? He says he is Chester Gimp and works for Knipp and Tucker. I says to myself, 'I bet he is Knipp hisself,' but I won't be able to prove it until I get him to the big town. He's shaved off his mustache, I says. This Gimp says he wants to go to the washroom, and I let him. We are in there when two guys come in and one conks me with a blackjack. When I come to, I have not got Gimp, and my noggin feels like it is stuffed full of buckshot."

"Well, well," Willie grinned, "no wonder crime pays. Dishonest persons will be giving you a testimonial dinner yet, Satchelfoot. I can see they did not wish to

knock out your brains, so they hit you on the head."

"You shut up!" Kelly roared at Willie, and a big crowd began to gather in front of Track 41.

The cops chased everybody away, including Willie; but the president of The Hawkeye Detective Agency never felt better in his whole life.

"It is very puzzling to me, to say the least," Willie Klump said as he sat in his office. "Why would anyone want to kidnap Knipp, even if it was Knipp in disguise? That firm must have been a very crooked one. I see they have let the bookkeeper go for lack of evidence, too. Well, it is Dutch Masters I am interested in. Why don't the G-men do their own work? Let's see now—the cops have grilled twenty suspects who wore brown pin-stripe suits but all were innocent. I can't see no clues no place, myself. Looks like a perfect crime."

WILLIE left his office quite late and when he reached the door of his furnished room, he wondered why his spine felt as if a trickle of very cold ice water were being poured the length of it. He turned the key in the lock, discovered that he had forgotten to lock his door. Or had he?

Willie stepped inside the room and looked around but not quick enough. *Kerwhacko!* Willie sighed and sank down on his knees. His mental machinery went a little haywire, began to cut a rug. After a while the butterflies in his noggin stopped fluttering, and Willie got to his feet and groped his way across the room. He lit the gas and looked things over. The room looked as if two big gorillas, man and wife, had been having a tiff in it.

The wardrobe was leaning against the window. Willie's mattress was ripped off the bedstead and tossed into the middle of

the room. Willie's good blue serge had been tossed into a heap along with the rest of the stuff that he had arranged quite neatly in the closet. An old rag rug on the floor had been ripped up and thrown over the one chair in the humble cubicle.

"Burglar!" Willie sighed and kicked his briefcase out of his way as he staggered to the chair to sit down. "Why would they break and enter a joint like this? Why nobody with no brains would ever think I had dough!"

Willie called down the stairs to Mrs. Grabowski. The landlady trotted up and wanted to know what was eating Willie.

"I was slugged. Somebody got into my room while I was out and he had a key! He tried to rob me. I thought you only had gentlemen here?"

"H-m-m-m. I thought it was you that come in awhile ago, Skrump," the landlady said. "H-m-m. Your door was locked. Seems like a roomer did walk off with a key a couple of weeks ago. Couldn't remember what he looked like. I bet I've had forty roomers in this same room, Kump."

"Klump," Willie corrected. "I can believe that all right. Well, I am getting out of here when my week is up."

"You've stayed longer than anybody so far. Well, I got me own troubles. G'night, Slump."

Willie put his bed to rights, undressed and crawled into it. The pillow under his aching noddle did not act as a Balm of Gilead, it was that flat. Willie got up and got his briefcase and slid it under the pillow.

Thirty-six hours later, as Willie was driving his coupe toward Broadway, who should hail him from the sidewalk but Satchelfoot Kelly. Willie pulled over to the curb and yelled:

"I never pick up hitchhikers, Satchelfoot. It is dangerous. Well, nice to

see you."

"Nuts to you and that heap of iron. Read the papers when they hit the stands. I grabbed off Dutch Masters, Willie, ha-ha! He's in the hoosegow, figuring out an alibi. My pitcher is going to be in all the papers. I guess I ain't a detective, huh?"

Willie groaned, started to nudge the coupe away from there. A cop came up alongside and wrote out a ticket.

"Driving along a one-way street the wrong way and illegal parking, stupe!" he said. "See you in court."

Willie drove away, wondering why everything had to happen to him. He could hear Satchelfoot laughing until he turned a corner. Willie drove home. When he got out of the jalopy in front of the rooming house, a tall stoop-shouldered character stopped him and asked him for a match.

"Nice day, buddy, huh?" the stranger said. "Say, I want to ask you a question. Er—I used to room in this roach palace and I—well I hid something there and—you didn't find nothing any place in there, did you?"

"No," Willie said. "I— Say was you in my room last night? I am a detective and have a good mind to arrest you. Why I bet—"

"Uh—I was mistaken, ha-ha. I thought you was a different guy and I guess I was thinking of another rooming house. No harm done, huh?"

The citizen took it on the lam, and Willie slumped down on the brownstone steps and pawed at his face.

"I must look around when I get up to my room," Willie said. "That was a criminal person who has cached ill-gotten gains there some place and forgot where. Maybe he did a stretch in stir and his memory has left him."

Willie made an extensive search of his three-fifty per week room but found nothing. He even pried up loose boards in

the closet but all he discovered was a rodent a big as a cat. Willie chased the rodent out through the window and then sat down again to wipe worry water off his face.

AFTER a while he changed into his best blue serge. Willie felt the need of nerve tonic that came out of a keg. He left the rooming house and strolled over to the tavern where he had had the unpleasant experience with a customer and his torch.

Willie Klump slid into a booth that was near the kitchen door of the grog shop. After imbibing for an hour or two, he felt much better. The newspaper in front of him had a picture of Dutch Masters on the front page, and handcuffed to the dishonest citizen was Satchelfoot Kelly. The caption read:

SUSPECT IN MESSENGER SLAYING  
AND CAPTOR

"Why didn't I get the clue?" Willie sighed. "I know I am as smart as Kelly. I couldn't be no dumber. Well, something else will come along, and I'll show them cops."

Willie sighed again, got up and left the tavern. As he walked toward the river, he was needled by an uncomfortable feeling that he was being followed. Willie kept shooting quick glances over his shoulder and he quickened his step. He got to his room and locked the door behind him.

He waited a while, then opened the door and walked along the gloomy hall to the front of the house. He looked out a window. Across the street he saw a female character, and she was jotting something down on a newspaper she carried.

"It is a doll," Willie gulped. "Maybe it is Gertie and—nope, her feet ain't as big as Gert's. I wish I could figger things out. First I am robbed and then I am followed

by a dame. Maybe she is a pal of the character who asked me about the room."

Willie slept with one eye open that night. His eyes were bleary the next morning, and his noggin felt as if it had been crammed full of cotton batting. He went out to a lunchroom and nibbled at sinkers and coffee.

He looked at a newspaper a customer had left on the counter, and it said that the cops were having a very difficult time of it with Dutch Masters. The criminal character had an alibi as tight as a Dundee miser and he dared the cops to try to hold him in the klink. Dutch, the type said, was threatening to sue for false arrest. A doll would prove he was in Jersey City at the time of the rubout of the bank legman.

The day dragged. At noon, Willie got word that Dutch Masters had been put back into circulation. The cops were as stalemated as a couple who have been married ninety-nine years. But Willie felt a lot better, now that Satchelfoot had laid an egg. Willie went home to his room and read a mystery story. Night moved in, and Willie got up to light the gas. His fingers were on the little dingus that turns the illuminating vapor on when a knock sounded on the door.

"Who is it?" Willie called out.

"An old pal, Klump."

Willie crossed the room and opened the door a crack. A big foot was shoved between the door and the casing. Then the door was pushed inward, and Willie saw a big citizen holding a very large toy cannon in his right fist.

"Not a word from ya, pal! Good, no light, huh?"

"You get out right this inst—" Willie forced out.

"Awright, can the chatter, wise guy. Sit down on the bed. You holler loud, and you get it in the bread basket, see?"

"Y-yeah."



"Now let's get down to business, pal. Maybe you ain't got a good memory, huh? A few nights back me and my canary tangled with you in that tavern over on Fifty-ninth. Remember?"

"Sure," Willie said. "You're the guy who—"

"Nice going. Now listen, I don't want to hurt you, pal. But what did you do with the sixty grand, huh?"

"What!"

"Oh, acting surprised, huh? I figgered you would. But this roscoe'll make you open up. Now look, Mister. When we got tangled up that night, my dame was carrying a briefcase and so was you. They got mixed up in the brawl and you got the dame's and she got yours, see? Now, all I want is only what belongs to us. That's fair enough, huh, pal?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," Willie squeaked.

"Okay, I gotta git rough. Look, I did a kidnaping on account of that briefcase, pal. That's bad, ain't it? I slugged a dick up in Utica to grab the guy I thought had the sixty grand. They say his name is Knipp. Well, I found what Knipp was carrying, and it wasn't my sixty grand like I thought.

"Now why did I snatch Knipp? Because what I found in the briefcase I got by mistake was stuff with Knipp's name on it and I figured then that it was Knipp what tangled with us that night. But I was wrong, pal. It was you. How did you get that stuff I found in the briefcase you was toting that night?"

**W**ILLIE wanted to faint but his brain was in too much of a spin to think of anything but briefcases.

"I-I-I don't get it," he gulped.

"Huh, I hate to mess this place up but I see I've got to. I made a deal with Knipp—that's why I contacted him—

snatched him from the flatfoot up in Utica but I see Knipp was the wrong guy. I wished to hell and back I'd never bought that case at that sale for one thirty-nine. I bet everybody and his grandmother bought them, huh? But let's get back to business. I had my cookie tail you last night. I put her in the tavern to see if you would show up there again. Well, you did. Now come on, palsy walsy, and hand over the briefcase like a nice man."

Willie Klump felt his heart jump up and play post office with his palate. Suddenly things started to clear up in his muddled noggin. Slowly, but surely. Ice cubes formed on Willie's spine.

"I offered Knipp a fair swap," Willie's visitor said. "Dope on the juggling of the books at Knipp and Tucker's for the sixty grand, but Knipp told me I was mistaken. He couldn't figure out how I got the stuff the Gs would give their right arms for. Quite a mixup, huh, pal?"

Willie gulped. Sixty grand! The amount taken from the messenger of the People's Fidelity and Trust. The assassin right in this room with Willie Klump. Willie could hear harps getting tuned up. The smell of formaldehyde was heavy in his nostrils. The briefcase over there under his blue serge coat across the room!

The air smelled pretty heavy in the room, and Willie felt groggy. The stuff he had crammed into his briefcase just for props! The stuff he had found under the wardrobe the night he had moved in. Figures on ruled yellow sheets!

Oh, everything was getting plain to Willie, and the revelation was knocking his teeth together. For three days Willie had been carrying the sixty thousand taken from a rubbed-out messenger! Why didn't he faint?

"Okay, pal. Time's up. Hand over the briefcase. You've got it hid. Now this watch says nine-seven. By nine-fifteen

you will be a dead pigeon, pal, as I am desperate, and my canary is waiting over at the tavern. Say, do you smell anything?"

"Lilies," Willie gulped.

Willie's scalp lifted. He thought of something.

"All right," he said. "I will hand over the stuff, p-p-pal. H-have a cigarette, huh? I know w-when I-I-I'm licked."

He walked toward the bed that was pushed up against the one window in the room. The window was open only a crack. It occurred to Willie that he was a gone goose even if he did turn over the briefcase, for the tough boy with the roscoe would never let a citizen live, who shared knowledge with him about the sixty grand. Willie, scared almost out of his skivvies, was sure that no one would ever see Mr. Knipp again—if that was who he was—outside of a morgue. He glanced over his shoulder and he saw his visitor, who sat under the gas jet, rip a match off a paper holder and strike it. Just as the match flared the rough person barked:

"Say, I smell. There's—"

*Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!*

Willie had Eleanor Holmed under the bed just as the escaping gas was ignited. When he came out from under it again, the criminal citizen was hopping up and down and yelling bloody murder and his clothes were hanging from him in long strips. Half the hair on his scalp was burned off, and parts of his bare torso were exposed. Willie snatched up the roscoe and yelled:

"Don't you make a move or I'll shoot! Ha-a-a-a-a-a-alp!"

Mrs. Grabowski hot-footed it up from below and she wanted to know the reason for everything.

"Call the police!" Willie yipped. "Tell them I have got the murderer of the bank messenger and the dope on Knipp and Tucker. Ha-ha, it was a good thing I forgot I left the gas on. Don't just stand there—"

"You will leave this house tomorrow, Mr. Skump! You might have burned us all up or aspixed all of us, you—"

"Call the police, will ya?" Willie screeched, "before I faint and then he will escape."

"Where's the bathtub?" yelled the rough citizen. "I'm going to burn up. Turn on some water somebody!"

"You move a bullet and I'll put a muscle th-through y-you!" Willie said.

IN DUE time, two carloads of Legendarmes came over to East Forty-fifth and swarmed up to the top floor of the rooming house. Satchelfoot Kelly looked at Willie and snorted loudly.

"Kidding us, huh? You show us proof that this is the guy!"

Willie tossed a big cop the briefcase he took from under a blue serge coat.

"Look in it. I guess you will find—er—I hope—"

Satchelfoot opened up the leather portfolio, looked inside.

"Yeah. It's filthy with dough."

Willie slumped down in a chair and grinned at the cops.

"Arrest the bookkeeper who worked for Knipp and Tucker. He tore out the pages of their books and hid them in this room. Ask him why. Make this crook tell you where they are now, those pages out of the books. He had them as he told me. He—"

"Sa-a-a-a-a-ay!" a big flatfoot cried. "This mug is Chips Chutney. He's wanted in Illinois for— Why Klump, how did you ever—"

"I wish I knew," Willie said weakly. "Why, what do you mean? Are you incinerating? Why, I had him tagged for a couple of days. It was a sale of briefcase at one thirty-nine, I guess. All the time I had the sixty grand and— Well, it's good-by, huh, Mr. Chips?"

"Somebody git me to a croaker," Chips groaned. "Can't you see I'm half fried? Ain't none of you got no hearts?"

"We will have you well done all over soon, Chips," Willie said. "The rotisserie up the Hudson is waiting. You better grab his canary, too, fellers."

Willie was still trying to explain everything to the cops downtown the next morning. The bookkeeper of Knipp & Tucker, Inc. helped a lot. He told Willie that he was the character who had upset his room and had slugged Willie. He had lifted the sheets out of the books of the spice firm when he heard rumors that the Gs were going to put the heat on his bosses. He saw a nice way to start a blackmailing racket. He had hired the room over on Forty-fifth just long enough to stash the records under the wardrobe where nobody would think of looking for them. The landlady, he said, never cleaned under it anyway.

"Yeah," Willie said, "now listen good. I'll go over it once more. The briefcase I bought for show and I found them ledger sheets under the wardrobe because I was trying to hide my cooking things under it. I just put them papers in the case to make it look like it had lots of important papers in it. Then I got jostled by Chips and his moll, and she picked up the wrong briefcase in the tavern as it looked just like the one I purchased as it come from the same sale. I thought she was carrying a handbag that night. Ha-ha!"

Satchelfoot Kelly moaned and dropped his head in his hands.

"Now when Chips opened up that case in his hideout, he found the Knipp and Tucker book sheets instead of the sixty grand. You see I had the sixty grand all the time. Imagine! So Chips says right then and there, 'Here is Knipp's books without covers. So he must have my sixty grand.' So he finds out they have a citizen

supposed to be Knipp held by the cops upstate and he follows Satchelfoot who went to pick up Knipp.

"He kidnaps Knipp and gives him the lowdown, but Knipp didn't have the sixty grand, so that was out. So Chips and the doll get together and say to each other, 'We will watch for the citizen who bumped into us back there in the tavern in the big town. Why, this Knipp don't look like him anyway, does he?' "

"I can't stand much more of this," Satchelfoot groaned and swallowed two aspirins.

"The doll spots me in the tavern as I go there a lot," Willie went on. "She tags me to the rooming house and then she goes back to where Chips is hiding and gives him the dope. Chips called last evening, you remember? Now this Cuppy, who keeps books for Knipp and Tucker, went after his evidence when the cops let him loose after questioning and he slugged me that night when I walked in on him. Cuppy was let go because they couldn't find where he hid the books without the covers as they went to where he lived permanently. But Cuppy had stowed the stuff in that room I rented as he knew they would look first thing in the place he stayed all the time. Am I going too fast for any of you?"

SATCHELFOOT KELLY got up and staggered out of headquarters. Satchelfoot said he was going out somewhere in the country where it was quiet. It was the only place where he would have a chance to figure it all out.

"So Cuppy came to get the sheets as they would be worth a lot of sugar to him as he could blackmail Knipp and Tucker or make a cash deal with the D.A. Poor Knipp, I bet, is rubbed out right now. He was just trying to get over the border with some neg—neg—What did you call them,

Satchelfoot? . . . Oh, he isn't here, is he?

"It was that briefcase I purchased. It was some bargain at one thirty-nine. If I had not bumped into Chips and his cookie in the tavern, I would have caught him some other way. I work alone and don't make much noise about anything: Is there a reward out for the assassin who bumped off the messenger? I bet the G-men will thank me for helping them get the goods on Knipp and Tucker, too. Two birds with one stone, huh?"

The Police Commissioner looked at Willie Klump and put the wrong end of his cigar in his mouth. The D.A. shook his head and reached for his hat and stick. "I—er—am going home for a while. If I wake up there and find I've been dreaming all this, you guys keep on the hop for the murderer of that bank messenger. We've got to grab that man. The papers are on our necks and—Good afternoon, gentlemen. You can reach me at my house in Westches—"

A big cop came in and said Chips was yelling for a mouthpiece.

"He wants to bet us a grand he don't fry."

"That reminds me," Willie said. "Has somebody got a newspaper? I must get me a room next time with electricity in it."

The papers carried pictures of Willie Klump again. Satchelfoot Kelly made the

front page, too. Gendarmes grabbed Satchelfoot just as he was about to do a Brodie off the Queensboro Bridge. Satchelfoot was put away a few hours for observation. When they let Satchelfoot out, he assaulted a man on lower Broadway because the citizen was carrying a briefcase. They locked Kelly up again.

Willie went down to his office, talked with reporters there and finally got rid of them.

An hour later Gertie Mudgett called to see Willie. Gertie said, "Oh-h-h-h, Willie, you're wonderful!"

"Please state your business, Madam," Willie sniffed. "This is a business office. I have no time to dilly-dally away with historical women. Here is my card, Madam."

"An' here is mine, you swellhead!" Gertie yelped and swung on Willie. Once—twice—three times. Two hours later an extra hit the street. The headlines said:

Killer's Pals Attack Detective Klump  
Chutney's Captor Victim of Reprisal  
From Underworld—Has Good Chance  
of Recovery—Klump Unable to Re-  
member Assailants