

# Cursed Edition

"Alvin Hinkey" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

*Alvin Hinkey, the understudy flatfoot, would rather do his research in a beer-parlor than a book-hall. But when Hinkey borrowed a crook-book from the library, he seemed slated to drink in its sinister wisdom only out of a Roscoe's muzzle.*

Sgt. Louis Garfunkle,  
c/o Postmaster,  
New York, N. Y.

**D**EAR LOUIE:  
I got your letter. But don't never try to send me no more ravioli like they make in Italy again, even if you do put it in a can. I am still burnin' incense in my room an' almost got evicted. I am glad you wasn't in France and they wasn't snails.

I saw Eva last night. She says maybe the Gothic Line is tough, but the Garfunkle one is even worse. She does not believe a wolf like you is not at this minute neckin' some doll in a gondola. I says to Eva you are not in Venice, and only gondolas come from Venice. She

says what do I think she is, dumb? How about Venetians? So I says they are too busy makin' blinds.

Louie, if there is anything dumber than Eva, it is only Hambone Noonan. Which reminds me of a murder I solved a couple of weeks ago.

We find a character bumped off, Louie. His name is Sigmund Sheaf. He is parked with a green sedan up in Van Cortlandt Park. Both his lights and the car's are out. Some cops advanced on the jalopy to put an end to a woo woo session, and what did they find but a cadaver. The only necking the citizen had gotten was from a thirty-eight caliber Betsy that left an opening in his noggin. There is nothing left in his poke, but a gas coupon.

Hambone says right away, "The

citizen gives somebody a lift an' the hitchhiker robbed him."

"But the corpse is not behind the wheel," I point out.

"Look Alvin," Hambone says and pushes me aside. "When I want your advice, I will ast for it. You are new to the business and have been lucky so far. Don't jump at a conclusion."

"If you was one, I would climb you now, Hambone," I says riled. "Who hitchhikes in a park?"

"Shut up," the big slob says, and we go on with the investigating. "Sheaf don't look like he had enemies."

"Not anymore," I offer. "What could they do to him now if he had. See if he owned the jalopy. The keys are in the dash, Hambone. Do somethin'."

We find out that Sheaf owned the sedan. Most always whoever owns a jalopy insists on driving it. It is only elementary. It looks like the assassin moved Sheaf from behind the wheel to mix up the cops, but why should it? Crooks do the darnedest things though.

The medical examiner makes a guess that Sheaf has been defunct for four hours at least. The cops take some pictures and dust for prints as usual, then let a meat wagon remove the victim. Me and Hambone and two other cops mentally dry-clean the death jalopy.

"I got somethin'," Hambone says. It was stuck between the seat cushion an' the back of the front seat. It is a membership card made out to a Rufus H. Wheedle. His address is right on it, Alvin. I says for you to just sit by an' watch good old Noonan work.

"Well, we will go and pick up this Wheedle," Noonan adds. "His address is 3214½ Katonah Avenue in Woodlawn. Let's go."

"It is quite late to make a call, isn't it?" I interrogate.

WE GO to the address in Woodlawn, Louie. There are no lights on in the little frame house. At least we could not spot one until we pussyfooted around back and saw one in the cellar. Hambone gets down on all fours, and peeks through a little hyphen of light under some kind of a curtain. He sucks in a breath and holds it until he gets on his big feet.

"Al-Alvin, you know what?" he gulps. "We have trapped not only a desperate killer, but also a counterfeiter! Let's go in and take him."

"Did you count the bazookas and Tommy-guns he's got?" I ask. "Awright, start establish in' a beachhead, Hambone. You lead the way as I am only a helper here."

It looked like the unlawful citizen had become very cocky, and was too sure of himself. We go down a little flight of stone steps. Hambone raps against the door. The character opens it a crack. Noonan pushes it the rest of the way and we take over.

"Stick up your head or I'll blow your hands off!" Noonan says and flourishes his police Betsy.

"Uh? Why I thought it was—cops, huh? Oh, my!" Wheedle says.

"Look, Alvin!" Hambone says. "Sheets an' sheets of phony gas coupons. An' red points an' blue points."

"I'll have some of the blue points on the half shell," I says. "Huh? Why, you dirty unpatriotic crook, you! Rufus Wheedle, you are a threat to free peoples."

"He also slewed Sigmund Sheaf," Hambone points out. "Confess, Wheedle!"

"Sheaf? Siggy is dead? Why, I—"

"You are a lousy actor, Wheedle," Noonan says. "You and him was in this racket together. You fell out over the split. You went ridin' with him, an' bumped him off. It is as plain as the nose on my pal's face here."

"I resent that," I says hotly.

“Shut up, Alvin! What you got to say, Wheedle?”

“Awright, I was makin’ these coupons with Sheaf,” the little geezer with the thick glasses says. “We did split up, but as friends. Siggie come and told me he was doin’ all right in another racket, and wanted to give all his time to it. He wouldn’t tell me what it was.”

“You was with him last night, wasn’t you?” Hambone yips.

“Why, the fact is I was,” Wheedle says. “I—”

“Anybody who will make up fake gas coupons and blue points is not rational,” I says.

“Alvin, will you shut up?” Hambone howls. “What was it you was sayin’, Wheedle?”

“I was out with Sheaf for awhile. I don’t remember when I left him. Around eleven maybe. I was a little boiled. I been drinkin’ black coffee since to sober up, as I had to git out a shipment of red points before eight o’clock this A.M. It was my best customer and—I didn’t kill Siggie Sheaf. Where would I git a gun?”

“In a dry goods store,” Noonan sniffs. “Alvin, did you get that slip he just made, huh? To be a expert in this business, you got to watch for ‘em. I bet you—”

“Why, he said where would he git a gun, Noonan,” I reply. “We never told him Sheaf was shot, so how did he know unlesst he did it?”

“Er—you guessed right, Alvin,” Hambone says. “That cooks you, Wheedle.”

“I am innocent,” the character says. “I—ah—remember a little somethin’ now. I left Sigmund Sheaf around nine P.M. I know now because somebody come up and asked me the time just as Siggie got into his car and—”

“Now tell us the one about the three li’l bears who complained about somebody

was eatin’ their bowls of farina. Ha! You are charged with murder in the first degree, Wheedle. Don’t say nothin’, or we will use it against you.”

“Maybe we should look for the murder artillery,” I suggest.

“Go ahead,” Wheedle groans. “You won’t find none.”

**T**HE guy was right, Louie. We ransacked the house from lightning-rod to cellar and found nothing more lethal than a Landon button. We take Rufus Wheedle downtown and lock him up without bail.

That afternoon the fingerprint experts tell us Wheedle’s smears were not only on parts of the rub-out runabout, but also on a cigarette case that came out of the deceased’s pockets.

“Looks like the case is closed except for a job up at Sing Sing,” Hambone says. “I guess I didn’t waste no time on this case, D.A.”

The D.A. pats Hambone Noonan on the back. The newspaper boys take Hambone’s picture. “Just stick with me, Hinkey,” the big kidney-foot says. “You will also git famous.”

“You know I think it is a good idea if we look over the lodgings of the late Sigmund Sheaf,” I says. “Wheedle says he got himself a new racket, Hambone. It could even be a black market handling pipe cleaners.”

“Do that,” the D.A. says.

“It was just what I was goin’ to suggest, Chief,” Hambone says with his big snoot way up in the air. “Come on, Hinkey.”

We go up to West Ninety-Ninth Street where Sheaf owes three weeks room rent. The late red and blue point racketeer had hived up in a hall room only twice the size of Hambone Noonan.

“Lookin’ at this cell,” I says. “Who

would believe Sheaf had made much hay?"

"He lived plain on purpose, Alvin. So's nobody would wonder at him gettin' in the moolah almost overnight. Maybe he hoarded his ill-gotten gains somewheres, too. Crooks like him wouldn't bother about tellin' Morgenthau how much they cleaned up. We will finetooth the joint."

Louie, sometimes even you and Noonan can be right. What do we find stuffed away in two pairs of old shoes hidden under a pile of newspapers in Sheaf's closet but twenty-five hundred smackeroos all done up in packages of five.

"You see, Alvin? They got to git up early to git ahead of Noonan, huh?"

"You're almost wonderful. I don't see how you ever found it in such a big triplex apartment," I says sourly. "Now where did he get it?"

We look over everything. I find a postcard that Sigmund Sheaf got from a branch library. It says:

Dear Mr. Sheaf:

This is the third notice we have sent you regarding the book entitled FOREVER JADE which you took out almost five weeks ago. Unless you return this book within the next few days, we shall be forced to take necessary steps to either recover the book or demand payment thereof.

Miss Eskie Culp.

"He was crooked all over," I says, handing the card to Hambone. Noonan reads it and tosses it aside. "Alvin, this has no bearing on the case. I don't think you'll ever git nowhere in this business.

"Well, I will take the twenty-five C's down to the D.A. as maybe we can check serial numbers and find out if it was hot.

"Anyway, I am tired and am goin'

home to git some sleep. We got the guilty character, an' he'll tell us everythin' in the grill room. You look for the lib'ary book. If you find it, take it down to the lib'ary as it is city property."

"Yes, Hambone," I says.

The big oaf leaves me there, Louie. I keep casing the late Sigmund Sheaf's room. Where do I find the library book, but behind a radiator. Not that it needed warming up. I have heard much about the best seller, Louie, and scan a chapter or two. It is about a cupcake who chisels her way into a king's court in the country of Bulldozia. Before she finishes with the royal joint, she has a lien on everything but the queen's sciatica.

Well, I close up the book and says to myself I will take it back to the library, when a piece of paper falls out. It is half a page torn out of a little loose-leaf memo book. Written on it is a name and address: "*G. Wilkers Dewpont, III. Broaken Arms Apts., West End Ave.*"

Now, Louie, that seemed very funny to me as the writing was the same as what I found in a notebook on the late Sigmund Sheaf's dresser. I also find where the half-page was torn out.

It is like you would find where a Bowery bum had jotted down the address of somebody like Lord Halifax or the Duke of Windsor. Or like pickin' up a withered orchid in back of a twenty buck a month cold water flat. To a detective, Louie, this does not make sense.

This G. Wilkers Dewpont The Third is quite a gee in the smart set. He is known mostly as the husband of a filly named Mignon Dewpont The Third, who has more rocks in her reticule of an afternoon than you generally find in the till of a good night club on Saturday night.

G. Wilkers, according to all the very tart gossip columnists, had little more than a frock coat, a pair of striped pants, mauve

spats and a carnation the day he welded with Mignon. In other words, G. Wilkers is known about town as a gigolo with portfolio.

Where did the late Sigmund Sheaf get palsy-walsy with a biggie like G. Wilkers?

**W**ELL, I tells myself, if I am a detective, here is where to make sure. First off, I will return *Forever Jade* to the branch library and let the city sue the Sheaf estate for the back rent on the torrid tome.

I ankled west. Finally I arrive at the branch library and ask where is a doll named Eskie Culp. The cupcake I ask is a cute babe, Louie, so could not be boss of the joint. She is a redhead with an upsweep hair-do and is filled out in all the places she should be. She has a pair of glimmers that is poison to cardiac eases.

"I am Miss Culp," the babe says.

"Huh?" I says and get all whoozy. "Er—this is the Sheaf a man named book took out an' returned to forgit. I mean this is *Forever Sheaf* which Jade forgot—"

"Really? There is sixty-four cents due on it," Miss Culp says.

"Don't look at me," I counter. "I am only a cop. Sigmund Sheaf is now at the morgue."

"A cop? Oh, a policeman," Eskie says. "Isn't that terrible?"

"Oh, there is worse cops," I says. "There is a war on, ain't they? Anyway I will not stand here an' git insult—"

"I mean about Sheaf being at the morgue, Mister—"

"Hinkey. Detective Alvin Hinkey," I says. "I got to ask you some questions." All the time there, I am adding up twenty-five hundred fish, and *Forever Jade*, and G. Wilkers Dewpont The Third.

"Of course," Miss Culp says. "It is a library here though and we would disturb—I am a little hungry, Mister

Stinkney."

"Hinkey," I says. "Why-er-you mean we could—?"

"Why couldn't we?"

Ten minutes later, I am sitting in a tavern on Amsterdam with Eskie Culp. She does not order orange pekoe. It looks like nothing is what it should be, huh?"

"Now what did you want to ask me, Mr. Hinkey?"

"Why, yeah, I was going to quiz you, Babe. I mean, Miss Culp," I says. "It is about that book.—"

"It's a pistol, Mr. Hinkley. I couldn't put it down," Eskie says.

"Now do you remember a geezer who was very extinguished looking askin' for the book?" I says. "He would be tall and have a face something like John Carradine's. Wears spats and maybe a Homberg hat an' with a carnation—"

"Of course, Mr. Hink—er—"

"Call me Alvin."

"That's cute," Miss Culp says and orders her third double rye. "I'll never forget him. He came every day for three days, sometimes twice a day, trying to get me to tell him who had copies of *Forever Jade* out. We have three you know. I told him it was against the rules to give that information until he—er—well, he gave me twenty dollars. For that kind of lettuce, he could've had the library."

"What you tell him?"

"I said one of the card holders was Sigmund Sheaf. I gave him the man's address. Why, I never thought I was doing wrong. Oh, you are a policeman. Oh! Please don't arrest me, Alvin. Please!"

Louie, if she was wanted for murder, I would have dropped the case. "Of courst not," I says. "You have done me a big favor. Have another snort."

"I shouldn't," the doll says, but does. She goes on to say the citizen looked desperate, as if he had left a ten thousand

dollar bill next to Chapter Eight of *Forever Jade*.

“Could be,” I says. “G. Wilker—er—that citizen might use one for a bookmark, Miss Culp.” Well, my bank roll is—I mean, I have things to do, as I am a detective so—”

“It’s been wonderful, Alvin,” the cute number coos. “We must do this ag’in sometime.”

“You ain’t kiddin’,” I says. “I will convoy you back to your books now.”

When I left her at the library, Louie, I bet she could not have told a copy of *Little Women* from *Rome’s Decline and Fall*. I jot down her telephone number and go over to get some black coffee which always helps me to think. I says I should call Hambone Noonan, but argue myself out of it. Anyway he has already got the guilty citizen who snuffed out Sheaf.

I hurry over to the Broaken Arms on West End Avenue, ferret out the superintendent, and flash my badge.

“Who you figurin’ on pinchin’?” the guy asks right out.

“It is a secret,” I says. “I am a assistant buildin’ inspector who is to go over fire hazards, inspect plumbin’, et cetera. You will cooperate fully with the law, huh?”

“I’m afraid I got to, Hinky,” the super says. “I guess you’ll want a master key in case some of the clients are out. I’ll get it right away.”

**L**OUIE, it was fun. I get into one apartment where three gorgeous dolls are havin’ cocktails and a snack. They are a fire hazard, but I do not put it down in my book.

I go next to a seven room layout which looks like a marahajah’s hideout. Nobody answered the buzzer, so I walked right in. A brunette jumps off a character’s lap. I asks to be excused an’ will come back some other time.

I did not go right to the Dewpont’s flat first thing as the super would have been suspicious, so I had to work up slow. Finally, though, I press the button outside D-19. Nobody answers, so I use the master key.

It is a swell dump. My feet sink into a big oriental rug up to my ankles. A big Persian cat spits at me as I walk into a boudoir. It smells like the inside of a perfumery vat. The walls are padded, and I wonder if the rich babe is afraid of going nuts.

This is not the room I want, so I keep looking around. I come to what looks like G. Wilker’s den. It has got swords, old guns, and things on the walls. I ransack the joint, Louie, looking for a certain Roscoe I think might be layin’ around. I have my mitts in the lower drawer of a teakwood desk when I am interrupted.

“Looking for something, I judge?”

It is a very cultured voice, Louie. I turn around and look at a character I know to be G. Wilkers Dewpont Number Three. I am glad the other two are not with him, as at the moment he does not look like he ever rowed a boat with the Princetons.

“Why, yeah,” I says. “I am a buildin’ inspector, an’ was lookin’ for a short cut—er—short circuit out of here—ah—I mean in here. Sorry to have disturbed you. Well, I’ll be gettin’ along—”

“Short circuit in a desk drawer, hah?” G. Wilkers says in a nasty tone of voice. “A burglar is what! Who on any jury would convict a man of my social standing for shooting an intruder? Nobody told me you were a building inspector. The conclusion is obvious, my friend. So I walk in and catch the intruder red-handed and—”

“Now if you are insinuat’in I am a cop—er—a burglar,” I says, standing my ground, “you can guess again as—”

It is hot in the joint, and I take out my

handkerchief to mop my brow. With it comes the police badge which falls on the floor.

Well, G. Wilkers takes a quick gander at it, jumps over to a big cigar humididor, lifts the cover, reaches in, and pulls out a—no, it was not a Corona, Louie, but a Betsy. I reach for my weapon and remember I left it on my bed back in the rooming house after cleaning it.

“Yes, my friend,” the society gent repeats. “Unfortunate occurrence. Had to shoot you—”

“Let’s talk this over,” I says squeakily. “You know you won’t get away with it. Crime don’t pay, I—”

“You are a policeman,” G. Wilkers says. “Cops do not sell tickets to police benefits this way. So it is rather plain to me that somehow a stupid goof like you stumbled over something, what?”

“Yeah,” I says. “A corpse. An’ a book called *Forever Jade*. Why did you rub out a citizen to—?”

“Too bad,” the spiffy taxpayer says. “Too bad. You’re kind of young to die. Move over to the left a bit as I do not wish to get blood on that leopard skin you are standing on!”

The character means business. His eyes were eighteen carat at the moment. He has his teeth bared like Dracula out looking for plasma. It looks like the end, Louie.

The crumb from the upper crust edges close so he can’t miss. I inch off the leopard skin and wonder if Hambone will see to it that I am laid out decent. Then I says to myself, why should I stand there and be a punchboard? It was silly. So I jumped quick. G. Wilkers opened up with the fireworks, and a bullet bit a hole out of the corner of the leather chair I slid behind. It would have been a better foxhole if I’d had a shovel, Louie.

“Come out and stand up like a man,”

G. Wilkers yelps.

“All my family was cowards,” I yelp and get hold of an old doorstep that is in the corner. I heave it. The gent ducks in the nick of time, but it bounces off the wall and hits him behind the ear anyway. His knees buckle. I take the offensive, making the mistake of thinking there is no moxie in the elite. He submarines me and lifts me three feet off the floor. I come down, but hard.

Then he is strangling me and I start living my life over from when I was a year old. I know it is the end. All is going black when I hear a dull thud. Then things get brown, then yellow, and then white once more.

I get to all fours, shake my noggin, and look up. There is a doll in a mink coat and a bunch of green feathers for a hat. She is not a squaw by any means. Then I see that G. Wilkers is reclining on the leopard rug with his dome half inside the animal’s mouth.

“What is going on here?” the babe says.

“It is not a coffee klotch,” I gulp. “I am a cop.”

Louie, it is Mrs. G. Wilkers Dewpont, the Third. She still has a big wooden shoe-tree clutched in her fist.

“What did the jerk do?” the babe says. “He is guilty of something or would not put up such a rhubarb.”

“He murdered Sigmund Sheaf,” I says, grabbing for the loose Betsy like it is a waterhole, and I am in Death Valley.

“He—wha—? Who is this Sigmund Sh—?”

“That I do not know, Ma’am,” I says. “Have you some smellin’ salts or brandy about? The latter is preferred.”

**M**RS. G. WILKERS gives me a slug and helps me into a chair. “Thanks,” I says. “Help come in the nick of time.”

G. Wilkers starts making funny sounds and moves a leg.

“Did you ever read *Forever Jade*?” I ask the rich babe.

“A honey, wasn’t it?”

“It tripped up your helpmate,” I says. “Ask him what was in the book that was returned to the lib’ary from this flat.”

“I returned that book,” Mrs. Dewpont says, getting bugeyed. “What do you mean, Inspector?”

“Thanks for the promotion,” I quip. “The doll at the branch lib’ary says G. Wilkers was pestering her to tell him who took the book out after you took it back. Now why did he—?”

“We’ll ask him. Get up, you cheap chiseler,” G. Wilkers’ meal ticket snaps. “I smell a rat. Not that I haven’t since I married you. Maybe now I can find out why he’s been putting a bigger bite on me the last couple of weeks. Twice his allowance. Get up, Granville!”

The citizen does and says, “Why, hello, Sugar. You’re lookin’ better every day an’—where am I?”

“Who was putting the pressure on you, you moocher?” the doll says. “Somebody named Sheaf like this cop says?”

“A cop? Ah, I remember. Where’s that gun? He was robbin’ the place. I surprised him an’—”

“Nuts,” Mrs. Dewpont, the Third sniffs. “So you carried a gun too? Was you playing penthouse commando?”

“I got you cold,” I says to the spiffy gent.

“I hope you have, Junior,” the society tigress says. “I’ve wanted to get something on him for a long time and get rid of him. What have you got?”

“The roscoe that bumped off Sigmund Sheaf,” I says. “Your spouse made a booby trap out of a cigar thermidor. Sheaf had twenty-five hundred fish stashed in his hall room, because he read *Forever Jade*.

Blackmail, huh?”

G. Wilkers makes another try for an exit. Mrs. Dewpont got him with the shoe-tree again. Granville Wilkers Dewpont Number Three did a series of waltzing steps, a rumba and a shag on through, then folded up like a campstool.

“You should join the Rangers,” I says.

“Thanks, Mister. Now I’ll get a pitcher of water and bring him to,” the babe says.

When we revive the geezer again, he has got no more fight left in him than there is in a canary suffering from leukemia. He takes a gander at the Betsy I have wrapped up in my hanky and nods his aching pate.

“Ballistics, huh?” G. Wilkers says. “I get it. Well, I might as well unload. I had gotten a letter from a honey that sings every night in the Blue Flamingo and was reading it when I heard Mignon here come in. I slid it in that book and figured to get it back after she left the room. Then I got a phone call. I talked for about fifteen minutes. When I was through, what did I discover but that she’d gone out again—with the book. She returned it to the library. So I hopped over fast and tried to get it out again. The girl there said there was such a demand for it, it didn’t stay on a shelf for ten seconds.”

“Yeah,” I says. “You finally bribed the doll there. She told you where to find all three copies of *Forever Jade*. You’d waited long enough, Sheaf would have told you, huh? You were afraid somebody would return the letter and your wife would snag it. You got a soft spot here, you crook, and knew you would get the heave-ho for two-timing. You would even have to go to work, and that is awful.

“You can say that again,” the guy groans. “Yeah, that skunk put the bite on me for plenty and kept raising the ante. I had to knock him off, didn’t I? Finally I made him a proposition, offered him five grand for the letter to close the deal. He

picked me up in the car, and we drove uptown.

“When I paid the five G’s, he gave me the brush-off like I figured he might. That’s why I took the gun. He nearly saved his skin, and got out from behind the wheel fast to make a fight of it. Well, I got the nerve to let him have it. Then I frisked him for the letter from Harmonia.”

“Hmm,” Mignon says. “I look awfully nice in black, Inspector.”

“Yeah? It is a good thing Sigmund Sheaf was one who never returned books on time,” I says.

“Not bad,” Mignon laughs. “What are we waitin’ for. Let’s call the wagon.”

I do. And when I finally return to the den, I see Mignon has an old sword she took off the wall and is guarding the prisoner. “You are a life-saver, pal,” she says. “I was thinking of doing away with him in another way. Could you use a highball?”

We lock G. Wilkers in a closet and have a little snort together. Just me and the swell dish. We are calling each other by our first names, when in comes Hambone Noonan and three big cops. Hambone is aghast.

“What does this rib mean, Alvin?”

“Rib? Look in the closet in the next room, Hambone,” I says. “It is the citizen who rubbed out Sigmund Sheaf. Have a canapé, Hambone. This one is pink caviar with blue cheese.”

Well, that is all, Louie. Hambone is still walking about talking to himself and counting his fingers. Mignon Dewpont, the Third, give me her telephone number. This man shortage is something fierce, Louie, so all of you G.I’s hurry back. G. Wilkers beat the hot squat, but he won’t wear another pair of puce spats for thirty or forty years, even with good behavior.

Keep punching, Louie. If you can send me a carton of cigarettes, I wish you would. It is an all-out war even over here as we are all out of smokes, roast beef, chocolate bars, and pipe cleaners. Rationing doesn’t bother Hambone Noonan much as he had his brains rationed years ago.

I saw your Uncle Herman last night. He asks does the government pay a ten thousand insurance all in one lump or by installments. Why, Louie?

Hoping this finds you in cheerful spirits, especially from grapes, I will close.

Like always,  
Alvin.