



"What nils the guy?"
Waldo wanted to
know, dashing water
in Willie's face

The Knife Thrower

By Joe Archibald

Satchelfoot Kelly said it was a perfect crime and couldn't be solved—but for a thousand bucks Willie Klump thought different!

CHAPTER I

WILLIE HORNS IN



HAT we should do is get married right away soon," Gertie Mudgett told Willie Klump in a clubby little beanery on West Fiftieth Street. "Your last fee would start us out, sugar. You been lookin' awful lately, Willie, from eatin' lunch-room cookin'. Anyways, we ain't gettin' no younger neither."

"Yeah," Willie said abstractedly. "I guess you're right. This is a gyp joint, Gertie. This beef a la mode—take a gander at it."

"Like I said, Willie— What is wrong with the beef? It looks all right to me. Now a dinin' room suite would cost us—"

" 'A la mode?' Ice cream comes with dishes named that. They gimme raisins."

"Oh, what a dope. Anyways, maybe I can make something out of you, Willie. We won't be like other couples, fightin' all the time, not unless you start it. Anyways, I don't believe all the movies I see about them gals gettin' married and bein' kicked around for a lark. We'll be different, Willie."

"Sure," Willie said.

He was the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency but looked no more like a human bloodhound than a nutmeg looks like a banana. Aloysius Kelly of New

York Police Headquarters always said that Willie could never find first base in the Yankee Stadium during a ball game and that if Willie had to live on his wits he would eat only half the time. As a matter of fact, Willie did look like a hayshaker who had swallowed three fingers of straight rye for the first time in his life. The crooks in the big town said it was not fair for Willie not to look like a real detective.

"Marriage is a great institute," Gertie said, pressing the issue. "There is so many happy couples." Willie looked up from his fodder and got a good look at a couple coming into the restaurant. The blond dish had an ear bound up with adhesive, and the male character escorting her had one of the neatest shiners Willie could imagine.

"You could take my arm when we come into a joint like this," the blonde said loud enough for most of the customers to hear.

"I could use one of 'em," the unhappy male countered, "to sock you over the conk with it. Why don't you snap out of it. It was an accident, babe. Listen—"

"I been carved up for the last time," the blonde snapped. "You and me are quits, see! Anyways, you are slippin'. You ain't worked in a month."

"It's jus' that I needed a rest. I couldn't never live without you, babe. You been seein' that big slob of a—"

"It's none of your business if I have. Shut up, or I'll close your other window. When I leave town tonight, I'll be talkin'

to myself. You can keep the electric grill, pal."

"Aw, Mame—"

"Shut up!"

"Like I was sayin', Willie," Gertie Mudgett went on. "You ain't listenin'. Trying to hedge, huh? Want to give me the air, maybe. Well, look here, you snake in the grass, I don't have to beg a guy to marry me. Why you should be cut up in chunks to bait mouse-traps with, that is what I think of you, you big hunk of cheese. Willie Klump, I could sue you for breach of promise and I will!"

THE tall citizen with the slightly rusty tuxedo tapped Willie on the shoulder and told him to try to do something about his boisterous girl friend.

"Look, we got a good name here. You two and that pair of battlers over by the window have got to pipe down, or we'll have to throw you out."

"I do not like the service here, anyways," Gertie snapped. "I could find better grub in a bear cage. And you stay here, William Klump, as I am through with you. You will get a letter from a lawyer."

Willie sighed and dropped his head in his hands. A few seconds later, someone touched him on the shoulder, and he looked up with a start.

"Mit me pal," a customer said. "My dame left me, too. All dames is nuts. But she ain't goin' to walk out on me. I'm goin' to fix her wagon. Well, happy days."

"Check," Willie sighed. "Love is funny, huh? I didn't say a word to her, not a word."

William Klump woke up the next morning and discovered that he was without his gold pencil, a present Gertie had given him on his last birthday. Willie remembered that he had been doing some figuring on the tablecloth in the restaurant

while Gertie had talked of the prices of bedroom and dining room suites at Bimberger's store. He hurriedly made his toilet, climbed into his blue serge and hastened to the restaurant. There he inquired of the cashier if anyone had turned in a pencil.

"Yeah. But it ain't yours until you pay twenty-five cents toward launderin' the table-cloth," the brunette back of the till said. "The boss told me to tell you."

Willie paid and got his pencil. He was walking out of the place when he heard the police siren scream. A Headquarters jeep tore past, and Willie saw it skid toward the curb halfway down the block and pull up behind another squad car. There was a crowd gathering in front of a West Fiftieth Street hostelry called the Hotel Paragon, and Willie was sure that they were not listening to a pitch man. He thought he recognized someone he knew, was sure of it when he saw the character's feet.

"Kelly," Willie tossed out and hurried faster. "Maybe a murder at least."

William Klump, president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, crashed the lobby of the Paragon, flashed a badge at an excited cop and was allowed to get past. He took the stairway and got up to the fourth floor before the elevator. Willie was peering in through a door when Satchelfoot Kelly and four members of the Homicide Squad emerged from the creaky lift.

"Hello," Willie said. "I just happened to be in the neighborhood. There a dead man in there, Satchelfoot?"

"Some day, Willie," yelled Kelly, "I am goin' to take that badge away from you and shove it down your throat. You dare to step over the sill and the corpse-appraiser will get paid double. Watch him, you guys. Slug him if he touches a thing."

"You are takin' away my bread and butter," Willie complained. "A guy like

me has a right to make a livin'."

"That's a matter of opinion, Klump," Kelly scoffed. "Look out and don't walk on those newspapers strewn about as whoever crept up and gored this citizen would have to walk on them."

"That is silly," Willie said. "The assassin put the newspapers there on the way out to hide his footprints. Why don't you hurry up and see who is killed. There is a relative somewhere expecting a letter from him maybe."

"I'll stand just so much, Willie," Satchelfoot warned.

CHAPTER II

GUMBLE JUMBLE

THE defunct citizen, the clerk of the hotel offered, had registered the night before. "His name on the book is Penryhn Del Roy and he wrote that he come from London. I don't believe it, though, as actors never have right names and always lie about where they come from."

The stiff-appraiser opined that the corpse had been that way for seven hours. He wrapped a hanky over his right hand, withdrew the liquidator and handed it gingerly to Kelly. The blade was almost as long as the detective's foot, Willie judged.

"Here is a wallet with almost two hundred bucks in it," Kelly said. "Ain't robbery, then. There was no struggle as nothin' is overturned. He walked right up behind Del Roy and let him have the works. There has got to be a motive. Call in everybody who is around who lives on this floor."

A blond dish and two jugglers were brought to the front, but they were unanimous in the statement that they had never seen Del Roy in their collective lives.

"There ain't a single footprint on these

newspapers," Satchelfoot says. "He had to walk over them, as they must have been here when—"

"Why?" Willie wanted to know. "The way I see it, this Del Roy felt himself get the shiv. He cried out, 'I am stabbed,' and grabs up the evening papers and hunts up the nearest doctor. He passes out before he finds a phone number."

"There would be blood on the papers if — Are you tryin' to kid me, Klump? Nobody heard no screams. All right, I warned you, junior. Open the elevator door and throw him down the shaft, you guys. If the elevator happens to be on this floor, he gits a break."

Willie found himself down in the lobby five minutes later, and the warning still echoed in his ears. He was sitting in a corner when the deadwagon attendants took the remains out in a bassinet. Soon the lift disgorged Satchelfoot Kelly and seven of his helpers. They seemed puzzled over everything.

"I never seen a perfect crime," Kelly said loud enough for Willie to hear. "I have heard of them. This is one, boys."

"There's not a print on anything, not even the handle of the shiv. No signs of footprints on the papers, only those belongin' to this Del Roy. Nobody knows the stiff, he only got in last night. All we know is he must be an actor."

"Maybe the audience at his last play followed him," Willie called out. "I have seen shows where I was urged to kill. Not a clue or a suspect, huh, Satchelfoot? You have not a chance, then, as you need at least the murderer's name and address to start with."

"Why don't you go home, Willie?" Kelly growled. "Leave us alone, please."

"Aw, come on," a flatfoot said. "Nobody'll worry much over it. He wasn't anybody of account, Kelly. It's a character found killed by a person or persons

unknown. There is no headlines in it.”

“You would make a good ghoul,” Willie flung at the cop. “I bet if you was stabbed, they would get frappe out of you. One citizen is as good as another, and when a stewbum on the Bowery is nudged off it is murder just the same as if he was an aluminum king. You do your duty, or I shall report all of you.”

“Come on,” Kelly said. “We will go down and see if there is anything on the corpse to identify him as somebody besides Del Roy.”

DETECTIVE William Klump, a strictly private one, ambled up the stairs to the fourth floor. He looked in through the door of the room where a citizen had been expunged and saw a hefty cop on watch. A tired-looking chambermaid was emerging from the grim cubicle, carrying some dog-eared magazines. Willie got a slant at the cover of one. It said: *Callous Crime Weekly*. It was Willie’s favorite trade journal.

“Good mornin’, gorgeous,” Willie said. “Are you throwin’ that stuff away?”

“What’s it to you, Rollo?”

“Why I am in the back-number magazine business,” Willie told the bony cupcake. “Maybe you and me can do business from now on. There is two-bits in it for you every time you find that many old copies. Let’s start partnership today, huh? You ought to pick up maybe two bucks a week gettin’ the magazines out of the rooms here for me.”

“That ain’t hay, dearie. Okay, gimme the twenty-fi’ cents.”

William Klump was a thrifty soul. He always managed to get enough reading matter during his rounds to help him while away the lonely hours. Willie’s literature was not too elevating as he found most of it in barber shops. A story was a story, even if it was a couple of months old.

People were still reading the stuff Dickens and Poe wrote, weren’t they? Why pay more? That was Willie’s motto regarding all luxuries.

Willie went to his office, put the magazines on his desk and sat down to read his mail. He had found two letters under his door. One was from a law firm, Snider, Snider & Snider. He opened it up, and it told him that he had better reconsider toying with a poor defenseless woman’s affections or be prepared to cough up a thousand fish for heart balm.

“Gertie lost no time,” Willie moaned. “She strikes faster than Hitler’s panzers. Well, I will call her up and tell her a thing or two. A thousand bucks is all I am worth to her, huh? That is an insult and I will file a counter claim for deformation of character.”

The other letter was a circular asking detectives like Willie if they had considered the uncertainty of life and there were samples of tombstones enclosed. Willie liked the one with the cherubs shaking hands on top of it. He wondered how the firm of Graves & Tombes had heard of his fight with Gertie so soon.

“I guess the guys in the buryin’ business have to be psychick,” Willie concluded. “I wish I had a case.”

Willie did not feel like reading. He put his magazines in a file cabinet and went to his rooming house fifteen blocks uptown and two blocks east. He slept fitfully. Three times he woke up from three nightmares, each time to save himself from being stabbed, shot and strangled by Gertie Mudgett. His eyes were as heavy as a bride’s first muffins when he finally entered a beanery near his rooming house to fuel up for the morning. An early bird had left a tabloid on the counter stool.

“Why, the scarehead has nothing about the war,” Willie gulped. “Something awful must have happened to—Oh—oh!” Willie

finally got the last traces of slumber out of his peepers and the headlines finally registered. You could have knocked William Klump over with a corn flake as he read:

HECTOR GUMBLE, GIRDLE HEIR
HOTEL PARAGON VICTIM!

Grand Rapids Girdle King Trails Son
to New York Only to Catch Up
With Him in Morgue! Son
Wanted to Be Actor.

"Buttered toast, four minutes," Willie gulped to the counterman. "Two eggs very crisp."

"Okay, pal. Shall I have the coffee rare or medium?"

WILLIE buried his face in the tabloid and read all about Gumble, Senior, having had a hunch that young Hector had set sail for the big town to become an Ameche or a Gable. The Girdle magnate told reporters at his suite in the Giltmore that Hector had run away once before, but had got only as far as Shamokin. Willie forgot his breakfast and went out and hopped a cab to the girdle mogul's inn. There was quite a mob outside the suite when Willie finally reached it. He heard a very shaky, stentorian voice and he cupped his ears.

"Maybe I'da half-killed him if I'd caught him myself," Gumble roared at the newspaperman. "Oh, why should anybody knife my son, huh? Nobody knew him in New York, and he never had any enemies. No clues, you say? What kind of a police force have you got here? I want the murderer, see? Isn't any visitor to this city safe at all? I'll spare no expense tracking the guilty monster down. Kelly, you said your name was—you standin' there in the two overnight bags! You couldn't get nowhere huh? Why—"

"Look, Mr. Gumble," Willie heard Satchelfoot argue. "Without no motive, a crime is perfect. I mean the killer had to have a reason to knock off your son. You can't think of none, so—"

"Oh, get out of here, all of you," Gumble roared. "I got to get some sleep and attend to getting Hector ready for shipment home. What a police force! Get out!"

William Klump ducked down behind a big laundry hamper and waited until the Gumble suite had been cleared and until the last of the slewfeet from Headquarters had ducked into the elevator. As bold as you please, Willie crashed the suite.

"Who are you?" a big portly character with a wiry salt-and-pepper mustache barked. "Beat it!"

"I can understand you bein' upset, sir," Willie said. "My card, Mr. Grumble."

"Gumble, dope," the girdle mogul spat out with a cigar butt. "A private detective, huh? If that's right, then I'm a quiz kid, here for a premiere. What goes on here?"

"Do not let appearances deceive you, sir. Would you send a wolf to a sheep pasture without a sheepskin diploma?"

"So there is no more wasting my time, Klump," Gumble yelled, "I'll pay a thousand dollars to any man who finds the man or woman who murdered my son. That goes for you, too. Get out of here."

Willie got out. He hurried over to his office where he tried to think things over. He had no more clues than Satchelfoot Kelly and he told himself he might just as well get to work on the long defunct Judge Crater case as this one.

"I must forget about it," Willie sighed. "I will read the wanted criminals department in *Callous Detective* for this week." He opened his file cabinet and took out the magazines he had purchased from the chambermaid at the Paragon.

"Hector must have at least studied with

the Harvards or the Amhersts,” Willie mumbled. “But such literature for an old grad. Why, here is even a copy of *Captain Jake’s Smokehouse Weekly*. And *Brevities*, the actors’ journal.” Willie tossed this aside and a sheet of paper flew out of it. He pounced on it. It was a receipted bill from the editorial offices of *Brevities*. It had been made out to Waldo the Wizard, Room 409, Hotel Paragon. Waldo had advertised in *Brevities* and a copy of the ad was pasted on the bill.

The president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency took out his gold pencil and started scribbling on a scratch pad. Willie’s memory was not hair-trigger and thoughts did not stay long inside his noggin.

“That is the same room where Hector was found,” Willie wrote, “No. 1— How long was the magazines in the room anyways? No. 2— Waldo the Wizard, huh? Could he change himself into another character like Doctor Jekyll and git killed before he drunk the antidote? Sounds silly. No. 3— Maybe Hector Gumble alias Penryhn Del Roy was also Waldo. A perfect crime, I guess.”

“I know what I shall do next,” Willie said. “I will go to the editor of *Brevities*. No sooner said than I am on my way.”

CHAPTER III

WILLIE TAKES A TRIP

WILLIAM KLUMP went over to Broadway and climbed three flights of stairs in an old office building. He was told by a reception girl to please sit down and wait as there was thirteen ahead of him. Willie selected a spot on the extreme end of a long settee and just as he relaxed, a fat, flashily dressed character got up and extended both hands toward him.

“No need of you to put an ad in, pal,” the stranger grinned. “I’m Lou Pinsky, burlescue magnet. I know a comic when I see one. A natural. Name your own price, pal.”

“I beg your pardon,” Willie huffed, “you must have the wrong party. I am not an actor, and I do not go to burlesques, anyway. I am here on very important police business. I am a detective.”

“What an actor,” Pinsky raved. “He’s a wow, huh, everybody? Maybe he wants to be coaxed. Look, I’ll pay a hundred a week and—”

“Do I have to get mad and punch somebody?” Willie countered. “This is an outrage.”

“I think he means it,” Pinsky gulped and backed up. “Now I’ve seen everythin’.”

Willie finally got in to see the right party on the actor’s Bible. The editor showed Willie a picture of Waldo, and Willie knew right away it could never be Hector Gumble.

“Where is Waldo now?” the private dick asked.

“I got no idea. You should go an’ see his agent, pal. It’s Maxie Steuber over on West Forty-fourth Street. Look it up in the book outside, pal. Them actors hardly ain’t never in one place, like a flea on a dog. Maxie’ll know Waldo’s intinery.”

So Willie, working with feverish haste, hied to the cubby hole in a walk-up on Forty-fourth where a theatrical agent shuffled his talent.

“Waldo?” Maxie said. “Yeah, he got booked just a couple days ago, Mister. I’ll tell you in a sec where he ought to be showing tonight or tomorrer. Yeah. Now let’s see, Klump. Here it is. The Strand-Bijou in Chillicothe, Oh-ho-ho.”

“That’s Ohio, huh?”

“Did it sound like I said Illinois?” Maxie sniffed. “What’s Waldo done?”

Skipped a hotel bill?"

"I wouldn't know as yet," Willie said. "How far is Chillicothe?"

"I wouldn't hire a taxi to make it, pal," Maxie said. "Look it up in a geography. Glad to do what I could for you."

Willie went to his office to pack a bag. He called up Mr. Gumble at the Giltmore and happened to catch that citizen in.

"Hello," Willie called out. "Mr. Girdle? I mean Gumble? This is Detective Klump reporting. Look, I am on my way to Chillicothe, Ohio. No. I haven't found the murderer, but I wish to talk with a citizen who could easily have been the victim, instead of your son. If I ever solve the case, are you willing to refund any expenses?"

"Sure," Mr. Gumble grumbled. "Where shall I call you back, Bellevue?"

SNAPPING his bag shut, Willie hastened to the Grand Central. While waiting for the train, he bumped into a familiar person. It was Satchelfoot Kelly.

"So you give up at last, Klump," Kelly yelled. "Or are you duckin' a lawyer, huh?"

"Neither," Willie said. "I am drafted for Class A. Send me some cigarettes, Satchelfoot. Now don't bother me, as a train don't wait for nobody."

"Hey, what is the idea?" Kelly howled. "Leave go my ankle."

"Pardon," Detective Klump said. "I thought I was pickin' up my valise. See you again some time."

Just twenty-four hours later, William Klump sat in a box in the Strand-Bijou in Chillicothe, Ohio. He sat through a flicker, a newsreel, a pair of jugglers and a trained sea lion. Then a card announced the act he was waiting for. The card read:

WALDO THE WIZARD
AND MEDUSA

"Huh," Willie said. "He changed the name of his act quick." He slumped down in his seat and made himself as inconspicuous as possible. The lights dimmed and there was a roll of drums and a crash of cymbals. A black curtain parted and there stood Waldo. Medusa did not show up for a minute or two. Waldo picked her out of an urn after a puff of smoke and flame had come out of the big container.

Medusa was a blond trick wearing just enough to keep her out of the category of strip-teasers. She tripped the light fantastic toward the box where Willie sat and took her place to wait for Waldo to do his stuff.

William Klump stared at the blonde. Her left ear was toward him, and the lobe was still held in place by adhesive tape. The detective almost fell out of his chair and he reached into his pocket for a little bottle of aspirin.

When he felt almost normal, he made his exit from the Strand-Bijou, went around the corner and found the stage door. He flashed a badge on the sleepy native who tended the gate.

"I should like to wait here until Waldo and the dame are through," Willie said. "I must talk to them private."

"Okay. They got dressing rooms seven an' eight," the doorman said. "They wanted for somethin'?"

"I am not at liberty to say," Willie said, and took a chair near a tank of trained seals. A corpulent soubrette ogled him and Willie gave her the brush-off. He wished Waldo the Wizard would hurry up and make himself appear.

There was a burst of applause from out front, and then some more seconds passed and out came Waldo and Medusa.

"Pardon me," Willie said to the blonde. "Wasn't you in a restaurant on Fiftieth Street in New York couple of days

ago?"

"Yeah. So what jumps here? Say, you look familiar yourself, Toots. Let's go inside."

"The name is Klump," Willie said.

"What's the big idea?" Waldo said to Willie, when the three were behind a closed door.

"Well, you had Room 409 in the Hotel Paragon, didn't you?" Willie asked. "On what day did you check out and what time?"

WALDO was no wizard off stage. He thought as slow as was humanly possible. After awhile, however, he gave Willie an answer that was near enough to make the private dick get a touch of St. Vitus.

"The guy who carved you?" Willie said to Medusa. "Where is he now?"

"I don't know," Medusa said. "I hope he fell in the Hudson, pal. I give him the air, see? He's washed up in his act, an' it would've been worth my life to stay with him. I teamed up with Waldo."

"What was the name of the actor you gave the powder to?" Willie pressed on.

"The Great Felix. He sure was good once. But the last time I appeared with the squirt, he nearly took off an ear for me. I got a nick near my ribs too."

"Ah—er—what is his stuff? His specialty?"

"A knife thrower," Medusa said.

The cramped dressing room began to spin. "Knife thr—" Willie caved, and Medusa yelled for Waldo the Wizard to find some smelling salts.

"What ails the guy?" Waldo wanted to know, and drew some water out of a faucet. He threw it in Willie's face, and the private dick began to use a crawl stroke along the floor. The actors finally revived him and propped him up against the wall.

"I must get a train back," Willie said. "You left some magazines in Room 409, huh?"

"So what?"

"You have no idea," Willie said. "Don't you read the papers?"

"No. All we git is war news. We ain't seen a paper in three days, pal. On the road, you don't git a chance to read. Five shows a day, pal. It's brutal. Why—"

"Before I go," Willie said. "Let me have your intinery the next few days, as I might have to call on you for somethin', yeah."

"Somethin' is screwy," Medusa said.

Private Detective Klump was back in New York the next morning. He hunted all over for The Great Felix, but booking agents claimed that the knife thrower must have quit the big town.

Maxie Steuber told Willie, "That guy has lost his technique an' is dangerous. Unless he has a stooge, his act is no good an' no dame wants her throat cut—not that some shouldn't have 'em cut, huh?"

"So long," Willie mumbled, and went to his office to think things out.

"It was Felix all right," Willie wrote down on his memo pad. "I heard him threaten to fix a wagon the day he appeared with Medusa. He says he couldn't live without her, I heard that too. No. Seven—Felix would read the papers to see if they suspected him of a rubout. He knows now that Waldo is still eating and breathin'. He will be cagey and might even quit New York. Like Maxie said, he couldn't make a living without a stooge."

"I think I'm right," Willie said, and grabbed the phone. He called the girdle mogul. He was told that he would not be in for a couple of hours at least. He was at a mortician's.

"He looked like he needed new glasses," Willie nodded as he hung up. Then he clenched his fists, drew in a deep

breath, and called Gertie Mudgett.

"Hello," he said when Gertie answered the public utility thing. "Now please listen, honey. Yon got me wrong. Will you help me make a thousand bucks? If so, please come over to my office at once. Please, sugar."

"Okay, Willie. I heard you skipped town," Gertie said. "I was goin' to hire me a detective. I'll be right over."

CHAPTER IV

CORNERED

GERTIE arrived, quite pugnacious as Willie had expected. He had to talk fast. He told her he had just about solved the Gumble murder, but needed her help.

"Look, Gert," Willie said. "It is my ace up my sleeve, and I need a queen to go with it. Ha! Not bad. Well, this suspect is an actor and he does not eat without throwin' knives. But to throw them in public, he must have somethin' to throw at. Which is always a swell-looking doll pleasing to the eye of the audiences. Most actresses here know that Felix has started to slip and will not take a chance with him. I bet Felix is still looking for a stooge before he leaves New York. I bet he has advertised."

"Oh, yeah? Throwin' knives at Gertie, huh? That is a fiendish way to beat my breach of promise suit, Willie Klump. So you want I should hire out to get murdered! That is the most cold-bloodedest thing I ever heard. I will complain to the police. Why you low-down—"

"Wait, Gert," Willie said, taking cover behind a file cabinet. "Wait until I finish. They never hit anybody with knives in the act. The trick is missin' them. Of course, if Felix wanted to not miss, he couldn't. Like

when he saw a citizen in a room with the door open and his back to him."

"Let me sit down an' figure this out, Willie," Gertie said. "You have been gettin' dumb luck before so—A thousand bucks, did you say, Willie?"

"Yeah. Then we could get the high-priced dinin' room suite, Gertie."

"Oh, Willie," Gertie said. "I will do any thin' you say. How could you ever forgive me?"

"That is what I— Wait, I must see if Gumble is back." Gumble was in when Willie called this time. Willie told him he expected to make an arrest within twenty-four hours.

"Sixteen other dicks have told me that," the girdle maker roared over the wire. "How many crooks do you think stabbed my son? You stop bothering me, you crackpot, or I'll call the police."

"Thank you," Willie said. "I will." He turned to Gertie and told her that Gumble was cooperating in swell fashion. He asked her to start helping immediately by going out and buying the latest copy of *Brevities*.

Gertie returned twenty minutes later, and she was all agog. She pointed to an ad in the actor's journal and told Willie she believed that was what he was looking for. The ad was to wit:

WANTED—Partner for high-class vaudeville act. Must be girl not over twenty-five. Pretty blonde who is not afraid to work. Apply at once. Room 1108, 220 W. — Street.

"It must be Felix," Willie said. "He goes for blondes. Now you hurry up there right away after fixing up to look more like a stage doll. Take the job if he gives it to you and find out how to call me back without him knowin' it. You are a swell pal, Gert. I'll be suin' you—I mean seein' you. Good luck, sugar."

GERTIE MUDGETT had not been gone fifteen minutes before Satchelfoot Kelly and five big helpers crashed the portals of the Hawkeye Agency.

"What's this I hear, Klump?" Kelly yelled. "So you was drafted, hey? You got a lead on the Gumble murder. Come on, now, let us in on it. You can't—"

"Now look," Willie said. "You was all very rude to me at the scene of the crime. There is no law sayin' a private detective should tell all he knows to real ones before his case is closed. If Mr. Gumble was unsatisfied with the New York cops, he has a bill of rights sayin' he can hire other characters. Good day, gentlemen."

"Have a heart, Willie!" Kelly whined. "We are on a spot. I bet you are bluffin', too, you fathead, and are takin' advantage of a grief-stricken parent to milk him for scratch. If we find that out—"

"You can't insult me in my office," Willie said in high dudgeon. "Leave at once, all of you!"

"Okay," Kelly said. "We'll keep an eye on you, though. Come on, guys. He's got nothin' on the case."

Willie waited. Two hours later, he got a call from Gertie.

"You did?" Willie said gleefully. "No kiddin'. He says you are perfect for the job, huh? You must hurry as you are just outside in a pay booth? He is goin' to start practicin' with you in a couple of minutes? Oh-oh! I'll hurry, sugar. I will not spare the horses. Huh? He says he is leavin' New York in the morning? Hello? Hello? Oh, my!" Willie banged down the phone and grabbed for his hat. "If he recognizes Gertie from that time in the restaurant, he will be sure not to miss. I didn't think of that. This might be awful."

Detective William Klump arrived outside a door marked 1108 just in time to hear a very frightened scream. He heard a

very angry voice and it said:

"Took me a couple of minutes to catch on, sister. I've seen you before. Come clean now, as this sticker I got here is not goin' to miss, if you ain't got the right answer. I'm a little nervous, baby. You went out and phoned somebody."

"You are mistaken," Gertie yelled, as Willie banged the door in and stepped inside.

A short narrow-faced character with eyes like Svengali's and a mustache like Cesar Romero's, whirled and took a quick inventory of William Klump.

"It is no use, Felix," Willie said. "I come to arrest you for the murder of Hector Gumble in the Para—"

"Duck, Willie!"

Willie did, and the shiv went on out through the door and plunked into the wall.

"Coppers, hah?" Felix the Great howled, and reached for another carver.

Gertie Mudgett threw her handbag, and she happened to be carrying an electric iron in it that she was taking to have fixed and Felix did not duck. He did not look so great when he spun around four times with his eyes changing from one socket to the other. He finally landed all sprawled out like a bear rug, and Willie got the cuffs on him.

"Shake, Gertie!" Willie said just as Satchelfoot Kelly barged in with two friends.

"A little late as usual, Satchelfoot," Willie sniffed. "Look at the knives here. So you tagged after me, did you? Let's play drop the handkerchief, too. Ha, here is the assassin, and he is mine. Call the mechanized Maria will you?"

EVERYBODY, including Felix, went down to Police Headquarters. Mr. Gumble arrived as the result of a hurried phone call, and Willie greeted him with a

triumphant grin. "I was waiting until you come," he said. "After all, you are my client. There is the character who slew Hector, because he thought he was Waldo the Wizard."

"Let's hear you prove it, turnip-face," Felix the Great groaned. "Yeah!"

"Well, if I can't, I know a blonde in Chillicothe who can," Willie said fast. There were times when falsehoods were in order, Willie told himself. "She remembered you threatening somebody, Felix. In the restaurant, remember? So who would it be but the actor named Waldo the Wizard who took her away from you. She quit because your eyes was getting bad and you didn't miss enough with the knives. She told me in Chillicothe that she was afraid you would rub out Waldo, and she saw you leave your hotel with a knife. She followed you to the Paragon and saw you go upstairs."

"That's a laugh," Felix sniffed.

"But just as she was going into the elevator, who comes out of it but Waldo who checked out. So she knew Waldo was safe and forgot about you, Felix.

"But a citizen hired the room right after Waldo and lost no time taking over. He was Hector Gumble, alias Penryhn Del Roy. He was wearing a loud plaid suit like Waldo. Why do actors dress like that, Felix? So you saw the door was open. His back was to you and you had to work fast. You heaved the shiv and didn't miss. Then you started running. The next morning you found out you liquidated the wrong citizen. How is that for apples, Felix, you vaudevillain!"

"The dame squawked, hah?" Felix the Great gulped. "She follered me? Well, I—yeah, that is right, gents. What is the use?

Now I got to go to the hot squat without no satisfaction of having speared Waldo. I warned Trix I wouldn't stand for him stealin' her away. I don't see how you started gettin' wise, even."

"Me neither," Kelly choked out and banged his hat against the wall. "There wasn't a clue. Not one, Mr. Gumble."

"Your trouble, Kelly," Willie said, "is you don't read and improve your mind like me. I found the magazines Waldo left in the room and one was a copy of *Brevities*. In it was a bill for an ad Waldo put in. Room 409 it said on the bill. So I says to myself, somebody was knocked over by error as Hector was also in Room 409 and so close behind Waldo. You get what I mean, don't you?"

"Amazing," Mr. Gumble said. "It goes to show you you can't judge a croquette by the sauce that's over it. Shake hands, Mr. Klump. Be at my hotel in the morning and I shall write you out a check."

"Ain't he marvelous, Aloysius?" Gertie asked Kelly.

"Huh? I wisht I knew." Satchelfoot groaned. "He has somethin', but it would take a dome specialist to diagnose what it is. I thought you give him the air a couple days ago?"

"Yeah. But today he has another thousand, Kelly," Gertie Mudgett said. "What would you do? Of course you would. Oh, Willie, let's go and look at that expensive dining-room suite again."

"I get it," Mr. Gumble said. "Well, Klump, you won't never have to buy no girdles as long as you live. Just let me know."

"Come on, Willie," Gertie repeated. "You want I should hand you one?"

