



# MORGUE SHEET MUSIC

By JOE ARCHIBALD

*When Willie Klump plays Hawkshaw in a big jewel theft, it leads him to three corpses—and plenty of headaches!*

“SATCHELFOOT” Kelly was frustrated. He was also discouraged. He sat in a bistro of a sort deep downtown, confiding in William J. Klump, president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, which proved that he was even more than frustrated and discouraged. Willie, on the other hand, seemed very pleased about it all and even bought Kelly a beer or two.

“Yeah,” Satchelfoot said, “I guess you tumbled before this that I been workin’ on a case of great importance, huh? I been in corporation even with the boys of Scotland Yard who let the big criminals slip through their fingers. They was the boys Sherlock Holmes always beat to the punch. In this case we are lookin’ for some I.D.B.’s, Willie. You have no doubt heard of them?”

"I never bothered much with lodges," Willie replied. "The Odd Fellows was after me once. I had an uncle blackballed by the Red Men, and he run a cigar store at that."

"No, no," Kelly sighed. "I.D.B.'s are illicit diamond buyers, Willie, who operate in South Africa. They git natives to hide the sparklers in their nostrils or between their toes and such and give them a few bucks for dornicks that are worth ten thousand times as much."

"I call that pretty dishonest," Willie declared. "But go on, Satchelfoot, as I don't understand how you got mixed up in something that took place in South Africa."

"The three I.D.B.'s escaped to the U.S. with half a million in the hot pebbles, Willie. Try and get it through your thick skull. There was supposed to be three of the gees, but we are sure a corpse we took out of the drink at the foot of East Fifty-second made the three. In short, the specifications of the stiff seemed to add up to the ones the Scotland Yards sent over on one of the I.D.B.'s, so now there should only be two. It should be quite difficult to hide a million dollars' worth of such rocks in New York even."

"Satchelfoot," Willie said, "what would you git for Gertie Mudgett for her birthday if it was you had to buy it?"

"A toy atomic bomb if you can purchase one," Kelly clipped. "Look, I was talkin' about a big sensational case and you switch off to Gertie."

"I got to git her somethin' different," Willie said, after biting off a hangnail. "I been tryin' to think for days what I could get."

"Look, Willie," Satchelfoot said. "You couldn't of been listenin'. If one of the I.D.B.'s was knocked off, it was because the other two wanted to split the half million two ways instead of three. What

should stop either one of the others figurin' on not even cutting two ways? You see what I mean?"

"It is too big for me to handle," Willie admitted. "Once a teacher ast me if a man died an' left five horses to two sons, how would each git their half, and I said make horse reddish which was wrong. Now I think Gertie would go for a bottle of perfume—say some of that Canal Number Nine? Or some shiny custom jewelry. Maybe a ring with a chip diamond—which reminds me for the first time about readin' once about the I.D.B.'s, Kelly. That was three months back and if you even give a dishonest person a five minute start, you know you have to give up."

"Awright, beetlehead!" Kelly snarled. "I was goin' to give you a chance to cut in on a big reward they have out for the crooks if you helped to catch them by accident, which could happen."

Willie grinned. "I didn't know you was so big-hearted, Satchelfoot," he sniffed. "You would ask me to help you find a licorice drop in a load of pea coal, wouldn't you? Anyway, if I haven't forgot by this time, two of the I.D.B.'s wore beards when they was chased out of England, huh? Once my old man shaved off his mustache and come home late and ma called the cops and said a strange man was in the house. He spent four hours in the lockup before she recognized him."

**S**ATCHELFOOT Kelly pawed at his face, took a long deep breath and counted to ten. It was a short count and a waiter took the empty beer bottle from Kelly's hand just in time, and immediately asked the flatfoot to leave.

"The next time I won't count!" Satchelfoot yelled from the doorway.

"You never know who are your friends," Willie said to the waiter, and got up and went into the phone booth.

He called Gertrude Mudgett. "How are you, Sugar?" he asked when he heard the sound of a very familiar voice in his ear. "Say, I got a niece I got to git somethin' for. I was thinkin' maybe she'd like a piece of custom jewelry. A big butterfly with a red stone for each eye maybe."

"You dare give me somethin' as crumby as that, Willie Klump, and I'll make you eat it!" Gertie said. "You think you was foolin' me? Why I can see right through you!"

"H-m-m," Willie choked out. "I hope when I think I got to have gall stones removed from me," he said, "you are handy. I hate X-rays and they scare me. Well, I'll think of somethin' you like better, like maybe a chindchilla coat lined with ermines."

"Why, you . . . Ha! I catch on to you, Willie. You want I should start a fight so you could git mad at me and wouldn't have to buy me nothin'. You are wastin' your time, and I just can't wait until I see the package. G'by, Willie."

Willie hung up and mopped the salt squeezings from his brow.

"She is certainly the most unsuspectin' person, but I better git somethin' good or I will git my brains knocked out."

He walked out of the bistro, ducked into a subway and hopped a rattler uptown. Once in his office he took a thin piece of cold toast from the file marked T and nibbled at it as he bemoaned the scarcity of clients. The door opened suddenly and a man came in. Willie spun around on his chair.

"I got a case for you," the caller said.

"Right here," Willie said, all agog. "You come to the right place. The Hawkeye never sleeps."

"Hun'ert and eighty-eight bucks for the case. This stuff is hard to git, pal. Say, how did I git into a closet? It is the next office I want."

The character slammed the door and shook Willie's correspondence school diploma off the wall. Willie Klump sighed deeply and finished his toast. After which he put on his hat and decided to go for a walk. Eight blocks away from his office he went into a drug-store to buy a comic book and while deciding between Og the Ogre and The Purple Phantom, a citizen burst into the pharmacy. He had crossed eyes and little chin, and a derby that he seemed to be balancing on his egg-shaped noggin. He took time out to fill flattened bellows, then a yelped:

"I seen a corpse!"

Willie walked over. He flashed his badge.

"I am a detective," he said. "You come to the right place, even if it was by accident."

"You a real detective?" the citizen asked.

"I am not drivin' a wagonload of cocoanuts if you look closer," Willie sniffed. "What do I look like? Don't answer that! Where did you trip over the corpse and are you sure he was one?"

"In an empty lot," the native gulped. "And I look, pal, when a fella is lyin' on his back and has his eyes open and don't laugh when he looks up at me, then I write him off! Come with me."

The discoverer of a cadaver walked uptown six blocks and then east for five more, and Willie was at his heels when he entered a small areaway a stone's throw from the river for a four-year-old sprout. He pointed to something that was reclining next to some old auto parts and William Klump soon admitted it was not a canvas top from an old coupe. The victim of foul play, without a doubt, had complained about his last Congressman.

"He was very well dressed indeed," Willie said. "He is no ordinary stiff. He did not walk up even a second flight for

his suits and has quite an extinguished goatee. Now, we'll look for clues."

The plain citizen seemed worried. "Er—don't you think we should notify some policeman?" he asked Willie. "I always thought one should inform Headquarters, when a stiff was found."

"Yeah," Willie said, "it is no good keepin' this to ourselves as where would we dispose of the remains? Hurry and notify the detectives—my contemptuaries. Ask for Aloysius Kilgrimmick Kelly."

"Ah—er—don't you know a detective with an easier name to pronounce?"

"Oh, hurry up," Willie said. "These things won't keep."

WHILE the character was gone, Willie scootched down and took a gander at the deceased, gingerly fingered some jewelry dangling from the loser's watch-chain.

"Yeah, he went to college once and most likely was a magnum come larder. That is one of them fraternizin' pins. Kappa Stigma or somethin'. But I must remember not to touch the corpse until the cops git here."

Willie was sitting beside the remains, eating some licorice he had found in his pocket when Satchelfoot Kelly, the medical examiner and other types of John Laws moved into the areaway. Satchelfoot cuffed his derby hat back over his locks and gaped at Willie.

"My good glory!" he yipped. "You git to these murders almost quick enough to have committed the foul deed! You are uncanny!"

"The strangest things do happen to me, I'll admit," Willie said. "And I don't even try, Kelly. Look, this taxpayer was given two shots and not for malaria or typhus fever. Find out who he is. He has not been speakin' to me."

Satchelfoot Kelly pushed Willie out of

the way and knelt beside the cadaver. He came up with a wallet and read the name stamped thereon.

"'Herkimer V. Fluke.' Two bullets went through him where only one would of did the trick. The killer had to be sure, huh?"

"Maybe Fluke had double identity with a insurance company," Willie offered.

The diagnostician of deceased persons laughed with hearty appreciation.

"I don't git it," Kelly snapped.

"Well, let's see if you can git some clues here," Willie sniffed. "Do somethin'."

Satchelfoot and the cops went through the old routine, of taking pictures and rifling the defunct character's clothes and Willie sat on an old auto seat bored with it all.

"You would think cops would git out of this rut," he complained. "This was an important victim and whoever done it would be very smart not to leave nothin' behind him."

"Wa'n't robbery," Satchelfoot said. "There is moola in his poke. Here is a letter addressed to him from somebody who puts down Fluke is an electric engineer. Fluke lives on West Hun'red and Eighty-Seven Street and we better go and call on the widow."

"They generally like to be told these things," Willie said. "So far, you are on the ball, Satchelfoot, but as usual I look for you to wind up right behind it."

"I got a good mind to wrap one of them old truck bumpers around your dirty neck!" Kelly snarled. "Awright, you look for some clues and if you find somethin' and try to cover up on it, I will tear off one of your legs and beat your brains out with it."

"I have not been asleep," Willie assured Kelly. "I see nothing to go by that would point to the assassin. We had better

brief Mrs. Fluke, if Herkimer had one, to see who had a reason to snuff him out.”

Willie accompanied the cops to the Fluke apartment which proved to be a very fashionable layout and Satchelfoot Kelly tipped his hat when he saw the widow.

“Madam,” he said, “your husband was a knocked off—er—he was murdered last night!”

Whereupon Mrs. Fluke, who was quite as frail as a hippo that had never exercised, uttered a plopping sound and swooned against Willie’s chest. Willie slumped down in a corner and made a squishing sound and he called for help. Then he got up and took an inventory of his ribs.

“You are every bit as tactful as a citizen who sells chances for a lottery in the same aisle of a church where the vestry is taking the collection,” he said to Satchelfoot.

“You git hardened to this business,” Kelly said as he held the ammonia under Mrs. Fluke’s nose.

After a while the obese doll became articulate and said Herkimer had never even spoken a cross word to anybody and that he must have been a victim of a case of mistaken identity.

Of late, she divulged, Herkimer Fluke had been working on things to do with electronics, but Herkimer never talked too much shop after a busy day’s work.

“You sure he was not workin’ on them automatic—atomic bombs?” Kelly asked. “Did he seem secretive and mysterious-like as if he was on the threshold of a big invention?”

“Oh, gosh!” Willie said. “You have been readin’ one of those comic weeklies again, Satchelfoot.”

The upshot of it was that the law gleaned absolutely nothing from the briefing.

“You better forget it, Satchelfoot,” Willie said on the way down in the

elevator. “Along with the I.D.B.’s, as you got no more to start out with than a pauper evicted by a poorhouse fire. I have more important things to do than git mixed up with it. I’ll see you around, Kelly.”

NOW just three days later, William J. Klump was sitting in his office, still undecided about Gertie Mudgett’s birthday gift and more than a little worried about the slump in free-lance criminal investigation. He put gift hunting out of his mind and turned to the want ads. He scanned four columns of fine print and his eyes slid over to a bunch of type that intrigued him. It was as follows:

FOUND—Music Box. Plays the tune “Moon Over My Amy,” and must be for either jewels or cigarettes. Owner apply Lamprey Pingree, Room 76, Pulzer Building.

“Huh,” Willie said. “I expected to spend about ten bucks at least on Gertie. If whoever mislaid the music box left town I can claim it if I git there first and give a reward of two dollars. I can’t see why it ain’t ethical. Only thing is, I hate that song it plays.”

Willie consulted his conscience again a few moments later and he wasted little time in convincing it he had won the argument. He picked up his hat and set sail for the Pulzer Building.

Lamprey Pingree, to Willie’s delight, proved to be a naive and dumb citizen who wrote figures down in a big book all day long. Lamprey was getting quite round-shouldered and wore specks with lenses as thick as the armor plate on a Tiger tank.

“I come to pick up the music box I lost,” Willie announced.

“Are you ready to identify it?” Lamprey asked.

“Of course!” Willie countered. “It plays ‘Moon Over My Amy,’ don’t it? It is to put cigarettes in.”

"I am satisfied you are the owner," the drone of the ledgers said, nodding his head.

He opened a desk drawer and handed the works to Willie. Willie thanked him very, very much and also gave him a two-dollar bill for his trouble. Willie lost no time getting out of the office and marveled that there was a character in the world with more gullibility than himself.

"Was that lug dumb!" Willie gulped. "This is quite a find and cost more than I dare to think. It weighs quite heavy. I will wrap it up nice for Gertie. Even she will admit it is different. I wish it played 'One Meatball,' though."

William J. Klump purchased a newspaper and wrapped it around the present and hurried to his rooming house via the Lexington Avenue subway. Just one block from the old brownstone where he kept his old straw suitcase out of the weather, a cab's brakes squealed. Tires wailed like a banshee and there were sounds that should have stood on Okinawa or along the Rhine.

A bullet tore the laces off Willie's left Oxford. Another came in higher and went through the pocket of his blue serge and ruined a peanut bar.

Willie hit the concrete and rolled over the sidewalk and down some steps leading to a basement. He crashed into a pile of garbage cans that tumbled down on top of him and garnished him with old lemon rinds, old onion jackets and other assorted vegetable waste that had become quite offensive to the neighborhood.

Some kind people removed the cans and brushed Willie off.

"Somebody tried to kill me!" Willie choked out, with half a carrot. "Didn't nobody git the number of the murder car? I was walkin' along . . . Where is my present for Gert? . . . Oh, I got it under my arm still, ha! I wish people would

correctly identify victims before they knock them off in this town. First it is Herkimer Fluke, and then me."

Things around Willie started spinning again. A bystander put an arm around him and asked him questions, and Willie answered them all but only in the abstract. And so it was the next day when the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency read about himself in the paper. There were two sticks about the to-do on the East Side and the headline said:

#### PRIVATE DETECTIVE NARROWLY ESCAPES DEATH!

"Huh!" Willie said and gobbled up the fine print. It read:

N. Y. City, Sept. 9-(VP) William J. Klump, President of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, was attacked by unknown assailants late this afternoon a block from his home. Mr. Klump, when questioned by a person who had witnessed the attempted murder, said with a shrug, "It is just another case of mistaken identity, is all. There is an epidemic on. It was nothing." And the private detective walked away as if it was an everyday occurrence for him.

"I said that?" Willie gulped. "I did that? Why, I don't remember a thing like—er—I am goin' to wrap this up right away and mail it this aft and tell Gertie not to open it until her birthday before I am a victim of another misunderstandin'."

Willie carefully wrapped up the music box, enclosed a note in same and addressed it to Gertrude Mudgett. After which he hurried out and dropped it in the big mail-box on the corner.

"I bet she'll love that," Willie said.

Satchelfoot Kelly was leaning against the door when Willie returned to his office.

"Hello, Willie," he said. "I have got a fella under surveyance. He was once an assistant to Herkimer Fluke and accused Herk once of stealin' plans for an

invention he made and then got fired. I ast him for his alibi about where he was durin' the committin' of the crime and he said he was home with his wife, but could only prove it by his wife. Wives can't testify for their husbands, can they? What wife wouldn't lie for her husban'?"

"Satchelfoot, you get worst every day," Willie said. "If all dicks was like you, we wouldn't have a single jail in the U. S. I haven't time to talk to you."

"Why was you attackted?" Kelly asked, one eye half-closed. "For publicity or what? Do you know anythin'?"

"Oh, I went to eight grades in school," Willie said. "I have no idea who would want to kill me."

"I could name three," Kelly snapped. "Well, I am goin' to watch you close."

"You keep away from me, Satchelfoot. I will be ruined social!" Willie went into his office.

Now, an hour or so later, Willie was sitting at his desk trying to reconstruct the murderous intent to kill him and did not hear the door of his office open. Suddenly something blew up inside his head and everything went as dark as the inside of a raven. Willie felt as if he was sinking slowly down through many layers of black wool and then there was nothing anywhere.

After a while, he opened his eyes and his file cabinet was chasing his desk around the room and he was following both articles of furniture in his old swivel chair. His noggin felt large enough for two citizens to start housekeeping in and there was more ache inside of it than in a million old maids' hearts.

Finally everything became stationary once more and Willie saw that his office had been ransacked. The contents of his file cabinet, the drawers of his desk, his little utility closet were piled up in the middle of the room.

"I am no mistaken identity," Willie gulped. "Somebody wants me defunct or, wants somethin' I got. I don't see what it could be as I don't own nothin' more valuable at the minute than a pair of gol'-plated collar buttons. Who would of done it besides Satchelfoot Kelly? I'll call him quick at Joe's Tavern and if he is there, he didn't do it, as he wouldn't of had time to get there."

Willie grabbed at the phone and dialed a number. Joe answered and Willie asked for Satchelfoot.

"The lug is here," Joe said. "Want to talk with the flatfoot?"

Willie certainly did. When Satchelfoot answered, he yelped:

"Look, I changed my mind about not havin' you watch me close, Kelly. I need a bodyguard as once more I am half murdered, and right in my office. What is it I ain't got somebody wants? For heaven's sake, find out who is attackin' citizens for no reason, huh? Come over and talk it over, Satchelfoot!"

"Yeah, lightnin' don't never strike the same tree twice unlest it is aimin' at it," Kelly said. "Somehow, Willie, I am sure you are head over heels in a murder or robbery by some way nobody can figure out. Sit tight until I get there."

"I wisht I was tight," Willie sighed, then hung up and searched for the little box of aspirin in his pocket.

Finding none, he bathed a great igloo that had risen on his pate with cold water and then sat down to try and work things out with paper and pencil. Even when Willie's head was not convalescing from a lusty clout, the thoughts inside it were as fleeting as a strawberry soda in the midst of four sprouts armed with as many straws.

Willie scribbled:

No. 1. I never got no clues at all where Fluke was liquidated and have not messed with the

rubout in no way, shape or form so who is sore at me and tried to bump me off twice? There is no sense in that.

"No.2. I couldn't of been mistook for anybody as even I know there is nobody else in the world looks like me. I wish Satchelfoot would get here. I better lock myself in."

Willie, his door locked, the filing cabinet pushed up against it, sat at his desk facing the window, a window pole resting across his knees.

"Maybe they will make another attack from the rear whicht I have covered . . . Who is that?"

"It is Satchelfoot—I mean it is Kelly!"

"I don't believe it," Willie said. "It is somebody imitatin' you. You can't fool me."

"Look, let me in, you flathead, or I will murder you!"

"That is what they tried to do awright, but I warn you, if it ain't you Kelly, I am goin' to crock you one you will feel in your arches until your dyin' day!"

KLUMP removed the barricade, opened the door a crack and looked out. He breathed a heavy sigh of relief.

"Er—come in, Kelly. I am sorry I am not myself—er—maybe I am somebody else, huh? A gee who has doublecrossed somebody. Or maybe I am a split personality."

"You sure must have been boffed pretty hard," Kelly said, feeling of the knot on Willie's skull. "It looks like somebody grafted a coconut on your dome. Look, come clean, Willie!"

"Satchelfoot, I am on the level worst than the top of a billiard table, I swear!" Willie stated. "I have no idea why I am so disliked or own somethin' citizens would murder me to git."

"Did you buy Gert an expensive present?"

"Huh? I forgot that. Huh, it only cost me two bucks, Satchelfoot. It is to hold cigarettes or slave bracelets or somethin', and plays a tune when you open it. Anyway, nobody knows how I took that Pingree character for a sucker. I mean, what difference does it make?"

"None, if it was somebody else done it," Kelly said. "Are you sure it was not made of pure uranium like was in the atomic bombs? It could happen to you."

"Most everythin' else has," Willie admitted. "I'll get it, Satchelfoot; and we'll examine . . . No, I mailed it to Gertie already."

Kelly began to chew his nails. "We got to get it, Willie," he said.

"Wha-a-a-a? Then I will git killed. You don't know what you're sayin'! Gertie would think if I ast for it I was goin' to change my mind. No matter what she'd think, it would be bad for me."

"On second thought, you ain't kiddin'," Kelly growled. "Well, maybe I should forget about it all as I am mixed up in two cases now I can't git nowheres with. The I.D.B.'s and their swag an' the Fluke erasure. I better be goin' on my way, Willie."

"No, Satchelfoot!" Willie gulped and grabbed at Kelly's sleeve. "Ain't we pals? Look, I got to have protection. For once I must have you at my side, in your spare time anyways. Durin' other times, I will not leave the house."

"Okay," Kelly said. "I couldn't see an Airdale knocked off for no reason. Let me know when you want to walk home, Willie."

"Right now," Willie said. "You got a Betsy?"

"What you think I carry, Willie? An orange stick? If you don't believe . . . Huh, I ain't got the gun, Willie. I remember now I was at Loew's theatre and the



Roscoe hurt me when I sat down and I laid it at my feet.”

“I’ll see you some time, Kelly,” Willie sniffed. “On second thought it is safer to be alone.”

“Yeah? Well, I’m keepin’ a eye on you, Willie Klump!”

“You better not,” Willie quipped. “You are blind enough as you are and could not spare one.”

Willie reached his rooming house without being molested and made sure the doors and windows of his hall room were securely fastened for the night. He went down to see the landlady.

“Don’t let nobody in to see me,” he told her. “It is a matter of life and death.”

“Sometimes you frighten me, Klump!” the old doll said. “I wish you’d give a week’s notice. I’d throw in the rent.”

Willie went upstairs and to bed. The landlady knocked on his door at six A.M.

“Telephone, Klump!” she yipped.

Willie groped to the telephone out in the hall and asked wearily of the gadget:

“Who is there?”

“It is me again, Willie,” Satchelfoot Kelly said. “I just happened to think of somethin’. Them crooks couldn’t find that box in your office, and they are plenty smart and will check on you at gin mills and such to see if you got a dame. They’ll work on Gertie, too.”

Willie shivered. “You think they are that tough, Kelly? I’m beginning to git scairt. But they don’t know from nothin’, as she’ll wreck ‘em.”

“Look, Willie. Even that doll is not part of the Eighth Armored Division. A bullet in a vital spot and you are a widower ahead of schedule.”

“You have been readin’ them comics too much again,” Willie sniffed. “Buildin’ a mole out of an anthill. I don’t see no sens in crossin’ a bridge until they build it or when you git to the river. I am goin’

back to bed. By this time the rough boys must see they have made a mistake.”

Willie hung up. Ten minutes later he was snoring soundly.

**J**UST to make sure, William Klump did not go to his office the next day. He hived up in his hall room and peered out of the window at intervals. Gertie, he judged, had the package by now.

There was a knock on the door. The landlady handed Willie a circular letter and a little slip from the post-office branch. It said Willie had neglected to put any postage at all on the package and would he come down and correct the error?

“I wish I didn’t forget things like I do,” Willie griped, and grabbed for his blue serge pants that hung over the foot of the bed.

He emerged from the rooming house, made his way warily to the post-office and bought stamps. He pasted them on the package and retraced his steps. At six A.M. the next morning, the landlady knocked on his door.

“Telephone, Klump!” she yelled.

Willie groped his way down two flights of stairs to the hall phone and cautiously lifted the receiver.

“Who is there?” he asked warily.

“You William J. Klump?” a very strange voice asked.

“I am. And who is callin’ in the middle of the night? My office hours are from nine to six.”

“Look, palsy-walsy, we ain’t kiddin’ around no more. We have a doll here named Mudgett and she says she is goin’ to marry you. Whicht is a slight exaggeration if you don’t fork over that box you got from a fella named Pingree, see? Catch on?”

“You leave her go at once!” Willie yowled. “That is kidnagin’! I’ll call the

cops!”

“You do, and if you ever go middle-aislin’ with this babe, they’ll have to carry her by silver handles if you git what I mean! Come over to Apartment Seven C, Waveyer Arms, with the box, pal. We’ll know if you don’t come alone, and it is bye-bye to this female commando. Look, we ain’t in a good mood. She has practically ruined a good boy we thought a lot of, Klump’ I got a bad eye and Jabsy is walkin’ like he went through Ima Jima an’ Okinawa both. So we ain’t kiddin’ no more. We will give you twenty-four hours, or else!”

“Awright,” Willie gulped. “You got me over a barrel, you dirty crooks! I sure hope the mails—er—I’ll be there with the box. You’d think it was worth a million bucks.”

“Only half a million,” the thick unpleasant voice said, and Willie felt a little faint.

He left the receiver dangling and stumbled up to his room to get his blue serge on. When he was dressed, wearing one black shoe and one russet one, the phone called him again. This time the voice that rang in his ear was familiar.

“Kelly, it is you!” he yelled. “Oh, thank heavens! But it is no use as if I approach that place with somebody with me, Gertie will git the works. You keep out of this!”

“So you wouldn’t listen, huh? Look, Willie, I had a hunch, and all yesterday my spine was full of needles, so I go and call on Gertie. She is not in an’ it was after midnight. I called ten minutes ago and she wa’n’t there. They got her, Willie!”

“Tell me some news, you big false alarm!” Willie yipped. “Like Japan quit. Of courst they did as they called me and . . . I cannot waste time with you as I got to stand in the hall where Gertie lives and

intracept that package which is worth a half million.”

“Willie, you said half a million?”

William Klump hung up and hurried out of the house. All that day he waited for the mailman to ring twice although he had heard somewhere that they never did. It was close to five P.M. when Willie finally had the package in his hands once more. He told Gertie’s female boniface that he had changed his mind about not giving it to Gertie himself.

“The personality touch, ha!” Willie grinned, and shook great globules of fretting oil from his brow. “And I got to git a card to put inside.”

At exactly five-thirty, Willie Klump entered the den of dishonest characters. One was a beefy individual with big jowls and a pair of eyes that could worry Dracula. One had a shanty under it. He held an ugly-looking Betsy in a big hairy fist. The other two gees were the worse for wear and could never be considered, by any stretch of the imagination, for positions as bank tellers.

Sitting in a corner, tied up as securely as traffic during a four-alarm fire, was Gertrude Mudgett. She had a handkerchief tied around her mouth, but her eyes pinched-hit very well for her stymied pipes as they broomed Willie.

“Don’t blame me, Gert!” Willie said. “I am just as puzzled as you.”

Willie shifted his gaze and he saw a great square metal door set into the wall. There was a small dial in the center. Willie knew it was a wall safe, but it was also the biggest he had ever seen.

“All right, you silly-lookin’ cove,” the big character said, taking charge. “Blarst your eyes, hand over that box if you know what’s good fer yer!”

“Yeah,” Willie said. “But why all the fuss over the thing? I admit I pulled a fast

one and made out I lost it. It could not hold no half million."

ONE of the rough persons narrowed his eyes, took a gander at his partner.

"Er—listen, sweetheart," he said to the big boy. "Don't tell me you wa'n't kiddin' about it bein' worth a half million? Only fifty bucks each for pickin' up that babe? Now, look here!"

"Shut your ugly mug!" the massive character said. "Both of you get out or I'll bloomin' well bash your wits outa yer!"

"Er—you are from Limehouse or some place," Willie said, as the gorillas took a powder. "Somethin' is goin' on inside my dome but I can't just . . . Well, here is the box! I unwrapped it just to make sure there was no half million dollars in it, and . . . Ooops, it, slipped!"

The music box hit the floor and snapped open and the melody that had been the rage in the big town's bistros for weeks poured out.

Mo-o-o-on Over-r-r-r My-y-y-y A-Amy-I I lo-ove  
her-can you-u-u-u bla-a-ame-mee-e-e-e-e!

"Ain't that awful?" Willie asked pleasantly. "I still like 'One Meatball.' See, it is a case of mistook identity. Ha, we all make mistakes, so let my babe. . . Huh?"

The big person had the Betsy pressed against Willie's floating rib. Gertie was making sounds behind the gag that reminded Willie of feeding time near the bear cage up at the Bronx Zoo. Willie tried to make some sounds of his own but his vocal organs were paralyzed.

The door of the wall safe was making sounds, however. The dial was turning as the music played on. There was a faint clicking sound, then another and suddenly the safe door swung open. "Moon Over My Amy" ceased, and the portly crook laughed deep in his throat, making a sound

like a load of empty barrels going over a wooden bridge. He backed away slowly, his miniature howitzer still covering the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency.

"Just a little music box, yes?" the mysterious ruffian mocked. "Ever hear of electronics, old fellow? In this safe there is a half million dollars in jolly old diamonds. Too bad I have to be such a ruddy heel, as you say over here, old custard. Can't let you live, you know!"

"We could talk it over," Willie choked out in a dry squeaky voice. "Why can't I?"

"Obvious why not, isn't it? I have removed from this jolly old world more than one cove because of those diamonds. A chap named Fluke, I believe. Another who . . . But shall it be the lady first, what?"

"By all means," Willie said in a hurry. "I am not anxious to . . . No, Gert, don't believe me, as it was a slip of the tongue. I swear it! He don't dast kill us!"

"Don't coax him, jughead," Gertie yipped, having worked her gag loose, her voice sounding as if it had been strained through a scoop of mashed potatoes. "How you gib me into thib mesh, huh?"

"You wouldn't believe it," Willie yipped, then was sure he heard somebody brush against the door outside. His eyes widened and he raised his voice. "Some lugs are suckers, Gertie. Hah, riskin' a hot squat to save a half million bucks for a big slob like this one, and they won't even git a chance to spend fifty skins each. Didn' he kill off his other pals, huh? Oh, I've heard of suckers!"

Willie ducked. A bullet scraped his blue serge close to his clavicle and thudded into the wall. The door burst open and the gorillas came in, but shooting. The big brain swapped artillery fire and Willie took an infiltration course under the flying lead as he wriggled toward Gertie. He got

hold of the corner of a rug and yanked viciously and the ponderous person let out a yell and hit the floor on his posterior.

"Git that gat, Willie!" Gertie Mudgett screeched. "You got to fight the winner, don't forget! It is not just hay in that wall. Here, let me do it, as I just busted loose, girdle and all, Willie!"

With Gertrude Mudgett swinging, Willie had odds of six to one. He waded into the two gorillas who had no time to go out of the apartment house and look for a store that sold refills for Roscoes, and Willie put on an exhibition of unorthodox fighting that would have made Maxie Rosenbloom look like a Billy Conn.

Gertie thumped the vital oxygen out of the heavy in the drama and then swung at the last male person on his feet. Willie did not regain consciousness until some time later when the place was filled with cops.

"Look, Gert," he said, "it was a slip of the tongue . . . Oh, I am glad to see policemen. Stop her as she will kill me!"

"Shush, Willie," Gertie said. "And it was a slip of my fist, so we are even. Now tell me, how did you get into this Donnybrook?"

"Because your birthday was comin' up," Willie said. "I saw a way to save a couple of leaves of cabbage, Gertie. I . . . Wait until I get well, huh?"

AN HOUR later, in a back room of a precinct station, the big criminal character, much the worse for his experience with Gertrude Mudgett, admitted to being Bertram Torkle, alias "Bertie the Big," alias the "Paddington Pachyderm." Satchelfoot Kelly arrived just as Bertie unfolded his wild and weird tale.

"So I pushes my pal, Harry the Horseplayer, orf the train on me way to Liverpool," Bertie pointed out. "A week after I am in the States, I bash Willie Charmonger over the bloomin' pate and

throw him in the river, yus. Then I hears that Harry the Horseplayer was not dead after I am over here for a while, but in a horsepital in Liverpool. So I says to meself, 'Bertie, Harry will never rest until he tracks you down or gets his share of the ruddy stones, the last which he will want more than anythin'.'

"I figures I had best try and find a hidin' place for the diamon's, see? First Harry would want them before killin' me. So I hears about these blinkin' electronics and find me a smart cove who knows all about such things. So he rigs up the mechanism of the wall safe so that it is a bloomin' affinity fer the sound waves comin' out of the blarsted music box. Yer foller me?"

"Not too close," Willie said. "But go on, Bertie."

"Fluke, the blinkin' doublecrosser, delivered the goods, then raised his price. I refused and the gent walked orf with the music box which made the safe no good without it, yus? So I called a person named Jabsy to foller him home and get the box even if he had to do the cove in. Jabsy gets the box after murderin' Fluke, stops in at a drugstore to tell me he has it. He picks up a package by mistake, a box of hard candy in one of them tin boxes, some other gormless gent has placed on the counter. They look that much alike. This clerk, Lamprey Pingree, advertises he has the real music box and so I send my pals to pick it up.

"Who walks out but that gent there," Bertie said, pointing a fat finger at William Klump. "Carryin' the ruddy box. My confederates do not tumble at first, but recover their wits in time to chase this cove with the blinkin' cow eyes and catch up with him near . . . I have no doubt you chaps know the rest. Jabsy tapped him with a piece of lead pipe in his office, but the music box wa'n't there. Then we

traced where this gent's lady frien' lived to kidnap her and put the pressure on him. Blimey, that was a blinkin' safe nobody could crack, gents. There ain't a man in the world could pick it. Lawks, I was so bloomin' near an' yet so blarsted far, what? The jolly old chair for Bertie, no doubt?"

"If you have any about it," Willie said, "you are a worst optimist than a citizen who would try an' hatch eggs under a rooster, old thing. Well, Satchelfoot, it looks . . . Gertie, what in the world is Kelly doin'?"

Satchelfoot was at the window, peeling off his coat. His tie was draped over a chair. The window was open. Kelly placed his watch and bill-fold carefully on a table.

"Stop!" Gertie cried out. "You will kill yourself. There is six stories there."

"They can't be worst than the one I just listened to," Satchelfoot said.

Three cops rushed him just as he threw one leg over the window sill. Kelly put up a fight.

"They can handle him, Gertie," Willie said. "I think we are finished here. I . . . Don't look at me like that, Gert! I swore it was a slip of the tongue! For heaven's sake how many times . . . Well, good-by, boys!" he yelped. "Here we go ag'in!"

When the running footsteps of Willie Klump and Gertie Mudgett faded on the stairs below, an Assistant D.A. sighed heavily and handed a written confession to Bertie along with a black cigar. He shoved the fountain pen in his mouth and touched the flame of a lighter to it.

"Just sign there, my friend," he said, wondering where rubber was burning. "Only six more payments . . . What am I sayin'? Well, I ought to quit. I should quit this business and go back sellin' autos."

From out in the street came a painful yelp from Willie Klump.

"Let's not be hasty, D.A.," Satchelfoot said. "She'll kill him yet."