

Taken for a Slay Ride

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Willie looked up at two great big policemen

*Willie Klump Learns What It Means to "Mitt the Mark"
When He Tackles the Case of the Cackle Capsule!*

IT WAS very unusual for Willie Klump, President of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, to receive a visit from a client at eight-thirty in the morning. In fact, it was very unusual for Willie to have a client at any time. Be that as it may, Willie tidied up his office in a hurry as soon as he heard the knock on his door. Then he swung the portals of his sanctum wide and admitted a

very frightened-looking character.

"Are we alone?" the citizen asked Willie.

"Not while we're with each other," Willie answered.

The client went to the window and looked out. Wiping his physiognomy with a mauve silk handkerchief, he then crossed the room and eased himself into a chair.

Willie Klump eyed him askance and

waited.

"M-my name is Alvin Atterbury," the jittery one offered. "I am in a mess. A terrible mess." Willie Klump looked his client over carefully. The citizen apparently possessed plenty of scratch. Sartorially he was everything that L'Esquire claimed a man ought to be. Alvin had that cafe-society look on his pan, and the cigarette he nervously dragged at bore a monogram.

"Let's start from the beginning," Willie said, taking paper and pencil from a drawer of his desk.

"I guess we must," Alvin said. "Now none of this won't get to the p-police, will it? You are a private investigator?"

"Right," Willie said. "In fact I am so private that sometimes I am not sure if I know what I am doing myself, Mr. Atterbury."

"I—er—was an accessory to a very heinous crime," Alvin said. "Against my will, I assure you, Mr. Klump. I do not know where the b-body was b-buried. And I am being b-blackmailed."

"Go on," Willie said, and braced himself.

"I come from a wealthy family in Philadelphia," Alvin said. "I got about three hundred thousand from my uncle when he passed away, and I came up here to be nearer Wall Street so's I could watch it closer. You see, it said in the will that if I run the three hundred thousand up to five hundred thousand, I get a million."

"Nobody can beat the market," Willie sniffed. "I have even tried it myself. So you lost the three hundred grand and got into bad company, huh?"

"I am afraid you are half right," Alvin said ruefully. "I got into bad company but I didn't lose all the three hundred thousand. Just most of it."

WILLIE KLUMP drew a deep breath and felt better. He showed more interest in his client.

"Well, I met a very prosperous looking man," Alvin said. "In an uptown broker's office. He gave me some tips that proved quite lucrative, and we became very good friends. And then I go into a very heavy deal with him and it hits the bottom. It is Bearface Steel and costs me fifty grand. I w-will sh-show you what happened, Mr. Klump."

Alvin Atterbury got to his feet and began to gesture dramatically.

"Now here is where we are standing, not far from the ticker, Mr. Klump. My pal, Mr. Ethbert Rusk, is about two feet from me when out of the office comes this partner of Rusk's named Elmo Peake, and he says terrible things to Mr. Rusk, and accuses him of putting him close to a W.P.A. shovel. Elmo pulls out a revolver, Mr. Klump and—oh-h-h-h-h-h!"

Alvin wiped jitter-juice from his patrician brow before he could go on.

"Peake shoots Mr. Rusk right before my very eyes, Mr. Klump. He goes right up to him like this, and then—Bang! Bang!"

Willie Klump almost passed out when his visitor rammed the stem of a big pipe against his midriff. He got hold of himself and laughed it off.

"Uh—sorry, Mr. Klump," Alvin apologized. "Well, then—Mr. Rusk, grabs at his stomach with both hands, and then he staggers toward me. The most gruesome thing happens. He coughs blood out of his mouth and it goes all over my new herringbone suit."

"It was terrible," Willie said. "It must have been. Then the cops came in."

"No," Alvin said. "It was a miracle they did not. Elmo Peake told me to scram in a hurry and that he would try to do away with the body. I—I guess he did, thus committing a perfect c-crime, Mr. Klump. It was two months ago and n-nobody has found the c-corps."

Willie hurriedly wrote on a piece of yellow copy paper.

"But Elmo is blackmailing you, huh?" Willie guessed. "Because he knows where he hid the remains and maybe planted discriminating evidence on them. A cuff-link of yours or something, Mr. Atterbury. That it?"

"I—I don't know. The citizen who I pay the hush to is not Elmo," Alvin said.

"The plot gets thick, huh?" Willie gulped out. "I imagined you could take me to the brokers where—"

"I w-would never go back there," Alvin said, and wiped more dew from his brow. "I c-could tell you how to g-get there. So far, I have been bled for twenty-five grand, and that is not turning three hundred thousand into five hundred thousand, is it?"

IT WASN'T a difficult problem in arithmetic.

"You are very bright, Mr. Atterbury," Willie said. "Where do I come in?"

"I want you to keep a good watch on me after I leave Twelve-Forty Park Avenue tomorrow night, Mr. Klump. I am to meet the blackmailer, and I want you to g-get a description of him, and find out how I c-can g-get out of this mess. I w-will pay you w-well."

"Er—what did you do with your blood-stained burlap?" Willie asked.

"I b-buried it in Central Park," Alvin said. "I r-remember where, if it becomes necessary t-to—"

"Good," Willie said. "Now, if that is all you know, Mr. Atterbury—"

"That is about all, Mr. Klump. Only I have been told by a very close friend that I might have been fleeced by some con men. Of course, I have not let on about the shooting, oh, no! I just hinted around about my loss in Bearface Steel and—"

"Tell me more."

"It is very confusing. My friend used the

strangest language, Mr. Klump. I could not understand him, and maybe he was kidding me, ha! He said something about me bein' the 'mark' and that maybe I was 'mitted'. The 'shill' coaxed me to the store where the 'mark' is played. They give me 'the convincer' to put the 'send' on the 'mark'. Then came the 'sting,' my friend says. The big deal flopped and maybe I was shown the 'cackle bladder'. The 'mark' don't dare open his mouth no more. Doesn't that sound silly, Mr. Klump?"

Willie scratched his head and blinked his eyes. He nodded.

"It is worse'n that, Mr. Atterbury. Well, I will take your case just the same. When and where do I start?"

Alvin Atterbury told Willie just when and where, and then he took his departure. Willie Klump walked around in several circles and wondered if he was as nutty as Alvin seemed to be. Finally Willie sat down and wrote on the copy paper.

No.1. A broker cleaned Alvin on purpose, or maybe not, and the broker's partner was in on it too and could not take it, so he went haywire with a Betsy and rubbed out Rusk. He hid the body after Alvin took it on the lam.

No.2. Being broke, the broker needed scratch, so he put the bee on Alvin, using another criminal character to make the touches. Looks simple. He knows Alvin will pay and pay and pay. I wonder if he hid the body in Central Park, too, like Alvin hid his scenery?

No.3. I must find out what a mark and a sting is. Shill sounds quite familiar but cackle bladder might mean an egg. I will call on a very tough dick who has retired. I will do that this afternoon. It is a very good rule not to take off today what you can put on tomorrow. A very difficult case.

Willie Klump went out and hied to a subway. About twenty minutes later he was walking up three flights of stairs to a small

flat on West Ninety-seventh Street. Here dwelt a retired slew-foot who still served as an encyclopedia for Gotham's finest. Patrick O'Flaherty had dogged the steps of the recalcitrants for forty years, and he had a filing cabinet inside his head filled with the faces and records of a thousand malefactors, living and defunct. Willie knocked and was admitted.

"Hello, Mr. O'Flaherty," Willie said. "I am a detective."

O'Flaherty laughed, and he did not laugh alone. He had a visitor who saw something funny in what Willie had said. It was a character known to Mr. Klump, and the character's name was Aloysius "Satchelfoot" Kelly.

"Let him stay, Pat," Kelly tossed out. "He is a card. His name is Klump, and he is good for a laugh even in a leprosy epidemic."

"Everything was nice up to now, the day and everything," Willie said. "Satchelfoot has the only two feet in the world that measure one yard, Mr. O'Flaherty."

The retired human bloodhound told Kelly the laugh was on him, and it took him five minutes to control his lusty mirth. Satchelfoot, indignant, snatched a photo out of O'Flaherty's hand and marched out of the flat.

"Don't go away mad," O'Flaherty yelled after Kelly. "Like I said, I ain't sure about that mug on that pitcher you got there. But it sure does remind me of a crook named Denver Danny Deever, although it's so long since—awright, if y' feel that way about it, Kelly."

"Who's he lookin' for?" Willie asked.

"There was a murder and holdup in Binghamton," Pat said. "The cops up there sent around a description of the suspect. A clerk got a good look at the mug holdin' the cannon. Kelly figures the description adds up with the picture he got out of the gallery. What's bitin' you, Klump? Say, I heard

about you solvin' a couple of tough cases. Sit down."

Willie took a notebook out of his pocket and asked O'Flaherty about certain puzzling terms.

"Shill?" Pat replied. "That is a crook's outside man playing he's a sucker. He goes looking for suckers. The mark is the sucker, Klump. Getting the sucker to the spider's parlor is called mitting the mark. The sting is the works they give him, and this cackle bladder—wait, I got to think. Remember hearing it oncet before. Yeah, in Frisco. It is a big capsule or something a guy puts in his mouth, and when he breaks it with his teeth, blood comes out of it. Why, Klump?"

Willie Klump had absently been scratching with a pencil on a page of a newspaper while the old mantracker talked. Suddenly Willie's mouth snapped open and the pencil slipped out of his clutch.

"Fakin' a g-guy is shot or somethin', huh?" Willie gulped. "Oh—I get it now. I—I b-begin to—well, thanks. I'll be g-goin'. I—"

O'FLAHERTY grabbed up the newspaper at Willie's elbow and set up a howl.

"Why, you fresh mug! What is the idea putting a mustache on the pitcher of my niece, hah? That is my hometown paper, and she is engaged, and they printed her pitcher. You've gone and blocked out her teeth, too. Oh, I got a good mind to kick you down them stairs—"

"Sorry," Willie choked out. "It is what I do an' don't know it. I w-will erase it if you—"

"Oh, scram!" O'Flaherty growled. "So you was a sucker for some racket, huh? Yeah, I heard about it. Ha ha ha! American Can Opener, wasn't it?"

"Good day," Willie said a little indignantly. "I thank you just the same."

Willie hurried to his office and there he

sat down and wrote on his copy paper. Yes, Alvin Atterbury had been the mark and had had the sting put on him. The cackle bladder had fooled Alvin, and Willie Klump was as sure a man named Rusk was not dead as much as he was that Hitler's word was no better than his bund.

"This citizen who shot Rusk used blanks," the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency told himself. "Rusk broke the cackle bladder with his teeth, let the spurious blood loose, and it splattered Alvin. Oh, what a dirty trick. I wonder how much Alvin will pay me if I win."

SO THAT very night, Willie waited outside the apartment house where Alvin Atterbury lived, and when Alvin walked out of the place, Willie trailed him. Alvin trekked all the way to Sixtieth and Third. There he met a character near the entrance to a tavern. Willie watched Alvin hand the blackmailer a package. The blackmailer was a short citizen with a beard. There was a taxi waiting at the curb, and just after Alvin let go of the sugar, the bearded man hopped into the jalopy and was off in a flash.

Willie met Alvin Atterbury two blocks away. Alvin was indignant.

"You are a fine detective, I must say, Klump. Why did you not follow that crook?"

"I did not bring a taxi with me, that is why!" Willie said. "Anyway, you are still not so bright, as I bet that beard was false. I have got the only way to trap the criminal who is hounding and cleaning you, Mr. Atterbury. Let us go where we can talk in private."

William Klump was escorted to a bistro on Lexington, and Alvin pointed to a booth in the back of the place that was very exclusive. He and Willie slid into it, and the powwow began.

"It is this way," Willie guessed. "The place where you was swindled was moved out soon after and is operating some place

else. It is a very good racket and would not fold up when there is more suckers about."

"I beg your pardon, Klump!"

"No offense," Willie hurriedly added. "I intend to be a mark for a shill, but I must have the proper background and clothes to wear. You are built just like me in most places, Mr. Atterbury. You can take me to places where I can drop the word I am a very rich playboy from Boston who has a yen for swelling up a bunch of scratch like you have, see? The shills must work them swell joints, as where would you expect to find easy dough, huh? Not at a hotdog stand, to say the least."

"So far it sounds quite insane," Alvin said.

"I am very sure nobody was shot the time you told me about," Willie went on. "It was a fake."

"I suppose that was catsup that I got on my herringbone suit, huh?" Alvin scoffed. "I am sure it was blood, as I examined the stains very carefully when I got to my rooms."

"You have heard that citizens go to hospitals and donate blood, haven't you?" Willie said. "Well, somebody stole some and made it look like a murder."

"Yeah? Well, if I wasn't so desperate, I would fire you right now," Alvin said.

"If you don't pay anybody, you have not hired them, Mr. Atterbury. Awright, it is my duty to report this to the police, as I am not going to stand for shills preying against people, Mr. Atterbury. I—"

"Wait, Klump. Ha ha, don't be hasty. Here is a hundred bucks. Now what will we do, huh?"

"You will take me to Park Avenue and fix me up like a rich boy," Willie said. "I get a manicure and put on a very ritzy false mustache—and not with a pencil. Ha ha!"

"I see," Alvin said. "I don't think it will work, though. Well, come on, and I will make you look so swell you can I get in the

Stork Club without a pass.”

THREE hours later, Willie sat in a Park Avenue apartment on the floor above Alvin's. Willie had a manicure and a nifty haircut and he wore silk pajamas. Eight new suits were hanging in a closet and not one of them had set Alvin back less than one hundred and fifty fish. The furnished apartment had a name on the door and it snootily said Kirby Fairchild, 3rd.

“I wish Gertie Mudgett could see me now,” Willie said. “I have heard of these Royalists who economize, but why do they call them that, as they never do stint themselves. Woo-woo, bath salts in my tub, too. I smell like a heliotrope. Tomorrow night I go the rounds of the flesh-pots and get myself made public. I wonder if Winchell will be any place.”

The next night, around one A.M., Willie Klump's eyes were getting quite puffed up. Alvin had introduced him all around in every place as Kirby Fairchild, Number Three, and the debts and all had made quite a fuss over the heir to a coffee plantation in Brazil. Alvin had been putting it on very thick, and made no bones about the fact that Kirby had plenty of fish to buck the market, and wanted a head start from somebody who enjoyed a close acquaintance with the well known and necessary ropes.

At three in the morning, Willie's eyes looked like two diamonds floating in two little pools of tabasco sauce. He begged for a halt.

“This is killing me,” Willie told Alvin on the way home. “How long must it go on?”

“It is your own fault, as you drank four zombies,” Alvin said. “This might have to go on and on for several weeks.”

“And citizens complain of being poor,” Willie groaned. “They are nutty.”

The gossip columns began to build Kirby up, and the best ones did not spare the bangtails in telling the dizzy Cosmos that

this Kirby Fairchild was a lamb ready to be plucked, and that if he was, he only asked for it.

Finally the plan concocted by William Klump bore ripe fruit. A very prosperous looking character snuggled up to him in a cocktail bar on Park, and handed him a card. The name was J. Tyler Jopp.

“Been hearing about you. I represent a brokerage firm that is very fussy about the type of clients it does business with, Mr. Fairchild. How about calling and seeing me? This is an exclusive place and is not open to the general public. My partner gets very important tips from a man who is connected with the Eastern Union Telegraph Company, and we seldom lose.”

Willie Klump got cold chills up his back. Kirby Fairchild fought them off, however, and tried to act quite hard to get.

“Er—I don't know, J. Tyler,” Willie said with hauteur, as he drew a mustache on the photo of a damsel who was to sing at the oasis that night. “I am interested in big turnovers and such, and maybe you could not handle such a big account.”

“Now you talk our language, Kirby. May I call you Kirby? Call me John.”

“Well, John,” the playboy with the neatly trimmed upper hair-fringe said. “No harm in looking your outfit over. Might try your tips for awhile and then really do business, huh?”

“Fine,” J. Tyler said. He wore a suit that was on a par with Willie's subdued plaid. He was tall and slim and had white patches of foliage on his noggin. “Expect you tomorrow at three, what?”

“Did I speak? Er--oh, certainly,” Willie said.

The great impersonation went on. Willie was quite impressed with the place uptown. There was a board in the big back room of the swanky apartment. There were two tickers and nice easy chairs and several clerks scattered about. Telephones jingled.

Here it was that Willie met J. Tyler's

partner, Jesse Mossman. Jesse was also a fashion plate and his features were nicely groomed. His mustache was a thing of artistry and the white hair around his temples made him very distinguished looking. There were times when Kirby Fairchild, the Third, entertained the idea that this layout was very much on the up and up and that he was gambling with Alvin's scratch legitimately and that he might even lose the rest of Alvin's nest egg the same way.

J. Tyler and his partner showed Willie that they could call them right. Willie showed Alvin a profit of ten grand the first week. But Alvin laughed it off.

"I made twenty-five grand before the roof fell in on me. Watch them crooks. Wait until you get the sting like I did. I am quite sure you are still a shill and have been mitted as a mark. I have put twenty thousand in the bank in your name, Klump, and that is all intend to put there for the blow-off. I wish you would not be so hard on my suits."

"That reminds me," Willie said. "I need a morning coat and striped pants, Alvin. I like to go out mornings."

DOWNTOWN, where the machinery of the law in the big town grinds, Satchelfoot Kelly talked of Willie Klump. Gertie Mudgett had notified the authorities that Willie had disappeared. His landlady had said that he had not been home for over ten days. Willie's office was collecting cobwebs.

"Looks like the screwball got knocked on the noggin and throwed into the river," Satchelfoot said. "We better look for him."

"He is not so important," an assistant D. A. growled. "Give the chore to the Bureau of Missing Persons."

"I'll do that," Kelly said.

Now it came to pass that J. Tyler and Jesse Mossman got Kirby Fairchild into a very private conclave in a very ornate cubicle and dumped a big deal in his lap.

They showed Willie Klump where he could get in on a very big clean-up in stock of a company that was going to expand. It was Standard Zipper.

"For only about fifty Gs," J. Tyler said, shoving his words through a cloud of La Corona Corona smoke, "you will clean up three times that much. Me and Jesse are pouring all we got into it. I got a hot tip from the Eastern Telegraph that says the president of Standard Zipper is going to—"

Willie listened. This time he knew that he was in the spider's boudoir and getting the old oil. He waited until J. Tyler was through and then he nodded.

"Yes. But I am a little short lately. I can only risk twenty thousand. If that interests you—"

J. Tyler Jopp swapped quick ganders with Jesse Mossman. The former whirled on Willie and said that would be all right, but that Kirby Fairchild was a sucker not to get a load of more easy scratch.

"Well, if we win, I can dump that into another deal and make up for it, huh?" Willie said, and tried to get his scalp from crawling down the back of his neck.

Three days later, Willie Klump and his financial phenaglers stood around a ticker and watched the ribbon pile up in the basket. Standard Zipper was dropping as steadily as an anvil tossed out of an army bomber. From 9 3-8 it tobogganed to 7. From 7 it slipped down to 5 6-8. It only used up an hour to hit 3. In a little back room a criminal character kept the tape flowing out of the ticket.

Jesse Mossman staggered away, went into an office and slammed the door behind him. J. Tyler mopped his pate with a hanky and chewed a Corona to ribbons.

"S-somethin' h-has gone w-wrong," he gulped, and leaned against the wall.

"Now comes the big act," Willie said and waited. "Cackle bladder, huh? Oh, you snakes in the grass. I am ready and waiting for you bums! The President of the Hawkeye

Det—”

OUT of the office on the left came Jesse Mossman with a dirty look on his face, which he threw at J. Tyler.

“You crook! He did this to us, Kirby, old boy!” Mossman whipped a Roscoe out of his pocket.

“No, Jesse. No! Pull yourself to—listen old pal. I swear I did not—”

Bang! Bang!

“Ha ha,” Willie said, as J. Tyler grabbed hold of his pantry and started to buckle in the middle. “Shoot him again, Mr. Mossman!”

Mossman tossed the smoking gat to Willie and Willie involuntarily caught it. The broker barged toward the back of the place in a big hurry and slammed a door shut behind him.

“Awright, get up, you big faker!” Willie said to the citizen sprawled out on the floor. “I am wise to that capsule in your mouth—”

There were sounds outside the store. Somebody yelled: “Get the cops. I heard some shootin’!”

William Klump wondered why the place was cleaned of humanity in such a short time. He found himself alone. J. Tyler was a great actor, Willie thought. He spoke to the supine character:

“Come on. You can’t fool me playin’ you are a ‘possum. Ha!”

Willie got down and pulled the “broker” over on his back. Then Willie fainted, and he did not come to until there was quite some fuss in the place. Willie looked up at the two great big policemen and they told him to get up and have the cuffs put on.

“Hah,” a cop said. “Wearin’ chamois gloves to leave no prints on the Betsy, huh? You got conked by somebody who made a getaway an’ you just woke up. Ain’t that too bad?”

Willie tried to get his gray matter rumbling. It started to paint a terrible picture, and when it was finished it threw the picture

right in front of Willie’s shocked peepers.

“L-look,” Willie said. “It was s-supposed to be a f-fake. He h-had a c-cackle bladder in his mouth, J. Tyler d-did. Y-you look for it, as it w-was f-filled with blood an’—”

“He is nutty,” a cop said. “You call the Homicide Squad, Frankie? They oughter be here any minute.”

“I c-can explain. C-call Alvin Atterbury. The number El Dorado 4-7406. H-he will tell you I am Willie Klump, a detective. L-look, this is a fake mustache.”

Willie tore off his mustache and the gendarmes gaped.

“Yeah!” a cop said. “It is Klump. He has been missing, an’—say, is Kelly comin’ with that bunch from downtown?”

KELLY was. In due time he came in with the medical examiner and five stout flatfeet. He was shown Willie, and he stared bug-eyed at his arch enemy, at the Park Avenue fabric covering Willie’s frame.

“You tell ‘em, Satchelfoot,” Willie begged.

“Will I? Why, you crook! So you got sore at the guys that took your dough in American Can Opener and went out to even things up. You knocked off this guy and thought you could get away with it, bein’ a trick dick. Look at the swell clothes that creep has got on! In the rocks, hah, Willie? Swindlin’ suckers with a fake brokerage office! I never thought you had brains enough to be a criminal.”

“Oh, don’t be silly, Satchelfoot,” Willie argued desperately. “It was another citizen who bumped off Jopp. He run out just after he tried to frame me. Look and see if that capsule that Jopp had in his mouth is busted. It was a fleecing and blackmailing racket I have been investigating for Alvin Atterbury. Somebody call him quick.”

“I just did,” a cop said. “He said he never heard of such nonsense. What did the character look like you said run away? Ha-a-

a-ah!”

“It is not funny,” Willie gulped. “I can get the chair.”

“You think you won’t?” Satchelfoot yelped. “Well, come along, Willie.”

“Er—there *is* a capsule here,” the corpse appraiser suddenly said, getting to his feet. “Found it close to the remains. Isn’t broken. Wait, I’ll—”

THE man from downtown stepped on the capsule with his foot and gory liquid gushed out of the thing.

“There!” Willie said. “Now, can I go?”

“So what does that prove?” Satchelfoot went on relentlessly. “That was a scheme you been workin’ with the citizen. He crossed you somehow an’ you plugged him, an’ maybe the sucker you had got away. No dice, Willie. To think you’d think crime pays. I will not hang Denver Danny Deever in the mornin’ but I will fry Willie Klump.”

William Klump was taken downtown and thrown into the ice-box without bail. He was in for a first degree murder rap. He was cooked if he could not locate the character who had called himself Jesse Mossman.

“Things happen to me that shouldn’t catch up with Hitler,” Willie moaned. “I have the Betsy in my hand and a stiff at my feet an’—I got to think of a swell lawyer.”

Three hours later, a mouthpiece Willie knew came down to the hoosegow. The mouthpiece had only passed his bar exam three months ago and he was a little bewildered when Willie told his story.

“If Clarence Darrow was still alive, Klump,” his lawyer said, “he would pass up this one. Even if Alvin Atterbury owns up you was bein’ promoted by him, how can you prove you didn’t knock off Jopp? You could not prove this J. Tyler Jopp was a wanted man and so how can you hide behind a badge, huh? You did not make the right kind of killin’ in Wall Street, Klump.”

“Look,” Willie sniffed. “I thought you was a lawyer, not a professional mourner. If I could answer them things, would I need you? Go away.”

“You can’t prove Jopp was not the sucker neither, instead of your fellow crook, Klump. And that capsule could have come out of your pal-in-crime’s mouth, the one who got away. No thanks, pal. I will stick to ambulance cases.”

Gertie Mudgett called and spoke to Willie. She was very sorry for him and said she was surprised to hear that he was just posing as a dick to start a career of crime.

“Walk to the chair like a man, Willie,” Gertie said in parting. “And don’t forget to repent. Oh, to think I was almost a gun moll!”

“Thanks,” Willie said. “Everythin’ is all over between us from now on.”

“I kind of guessed that,” Gertie said.

William Klump suffered through several needlings from the boys downtown. They kept reminding him that nothing could save him from the high voltage armchair unless he could definitely put his finger on a criminal character he called Jesse Mossman.

“Own up, Willie,” Satchelfoot said. “There ain’t no such guy, huh?”

“You go and bring in this Alvin Atterbury,” Willie said. “He buried a suit of clothes that he got blood on from one of them cackle bladders. It is somewhere in Central Park, and if you get the smart guys in the lab here to match up the stuff with what came out of that capsule Jopp had, then—”

“So what? Even if you wasn’t raving,” Kelly snapped. “You got to prove you didn’t rub out a respectable citizen, Willie.”

Willie nodded and sighed wearily. He was idly penciling a mustache on a photo that lay on a table near his elbow. He blocked out a tooth of the likeness of a living citizen. Satchelfoot Kelly yelled at him.

"Oh, you fathead," Kelly said. "That is the only picture of Denver Danny Deeever we have got. Now you've gone and messed it up. I've got a good mind to cheat the chair and fracture your skull!"

Willie glanced down at his handiwork.

"I am very sorry, Satchelfoot. It is a habit I got that I don't know I do an'—huh? Wait! Oh-h-h! Was that a picture of Denver Danny Deeever? Then he is g-goin' around disguised, an' *he*—yes he—is Jesse Mossman! Now it looks just like the character! With a mustache it is perfect of him! Give me an eraser so I can rub off the hair at his temples. Quick, Satchelfoot! He would take off his disguise as Jesse Mossman after shootin' Jopp, hah? Send out the dragnet!"

"Then I was right," Satchelfoot howled. "I *did* see this Deeever that time after that description come in. When I got his photo out of the gallery, I knew it. I know the neighborhood where he hangs out an' we will fill it with cops. Thanks, Willie! He is good for a thousand bucks on the hoof or laid out in a basket. This screwball has got somethin' here. Denver Danny was a con-man once. He—"

"It is perfect," Willie yelled. "Here is Jesse Mossman with white above his ears an' a black mustache. So if Jesse was Denver Danny, he is a crook, huh? And Jopp wouldn't have been hangin' around him if he wasn't one, too, huh? I didn't rub Jopp out, but you couldn't burn me if I did, hah? Get Deeever an' he will confess. Raid his place for them capsules an' what he puts in them—what a racket!"

The dragnet went out for Denver Danny Deeever. Three blocks on the west side between Fifty-first and Fifty-fourth Streets were hemmed in by cops. The net tightened. The fish for which the net was angling could add up two and two, and knew very well that the gendarmes were not just practicing.

DENVER DANNY DEEVER wondered why the cops had spotted him so soon after he had ventilated a doublecrossing crook with slugs. He gathered up fifty grand, two Betsys and a chopper, and got set to make a break for the wide open spaces.

"I get it," Denver Danny, growled as he made his way to the roof. "That Fairchild was no mark. He was a flatfoot! They locked him up to make things look like everybody else was in the clear."

The crook blazed away with a chopper when he spotted the cops down in the street. Bullets sprayed him from the roof of a house across the street. Denver Danny retreated with his artillery and went down into his flat again. A tear-gas bomb crashed through the window and Denver Danny let the floodgates down. Three more had him bawling like a stray calf and he had to unload his cannon from memory.

"Aw nuts!" Denver Danny tried to hold the door against seven big cops. He and the door went down together. He was walked on and treated very roughly before he reached the vertical again.

"Raid the joint," Satchelfoot said. "Look for them capsules an' disguises. I wonder where this mug an' his pals got that blood they put in them cackle bladders, as Klump calls 'em?"

THE gendarmes reaped a harvest. They found a box of big capsules and a container that held ox-blood that must have been purloined from a hospital. Denver Danny Deeever let down his hair and confessed all. There was nothing else for him to do after the cops showed him the pile of fake brokerage literature they had taken out of a closet.

"Yeah," Satchelfoot said. "An' we found out there was guys livin' in that joint with ya, too. You bumped one of 'em off."

"So shut up and let the stenog take this down," Denver Danny growled. "Yeah, I

plugged that doublecrosser. The dough he was gettin' from this Atterbury—he held it out on me. Said he was only gettin' a thousand at a time and I found out it was five Gs. So when I worked the act to put the scare on the last sucker, I put real slugs in and let Maxsey have it, the rat!”

“Very interesting, isn’t it?” Willie Klump said. “After you made a cleanup and had a citizen ready for the shakedown, you moved to another place. You put on different disguises. The night I saw one of you mugs take dough from Alvin, he had a beard. The blackmailer, I mean.”

“You know everything, huh, big mouth? So why not give me a rest and you do the talkin’. To think you was a dick. It ain’t right. It is hittin’ guys below the belt. Well, I lammed after tossin’ the gun to this crumb here. I took off the disguise I used as Jesse Mossman so the sucker couldn’t ever tag me again. I never figgered nobody had seen me in the big burg. But I was wrong, huh?”

“Check,” Satchelfoot said. “That is quite a racket you had, huh?”

“It has been,” Deeever grunted. “Up to now. I guess nothin’ is perfect, though. Ox-blood is like real blood, if you don’t know it is ox-blood. Them suckers thought they was an ax-sessory in a rub-out, and they run away quick. Maxsey was smart, the way he could talk about the market. He studied it up for a year or two.”

“We will get Alvin Atterbury and make him get that suit of his now,” Willie Klump said. “We will match up the blood and prove everything, if it is not yet clear to some of you. Now he will not get blackmailed no more, he will have to pay me my fee. Both of us win this time, Satchelfoot—on account of me though.”

ALVIN ATTERBURY told Willie he was very sorry he had to keep out of the scandal when Willie called to see him with the evening journals.

“You do not know how close to a braising I came, you snob!” Willie growled. “I am still a nervous wreck and need a doctor or two. My fee has doubled on account Of it. It is just two thousand dollars, Alvin.”

“Mister Atterbury,” Alvin reminded the private detective. “I shall write you a check. Of course, you shall have to admit that I must deduct nine hundred for the clothes I gave you. I certainly would never wear them again.”

William Klump took his eleven hundred fish, folded the check and put it in his pocket.

“Look, Alvin,” Willie said. “What is this?”

“It is a—a fist, of course, Klump,” Alvin said in alarm. “Don’t you dare hit me with it!”

Willie didn’t. The fist was his right one. He clouted Alvin with his left and took his departure.

Gertie Mudgett waited for word from Willie, seeing that she could not reach him herself, although she had tried.

Five days after Willie closed the case, Gertie received her photo in the mail. A mustache had been drawn over her upper lip and a couple of her teeth blocked out.

Gertie Mudgett was asked to move from her rooming house that very night. No landlady was going to put up with anybody who threw half the furnishings of the room out through a window.