

SHOE TREED

A Willie Klump Story

By
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*The Hawkeye Hawkshaw Tries to Pick Up
a Frill—and Is Bounced into the Midst of
Murder and Robbery!*

WILLIAM KLUMP, president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, sat on a bench in Central Park and dolefully perused a painful communique from his broker. After cleaning up close to two thousand dollars worth of scratch in the manhunting business, Willie had decided to let his opulence go to work for him. Instantly the biggest and baddest wolf of Wall Street had leaped on the lamb and had persuaded the poor thing that a fortune or two was to be made in American Can Opener, Pfd.

Housewives apparently started a movement to get home early from bridge games and window shopping treks the moment Willie gobbled up five hundred shares of the stuff. American Can Opener had started a lively diving exhibition the moment Willie had placed the certificates in his office safe. It had dropped from four and a quarter to one and three-eighths, and the wolf was bearing down with the missives demanding margin.

Willie was just about convinced that he had been cleaned as prettily as a kid's face the morning of the first day of school. He could not dig up any more margin, so he figured to hell with it. He crammed the



"I am arresting both of you!" Klump yelled

dunning billet doux into the same pocket where reposed a letter from Gertie Mudgett, a member of the distaff side with whom he had had sort of understanding.

Gertie's letter had not brightened Willie's day, either. It told him that he was washed up in the matrimonial market and that he was even a bigger dope than she had always thought he was. She hoped he was satisfied in being a big man on the Street. That was just where a moron belonged, who thought he had brains enough to be a rugged individual like Jesse Livermore and the other boys.

Willie was miserable and lonesome. On the other end of the bench was a nifty-looking canary with golden locks. The doll was looking through the ads in a morning paper, so Willie guessed she was not too well heeled.

"How is things?" Willie, said, by way of breaking the ice.

"Were you addressing me?" the girl flung back icily. "Most mashers work at night. Don't you ever sleep? Look, moron, I never was at Atlantic City and I am not lonesome and my mother knows I'm out. Besides, I have a husband who juggles crates of gravestone slabs as if they were full of marshmallows and he understands me. Now shut up!"

"Pardon me," Willie gulped.

HE LOWERED his noggin deeper into the collar of his mustard-colored topcoat and steeped himself in woe. He wished he could stumble over a nice, big murder that had a clue attached to it. But he kept looking at the comely doll out of the corner of his eye. She had a little mole under her left peeper that somehow gave her an exotic look. Her profile was a lot like Ginger Rogers' only she had a lot more chin and more character to her nose.

The female suddenly tore a piece of paper out of a page. Then she rolled the

newspaper into a big ball and chucked it over her shoulder. It rolled down a bank and into some bushes, though there was a trash can not five feet away from her. Willie pointed it out to her.

"It is what the city put it there for," Willie said indignantly. "We are lucky to have parks, without citizens like you cluttering them up."

"Somebody will get a bigger mess to clean up if you don't button your lip, you interfering idiot!" the girl said as she got up. "You follow me and I'll call a cop."

Willie went over to Fifth Avenue and got on a bus that took him downtown. He walked toward the river and reached his two by four office.

Sorrowfully taking a portable grill and a toaster from a drawer of his desk, he blew dust off them, for he was going to need them again. His room rent was due in three days and he possessed just two frogskins. So before long his office would again have to serve as boudoir and kitchenette and no bath.

Willie opened a copy of *True Crime Chasers* and brushed up on detective work. In the back of the book were half-tones of famous felons who were still pretty much at large. One of them was a character named Billy "the Skid" Carson.

The magazine said that Billy was wanted for kidnaping, arson, extortion, murder and robbery. He had a long, forbidding pan and little, piggy eyes.

There was a picture of a wanted taxpayer answering to the name of Lippy Leech, and another of a remarkably low-browed lug labeled Alexander Grate.

"If I could catch one of them, I would be almost even with American Can Opener, Preferred," Willie sighed.

He tried to put a crease in his shiny blue serge pants with his fingernails. Then he touched up some scuffed spots in his shoes with ink from a bottle on his desk.

Willie did not look any more like a detective than a Nazi swastika looks like an American eagle. For that reason, he had been surprisingly successful several times in apprehending the unlawful. The president of the Hawkeye Agency worked on the theory that if you wanted to catch mice, you cannot wear cat fur.

Willie trudged home and went to bed, where he dreamed he had cornered Billy the Skid. Willie had the dishonest citizen *hors de combat* and the sirens of the police cars were ringing in his ears. The world's finest arrived just as Willie woke up.

He sat up in bed, blinking like an owl, and was rudely deposited into reality. The phone outside his door was ringing without a let-up. Willie swung out of bed, muttering incoherently. He snapped on a light and saw that the alarm clock said five A.M.

WILLIE went out and answered the phone. A voice howled in his ear.

"About time, Klump! I been tryin' to get you for ten minutes. Remember that twenty I borrowed six months ago? Yeah, this is Doolan. Well, I can't pay it."

"What!" Willie yelled back. "You call me outa bed at this hour to kid me? Look, Doolan, I'll garnish your pay, you flat-headed flatfoot. You ain't funny. I'll have you throwed off the Force."

"Keep your rompers on, chump!" Doolan countered. "I said I'd do yuh a favor for doin' me one, didn't I? Well, there is a dead guy over in the office of the Craytem Casket Company. It is the watchman and he has been crocked for keeps. The safe's standin' as wide-open as the entrance to a tunnel. Hurry before all the smart cops get here."

"What!" Willie howled again, and woke up the half the block. "A murder? Hold everythin'. Don't leave there, Doolan. I'll be right over. Where's my p-

pants? Don't touch the body!"

Willie put his pants on backward and threw a tie around the collar of his nightshirt. He grabbed a benny and sky-piece and evacuated the rooming house.

When he reached the subway, he tumbled to the fact that he still had his felt slippers on. Willie arrived at the office of the Craytem Casket Company a few minutes ahead of the cops. He found Doolan sitting just outside the door.

"Where is it?" gasped Willie.

"If it ain't right where I left it," Doolan said, "I'll be a long way from here in the next two minutes. Some guy must of hit that watchman with a steam-shovel, Willie. I am walkin' my beat when I hear a jalopy startin' up. I knew nobody would be stoppin' to pick up a wooden kimoner at this awful hour and start runnin'."

Willie went into the office. Doolan had snapped on a light. The defunct employee was stretched out on the floor and his pate was not nice to look at. There were papers spread all over the floor. As Doolan had said, the safe door was open all the way.

"He couldn't of picked a handier place to take off from, could he, Klump?" Doolan said. "The undertaker can save himself carrying charges."

"Don't you have no respect for anythin'?" Willie accused. "Did you touch anythin' here?"

"Only the light cord and the doorknob," the bluecoat said. "Almost at the same time. I hate lookin' at stiff. Looks like a robbery, huh?"

"Don't be silly," Willie said. "Anybody can see he was nudged by a hit-and-run driver."

"Huh? How could a boiler come through here? You're kiddin', ain't you, Willie?"

There was a commotion outside and a lot of brakes squealed. New York's crime-catchers began pouring through the door.

A plainclothes slewfoot took a quick look at the corpse and a slower look at William Klump. The citizen was Satchelfoot Kelly, originally Aloysius, and he never liked the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency.

"You get around, don't you, Willie?" Satchelfoot snapped. "Pretty soon you will be at a murder before the murderer."

"I generally am prompt," Willie agreed pleasantly. "Where were you? Get your big feet out of the way. They are hiding the remains."

THE appraiser of the deceased for the State examined the body and made the statement that the watchman had been rubbed out at least two hours ago. Doolan scratched his head and then shook it a little.

"Maybe it was my tuition that made me hurry here, then," Doolan said. "Horses always know when somethin' dead is around. Maybe I just heard a jaloppy on the next block. Anyway, I discovered the murder."

The dead wagon came and took away the defunct citizen while Willie started browsing around, looking for clues. Satchelfoot Kelly pointed to a chair in the corner. He ordered Willie to ease himself into it and stay put, as he had no right to be there anyway.

"Nobody hired you to work on this case, Klump," he concluded. "I oughter throw yuh out on your ear! How'd you find out about this, huh?" "Well, I was sleepin' and a little elf woke me up, Satchelfoot." Willie grinned. "Here is a sheet of paper with a footprint on it I just picked up. See what you can do with it."

"Maybe everybody who works here goes barefoot except one guy," Kelly snorted. "Why don't you just go home, Willie?"

The cops were still at the Craytem Casket Co. when the employees began to arrive. Satchelfoot had called the owner of the establishment at seven and asked him how much scratch had been in the safe. There had been approximately eleven thousand dollars and fifty-nine cents in the old crate.

Satchelfoot grilled a little stenog first. The jittery jill took a gander at the piece of paper carrying a footprint. Immediately she swallowed the gum she had been enjoying with great vigor.

"Somebody wears rubber-soled shoes who works here," Kelly growled. "Who is the gumshoe?"

"Why, there is only one I know of," the little trick said. "But he wouldn't kill anybody. Orville Snerk wouldn't even hurt your feelings. He was a frugal boy and wore those soles you buy and glue onto your uppers when the other soles wear out. He showed me a pair of shoes just the other day and said he had had them for over two years."

Kelly pointed to the paper on the desk. It was held down with a paperweight and a bottle of ink.

"We found that print on there, sister. Was it this guy's?"

The stenog picked the paper up and looked at the print. Then she turned it over to see what was on the other side. Willie Klump caught her just as she was ready to hit the floor. When she got her marbles picked up, she said:

"I—I hope that is not Orville's print, because that paper that was stepped on came out of the safe. Orville couldn't have stepped on it during workin' hours as it was in the safe then."

"Yeah?" Kelly barked. "Where does this Orville Snerk live? Quick!"

"I'm not sure. It's easy to find out, though." She went white under her

synthetic complexion. "I—I'm goin' to faint again."

"Go ahead," Willie said politely, and led her to a chair.

"Here it is eight-thirty," Kelly said. "This Orville still ain't showed up for work. What did he do here, babe?"

"He was a bookkeeper and assistant cashier," the stenog said. "And don't get so personal with me."

"Orville is the killer," Kelly stated calmly.

"Maybe we better go an' tell him," Willie sniffed. "He'd love to know."

WILLIE and the boys went over to a rooming house two blocks north of Central Park. Satchelfoot ferreted out the landlady and asked about Orville Snerk.

"Him?" the old lady yapped. "Look, he got in this mornin' at a quarter to six, and he woke me up as he said he lost his key. Was he spiffed! I never saw him plastered before. He ain't up yet, I don't think."

"That cooks him," Kelly said. "Come on. We'll play we're alarm clocks for Orville."

Orville was still pounding his ear when the cops walked into his hall room. It took Kelly three minutes to shake the slumber out of Orville. When the citizen finally sat up, he gulped out some words that sounded like Zulu.

He was indeed a mess. His eyes looked like a pair of tokay grapes swimming in little pools of tobasco sauce. His facial epidermis was the color of unusually dejected banana skins.

Kelly pulled him out of bed and gently poured a pitcher of water on him.

"Wake up and hear the birdies sing. You are under arrest for the murder of a watchman at the casket plant. Where is the eleven thousand clams?"

"Really?" Orville muttered dazedly. "I don't think I could eat that many."

"You heard me, chump. Get your clothes on."

"H-here's a pair of sh-shoes," Willie Klump said. "Th-they got them rubber soles pasted on them. I—Ouch!"

"Drop 'em, you slow-motion Sherlock," Satchelfoot snapped. "Next place I smack you will be on the chops. You stop foolin' with evidence or I'll lock you up with Orville!"

"I am only helping," Willie said indignantly, "Well, from now on I'll let you guys try to figure it all out yourselves. I won't help you no more."

Willie wondered why he had a punctured finger with a drop of blood on it. Satchelfoot had smacked him on the back of his hand, knocking the shoes out of his clutch.

"Them your shoes?" Kelly barked at the stunned suspect.

"Sure. But—"

"You wore 'em last night, didn't you?"

"I did not!"

"Don't kid me, you rat. I matched up that sole with the print on the paper in the office. You better get ready for some volts in the sizzle-divan up on the Hudson."

"Maybe Mr. Snerk could give a good alibi if you ast him, Satchelfoot," Willie offered.

"Yeah? Well, spill it, Snerk."

"I can and I will. I was in a tavern and—er—"

"Go on," Willie urged. "Think fast, Orville, as you are behind a big eight-ball."

Orville shut his mouth.

"I won't talk," he said. "All I will say is I am innercent."

"Take him downtown," Satchelfoot ordered. "We got exhibits A and B that'll give the D.A. a easy stint in any courtroom. Hand over the eleven grand, Orville."

"I don't know what you're talkin'

about," Snerk bridled.

"Search the joint!" Kelly yelled. "This guy can't even act polite."

The cops soon turned the room upside down. They found a few changes of shirts and socks and two letters from a finance company. One of the letters wanted to know when Orville was going to pay another installment on the jalopy he had bought. The other one demanded that Orville come through on another piece of scratch for a diamond ring.

"I got enough," Satchelfoot said. "Orville was in hock and needed dough. We got the motive and everythin' but the dough. That'll come later. How's these for apples, Mr. Klump? You can just forget the rest as you can read it in the papers. Beat it."

"I am innercent," Orville reiterated.

Willie got in close and looked at the shoes that Satchelfoot held in his hand. The insides of them were in bad shape. Something drew Willie's bovine peepers, and Willie had to scratch his head. He had taken a gander at something that puzzled him.

Leaving the place, he hurried downtown to his office. He took paper and pencil from his desk and wrote hurriedly. The president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency had his thoughts the same as anyone else, but they were elusive little devils in his case. Once they occurred to him, he had to get them down on paper so they would stay with him. Willie scribbled:

No.1—Orville looks cremated already. He had a beaut of a hangover and how could a character commit such a crime filled with what must have been tiger sweat? A crook has to have all his buttons, committing such a big job.

No.2—Orville lost the key to his rooming house. The blonde also said he carried a key to the office where he worked. I know that print will match with Orville's shoe that Kelly has. Orville didn't have no alibi. Or didn't he? He started out

with one and swallowed it. Orville does not look dishonest. Funny case.

No.3—The case is so perfect, it is too good to be true. Why would Orville wear them shoes if they hurt his feet? If a crook goes out on a job, he has to plan on doing some running nine times out of ten. Something is nutty. Where was Orville if he did not assassinate that watchman and steal the dough? Tough case and I better drop it.

The first editions of the afternoon papers carried the story of the heinous crime at the Craytem Casket Company. Satchelfoot Kelly's name in the grim scheme of things was enviably prominent. The detective had found that Orville Snerk's shoe had made the prints in the cashier's office, though he had not been able to get an alibi out of the figure-juggler. Orville was in the klink without bail.

When Willie had glumly finished reading the papers, he was struck with an idea. Feeling slightly happier, he hurried downtown to see Orville Snerk. At first the cops would not let Willie see him, but Willie pointed out pertinent facts to the keepers of the bastille.

"Kelly and them other fellers are real cops," Willie said. "Orville is holdin' somethin' back, as he knows everythin' he says will get in the papers. I think Orville is innocent, but he don't dare tell where he was durin' the crime. Maybe he will tell me as I am a private investigator. I might even find where he hid the dough."

FINALLY they let Willie see Orville in private.

"Look, Mr. Snerk," the world-unrenowned sleuth said. "You are on the skids and no kiddin'. If you are tryin' to shield somebody, don't be silly. I am a private investigator who don't blab things to newspapers as it would hurt my business. Now where was you last night between midnight and the time you got home? Maybe you was so boiled you

forgot, huh?"

"I—er—remember," Orville replied unhappily. "Oh, am I in a mess! I wish somebody would get me out of it, Mr. Klump. I got a story nobody would believe. But if I tell it, I lose my dame. If she ever found out about that canary I seen a couple of times, she'd give me the ring back. Look, I might as well own up to you as maybe you can find this dame. Once or twice I meet her in a tavern where I go for beer an' we get kind of happy together. See?"

"She is a pip, but she is awful hardboiled. Well, last night I am havin' a couple of snorts with her and I get drunk and pass out quick. When I wake up, I am in an alley and my dome feels like it is filled with old nuts and bolts and cement."

"Go on," Willie said sympathetically, when Orville took time out to feel sorry for himself.

"So I ain't got my keys. The next thing I know, the cops come and I'm a murderer."

"I bet you blabbed your life's history to the doll while you was with her them times, Orville. You are a pushover for a smart dame, I bet."

"We was quite chummy," Orville confessed. "Find her, Klump. I mean that doll. Somethin' tells me she handed me a mickey."

"No kiddin'?" Willie said. "Now describe the doll."

"She had kind of a long pan, gold hair and a little mole near her right eye. Dresses like a million. I never knowed where she lived. She just hung around that tavern."

Willie Klump felt faint. The cell's walls seemed to turn to liquid, start to disintegrate and make long, spiraling patterns in front of Willie's peepers.

"Y-you sure about th-that?" the private sleuth gulped. "Is there water handy?" He

took a deep breath. "Well, I think I will be goin'. Hang on, Orville, an' I w-will t-try to save you."

"Yeah—you look scareder than me," the prisoner said dolefully. "And me booked for a murder. Nuts!"

The cops grabbed Willie on his way out. Satchelfoot demanded to know what Orville had said, if anything.

"Come clean, Klump!" he alliterated. "It is not legal to hide no evidence from us guys. You know that."

"He is mighty stubborn," Willie said. "He won't talk. He has an alibi, but he says it would be like jumpin' out of a blast furnace into a vat of boilin' tar if he told it."

"Oh, he had an accomplice and was carryin' the torch for her, huh? I bet she is headin' for the Border with that dough. I'm gonna give him the business and make him own up. Thanks, Willie. I'll see maybe if I can't get your name in the papers."

WILLIAM KLUMP thanked Satchelfoot with his tongue in his cheek and hurried out. He had to think, so he walked for whole blocks. When he got tired, he jumped into a subway. He left it away uptown and walked some more. Finally he came to a bench in the park, sat down and opened up a newspaper. After reading a little about the case they had piled up against Orville, he threw the paper onto the grass.

"Hey, you!"

Willie lifted his noggin in a hurry.

"Pick up that trash, you creep, before I run you in for a public nuisance," a park officer yelled. "Lookit that can over there. Maybe you think the city built it for a bombproof shelter for squirrels, huh? Pick up that paper and chuck it in there, or I do it myself and throw you in with it?"

"Give me time," Willie said. "You

public servants are supposed to be a little polite to taxpayers, though. I was thinkin' of somethin' else as—Yeah, somethin' else!”

The president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency dropped the newspaper and started running.

“Come back here, you jabbering idiot!” the park attendant roared. “If I ever lay my eyes on you again, I’ll stab you like you was only a candy bar wrapper.”

Willie Klump did not stop running until he had come to a place in Central Park where he had been only a few days before. He tagged a familiar-looking bench, then slipped down a little bank and rummaged in the bushes. Willie’s ticker operated with leaps and bounds when he pulled a crumpled newspaper out of the bushes. He held it close to him as he made his way to the nearest public carrier.

“Dolls are generally mighty tidy,” Willie mumbled. “I am glad this one was not. She give Orville a shot of sleepin’ stuff so’s somebody could frame him. She had to have help as no doll could have had the beef to have nudged the watchman off so permanently.”

Willie wrote the facts down as he traveled downtown on a bus.

She lifted Orville’s keys after finding out all about him and where he worked. Orville would rather take the jolt than have his torch know he was gambling about with a canary like that one. Love is nutty.

In the privacy of his sleuthing chambers, Willie Klump examined the discarded ball of newspaper. It was a tabloid, the *Daily Bulletin*. Willie found where the frill had torn a small rectangular piece from a page that was packed with classified ads.

“I get it,” he muttered. “Sometimes I am almost too smart. When she was sittin’ there on that bench, she was figurin’ on

movin’ from where she was. She tore an ad for a furnished room out of the page here. Now all I have to do is hurry to the office of the *Bulletin* an’ get a paper of the same date. I will have to prove things after I find her, though. Can I? Hmm!”

William Klump called at the newspaper office and got himself a fresh tabloid of the same edition. In his office once more, he spread the old paper out and placed the new one beside it. Before long he was reading an ad that had been set up as follows:

FURNISHED ROOM. Nice view. Refined neighborhood. \$7. Apply 1024 W. 108th St.

“Eureka!” Willie cried. “This is where my shadowin’ studies come in handy. But I have to put on a disguise. The doll might remember me and wonder why I am around that neighborhood as she maybe does not believe in coincidents.”

The president of the Hawkeye took a little tin box from a desk drawer. From this he selected a sweeping black mustache and eyebrows to match. He glued them in their proper places and then pulled a black wig over his corn-colored locks. Topping his disguise off with a pair of heavy-lensed cheaters, he knocked his hat into a new shape. It had been the work of but a moment for history’s least famous detective to transform himself into another completely unknown man.

KLUMP hovered close to the West 108th Street address all that afternoon and evening. He had watched the portals of the place closely but no doll with golden hair and a mole on her face had come forth. Willie was getting discouraged, for it looked as if Lady Luck had again slapped him where it hurt.

At last he rang the bell. A landlady opened the door and peered out at him. Willie asked about the golden-haired

female and the landlady replied that she had not shown up in the hostelry.

"Anyway, if you can't state your business, I don't give out no more information about my guests," the old frill fired at Willie.

She slammed the door in his face.

"Nuts," Willie groaned.

He looked at his watch. It was seven P.M. and he felt an emptiness that called for the nearest beanery. He hied to one and took a small table near the window. Over in the corner was a studious-looking cupcake with glasses and long, straight, black hair.

Willie wasted but a glance on her.

He ordered hamburger and mashed and looked dolefully out of the window. The doll had decided not to take that room after all, he mused. Maybe by this time she was in Detroit with her plug-ugly, picking out mink coats and sixteen cylinder gas buggies. Obviously she was going to let Orville Snerk fry.

Willie did not see the customer come in. The character was a sheik type, and he took a seat at the same table with the black-haired doll. Willie did not hear the passes the mashing citizen made at the girl with the book. He heard only the result.

"Look, moron, I never was at Atlantic City and I am not lonesome and my mother knows I'm out. Besides, I have a husband who juggles cases of gravestones around as if they were filled with marshmallows and he understands me. Now shut up!"

Willie almost strangled as he swallowed a big chunk of hamburger that had not been chewed. He staggered out of the eatery with his eyes watering and his legs getting all tangled up.

The doll had disguised herself, too! She thought she was pretty smart, eh? Well, she shouldn't have stepped out of character like that.

HE ducked into a doorway a block from the beanery and waited. Before long the siren who had put the skids under Orville Snerk was on her way uptown. Willie trailed b her. She entered an apartment house. Just as he got into the lobby, he saw her stop a professional-looking character who was on his way out.

"How is Mr. Dudley this evening?" the don asked.

"Not too bad. Not too good. I think I've got things under control, Ma'am. I guess the poison has been checked."

Then the dame went to the elevator and the doctor came out. Willie accosted him.

"I—er—am from the insurance company, Doctor," Willie said. "I seem to have lost his apartment number—Mr. Dudley's, you know. Would you mind tellin' me—"

"Why don't you look at the bells in the hall?" the sawbones retorted. "It is what most people do."

Willie Klump finally got himself upstairs. He paused in front of a door that was marked G9. The instant he knocked, the girl opened the door and asked what the idea was.

"I must see Mr. Dudley," Willie said. "It is important. If you would stay outside—"

"Who you think you are?" the doll said in high dudgeon. "Go away. We don't want any."

"Let the punk in, Trix," a voice called out. "I bet he's from Toledo and has a message from one of the guys. Come in, mug!"

Willie stepped inside and dispensed with all preliminaries, for that was Willie's way. When he got to thinking too much, things scared him. Therefore he always acted before he could get scared.

He reached out and dragged the wig off the doll's head. She let out a screech.

Mr. Dudley was sitting in a chair, with one foot in a tub of hot water. There was a bottle of liquor close to Mr. Dudley's elbow, and also a Betsy in the pocket of Mr. Dudley's dressing gown.

"You framed Orville!" Willie yelled as he pushed the female over a chair and into a corner. "I am arresting both of you for m-murder and r-robbery!"

"No kiddin'?" yelled Mr. Dudley.

He fired his cannon at Willie. But the Hawkeye Detective Agency had ducked low and was pushing a big easy chair straight at Dudley when the crook had unlimbered his artillery.

The bullet lost a lot of moxie, trying to get through heavy upholstery. It was well spent when it finally nudged Willie in the shoulder. Into Dudley crashed Willie and the chair. Hot water splashed all over everything, especially Dudley's uncovered undercarriage.

"Ow! Where are yuh, Trixie? Help! We gotta get this guy. Ow-oo!"

The doll had a tight dress on and it hampered her offensive a little. Before she could mash Willie's head in with a bottle, the terrified fearless sleuth ducked smartly and landed a straight left. Willie had never been partial to smacking women. He felt a little ashamed as he saw the frill do a kind of rumba with her eyes crossed.

Then she sat down and started talking to herself.

Dudley made another play for his cannon. But Willie threw himself right on top of the citizen and started punching. That was the scene the cops saw when they crashed the joint.

"Everybody stick 'em up!" a gendarme yelled.

WILLIE stood up and blew on his knuckles.

"I am glad to see you, boys. I am Willie Klump, private detective. Arrest

this man and woman as they murdered a watchman and stole eleven thousand dollars. I will prove it now—uh—I think I can. For a minute, though, I was worried. I don't think fast."

"Don't kid us, Klump. They got Snork for that job and they got the shoes he wore."

"You mean the ones this character wore," Willie corrected. "Grab these two as I bet both of 'em was disguised. I was, too. There is the black wig the doll wore. Orville will identify her as the one who give him a mickey."

"Lookit, Clancy!" a cop breathed in awe. "That guy there with the bum foot. His pan is familiar. Why, I think we've got Billy the Skid Carson. Search the joint!"

The victims of the Klump blitzkrieg had little fight left in them while the State jewelry was put on their dukes. After ransacking the apartment, the boys found a suitcase stuffed with legal tender. They poked it right into Billy the Skid's face. The eagerly wanted public enemy admitted he had not won it in a bingo in contest.

"Don't talk!" the doll yelped. "They can't prove anything, sugar."

"Yeah, let 'em try," the crook said and swore when another pain needled his bum foot.

"It is a cinch," Willie stated.

Billy the Skid and the doll—who owned up to the name of Trixie Devine—were loaded into a squad car and taken downtown. Satchelfoot Kelly and everybody refused to believe what they heard. Then Orville Snork came out of durance vile and immediately recognized Trixie.

"That is the babe!" he yipped. "Where's my keys, you crook?"

"He is nutty," Trixie said. "I never saw him before in my life."

"Yeah, let 'em try and prove things,

sugar,” Billy the Skid said.

“All right, I will,” said Willie Klump. “Bring me them shoes you found in Orville’s room, Satch, old boy. There was a nail in the heel of one of them. It jabbed Mr. Dudley here and give him an infection. No, huh? Make him put on the shoe. It will jab him in the same spot where the cut is in his tootsie right now. How’s them for apples? Crime don’t pay.”

“Ah, nuts—I’m licked.” Billy the Skid moaned. “Yeah, I knocked off the watchman, but it wasn’t on purpose—much. This foot is achin’ like a ulstered tooth now, and I ain’t jabbin’ it again. They got us cold, sugar.”

“Why, you big blab-mouth!” Trixie howled. “I hope you burn.”

“Now it is your turn, Trixie,” Willie grinned. “Clutterin’ up our parks is a habit that tripped you on this job before it was pulled. You got Orville spiffed and stole his keys. You went to his roomin’ house long after midnight, when everybody was asleep, and stole them rubber-soled shoes. Then you took ‘em to where Billy the Skid was waitin’. It is easy to walk into any roomin’ house at two A.M. or worse. The landlady is asleep and people who live in them places don’t get surprised to see a strange face, as roomers come and go.

“It did not take a trained criminal long to knock off the watchman at the wooden kimono factory and get the payroll in the safe. I bet Orville had the combination of

the safe on him, too, and the doll got hold of it. Snerk could not prove he lost it. Well, when Billy the Skid got through with the shoes, he handed them back to the dame. She got into the rooming house again and put them back right near Orville’s empty bed. Then the first thing the next A.M., she moved and put on a disguise in case Orville told the cops what she looked like.”

TRIXIE looked at Willie as if he were a horoscope predicting her doom. Then she shook her golden noggin and sighed defeatedly.

“How can anybody make a living in this business when they disguise airedales to make them into police dogs?”

“Yeah,” Willie agreed. “I found the paper you threw away and saw the ad you tore out of it by buyin’ an old copy from-”

“Oh, shut up,” Trixie said. “I can’t stand the sound of your voice any more.”

“*You* can’t? Satchelfoot Kelly moaned. “Look, babe. What did you knock out Orville with? I want to go and buy myself about a pint of the stuff.”

“How would you know when you was unconscious, Kelly?” Willie asked, interested. “If you will excuse me, I will run down to my office and add up the rewards that are out for Billy the Skid. I think the coffin makers might be generous, too. Don’t you, Satch, old boy?”