



WILLIAM KLUMP, NURSEMAID

By JOE ARCHIBALD

The Hawkeye Hawkshaw plays "wooden duck" for a killer and gets a clue from Mother Goose!

GERTRUDE MUDGETT read the gossip columns as regularly as bangtail fever patients peruse the racing forms.

"It makes a girl sophisticated," she told William Klump, president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency, one evening when they were having their mess in La Boheme Rouge on East Forty-sixth Street.

"When you are with people you can converse in step with them and they won't take you for no dope."

"That reminds me, I must buy that latest issue of All Laugh Comics before I go home t'night," Willie said.

"Now right here is somethin' that is a riot in Hinchell's column," Gertie pointed out. "Stop playin' Begin the Beguine with your soup and listen, Willie. 'During your correspondent's nightly canvas of the big town's best bistros, he observed a strange coincidence. Sherman Dillingby, boniface of El Bonanza, greeted us at the sacred portals of the Puce Room wearing as pretty a mouse

under his right glimmer as you'd ever want to see.

"‘Sherman also had a knot on his almost hairless pate and there was a cut under his lower lip. He claimed the dimouts were getting serious and said he fell down cellar going after some grape. . . . Imagine our astonishment when we minced into La Maison de Boeuf and beheld the host, Rinaldo Lavista, wearing a pair of black cheaters and packing a chunk of adhesive tape on the bridge of his nose. . . .

"‘Last but not least, as we paid our respects to Toots Short of the Club 23, we noticed that Toots’ ordinarily handsome pan had been scrambled a trifle and Toots looked like a grunt and groan performer after a tiff on the canvas. . . .’"

"‘Dolls,’ Willie said and sniffed. "‘Them big-shots are always gittin’ sued or clawed up by one. Maybe they was all competin’ for the services of a new warbler and had t’ fight it out to sign her up. Anyways, they have lots of enemies, as look how many citizens they rob in those joints!’"

"‘JUST the same,’ Gertie said. "‘It is coincidents like Hinchell says. Use your napkin, sloppy. You got nine points’ worth of fodder on your chin now. What I see in you—"

"‘Well, I just put five hun’red in the bank the F.B.I. give me, so—"

"‘Oh, I’m an adventurer, am I? A golddigger!’ Gertie said in piercing tones. "‘Why, you got a nerve, William Klump. I want you to understand I passed up a dozen men to get at you. I won’t sit here an’ let you insult me. I—"

"‘Please, Madam,’ a little waitress said, leaning over Gertie. She thought Gertie was complaining about the food. "‘Don’t blame me as the manager told me to—"

"‘You go tell him to peel a turnip,’ Gertie yelled back and picked up her war-bag. "‘Tell him the food here is terrible.’"

"‘He knows it,’ the doll with the apron said, and Willie laughed. Gertie got up and walked out of the restaurant and yelled back to Willie from the sidewalk. The waitress turned to Willie. "‘I feel sorry for you when you git home, Mister. How long you been married?’"

"‘We are just engaged,’ Willie gulped.

"‘Oh, brother!’"

"‘I was thinkin’ that too, sister,’ Willie said. "‘I am goin’ to my draft board tomorrer and ask them to make sure I wouldn’t be a good risk in Sicily or somewhere.’"

He got up and paid his tariff and when he came outside he gave a subway kiosk a wide berth, as it was a natural booby trap and Gertie had thrown things before.

Willie thought a good walk would do him good and his peregrinations finally took him to the corner of Madison and Fifty-seventh where he leaned against a store front to ponder the vicissitudes of his profession. Willie was a private investigator like some famous characters of fiction and radio but there the analogy ended.

Private slewfeet of the make-believe world had color and dash and aplomb and Willie was as ordinary and as colorless as the inside of a phone booth. These other guys were debonair and always seemed to have exciting cases to solve. But Willie was a crumb, sartorially, and his cases were as far between as Omsk and Chungking.

"‘I ought to git myself known as The Lone Hawk or the Scarlet Pumpernickel or somethin’," Willie said.

There was a prowler car at the curb but Willie was unaware of the fact. Two of New York’s finest lolled on the front seat until the radio started fanning their ears. It was a stuffy night and sounds carried. Whatever was said of Willie, no one ever accused him of having small ears.

"‘Car Forty-two—proceed to Two-eight-six East Thirty-sixth Street at once—man found dead in Apartment G-Eight—looks

like murder. . . .”

“Huh?” Willie yelled. “Who said that?” He saw the car leap away from the curb, got a glimpse of the letters “P.D.” on the side. “Oh, cops! This Radar will win the war and close up criminals, too,” he said and started yelling for a cab.

Willie Klump got to the scene and barged into the lobby of a small pueblo.

“Hol’ on, Junior.” Three cops gathered him in. “Where you think you’re goin’? If you forgot your yo-yo, you wait until later. You what?”

“He is my boss,” Willie said. “I got called as quick as they found him. I—”

“Oh, yeah? Come on upstairs, sweetheart, as’ maybe you was on your way out and not in. Hid behind a potted palm or somethin’.”

“This is an outrage!” Willie protested. “I am innocent.”

“We got a suspect,” a cop said when they shoved Willie into a small apartment and into the arms of a detective from Headquarters named Aloysius Kelly, more commonly addressed as “Satchelfoot.”

“FAST work, men,” Kelly said. “Awright, start talkin’ – er – YOU! Willie Klump, how come they picked you up? Oh, the dopes! Look, stupes, this character calls himself a private detective and how he ever got wise we had a murder. . . Willie, go over in that corner and sit down and shut your trap! Where was we? Oh, yeah—well, what was he slugged with, Doc?”

“This little bronze statuette of Venus de Milo,” the medical examiner told Satchelfoot.

“That is what a dame can do to you,” Willie quipped and even the corpse appraiser had to laugh.

Kelly summoned all his will-power and then asked who the victim was.

“Name’s Cockrell Robbins,” the morgue

M.D. said.

“There was an argument over somethin’,” Kelly diagnosed.

“In the next room, Kelly,” a cop said. “A card table set up and the remains of a meal. They was big-shots, I bet, as they was eatin’ meat. Pork chops, no less. That is the trouble with this country. Discrimination, as some people can eat meat an’ some—”

“Shut up,” Kelly snapped. “This is a murder investigation, not a forum of the airways. Let’s look if they left any meat—I mean maybe we can git a clue—”

“With you them things are sure rationed, too,” Willie could not help but observe.

“The murderer et with his victim,” Satchelfoot said, looking over the remains of the deceased’s last supper. “That is awful cold-blooded. The culprit used gloves when he picked up the stature, maybe, but take a shot at prints on it anyways, boys. Dust everythin’, except Klump there.”

“The corpse was once a home body,” a cop said. “He cooked his own chow here. Funny thing about all the bottles in the kitchen though. They look like bottles I been familiar with at times only they got no labels or remains of seals on them.”

“Somebody grab that elevator operator an’ bring him in here,” Kelly said. “Yeah, must be about three dozen bottles here. Washed clean as anythin’ an’ who bothers to clean labels off hooch bottles unless—I smell somethin’, guys!”

“Maybe he was a vodville actor,” Willie called out. “Every bottle has a different sound when you hit it with a stick. Call up Broadway Brevities and ask was Robbins a Thespian, Satchelfoot.”

“What his religion was will not help to you cluck. And shut up and keep your nose out of this, Willie.”

They brought in a palpitating Senegambian and the little colored character was getting almost white around the gills. Satchelfoot said he would grill him and

Willie asked him how he would know when the citizen was well browned. The detective counted to ten and then started cross-examining.

"This Robbins here, who was," Kelly said. "Was he a boozier, Sam?"

"Huh? I ain't Sam. Mah' name is Beauregard. Mistuh Robbins, he never drunk not a drop of likker, boss. But doggone, he toted a lot of it home the las' coupla weeks, he sho' did. Yo' can tell likker bottles wrapped up even if you don' see 'em. Once he dropped a package an' bruk a bottle an' brothah, that elevator smelled scrumpious fo' a whole week."

"Who et with him t'night?" Kelly asked.

"Huh? Ah don' know. Mah relief was workin' then an' he's almos' seventy an' has got cataracks on bofe eyes, boss. Mos' able-bodied elevator mens are in the Ahmy. He's so't of janitor relief man an' sleeps down by the coal bin. Ah'll git him if yo' want."

"Get him," Kelly said, then snapped something up from a chair. From where he sat, Willie thought it was a business card. Satchelfoot grinned like a hyena knee-deep in carrion. "Got somethin' here. Yeah, Michael O'Toole Fogarty, Breezy Beverages, Inc. This little business card could easy pass Fogarty into the sizzle salon. Fogarty! I bet the old-timers downtown will remember that name."

WILLIE, noticing that Kelly was in a nice mood, began to saunter around the apartment at will. He pointed to the card table.

"One napkin is used and one is still folded up nice, Satchelfoot. It means one of the diners was a very sloppy character. See if there is stains on the stiff's vest and if his fingers smell of pork chops. Even the knife at the place where the napkin was not used is as clean as a hound's tooth. Never mind, I can look for myself."

"You keep away from that corpse!" the

medical examiner yelled. "I'll attend to that."

The elevator boy came in leading another one that looked as old as Uncle Tom and just had a beating by Simon Legree. Satchelfoot asked the old boy who went down in the elevator last—from the floor where Robbins' apartment was.

"Mah eyes ain't so good, boss," he said. "But he was a powerful big man. One thing I knew he wore a green shirt. Ah kin see green as plain as when I was ten years old, yassuh! He smelled like he been rollin' aroun' in a saloon, boss."

"No stains on Robbins clothes," the medical examiner said. "Hands not a bit greasy."

"No kiddin'," Satchelfoot yelled. "I'm the detective here, remember? Willie, you stop orderin' the Doc around . . . Fogarty! Fogarty. The name is—"

"First the deceased looks familiar," Willie mumbled, "now a name sounds familiar. You will not git nowhere in a guessin' game." He looked at a calendar on the wall and then at Kelly. "Very odd," he told himself, shaking his head.

"Fogarty would wear a green shirt," Satchelfoot said. "So he was here and did not drop no callin' cards some other day. Guys, he'd better have an alibi when we pick him up. He—"

"Got it, Kelly!" one of the cops said. "He's got his name in the guest book downtown. Mike Fogarty was one of the bigges' bootleggers in the ol' days. Now he owns a soft drink outfit an' puts out a slop called Speg. It looks like maybe on account of the way liquor is gittin' scarce an' high in price, an' how it is rationed in some states, an old racket is comin' back, Kelly!"

"I was thinkin' the same thing," Satchelfoot Kelly said.

"Nuts," Willie cut in. "When will you stop usin' brains by proxy?"

"One more crack out of you, Willie, and

I'll pin your lower lip up."

"You try it an' you'll never grit nothin' but your gums from now on, Mr. Kelly," Willie said. "I am only trying to help. Now I won't offer no suggestions at all. You are on your own and if that does not boost morale in the underworld, then I—"

But Satchelfoot had had enough and he ordered the two cops to evict Willie from the murder scene. When Willie got outside he ran to the nearest drug store and thumbed a telephone directory. He found out that Michael Fogarty lived up in Washington Heights and immediately went up there fast.

An hour later, Willie was slumped down in a chair behind a potted palm ten feet from the entrance to the big apartment house, and Satchelfoot Kelly and three of his satellites were escorting a very big and irate citizen out of an elevator.

"I tell ya I didn' knock him off. I just went t' see N—Cocky—on business, you dumb bulls!" Fogarty yelled. "Somebody musta come in after and—"

Willie got a good look at the ex-bootleg czar. Fogarty was still wearing a green shirt and by the wrinkles in his trousers, Willie guessed the big character had not changed his ensemble since meeting Robbins. But his light gray suit was clean and immaculate.

Michael Fogarty was past middle age but he could go three rounds with Joe Louis if he had to and not come out looking too bad. He had a chin as big as a twenty-cent piece of ice and a pair of hands that bulged with muscles.

“A WRIGHT,” Kelly yelled as his men convoyed Fogarty to the police car. “You admit you was there. You was a bad boy oncet, so we got to go over you with the works, Mike. The D.A. will think it ol’ times talkin’ things over with you.”

“You got nothin’ on me,” Fogarty trumpeted just as the boiler left the curb.

“Strange,” Willie said. “I think he is innocent of murder, but not of anythin’ else, I bet . . . I’m tryin’ to think of somethin’, an’ all that comes to my dome is Gertie. I wonder why? I better go on home an’ try to figger what is cookin’.”

In his room on East Forty-sixth Street, Willie took an old notebook out of his dresser drawer. On it was printed: Case Book of Detective William Klump. To be Turned Over to Police Headquarters and Prosperity in Case of My Decease.

“Number 1,” Willie scribbled. “Empty bottles in Robbins’ flat without no labels or seals on them an’ the corpse never drunk a drop. Fogarty who et with the deceased or so the cops think was an ex-bootlegger who now makes soft stuff called Spew. What would he be doin’ talkin’ with Robbins? What is the motive?”

“Number 2. Did Fogarty make a slip of the tongue when he said N—before he said Cocky? Why do I think of Gertie every time I think of bootleggers? I wonder sometimes if Satchelfoot even knows what day it is. Fogarty is not a sloppy character, but almost a dude. Nothin’ adds up yet.”

Willie Klump awoke the next morning, dressed very fast, and went over to Lexington where he breakfasted on crullers and coffee. While dunking, he read his favorite morning journal and there on the front page, despite the war, was the news that Michael Fogarty had been booked for the rub-out of one Nicky Pantelleria alias Cockrell Robbins.

The gendarmes downtown had matched the prints of the corpse with those of old bootleggers and had tagged Cocky as Nicky Pantelleria who once was the terror of the Loop in Chi and had beaten four murder raps before the Volstead Act went the way of the bustle and the crystal radio set.

“Oh, cripes,” Willie gulped out. “Has Satchelfoot hit a jackpot?”

It looked very much as if he had. The police had grilled Michael Fogarty to a nice turn and had descended upon his soft drink bottling works on the banks of the Harlem River. They found that Fogarty was distilling very inferior brands of Scotch and Rye and putting them in bottles like the real McCoy.

The cops picked up a big wooden box full of labels of every well-known brand of giggle water on the market. It looked as if the harmless appearing Spep trucks would be used to transport the alleged stimulant to the various oases where Fogarty made deals.

“ ‘And so the old bootleg liquor racket rearing its ugly head in Gotham,’ ” Willie read aloud, “ ‘has been nipped in the bud by a master stroke on the part of New York’s Detective Bureau.

“ ‘The arrest of Michael O’Toole Fogarty, once the overlord of the bootleggers in Manhattan, for the murder of Nick Pantelleria alias Cockrell Robbins, has prevented a wave of crime that would have been a dainty morsel for enemy propaganda agents and might have been detrimental to the war effort. Fogarty maintains that he is innocent of murder.’ ”

“Huh,” Willie said. “Two of the biggest old-time gangsters grabbed by Satchelfoot in one night. Now I have heard everythin’. What a racket they would have set up! The hookers in the swell night-spots would have been thinner than ever an’ big night-club bosses like Sherman Dillingby an’ Toots Short would make even more profit an’ . . . I wish I could remember somethin’!

“Well, I will go to the office as there is nothin’ for me in this case. I guess Satchelfoot has to do somethin’ right once; if you throw rings at a runnin’ rhinoceros long enough, you will catch one on his horn. But the more I think of it, the more I wonder—huh, there I go ag’in, thinkin’ of Gertie Mudgett. If she looked like Veronica Lake now instead of how she does look, I wouldn’t wonder, but. . .”

WILLIE walked into his cubby-hole of an office twenty minutes later and the phone was ringing its hooks off.

“Hello,” Willie said, lifting the squawking public utility gadget out of its cradle.

It was Gertie.

“Now you know why Dillingby and Lavista and Short looked like they had fought in the golden gloves, when Hinchell called, huh?” she yelled in his ear.

“No. Look, Gert, I have a crime on my mind and have no time for such silly foolderols. Call me up when—”

“You dumb crumb!” Gertie retorted. “Fogarty is locked up for murder, ain’t he? He was sellin’ hooch to the nightclubs. In the old days, they went around and beat up guys who wouldn’t do business. So this Fogarty who is ol’-fashioned, went an’ slugged Dillingby an’—”

“Huh?” Willie gulped. Something snapped apart inside his cranium. “Why, Gertie, you got somethin’! But maybe you are gaga, as why didn’t those three big-shot night-club runners tell the cops after Fogarty was locked up, then?”

“Er, that is funny, ain’t it, Willie?”

“Yeah,” Willie said. “Unlest they are still scairt because a gorilla or two is still at large and will take up where Fogarty and the deceased left off. Cockrell Robbins bought liquor so’s he could get the labels an’ seals off the bottles to counterfeit them, as he never drunk no snake oil himself. Yeah, I bet there is a gorilla still loose. But how to find him, huh?”

“We should tell Satchelfoot, Willie.”

“Look, he has used everybody’s brains but our’n, Gertie,” Willie protested. “Nothin’ doin’. Anyway, he wouldn’t believe us.”

“You ain’t kiddin’,” Gertie sniffed. “Who would blame him? G’by, Willie.”

William Klump, brain in a whirl, went downtown at noontime and walked into a certain restaurant often patronized by

slewfeet like Satchelfoot Kelly. Willie's pet aversion was already hanging on the feedbag and talking to a contemporary.

"That big gorilla had his gall knockin' off Robbins and then walkin' right out to an elevator," Kelly's companion said.

"Yeah. Gall? Ha-a-a-a-ah!" Satchelfoot laughed while Willie's ears twitched. "We take him some chow las' night an' he tosses the oleomargerine at us, an' asts could he have some apple butter. Yeah, you would think he had lots of gall, Eddie. But what do you think he says? He had his gall bladder out two years ago an' can't eat no grease. We'll make him confess inside of twenty-four hours."

Willie took a seat in the booth behind Satchelfoot.

"One thing kind of worries me, Kelly," Eddie said, lowering his voice. "You said there was a set of prints showed up besides those of the victim. On a glass."

"So what?" Satchelfoot growled. "The defunct citizen was not in a cloister, so had visitors at times, ones who wasn't crooked or had no reason to conk him with a stature. Why, we got two sets of prints that was not on record over in the gallery. But we got Fogarty. He had a motive, bein' in the racket with Cocky Robbins. They fell out about who should git the bigges' cut, see? He ain't got a leg to stand on, Eddie."

Willie ate crackers and milk and waited until it was safe to leave the beanery.

Well, Kelly might be on the right track, but the flatfoot, he mused, never figured on hitting a switch. At the moment, Willie was sure that Fogarty had never assassinated any Cocky Robbins, alias Nick Pantelleria.

CROSSING the street, a gust of wind hit him a hunch that sent him scurrying for the subway. He went uptown and crashed the El Bonanza, was shown the way to the Dillingby office after he flashed his badge, but fast.

"You're nuts," the night-club biggie howled, mopping his pan with a silk hanky. "He wa'n't intimidatin' me, Klump. I never saw Fogarty in my life an' nobody's goin' to drag me into that mess, as if the public thought I'd bought bootleg—git out of here!"

"But look, Mr. Dillingby, you are helpin' crime in time of war by pertectin'—"

Dillingby threw a waste basket at Willie and he fled for his life. Some of the papers spilled over him and he fished one out of his neck. It was a bill to El Bonanza from the De Luxe Fish and Meat Sauce Co., Inc., Theodore J. Aspara, Pres.

He crumpled it up and tossed it away, knew Dillingby had been lying worse than a Goebbel's flunkey. He was very sure there was a character left who was still putting the heat on citizens like Dillingby and Toots Short and the others.

"But how will I ever find him or convince the cops there is, as they are sure Fogarty was the whole works. Oh, I better fergit it as it is the D.A.'s hard luck if he sautes an innocent crook by accident. Ugh!"

Ten minutes after Willie arrived at the Hawkeye Detective Agency, his phone rang. He picked it up fast, as he never knew when the utilities would cut the wires.

"Hawkeye Detective Agency," Willie answered. "Our operatives from Coast to Coast. The president speaking."

"This is Mrs. Elmo Flick, Mr. Klump. I live at Twenty-four Sixty Marion Avenue, the Bronx, and wish to hire you for the evening. How much do you charge?"

"To do what Mrs. Flick? If it is dangerous work, I would charge more," Willie said.

"It is both—guarding valuables and my son Ronald," Mrs. Flick said. "It is impossible to get maids now, Mr. Klump. I can pay you twenty-five dollars for the evening."

"What time shall I be there?" Willie asked. "Twenty-five is twenty—what time? Seven, huh? All my operators are busy but as Gertie works tonight, I have no place to go. G'by."

Willie arrived on time and Mrs. Flick gave him his instructions.

"There is Roland, Mr. Klump. There is a five-hundred-dollar diamond wristwatch upstairs, but most of all I want you to listen for sounds in the kitchen as there is a roast beef in the ice-box there worth sixty-seven points."

"I don't blame you," Willie grinned. "How's my li'l man, huh?"

"Nerts," Roland said. "If you are a deteckative, then I will start readin' about cowboys from now on. You ain't even got a cigar or flat feet."

"He's so cute," Mrs. Flick said as she departed. "I expect to be back at midnight."

After five minutes with Roland, Willie believed in gremlins. Roland tried to throw his watch out the window, climbed on him as if he was a stepladder and pulled one of his ears until it drooped like a poodle's.

"Don't you never go to sleep?" Willie yipped.

"Tell me a story, Mr. Klump. 'Bout Li'l Red Ridin' Hood."

“A WRIGHT. Oncet there was a little dame named Red Ridin' Hood and she was takin' lunch to her grandma who lived in the woods because she made the best mousetraps. A wolf—”

"Like Pa?" Roland cut in.

"Er—no," Willie sniffed. "A real wolf. It run on ahead an' forgot it was meatless Tuesday an' gobbled up the old doll, then put on her kimoner and nightcap and climbed into bed. Red Ridin' Hood came in an' said, 'You sure got big eyes, gran'ma.' And the wolf said, 'How are you, babe? Er—the better to get a gander at you with, Toots. What's in the feedbag for t'night?"

"Red R. H. said, 'You sure got big teeth, gran'ma,' an hands the wolf a caramel. The wolf gits its false teeth stuck in it an' Red Ridin' Hood, who has met wolves before, picks up an axe and bops the wolf and then reports the killin' to the O.P.A., as you can't kill animals—"

"Never mind the corn," Roland said to Willie. "Read me outa this book an' no adlibbin'. You are gittin' paid for takin' care of me."

Willie wished the East River was handy. He was sure Mrs. Flick would not prosecute him too far if he heaved in the little twerp. He opened the book and began:

"'Who killed Cock Robin? I, said the sparrer, with my bow an' arrer.' Why—er—" Willie Klump snapped the book shut and pushed Roland off his lap. The Flick sprout set up a squall that must have been heard in Hoboken.

Willie picked up his hat and headed for the door.

"You come back here," Roland yelled. "It is only ten o'clock an' Ma said—"

"Go play with a black widow," Willie said.

On his way out the door, Roland threw a toy tank at him and did not miss. It jolted his memory and almost fractured his skull and the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency did not remember a thing until he got into the street.

"Well, one thing leads to another in the detectin' business," Willie said. "Roland has the makin's of a firs'-class thug. But maybe he has helped me put the finger on an assassin. Who did kill Cockrell Robbins, huh? Could be, Roland."

At nine the next A.M., he hounded the second-hand stores on both the East and the West Sides and by two P.M. he found what he was looking for. At two-thirty, Willie was at the De Luxe Fish and Meat Sauce Co., Inc., asking to see the boss.

"I got somethin' that'll interest him,"

Willie said.

The girl at the switchboard sent him into Theodore Aspara's office. Willie unwrapped a package and displayed a little bronze statue of Venus de Milo.

"A bargain at six bucks," Willie said. "Sold a couple already. They was part of art treasures from—"

Theodore Aspara stared at Willie and the ashes of his cigar sprayed his vest. Willie could not remember a more slovenly-looking character. Suddenly the citizen let out a snarl and drove Willie out of the building.

"I'll fire that dame for lettin' punk peddlers into my office!" he howled.

Willie walked back into the building and cautiously approached the girl's desk. The brunette snarled at him, too.

"Beat it, jerk. I almos' got fired."

"I lef' the stature up there," Willie said. "I don't dare to go after it. Here is my address and fifty cents for postage. Ship it to me, huh?"

"When we get around to it. Now get out of here before I call a cop!"

WILLIAM KLUMP, having delved into the study of psychology, unbeknownst to himself, skipped uptown and called Headquarters. He asked for Satchelfoot Kelly.

"Look," Willie said. "This is important, Kelly, so don't hang up. If you want to grab the murderer of Cockrell Robbins, alias whoever it was, come up to my office, as I think I'm a decoy."

"If you mean a wooden duck, you are right, Willie," Satchelfoot sneered. "Listen blockhead, I—"

"Michael Fogarty did not kill nobody," Willie said. "You better come up here, Kelly."

"Awright, but I'm a sucker."

"You are still flatterin' yourself," Willie said. "I'll wait here, Satchelfoot."

An hour later, Willie was talking to

Kelly.

"I have an idea I've scairt a guilty party," he was saying. "You better stick close to where I live t'night, as maybe I will have visitors. I am in grave danger of my life, Satchelfoot. Look, here is what you better do."

"The room next to mine is vacant, as the landlady kicked a doll out for cookin' cabbage in her room this A.M. You go an' rent the room.' Then, when somebody visits me, you will be close by with a Betsy."

"Willie, you would hire a weasel to protect a prize leghorn. With somebody murderin' you next to me, I could sit and read a book all through the crime. You ought to know better."

"No kiddin'," Willie said. "You don't want to be an excessory to roastin' a perfectly innocent taxpayer, Satchelfoot. With all the dough the government needs, too."

"Okay, I'll go along with the gag," Kelly said.

"It might happen tonight or the next night, all dependin' on how strong the killer's conscience is, Satchelfoot."

"I'm goin' to rent the room now before I change my mind," the detective said. "Before you make it sound even sillier."

* * * * *

The president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency meandered to his boarding house around seven o'clock that evening. He knocked on the door next to his room and Kelly said:

"That you, Willie? Or the murderer? Whoever it is, have you got a can of flit as somethin' just hopped out of the mattress at me."

"Lay low, Satchelfoot," Willie said and went into his own room.

He read a stack of old comic books, turned on the radio and got his favorite crime drama and was wrapped up in the mullarkey when a knock sounded on his door. He got

up and opened it. Standing there was Theodore Aspara of the De Luxe Fish and Meat Sauce Co., Inc.

"Hello, Mr. Klump," Theodore said in a soft voice. "I got t' talk to you."

"You bring my stature?" Willie asked. "Oh, you shouldn't of bothered goin' out of your way, as—"

"Cut the stallin', Klump. What was the idea tryin' to sell me a statue of Venus de Milo, huh? I looked you up an' you are a private detective." Aspara glowered. "Awright, punk, what do you know? Talk fas', baby, as I got a cannon."

"Well, you ast me right out," Willie said. "Why beat around the mulberry bush, Aspara? I noticed how your eyes bulged when I showed you the statuette. Nobody should use the Goddess of Love to fracture a citizen's skull with, pal. It looked like you an' Cocky Robbins was on the outs for some reason and I bet it is because somethin' slipped up in that bootleg racket."

"Stop me if I am wrong, but after Fogarty left Robbins' flat, you come in through the back way, huh? You maybe deliver the black market bug-juice to El Bonanza an' the other bistros in your sauce wagon. Anyway, you forgot to wipe one fingerprint off the thing you hit Robbins with. You should use a napkin when you eat, Aspara, as greasy fingers make swell—"

"I GET it. You know, huh? Want to make a deal, Klump? I need a guy. See, Fogarty was gettin' the spot Robbins—er, Nick—promised me. A partnership. I was gettin' left holdin' the short end, so I went an' fixed that punk's wagon. I figured I'd make a deal with Mike Fogarty after but who thought he'd git tagged for the rub-out. So, what's your terms, Klump?"

"Why, I never was so insulted," Willie yipped. "I am all out against criminals. Why, you fiend, you'd let Mike Fogarty get cooked an' you knowin' all the time—"

"I see," the visitor said and sighed. "Well, what is one more killin' more or less, huh?"

He drew his Roscoe and Willie yelled his head off.

"Kelly, you flathead! Ha-a-a-lp!"

He ducked under the first slug and got his arms around Aspara's legs. Aspara wiggled loose like a slippery Duke halfback and took aim again. A bullet whistled past Willie's right ear and chugged into a mirror.

"Satchelfoot, you dirty—"

Willie stopped the next thirty-eight caliber pellet, went over backward and collapsed in the corner under the washstand.

"It is the end," he moaned.

Then muffled sounds, some heavy breathing and some prime cussing penetrated his consciousness. There was a loud plopping sound, and somebody yelled all the way from China:

"Willie! Talk to me, Willie!"

Somebody helped him to a sitting position and his eyes cleared as he recognized Satchelfoot Kelly.

"So long, Kelly," Willie said. "Right in the old ticker, yeah. Tell the law I fought to the last man, which was me. Where was you? Did you stop for a drink?"

"You got it in the ticker, awright," Satchelfoot said and held a big silver watch in front of Willie's eyes. "This turnip would stop one of Eisenhower's anti-tank guns. The slug didn't even git through the machinery in it. No wonder you are round-shouldered. I got here soon as I could as I had to bust the door down as the crook locked the door behind him. . . You can git in the worst messes!"

"Ha," Willie said. "That watch has stopped for the first time since Bull Run. You heard him confess, huh?"

"I sure did, Willie. I don't know how you ever got wise to that guy as I never even saw him before."

"There is always a first time for

somebody to go crooked,” Willie grinned and rubbed his stubble. “How I really did it, the D.A. won’t believe, Kelly. I knew all along though, that Fogarty didn’t kill Robbins. You should have known it, too, and I am amazed you could be so dumb even. Well, we better git this crook down to the klink and raid the De Luxe Fish and Meat Sauce Co., Inc.”

Theodore Aspara, once confronted by the D.A. and reminded by Willie that three night-club owners would talk plenty now there was no danger of getting liquidated, let loose with the entire works. Mike Fogarty had beaten up the three swindle salon owners in his quaint old-fashioned way, and had wormed his way in as partner to the top crook, Cockrell Robbins.

“I was playin’ third fiddle an’ was promised a fifty-fifty break with Robbins. Why, they was even tryin’ to muscle me out of that sweet new racket. Yeah, I took over after the rub-out and was getting ready to put in my own distillery. I wish I knew how this funny-lookin’ goon tripped me.”

They all turned to Willie.

Willie said:

“Who killed Cock Robin?”

“A sparrer,” a cop said, and the crook’s eyes popped out and his mouth snapped open like a fish stranded upon the beach.

“Why, you mean—”

THE D.A. and Satchelfoot Kelly exchanged sorrowful glances.

“Funny, huh?” Willie said. “Aspara killed Cocky Robbins alias Nick Pantelleria. I was readin’ a nursery soap opera an’ all at oncet I remembered a bill for meat sauce that was stickin’ out of my neck, but who would believe it? Kelly, how could you arrest Mike Fogarty?”

“Why the evidence—”

“Nerts. You saw the assassin had been eatin’ pork chops and I said I bet he was the one that didn’t use a napkin as the corpse looked so neat, huh? And right in’ jail you heard Fogarty complain about the mess, as nobody without no gall bladder can eat grease. But that is not what makes you so dumb, Satchelfoot. What day was the murder committed on?”

“Las’ Friday,” Kelly said.

“Sure,” said William Klump. “A citizen like Mike Fogarty eatin’ pork chops on Friday. An’ the thirteenth of the month at that. You ought to pick up a fresh set of brains as they are very low in point value. It is hard to believe how I done it, ain’t it?” Willie addressed the D.A.

“We don’t dare put it in print, Klump,” the D.A. said. “The department would get laughed at so we must make it look like very clever detective work, which will let you out of the picture. But we’ll see that you get paid for your trouble.”

“All I want is to know justice prevails,” Willie said. “But I will put it down in my case book the way it really was. Send a check to my office, huh? Well, good evenin’.”

“I still don’t git it,” Aspara said and pawed at his pan with two big hands.

“You will, though,” the D.A. snapped. “And you know what!”

“I must go home now, Chief,” Satchelfoot Kelly said deep down in his larynx. “I feel funny, like only one other time, after I saw my firs’ seance. I hope I’ll be all right in the mornin’.”

“That’s what you call really killin’ time,” said Willie Klump on his way uptown. He chuckled as he looked at the defunct nineteenth century ticker. “I must git it fixed.”