



A bullet tore through the plaid at Nick's shoulder and nicked Willy's ear-lobe

FIT TO BE TRIED

By JOE ARCHIBALD

Willie Klump, the Hawkeye Hawkshaw, tackles a tangled case of murder and loot, and gives the miscreant plenty of rope!

IT WAS a morning when the mail at the Hawkeye Detective Agency was quite heavy, and William Klump, President, was as excited as a moth feeding on Lana's shirred beaver coat when the postman dumped it on his desk.

"You sure rang twicet this mornin'," Willie said. "Join me in a crumb bun an' a cup of coffee."

"Don't mind if I do," the postman said, then quickly took a gander at the mail. "Oh, I almost done it again. This stuff, all but three letters, belongs to the Hawker Disinfectant Company next door. I'll take a little sugar in my coffee."

"I just happened to think," Willie snapped, "I am short of crumb buns this A. M. An' I'll need all the coffee I got. I am a

busy man so run along.”

“Yeah?” the postman griped. “I hope what letters you got are dunnin’ you for all the dough you got.”

“You come under Civil Service, don’t you?” Willie sniffed. “Then try actin’ civil before I report you to Farley.”

“Farley? He ain’t been postmaster since—”

“I didn’t see the newspapers this mornin’,” Willie snapped. “Now go away.”

Willie Klump opened his mail. One letter was soliciting funds for an organization that had been formed for the purpose of suppressing crime.

“That is a lot of sens,” Willie scoffed. “They would ask me to support the Temperance Union if I owned a chain of breweries.”

The second letter was from the Policemen’s Benevolent Ass’n, and contained four tickets at three dollars per. The typewritten message assured William that he would send a check immediately.

“It is intimation!” he grouched. “They are worst robbers than they go out huntin’ for. What’s the use of lookin’ at any more mail?”

Willie ate the rest of his breakfast and was tidying up when a tall, cadaverous citizen walked in. Willie almost told him that he must be mistaken about an address, as U.N.R.R.A. was in Washington. Anyway, the wheat shipments were none of his doings.

“Ah, Mr. Klump, I presume?”

“Have a chair,” Willie said. “You’re a client, I presume?”

“I am. I note that you find missing persons.”

“If they’re above ground, we find ‘em,” Willie said.

“I am Humphrey Buff. Perhaps you know I am appearing at Radio Theatre this week.”

Willie shook his head.

“My specialty is escaping from safes,” Buff said, lifted the skirts of his plaid coat, and sat down. “Once, I had a partner.”

“I begin to see,” Willie said, assuming a professional mien. “He got in a safe oncet an’ was stumped. Somebody moved the safe and you never got the forwardin’ address.”

Humphrey Buff swung his head around on his turtlelike neck and read the letters on Willie’s door as if to make sure he had come to the right place.

“Nothing of the kind,” he said, eyeing Willie again. “It was because poor Elbert could not tolerate hunger any further, my friend. Fifteen years ago, vodville became a precarious method of making a living, and Elbert packed up one night and left Kankakee where we were showing. I have not seen him since. Now that it has come to pass that trodding the boards is once more a lucrative—”

“His full name?” Willie interrupted, reaching for paper and pencil.

Elbert Eely, Escape Artist Extraordinary!”

“H-m-m,” Willie said.

“I—er—changed my name when I went back to the stage again, Klump. In those days we were known as Squirmerhorn and Eely. I have an old copy of Variety I shall leave with you. When I knew Elbert last he was about five feet, eight, had a black mustache and a mole over his left eye. If you find him, Klump, I will pay you five hundred dollars.”

“Dear or alive?” Willie said sharply.

“Well—er—no. If you find that Elbert is defunct, the fee will be three hundred.”

“It is harder to find citizens who no longer walk about,” Willie pointed out. “But it is a deal. Of courst, there will be expenses.”

“Keep them down, Mr. Klump,” Buff said.

"Supposin' I locate him in Manchuria," Willie argued. "I do not own my own airplanes."

"Let's stop being silly, Mr. Klump. I'll see you are adequately reimbursed."

"It was the pay I was worried about. All right, I'll take the case. All right, you give me the addresses where you'll be the next six months or so. Glad to have met you, Buff."

The actor placed an old magazine on Willie's desk, and Willie picked it up and tucked it away among his comic books on top of the filing cabinet. For an hour after Buff had departed, the president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency wondered where in the world he would start looking for Elbert Eely.

"I better sleep on it," Willie said. "I wisht I was half as smart as Satchelfoot Kelly thinks the D.A. thinks he is. First, I could maybe canvass the morgues everywhere by mail. I never had such a stiff assignment. Oh, well, I can afford to take my time as the dividends should start rollin' in soon. Mr. Plochnitz said I could expect 'em the first of the month. Hah, wait until I show Gertie the check. I'll show her how dumb I really am!"

The phone rang as Willie started visualizing a twelve-cylinder jalopy with plush upholstery and a built-in frozen food cabinet.

"Hello," Willie said. "Hawkeye Dividend and Limousine Co. I mean—"

"This is Kelly," a voice said.

"Up to now I was havin' one of my good days," Willie snapped. "What you want?"

"Do you know a Gasper J. Plochnitz?"

"I—I do. But how would you, Satchelfoot?"

"Oh, I meet all kinds in this business, Willie. I threw him in the hoosegow last night. He had a sucker list on him, and guess whose name was on it?"

"Mine," Willie said. "That is, I was one of the preferred clients."

"Ha-ha!" Kelly laughed. "Atomizers, Incorporated. How much you buy, Willie?"

"A thousan' shares at fifty cents a share," Willie said, beginning to feel a little woozy.

"Yeah? Atomizers. Ha-a-a-ah!"

"Atoms is everything today," Willie said. "Mr. Plochnitz says after they blowed up Bikini, the stocks would rise like jet planes. There would be atoms workin' electric toasters an'—"

"We raided Plochnitz's office. There is a little store-room with about a hundred atomizers in it. The glass ones with the rubber bulbs you spray cologne with. Oh, Willie!" Satchelfoot howled.

Willie hung up and fell into his chair as limp as garbage pail lettuce. Five C's had taken wing, had flown the coop more conclusively than had Elbert Eely. Gertie would find out before the noon whistles, and she would have a dozen more synonyms for the word "moron" when he met her face to face.

"I can't be as dumb as I act," Willie told himself. "Who could? But I must have been. Well—"

Again the public utility necessity clamored to be answered. At first Willie ignored it, hardly in the mood to argue with Gertie Mudgett over the fact that there might be insanity in his family most anywhere. But he concluded that he might as well take the rap sooner as later. He snatched up the phone.

"All right, go ahead!" he yelled. "Say it all at oncet, you—"

It was not Gertie's gravelly voice. It was a scared squeaky one.

"Please come to Four-ninety-seven and a half West Twentieth Street at once, please!" it said. "It is a robbery. Oh, do hurry!"

"You should of called the public detectives!" Willie said. "I'm a private . . . Hello! Hel-l-llo! She's hung up. Oh, what a day so far! I got to look for a missin' person I can't never find. I get bankrupt, and now—well, I'll call Kelly and the real cops. What am I sayin'?"

Willie did not call Headquarters until he got to a cigar store a block from the scene of the felony. Then Willie Klump went on and rang the bell of an old brownstone that looked as if it had not been lived in since Dewey smeared the Spaniards at Manila. A little wrinkled doll opened the door. She let Willie into a place that was an antique dealer's dream. Smells belonging to the Gay Nineties slapped Willie in the face.

"Oh, thank heaven, you got here," said the little old doll. "I'm Miss Penelope Paisley."

PENELOPE wore a taffeta dress that Hetty Green must have tossed away. She swung a lorgnette and had a big tortoise shell comb sticking out of the pug at the nape of her neck. She led Willie into a library that would have tickled Karloff.

"There is poor Mr. MacGonigle tied up there," she said.

Willie looked at the trussed flunkey. Nothing had ever been tied up more thoroughly, not even a trust fund.

"He been here all this time?" Willie asked.

"Of course," the little doll snapped. "And I know my detective stories. I didn't disturb a thing."

"Glub-ug!" the butler said.

"That is not a Scotch dialect," Willie said.

"He is gagged, you lunkhead," Penelope Paisley sniffed. "Are you a detective?"

"The bonner fide ones are on their way," Willie explained. "You got me by mistake."

"I figgered that when you got here," the old girl countered. "Have patience, MacGonigle, they'll be here any minute to untie you."

Willie was lolling on a horsehair sofa when Satchelfoot Kelly and his men arrived. Kelly snarled at the private snooper and threatened to make Willie take his name out of the phone book.

"I pay my telephone bills," Willie said. "Everybody makes mistakes."

"You been robbed?" Kelly asked Penelope.

"Why, no! I been havin' a scavenger hunt. We play like this often, me and my butler. When are the real police comin'?"

Willie Klump went into stitches.

"Well—er—were they valuable, what was took?" Satchelfoot went on, picking up a bronze statue and looking nasty at Willie.

"What do you think? They only belonged to Catherine the Great of Russia once. Ivan the Terrible give 'em to her." The ancient eccentric sniffed.

"We all have forgot somethin'," Willie offered. "Don't you think the butler would like to git loose?"

"First I got to look at him as he is," Kelly said. "Huh, quite a knot on his noggin. The intruder used more than a banana on him. Untie him, men."

The detectives had to cut MacGonigle loose. They ungagged him and Penelope ran out and came back with a bottle all covered with cobwebs. "I bet that is pre-war," Satchelfoot said.

"For once you are right," Penelope said. "My grandfather bought it when Lincoln was elected. This should revive MacGonigle."

The butler took a heavy snort, worked his arms and legs to get back into circulation, then dropped into a chair.

"Awright, start in from the beginnin'," Kelly said.

"Well," Willie said. "This is not like in books. This time how could the butler of done it?"

"You shut up, Klump, or we'll throw you down the cellar stairs!" Satchelfoot howled. "Go on, MacGonigle."

"Le's see now. Yeah, I was in the lib'ary here sortin' out some books last night about eleven when somebody walks in quiet as a mouse. At first I think it is Penelope—Miss Paisley. But when I turn my head I see it is a burglar. I always kept a gun over on the shelf in the corner, so I was ready for him. He was quick as a cat, though, and was springin' at me when I fired. I missed him, an' then somethin' hits me on the head, and when I come to, I am tied in a chair. That's all I know."

"I come in late from a D.A.R. meetin'," Miss Paisley said. "I went right upstairs and went to bed and it wa'n't until ten o'clock this mornin' I come down and found MacGonigle."

Satchelfoot stroked his chin and then asked the butler to show him where he stood when he fired off the Betsy. MacGonigle got up and went over in a corner. He kicked his foot against something and was about to stoop down and retrieve it when Satchelfoot warned him.

"If that's the Roscoe, an' I see it is now, you keep your mitts off it!"

Willie Klump watched MacGonigle go through some pantomime. Satchelfoot Kelly walked over to the moldy portieres and finally located a hole that never had been made by a moth. And from that moment things got so complicated that Willie Klump's head buzzed like a bee farm.

THE hole in the drapes was nearly six feet from the floor. Satchelfoot went into the next room and found bloodstains on the floor. He jumped back into the library.

"You didn't miss the burglar like you thought!" he yelled at the butler.

"But you shot at him in here, didn't you?" Willie asked.

"Sure," MacGonigle said.

"So he didn't bleed until he got in the middle of that parlor in there, hah?" William Klump scoffed. "Maybe he could suspend his animating and stop his heart at will."

"I pass," the butler said, and pawed at his bony face. "You got me there, awright."

"Willie, you keep out of this or—"

"An' how could you of hit the burglar in the first place, Mac?" the president of the Hawkeye insisted. "To of nicked him in the flesh, he would have to of been eight foot tall. So there is a clue, Kelly. A circus freak is the suspect. Why is it I always have to start you off on the right foot?"

"You'll git my foot in a minute, you mushmouth!" Kelly raved.

"You got to admit the guy is right, Kelly," a cop said.

"Are you on my side or his, McNinney?" Satchelfoot pouted.

"Well, somebody better get the culprit!" Penelope Paisley snapped. "I was only robbed of a quarter of a million worth of jewels. Maybe you think they grow on privet hedges!"

Satchelfoot gasped. "W—was they insured?"

"No. So do somethin' right away."

Satchelfoot's nerves acted up. "Stop scratchin' your head, Willie. You make more noise when you—"

"That is just some rats in the woodwork," Penelope sniffed.

"Maybe one wearin' shoes is hidin' in there with 'em," Willie said.

"Where is the safe?" Kelly asked suddenly.

"Huh, I wondered how long it would be before you thought to ask," the wrinkled doll said. "It is in the wall out in the parlor behind my dear brother's picture."

Willie followed the cops into the next room. The picture of Penelope's brother was leaning against the wall, sideburns and all. An iron door swung open. There was a high chair standing against the wall under the gaping square hole in the faded wallpaper.

"Photograft everythin', men!" Satchelfoot yelled. "Now we're gettin' somewheres. The guilty citizen stood on that old chair to reach the safe an' maybe left a footprint."

Willie Klump sat down near an old etagere, and wondered why he tried to think of something all of a sudden. However, whatever thought had occurred to him ducked back out of sight in one of his few brain cells. He digressed, thought of a citizen named Plochnitz, the new blue serge suit he was going to purchase with the first dividend from Atomizers, Inc.

He was definitely atomized himself for the next few minutes while Satchelfoot and his men combed Penelope's old pueblo. Satchelfoot's cry of triumph scattered his foggiess. Willie got up and hurried out into the library.

"Who did it?" he yelled.

"While you was asleep as usual, I got a suspect," Kelly said. "We found the gas man's book and pencil right at the head of the stairs leadin' to the cellar. He better prove he dropped it some other time than last night. He could of carried it along so's if he got caught in the house he could say he forgot to read the meter and come back to do it. If he has been shot any place, he is

cooked. If the boys in the lab can tell the blood we got a sample of comes out of the gas man—"

"He could have an alibi where he was last night," Willie said. .

"He better," Kelly snapped, "We're goin' after him right now. I bet we got this solved, Miss Paisley!"

"I got my doubts," the old doll said.

"Shake on that." Willie grinned, and Penelope did.

"Awright," Kelly huffed. "I'll show you septics."

Willie did not bother going along with the cops. It sounded too pat all around. He went back uptown to his office and proceeded to forget about the jewel robbery. He had a missing person to find.

That afternoon the papers said Kelly was holding one Elmore Boody for questioning in connection with the big robbery on Twentieth Street. The gas man, according to Satchelfoot, could not prove where he was while the outrage was perpetrated. He couldn't or wouldn't.

Once, Boody told the cops, he had suffered from amnesia. The only thing that puzzled the law was the fact that there was not a scratch on the suspect. Kelly promised he would make Boody confess all, however, within a day or two.

"Huh," Willie said. "I better write some things down. Like if the butler missed when he fired at the burglar, how could he have drawn blood? An' how the wounded citizen waited until he got in the parlor to start bleedin'. And he would have had to of been bleedin' while he tied MacGonigle up, as it must of took him quite some time. If the gas man was somewhere else at the time, why can't he say he was? Maybe Satchelfoot is right for oncet, as nobody can be wrong forever."

Willie, after he had noted these thoughts in an old case-book, turned his attention to the disappearance of Elbert

Eely. He asked himself where he would go if he was a disheartened Thespian, and tried to think of a likely place. He remembered the colored gentleman who had found a mule that had been lost when all other searchers had given up, because he had figured where he would go if he was a mule, and went there, and there the mule was.

"I don't think that would work," Willie sighed, and struck off on another tangent just as the phone rang.

"Hello," Willie said.

"You dope! Of all the lame-brained crackpots! I heard about that stock, Willie Klump! You muddle-skulled stooge for a village idiot! I thought you was the mos' beetle-brained gland case before, but now—"

"Wrong number," Willie gulped, and hung up. "Gertie must of waited to think up all of them insults before she buzzed me. I wisht I was sure she wa'n't right, though. Oh, well."

Willie Klump slept fitfully that night wishing a man with a mustache and a mole would stop sitting on his chest every time he dropped off.

He was pulling on his blue serge pants at eight a. m. when the landlady yelled his name. He went down in the hall and picked up the receiver and heard Satchelfoot's excited voice.

"Start all over," Willie said. "Or wait until you finish eatin' the banana!"

"The cops up in the Bronx picked up a stiff, Willie. Who you think it was?"

"Hitler? I told everybody he wa'n't dead."

"No, no, Willie!" Kelly yelled. "It was MacGonigle, that butler, who was tied up. I don't get it, Willie."

"For heaven's sake!" Willie choked out. "They could of rubbed him out easier las' night, couldn't they?"

"They got him in the morgue, Willie. I

. . . Why am I telling you about it? I've been so excited an' upset I don't know what I'm doin'. You keep out of this thing!"

"You won't let me, it looks like," Willie retorted.

The president of the Hawkeye Detective Agency was curious. He hurried to the morgue, and who was already there looking at the remains of MacGonigle but Penelope Paisley!

"It's him, the poor man," the spinster gulped, and reached into her old reticule for a nose doily. "Oh, hello, Mr. Krump. Who would want to murder such a faithful servant?"

"I wisht I knew," Willie said, and kept looking at the physiognomy of the corpse, and wondering about a certain little blemish thereon.

"Would you please see me home, Mr. Frump?" Penelope requested. "I'm so nervous and all. A maniac is at large."

Willie took the old doll downtown. He was about to take his leave of her after he had gone in the house, when he saw some old clothes piled up on an old sofa in the hall.

"Don't tell me you are disposin' of the butler's duds so soon, Miss Paisley?" he queried, eyeing her askance.

"Oh, those are old clothes that MacGonigle got together to give to the poor Europeans," Penelope said. "You even suspect me, don't you, Krump?"

"Klump is the name," Willie said. "Er—I'll take these over to where they're shipped out if you want. Why, this blue suit is the color I wear. He had good taste, didn't he?"

"That will be wonderful," the spinster said. "Thanks for thinkin' of it."

"Not at all," Willie said, and left.

He felt elated for a change, told himself that charity begins at home. Maybe there would be a few alterations,

but it would be a saving of forty bucks, even if he'd had forty to save. When he got to his room, he made sure the pockets of the hand-me-down were empty. They were, save a slip of paper that was part of a letterhead advertising a place called "The Excelsior A.A. 1987 Second Avenue."

ON THE paper MacGonigle had evidently scrawled:

Living Jane—Hialeah. 20-1

"That is race track talk," Willie said. "Why, I bet the butler played the hayburners. He got in deep an' owed some tough boy a load of cabbage an' . . . But he was the one tied up! This gets worst all the time H-m-m, Excelsior A.A. I wonder if there are birds of a feather there. Well, for oncet I am not goin' to stick my neck into no door of a mortuary an' say yoo-hoo, here I am for keeps. I will pack a Betsy."

The weapon was over at his office so Willie scooted over there and pulled at a drawer of the file cabinet that took a notion to go on strike. Willie yanked and nearly pulled the whole works over on top of him and a lot of magazines, mostly comics, piled up on the floor at his feet.

He was picking them up when he recognized the old copy of *Variety*, the journal devoted to the activities of Thespians.

"Huh, I forgot all about it," Willie said. "I wonder why Buff left it."

He sat down and riffled the pages, came to a place marked with pencil. It was an ad and it said:

OPEN FOR ENGAGEMENTS.

Squirmerhorn

&

Eely Escape Artists, Ext'y.

The fine print had let it be known that Elbert Eely was a wonder, even in reverse. He could truss himself up as easily as he could release himself from any kind of cord known to the trade. He was a two-way wonder who had performed for crowned heads.

"What do you know?" Willie mumbled. "Fancy that? Wha-a? He can tie himself up? No, I don't believe it. I shouldn't think on the spur of a moment! But—but—but— That corpse at the frozen cadaver plant, there was a spot over one of the eyes. No, even this couldn't happen to me. Oh, I know mustaches an' moles can be took off, but—"

Willie went over to the window and got some fresh air. Then he went over to the file cabinet and found a Roscoe he had purchased from a G.I. Ten minutes later he was on his way to the Excelsior A.A.

Willie appraised the building carefully before he took action. The Excelsior A.A. was on the second floor, above a delicatessen store. He looked harmless enough as he stood there, and so a flashy-looking individual sauntered up to him and mentioned that it was a nice day.

"Sure is," Willie said.

"You figurin' on goin' upstairs, pal? Bet you just got in town."

"Why—er—not exactly," Willie said.

"Okay, so le's be friends, huh? Want to lay a little bet, Hiram?"

"Uh—er—I would if it is goin' to win," Willie said, acting much dumber than he actually was.

"Follow me, Buster," the come-on said. "I can pick winners nine out of ten times."

"Well, awright," Willie said.

He trailed the gee up a flight of steps and into a big room where several rough characters were sitting. There was a counter along a wall and it was lined with telephones. There was a board on the wall

with the names of bangtails and the races they were running in.

"Sit down, kid," the rough boy said. "I'll get Nick Lutzig an' interduce you."

"I'm crazy to meet him," Willie said, and meant it.

A few moments later, a squat taxpayer, wearing a plaid gray suit and checkered shirt came toward Willie. The gee limped noticeably and cold chills began to run along Willie's bones close to the marrow.

"Hiya, pal. Winky says you want to make yourself some dough. Why don't you come in my private office an' have a drink first? I always like the personal touch an' like to git acquainted with my customers."

"Yeah, it is more clubby, ain't it?" Willie gulped.

He followed Nick into a back room. So crooks were smart, were they? They didn't know from nothing, believed Willie. He sat down and Nick locked the door.

"Well, flatfoot, you should have had more sense than to just come an' ast fer a slug!" Nick growled. "You think we take chances? We've got every bull in this town cased, even you private dicks. Okay. What do you know, Klump?"

"I know I should of stood in bed," Willie choked out.

"Of courst you know they'll find you in the river tomorrer or nex' day," Nick said. "How did you happen to come here so soon after that job over on Twentieth Street, huh?"

"Seein' as I will get shot anyways, what can I lose by answerin'?" Willie said. "That bullet MacGonigle fired nicked you, huh? Nick. Your name on it. Not bad. Ha!"

"Yeah. An' I still don't know how he knew I was standin' on that chair gettin' at the safe. But he lets go with a gat without even comin' into the room. That gee was hard of hearin', too, an' I don't think he

knew I was there. I am sure as all get-out puzzled, Klump."

"So you got the jewels, huh?"

"Not the first time," Nick smirked. "The safe was empty. So I knew MacGonigle had got to 'em first an' doublecrossed us. That punk got into us deep bettin' on the nags an' we threatened to tell the old dame, and he told us how we could all come out on top if we'd hold off."

"An' you figured to get the rocks all by yourself, too," Willie said. "You was crossin' your pals up, too. Won't there ever be no honor among crooks?"

"Yeah." Nick grinned. "I still can't figure how he shot me, though. And it's got me gaga about his bein' tied up an' gagged like he was. Well, anyway, we tagged him when he sneaked out of that house, an' knocked him off. We only got about ten grand worth of rocks offen him, though."

"It is quite a puzzle, isn't it?" Willie said. "I am startin' to add up a little, though. Funny how good your mind works when you are close to gettin' the final curtain. Here I got a missin' person I was hired to look for, but he'll git buried before I get paid, an' I'll get buried before I can tell his old pal. Life is complicated, ain't it?"

"Too bad, Klump," Nick said. "You ain't a bad guy personal. But you see why I got to rub you out, don't you?"

"You couldn't do nothin' else. Let's see if we can reach an agreement, huh?"

Nick Lutzig polished the barrel of his Roscoe with a handkerchief.

"No use," he said. "You might as well try an' make a deal with Russia, Klump. Of courst you know you got frisked of that gat the minute you got inside, don't you?"

"I did?" Willie gulped, reached for his pocket, and found it as empty as his midriff.

"Winky lifted a bass viol out of a night club orchestra oncet, and nobody knew it," Nick said. "The place was packed, too. I got a hunch MacGonigle was tryin' to sell those sparklers a little bit at a time, an' the rest are still hid in his room."

"I would say that," Willie mumbled, and looked for an out.

He could not see one and he looked back at the gun Nick was fondling, and suddenly Willie's ears quivered and his teeth snapped together. He remembered what he had forgotten.

"Yeah, your Roscoe, Klump," Nick grimaced. "Kraut Walther, huh? I never believe in shootin' two guys twice with the same gat. Makes the cops work harder!"

Willie got up and charged like a cornered rhino.

"It ain't loaded, you crook!" he yelped.

"That trick is older than—"

Nick Lutzig aimed at Willie and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened.

"Why, you wasn't kiddin'!"

He took Willie's noggin in his solar plexus just as he screeched for his reserves. Willie got him as he bounced off the wall and hugged him to him just as the door broke open.

"Awright, you punks!" Willie flung in the teeth of three gorillas. "Start shootin' and work your way to me through Nick's grisket!"

Willie Klump did not think they would, but they did. A bullet tore through the plaid at Nick's shoulder and stung Willie's right ear-lobe. Nick, his marbles back, screamed bloody murder.

"You wouldn't shoot me, Winky?"

"Oh, wouldn't I?" the mug mocked, and was getting closer to make sure of a vital spot when there was a battering and crashing sound in both the front and rear of the building.

"The cops!" a bull-like voice roared.

Glass splintered and partitions caved in. There were shots.

"A raid!" Nick gulped. "I lose anyways."

Willie flung the dishonest citizen right at the cops when they burst into the office.

"For oncet," Willie said, "you snails was on the ball. This is Nick Lutzig who killed MacGonigle, the butler. MacGonigle robbed that safe of Penelope's. It is lucky I forget so easy or you could just as well have forgot to raid this joint today anyway. Who carries aspirin with them?"

"It's that Willie Klump," a cop said.

"Search this joint for some jewels before you go," Willie said, and sat down to loosen his nerves. "I got to phone."

WILLIE picked one up, and a voice at the other end said:

"Hold your rompers on, Nick. They ain't even at the post for the third yet."

Willie decided to call Satchelfoot from the precinct house. . . .

"It was this way," Willie Klump explained later, with a D.A. and three assistants, and Satchelfoot Kelly looking on with lower jaws drooping. "MacGonigle got to playin' the hayburners but picked too many goats and was in hock to Nick Lutzig and his hoods. So to escape being ventilated he made a deal, but decided to cross the illegal citizens, at about the same time Nick decided to cross him. I happen to know MacGonigle used to be Elbert Eely, escape artist, and could tie himself up solo. Well, the butler took the sparklers out of the safe, took them upstairs and stashed them. Then, seeing that Penelope Paisley was out to the D.A.R. he had plenty of time to stage the phony burglary."

"I need some digitalis," Satchelfoot gulped.

"What for?" Willie needled. "You never had a heart. As I was sayin'—now, the butler come downstairs an' fired off a gun at random, but happened to hit Nick who had come in meanwhile. Nick was standin' on a chair, openin' the safe an' findin' somebody had beat him to it when he got shot. He lams, but MacGonigle don't hear him, as the butler is a little deaf. Well, MacGonigle tosses the gun to the floor, whangs himself over the coco with a book-end or somethin', then gags himself and trusses himself up.

"You already know how I got a new suit an' found evidence the butler played the nags, an' how I started thinkin' when I saw the little white spot over the eye of the corpse. He'd had a mole took off. MacGonigle was on his way to convert part of his loot into lettuce when Nick and his pals rubbed him out. You found the rest of the jewels in the guy's room, huh? No wonder butlers are always suspects in them books, huh?"

Satchelfoot Kelly loosened his tie, unbuttoned his shirt collar.

"Water—water!" he gasped.

"Well, why didn't the gas man give us an alibi if he was innocent?" the D.A. fretted.

"I wouldn't know," Willie said. "Maybe he was just stubborn. Maybe gas men meet lots of lonesome wives in their business. Some wives have husbands who would just as soon strangle you as not."

"You get a thousand dollars from the old babe for a reward," the D.A. said.

"Yeah," Willie said. "Let any wise guy try and sell me no more stock which has no horns on it. I also git three C's from the late butler's old partner, Humphrey Buff. So if you'll excuse me I will go an' call him up."

"How does he do it, Kelly?" the D.A. asked, in a froggy voice. "He never uses

no mirrors. Maybe it is because he knows he is stupid but won't admit it."

"That don't make sense," Satchelfoot sighed. "But what does when Willie works? You got anythin' to drink handy?"

William Klump dragged the world by the tail as he went to his office the next morning. The phone was ringing when he walked in. He answered it, expecting to hear Gertie's humble apologies. But a male voice twanged his eardrum.

"Mr. Klump? Say, this is Draper of the F.B.I. Want to congratulate you. Don't be surprised if you get a letter from Mr. Hoover any day now. He'll want you to go to work for him maybe."

"Who you tryin' to kid this time?" Willie sniffed. "He is not president no more an' couldn't hire nobody. You call up the aquarium if you want to talk to an easy fish. G'bye!"

Willie clenched his teeth. This was one day he would live through without getting taken in.

The door opened suddenly. Before Willie could spin around in his chair, Gertrude Mudgett had crossed the floor and was in his lap and throwing her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Willie, you are wonderful! The papers said you—"

There was a flash of light that made Willie blink, and there was no thunderstorm going on anywhere on the Atlantic seaboard.

"Yeah, hold it!" a voice said. "It's a natural!"

"Pitchers!" Willie screeched. "I been compermised. It is a badger's game!"

He jumped up, and Gertie Mudgett slid off his lap and sat down hard on the floor.

"You give me them plates!" Willie yelled, but the photographers were already jumping into the elevator when he got out into the corridor.

Willie stormed back to his office. "You—you adventurish!" he yelled at Gertie.

"I never had nothin' to do with it, Willie Klump," the Mudgett protested. "But what a break for me, ha! I'll order six of the snaps, an' when you think you want to cast me aside . . . Willie, why do you act so cold at times?"

"If you got into hot water as much as I did, you'd want a change," William Klump yelped, and picked up the phone.

He gave the operator the first number that came in his head.

"Hello, hello, Mr. Miffnish? About that fugitive you want me to shadow up in

the Yukon. I'll take it. Be there right away. G'bye!"

He snatched up his hat and ran out of the office. Gertie's shrill voice turned the corner and followed him to the elevator.

"Willie, you can't go dressed like that! You'll freeze up there with just—er . . . Why that dirty fakir!"

She went after Willie.

On the other side of town, an undertaker banged down his telephone, and scratched his noggin. The thing that puzzled him the most was the fact that his name *was* Miffnish.