



Boone's hard right sent Mawson reeling back

One for the Book

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When Down-and-Outers Grow Enthusiastic About Literature, Detective Boone Exercises His Own Think-Tank to Bag a Counterfeit Gang!

TOD BOONE looked out of place as he stood in front of the desk of the captain of detectives in Police Headquarters. The dark-haired, raw-boned man from the Blue Grass country of Kentucky looked more like a hillbilly than he did a first grade detective. At the moment it was Captain Marsh's opinion that Boone also acted like a dumb hick from the sticks.

"Three weeks you've been working on that counterfeiting case!" stormed the captain. "And what's happened, Boone?" He glared at the detective as Boone opened his mouth, then closed it again without saying anything. "I'll tell you—nothing! There's still a lot of queer money being passed around town—and most of it in the Radio City section where you've been working."

"Figgered on bein' a mite cautious, Cap'n," said Boone in his low, drawling voice. "Reckon I could have brought in some of them fellers I seen handin'

out phony five dollar bills, but I been aimin' to get the big shots."

"So the Government men pick up those passers, and want to know why the police are asleep," growled Captain Marsh. "I'm taking you off the counterfeiting case, and putting Barton and Lang on it." He glared at the man from Kentucky. "I don't see why the rest of the men call you Daniel Boone. At least he was a famous tracker—and you can't find anything."

"Reckon the boys has just been funnin'," said Boone. "What you want me to do, Cap'n?"

Marsh glanced at a letter on the desk in front of him. He frowned and looked up at Boone.

"Do you think you could find a book?" he demanded. "A rare book that is worth fifty thousand dollars."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Boone. "Shucks, there must be more readin' in that book

than there was in *Gone with the Wind*.” He smiled dryly, his blue eyes bright as he gazed at the captain. “So the Gutenberg edition of *Azure Nights* is still missing, and it is one of only three copies in the world. Thank you, Cap’n. I’ll see if I can’t find it.”

Captain Marsh sat in his chair in speechless amazement as Tod Boone ambled out of the office. Marsh had always considered Boone a bit dumb, though he usually carried out his work as a detective to the best of his ability.

But now the captain found himself wondering. The man from Kentucky knew a lot more about the missing book than Marsh had realized.

“Maybe he will find the book at that,” said the captain. “At least he seems to know what he’s doing.”

TOD BOONE felt hurt as he wandered out of Police Headquarters and finally took the subway uptown. He felt that Captain Marsh had not given him a fair chance to round up the counterfeiters, and resented having been taken off the case.

“Just when it looked like I was gettin’ a lead on the men back of the whole thing,” thought Boone as he got out of the subway.

He was on his way now to call on J. Thomas Lake, a collector of rare books. He knew that Lake was the owner of the Gutenberg edition of *Azure Nights*, for he had read about the mysterious disappearance of the book in the newspapers.

“But I might as well see if I can’t find the book,” he told himself. “Then maybe the captain will let me go back after them counterfeiters.”

Lake, the detective discovered, had already talked to the police, but when he learned that Boone was from the detective bureau he was willing to talk some more.

“I guess I’m to blame for the disappearance of the book,” Lake, who looked more like a bank president than a bibliophile, said when he received the Kentuckian in his library. “In some way it got mixed with a lot of worthless books that I turned over to a secondhand book dealer on the Fourth Avenue.”

“I know,” said Boone. “That’s what you told the newspapers. And before you could get in touch with that dealer he had sold the whole lot of books to a couple of men who paid cash and didn’t even give their names and addresses. You reckon maybe

you remember anything special about them other books?”

“No, there was nothing special about them.” J. Thomas Lake shook his gray head. “Unless you consider the fact they were all published between Nineteen-twenty and Nineteen-thirty important.”

“Could be,” said Boone. “Hard to tell just what is and what ain’t important in a case like this.”

When he left, he took a bus uptown and wandered over to Sixth Avenue in the vicinity of Radio City. A street hawker interested him and he went closer. The man was selling secondhand books at twenty-five cents each, and was doing what Boone considered a surprisingly good business.

“Either there’s somethin’ special about those books or the folks around here have suddenly become a lot richer than they usually are,” Boone decided, for he had noticed that most of the men buying books appeared to be from the crowds who were usually clustered in front of employment agencies. “Reckon I better buy some of them books myself.”

“Here they are, folks!” called out the pitchman. “All two-dollar books for the price of one quarter—two bits for real reading entertainment.” He scowled as Boone picked up a book. “You don’t want that one, brother. It’s reserved for a special customer.”

“I’ll take this,” said Boone finally, letting the pitchman get a glimpse of his detective shield. “And no argument about it.”

“Sure,” said the hawker quickly as he took Boone’s quarter. He breathed a sigh of relief as the detective moved away. “Get them while they last, folks! Here they are!”

Suddenly, two tough-looking men close to Boone snarled at each other. One of them said something and swung his fist at his companion. The second man leaped back, bumped against Boone and knocked the book out of the detective’s hand. As he reached down to pick it up a knee caught him in the face and knocked him back. One of the men grabbed the book and hastily disappeared in the crowd.

“He hit me!” shouted the remaining man, pointing indignantly at Boone. “I was minding my own business when he just come up to me and socked me!”

PATROLMEN arrived and a crowd gathered. By the time that Tod Boone had identified himself the pitchman had disappeared, as had the two tough-looking individuals who had evidently been his shills.

Boone finally departed, but he was sure there had been something interesting about those books. He wanted to know what it was that made them so vital to the three men.

He strolled down Sixth Avenue and to his delight saw one of the tough-looking men he had just encountered, entering one of the cheaper hotels along Forty-seventh Street. Boone followed the man into the dingy lobby without being seen, for the fellow had not looked back.

"Wasn't that Mr. Clark who just went up in the elevator?" Boone asked the clerk at the desk.

"Why, no," said the clerk. "That was Mr. Mawson." He glanced at the rack behind him. "And he forgot his key as usual." The clerk motioned a bellhop. "Front, boy! Take the key up to Mr. Mawson in Three-ten. He forgot it."

Boone had stepped away from the desk, but he heard what the clerk said and entered the elevator; the bellboy entered a moment later. Both got out at the third floor, but Boone walked in the opposite direction from that which the boy took along the corridor.

He stepped around a corner of the hall and waited a few moments. Then he came back and walked along until he reached the closed door of Room 310 and knocked. When the door was opened he quickly stepped inside.

"Police," he said curtly. "I want to talk to you, Mawson."

The hard-faced man backed toward the center of the room as Boone closed the door from the inside by reaching behind him for the knob. He never took his gaze off Mawson, for he had no intention of giving the man a chance to reach for a gun. In Boone's estimation Mawson looked like a cheap gunman.

"What do you want?" Mawson demanded sullenly.

Boone's eyes flicked to the row of secondhand books that were piled on a table. They interested him greatly, for Mawson did not look like the type of man who would do much reading.

"I want to know who those two other men are who were working with you on Sixth Avenue," Boone said coolly. "I know two of you were shills

for that pitchman who was selling secondhand books—but that doesn't explain why you had to fake a fight to get that one particular book away from me. Reckon you figured I was kind of simple lookin' and wouldn't notice that."

Abruptly he leaped at Boone, but the man from Kentucky caught him squarely on the chin with a hard right that sent him reeling back against the table. The detective apparently did not hear the door open or see the other man who appeared behind him.

"No, you don't!" Boone whirled, his hard fists landing on the attacker's body. "I don't get caught that easy!"

"Get him, Harper!" shouted Mawson, as he picked up an old book and flung it at Boone.

Boone ducked and the book caught Harper squarely in the face with such force that it knocked him out. Boone brought Mawson down in a flying tackle.

THE battle in the room had made so much noise that someone had hastily sent for the police. They came bursting into the room just as Boone picked the old book up off the floor and placed it on the table with the rest of the secondhand novels. He showed his badge and quickly explained to the police.

"These two, Mawson and Harper, are part of the counterfeiting gang," he said. "I guess the Feds must be so hot on their trail that they have been afraid to contact each other in the usual way." He picked up one of the books on the table and shook it. The leaves fluttered, but nothing else happened.

"That's sure odd," he declared. "I was right certain—"

He broke off, and picked up the phone as it rang insistently.

"Yeah?" he said. "Oh, I see. Sure me and Harper will take care of that." He frowned. "I'll come over."

He hung up and glanced at the two prisoners, a smile on his rugged face. He grinned broadly at the uniformed men.

"That was the brains of the counterfeiting gang," he remarked. "He's at the White Front Hotel down the street. Said he decided to change the method of passing the queer and wanted these boys to drop there and receive new instructions. Guess he knew he was taking a chance in phoning them to come over, but he sounded like he was right

desperate.”

Boone phoned the Detective Bureau, talked to Captain Marsh and then left, after having given orders to the rest of the police to take Mawson and Harper to Headquarters. The police took most of the books with them, but Boone held two of them when he met a group of detectives commanded by Captain Marsh.

A quick raid on a room in the White Front Hotel netted five more prisoners. The leader of the gang proved to be the pitchman who had been selling the books. He was quickly identified as John Franklyn, an expert engraver who had served ten years for counterfeiting, and had gone back to his old tricks.

“Franklyn made the queer money, then hid the new bills in the back of the old books he was selling,” Boone explained as he pulled a bill out of

the heel of one of the books he held. “Mawson and Harper worked with Franklyn as shills and bodyguards but they didn’t try to pass any of the money. The other men did that.”

“That’s fine,” growled Captain Marsh, glaring at Boone. “But I thought I told you to drop the counterfeiting case and find that missing book, Boone. When I give an order I expect it to be carried out.”

“Shucks, there ain’t no need for you to get all het up, Cap’n,” said Boone as he held up the other book he had been carrying. “This is the Gutenberg edition of *Azure Nights*. Them counterfeiterers have been kicking fifty thousand dollars around without even knowing it!” He grinned. “Say, you ain’t sick, are you, Cap’n? You sure look kind of peaked!”