



Preface

GIMAR BOOKS and UNIVERSAL TIME PASS are proud to associate and release this comic from the classic golden era in the form of an android flipbook.

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COMIC-O-MANIA - GREAT AMERICAN CLASSICS...

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NO ALIBI FOR CICERO SAM

The mobster was listed in the police files as "Cicero, Sam" for several practical reasons. Every time he had been picked up for questioning he had given a different surname, and there was no way of knowing what his real surname was. His first name was Sam. He'd admitted that much. And the underworld had given him the Cicero tag because he had hailed originally from that suburb of Chicago.

Detective Frank Hooper had been assigned to the task of getting the goods on Cicero Sam. Hooper told his friends: "Pinning anything on Sam is like playing the donkey game blindfolded. Only they don't give you the tail and pin. You have to find those articles with a blindfold on. I guess they were afraid I'd stumble onto a political hot potato, so to keep me out of trouble they told me to run down Sam."

"Getting anywhere?" Detective Sergeant Whit Tiernan grumbled from behind his newspaper in the corner of the squad room.

Hooper trusted the sergeant and the two other younger detectives. They weren't vultures who would jump in on a case when the man assigned to it was closing in for the kill. They weren't glory-grabbers who would beat you to the pinch after you'd spent months trailing a suspect. Hooper looked around to make sure no others had slipped into the squad room. None had.

"Yes, Sarge," Hooper said cheerily, "I'm getting somewhere. Sam isn't too careful about covering his trail. He thinks he can fall back on phony witnesses to alibi for him if he's picked up. I've solved that problem. A dozen witnesses won't do Sam any good when I bring him in on charges."

"That's what *you* think!" Detective Terry McGowan chuckled. "Remember, I worked with Inspector Wilson on the Aetna Warehouse robbery. It took us a full day in court to present the evidence. We'd traced the trucks used to haul away the loot, and had found threads on the truck floorboards that matched the stolen textiles. But Sam's lawyer called seven reliable witnesses to testify that Sam and the others had been in Hot Springs the week preceding and the week following the robbery."

Detective Frank Hooper smiled and shrugged. "I've got something under my hat, boys."

"I'd been thinking the same thing," the detective sergeant wisecracked. "I haven't seen you take off that new hat since you bought it last week. What

do you call it, a five gallon? It's big, but that sheriff from Colorado who dropped in last week wore a real ten gallon model."

For reasons he didn't care to reveal, Detective Frank Hooper decided it was time to leave. He snapped his fingers at them from the doorway. "When I've got the goods on Cicero Sam, maybe I'll turn it in for a low crown style. Anyone offering to buy me a new hat if I make the evidence stick against Sam?"

"I will!" the three chorused.

Smiling to himself, Frank Hooper went out and walked down Clark Street in a wind-lashed rain. The weather report had said that the sun would be out by four o'clock. Hooper needed the sun to gather evidence against Cicero Sam.

He picked up the mobster's trail in a South Side tavern, but Sam scarcely noticed him. Sam was short, heavy-set and oily-skinned with a sharp, thin nose that looked incongruous on his broad, beefy face. Sam didn't talk like other men, even when he was excited. His voice could best be described as a low growl, and he had a way of slurring his words together so that a person more than six feet from him couldn't make out what he was talking about.

But Detective Frank Hooper didn't try to overhear the conversation between Sam and Harry The Switch, a confidence man who always worked outside the city limits. Hooper had learned the timetable of Sam's next job by eavesdropping on Flip Havell and Oscar Beck, a pair of ex-cons who had thrown in with Sam.

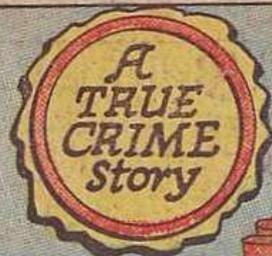
So when Sam left the tavern at ten of three, Hooper knew he would head for the used car lot that backed up to a spur track across from the motor freight terminal.

Hooper ordered another beer from the waiter tending tables, and let his eyes rove past Harry The Switch. He chuckled to himself over the blank stare that Harry had fastened upon him. Sam had undoubtedly told Harry to phone one of the boys as soon as the dick took off after him. Sam had been sure Hooper would follow him, and Harry was now thrown into confusion by Hooper's contrary course.

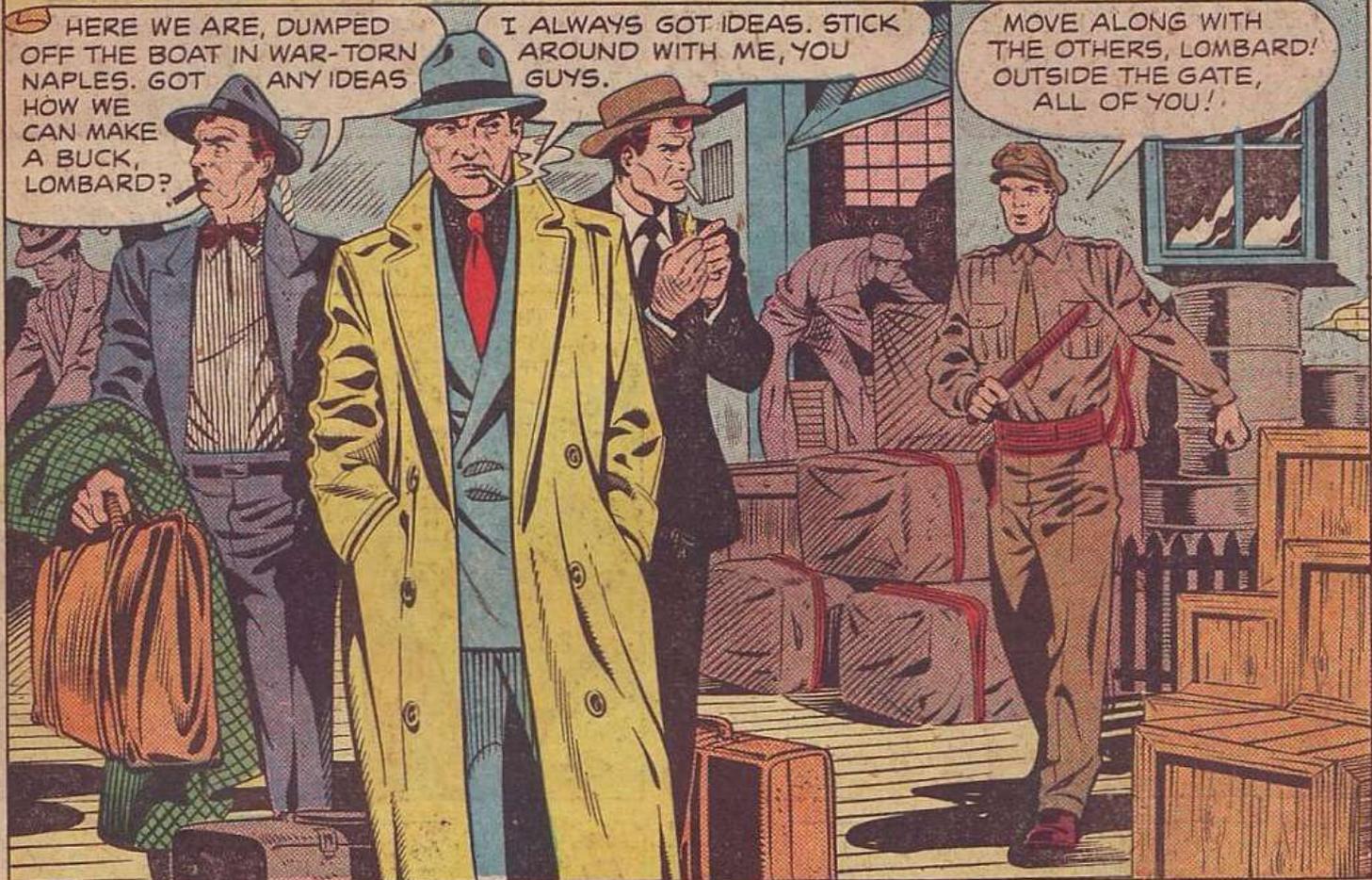
But at five after three, Hooper walked to the front and stood inside the door looking back at the television for a long minute before shuffling

(Continued on Back Inside Cover)

ARMY CRIME BUSTERS CORNER *Black Market Racketeer*



THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION OF THE U.S. ARMY HAD THE DANGEROUS TASK OF ROUNDING UP MANY OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS CROOKS LEFT IN THE WAKE OF WAR IN ITALY. BUT THE NATIVE BADMEN WERE SMALL TIME OPERATORS COMPARED WITH A DEPORTEE FROM THE UNITED STATES WHO MASQUERADED AS A MAJOR. COLOSSAL NERVE WAS THE SLICK IMPOSTER'S CHIEF-IN-TRADE, GETTING HIM OUT OF HOT WATER AGAIN AND AGAIN. HE WAS STILL "IN THE CLEAR" AFTER SWINDLING A GROUP OF BIG INDUSTRIALISTS AND BEING ACCUSED BY A SQUEALER. BUT AN ALERT MP AND A TEAM OF TOP INVESTIGATORS WERE READY TO POUNCE ON HIM WHEN HE MADE A CARELESS SLIP-UP...



HERE WE ARE, DUMPED OFF THE BOAT IN WAR-TORN NAPLES. GOT ANY IDEAS HOW WE CAN MAKE A BUCK, LOMBARD?

I ALWAYS GOT IDEAS. STICK AROUND WITH ME, YOU GUYS.

MOVE ALONG WITH THE OTHERS, LOMBARD! OUTSIDE THE GATE, ALL OF YOU!

BUT AS LOMBARD AND HIS SHIPBOARD PALS STRAGGLED ALONG THE MAIN THOROUGHFARES OF NAPLES, THE RAVAGES OF WARBORN POVERTY ASSAILED THEIR GREEDY EYES...

HOW'S A GUY GONNA MAKE OUT IN *THIS* BURG? EVERY JOE IS IN RAGS AN' HALF-STARVED!

YEAH-- IT DON'T LOOK TOO GOOD. LET'S FIND A CAFE.

IT'S THE SAME EVERYWHERE-- NO MONEY, NO FOOD. WISH I WAS BACK IN SING SING WITH THREE SQUARE MEALS A DAY.

YEAH, IT AIN'T SO HOT HERE IN NAPLES. GUESS I'LL GO TO THAT VILLAGE WHERE I GOT COUSINS.



BUT LOMBARD WAS MET IN NAPLES BY A COUNTRY COUSIN WHO REGARDED HIM WITH CHILDISH ADMIRATION...

LET US GO! ALL YOUR RELATIVES ARE WAITING TO SEE YOU, OUR RICH COUSIN FROM AMERICA!

WE GOTTA TAKE A TAXI--TWENTY MILES TO WHERE THE RAILROAD IS RUNNIN'? THAT'LL SET ME BACK PLENTY!



THE GOUGE IN LOMBARD'S FIVE HUNDRED DOLLAR BANKROLL WASN'T THE WORSE NEWS THAT GREETED THEM AT THEIR DESTINATION...

A HUNDRED BUCKS? THAT'S ROBBERY!

GASOLINE IS SCARCE AN' COSTS PLENTY ON THE BLACK MARKET!

NO TRAIN UNTIL NEXT WEEK!



SO THE AMERICAN CON MAN AND HIS COUSIN JOINED THE FOOTSORE REFUGEES UNTIL A TRUCK CAME ALONG...

THIS LIFT WILL COST ME DOUGH, TOO, BUT I AIN'T HOOFIN' IT. THEY'D BETTER HAVE A ROYAL WELCOME WAITIN' FOR ME IN THE VILLAGE... OR I'LL HIT THE ROAD BACK TO THE CITY!



AFTER SEVERAL MORE EXPENSIVE LIFTS, LOMBARD HAD ONLY TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS IN HIS POCKET WHEN THEY REACHED THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE...

IS THIS ALL THEY GOT? WHAT A DUMP! ALL THEY GOT IS RAGS ON THEIR BACKS!

BUT THEY ARE SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!



OUR RICH COUSIN FROM AMERICA! OUR WHOLE VILLAGE HAS TURNED OUT TO WELCOME YOU--

YEAH--YEAH, SURE, GRAND-POP!

I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE SOON'S I CAN...

FOR WITH YOUR HELP, OUR FORTUNES WILL CHANGE!



LOMBARD MADE GOOD HIS ESCAPE AND DECIDED TO HEAD FOR ROME WHERE HE KNEW HE WOULD FIND CONFRERES OF HIS OWN ILK AND WAYS OF TURNING A DISHONEST PROFIT...

I'LL HOOK UP WITH SOME SMART BOY AN' PULL A FEW FAST DEALS ON THE BLACK MARKET--JUST TO GET STARTED. THEN I'LL PLAY FOR BIG STAKES.



LIKE BIRDS OF A FEATHER, THE CROOKS DEPARTED FROM AMERICA FLOCKED TO ROME. AND IT WAS THERE THAT THE CYNICAL, EMBITTERED LOMBARD TEAMED UP WITH A FELLOW-DEPORTEE NAMED ROCKY....

YEAH, A CASE OF CIGARETTES. NEVER MIND HOW I GOT 'EM. YOU HELP ME PEDDLE 'EM AT FANCY PRICES AN' I'LL CUT YOU IN.

OKAY-- BUT IT'S PEANUTS. WAIT TILL I GET SOME CAPITAL...



BY SHORT-CHANGING, SWITCHING DUMMY FOR GENUINE CARTONS AND OUTRIGHT DEFAULT, LOMBARD GOT FOR HIMSELF FAR MORE THAN THE CUT ROCKY HAD AGREED TO GIVE HIM...

SCOUNDREL! SWINDLER! HE PROMISED TO CHANGE MY HUNDRED LIRA FOR AMERICAN DOLLARS!



THE NEXT STEP IN HIS CROOKED TRAIL-- THE ONE WHICH INITIATED THE ARMY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS' CASE AGAINST HIM-- BEGAN IN A SHOP ON THE FRINGE OF ROME'S BLACK MARKET...

YOU TELL NO ONE YOU BUY THIS MAJOR'S UNIFORM FROM ME.

MUM IS THE WORD, MY FRIEND. HA! NOW I'LL FORGE SOME PAPERS AND BECOME MAJOR DE MARCO.



LOMBARD'S ACT WENT OVER BIG. ROME WAS CROWDED WITH U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL, AND NO ONE DOUBTED THAT HE WAS AN AUTHENTIC MAJOR...

THIS IS THE RACKET! WHAT PRESTIGE, WHAT AUTHORITY I CAN SWING IN THIS GET-UP! I GOT THE DAMES FALLIN' FOR ME ALREADY. BUT IT'S THE RICH SUCKERS I'M AFTER!



GEE, I THOUGHT YOU WAS A REAL MAJOR WHEN I SEEN YOU COMIN'! WHAT'S THE PITCH, FELLA?

NOT SO LOUD, WILL YA? FROM NOW ON YOU'RE LIEUTENANT STARK, MY ASSISTANT. YOU'LL BE IN PLAINCLOTHES AS AN AGENT OF THE SECRET POLICE. NOW WIPE THAT GRIN OFF YOUR KISSER!



WITH HIS UNIFORM GIVING CREDENCE TO EXAGGERATED PROMISES FOR DELIVERY OF FOODSTUFFS AND ARMY SURPLUS, LOMBARD SWINDLED NOT ONLY WEALTHY ROMANS, BUT DISTINGUISHED FOREIGN VISITORS, TOO...

YOU'LL PAY NINE HUNDRED LIRA DOWN AND THE BALANCE ON DELIVERY.

THAT'S A FAIR PROPOSITION, MAJOR DE MARCO. HERE'S YOUR MONEY.



INDIRECTLY, LOMBARD'S CROOKED OPERATIONS CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ARMY'S CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION IN ROME...

TWO OF OUR UNDERCOVER MEN HAVE REPORTED THAT A MAJOR HAS PULLED SOME SLICK SWINDLES. BLACK MARKET DEALS, SO THE VICTIMS ARE AFRAID TO TALK.

PUT LIEUTENANT'S CATALANO AND HIGGINS ON THE CASE. MAYBE THEY CAN TRACK HIM DOWN.



AS THE INVESTIGATORS LOOKED FOR A FURTIVE, SHADOWY MAJOR, LOMBARD BRAZENLY PROMOTED AN ARMY CAR FOR HIMSELF, KEPT THE TANK FILLED WITH GAS SUPPLIED TO HIM BY THE ARMY, AND CONTINUED TO FLEECE SPECULATORS IN THE BLACK MARKET.

WE'RE MOVING INTO BETTER QUARTERS, ROCKY. I'VE ARRANGED FOR A SUITE IN A HOTEL TAKEN OVER BY THE ARMY.

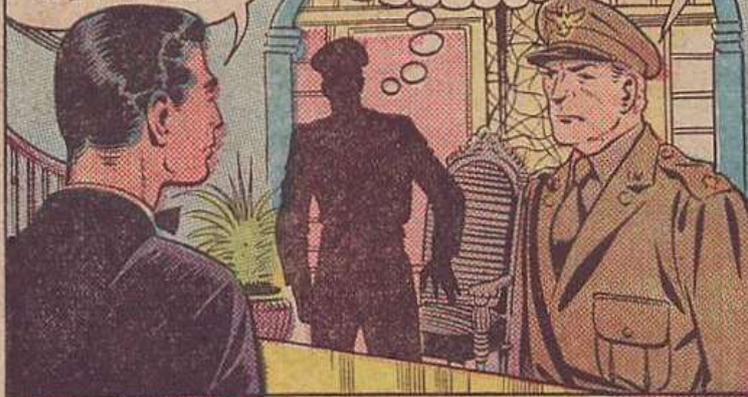


LOMBARD PLAYED HIS ROLE SO WELL, HE ALMOST BELIEVED HIMSELF TO BE A GENUINE MAJOR--AND AN IMPORTANT ONE AT THAT...

I AM SO SORRY, COLONEL, BUT THE SUITE IS RESERVED FOR MAJOR DE MARCO.

I WANT IT. FIND HIM ROOMS SOMEWHERE ELSE.

I'LL TELL THAT BRASS HAT A THING OR TWO!



NOBODY GAVE YOU THE AUTHORITY TO PUT ME OUT! WHERE DO YOU GET THAT STUFF? I WAS ASSIGNED TO THIS BILLET BY THE GENERAL HIMSELF!

WELL--ER-- I MUST HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION, MAJOR. MY SINCERE REGRETS, I ASSURE YOU.



I'LL OVERLOOK IT THIS TIME, COLONEL. COME ON-- LET'S HAVE A DRINK!

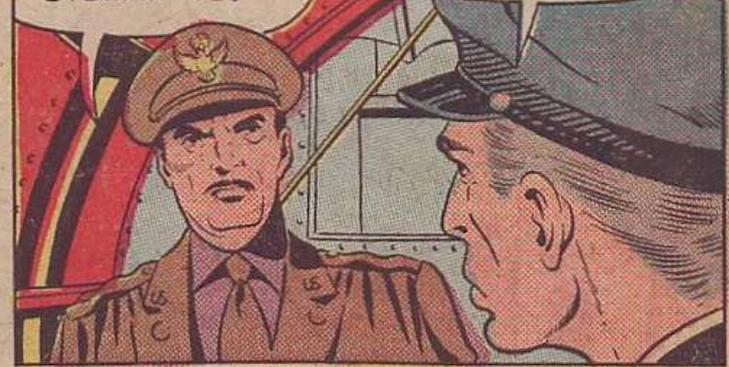
WHY, SURE. THANKS, MAJOR. AND IF I CAN DO ANY FAVORS FOR YOU AT ANY TIME...



BESIDES APPROPRIATING ARMY SUPPLIES AND MATERIAL IN WHICH HE TURNED A FANCY PROFIT, LOMBARD PULLED SEVERAL FAST ONES ON THE U.S. NAVY...

I'M CONDUCTING A SEARCH FOR GERMAN WAR CRIMINALS, CAPTAIN. MIND IF I COMB YOUR SHIP FOR STOWAWAYS?

NONE ABOARD, MAJOR, BUT PERHAPS WE CAN BE OF ASSISTANCE IN SOME OTHER MATTER. JUST GIVE THE WORD!



LOMBARD NEVER REFUSED AN OFFER. WITH SUPREME NERVE HE SHOOK DOWN THE CREW FOR CONTRABAND PISTOLS WHICH HE PUT IN A CANVAS. IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS "FINE WORK", THE CAPTAIN PRESENTED HIM WITH A CASE OF WHISKEY AND CARTONS OF CIGARETTES.

IT SURE WAS NICE MEETING YOU, CAPTAIN. SMOOTH SAILING, OLD MAN!

COME ABOARD ANY TIME WE'RE IN PORT, MAJOR. HOPE TO BE SEEING YOU AGAIN.



BUT AS LOMBARD STARTED TO LEAVE THE PIER, A YOUNG ITALIAN CUSTOMS GUARD HAD THE EFFRONTERY TO QUESTION HIM...

WE MAKE NO EXCEPTIONS FOR AMERICAN MAJORS. YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY DUTY ON WHAT YOU'RE BRINGING ASHORE-- LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

YOU'RE TALKING TO MAJOR DE MARCO! GET IN MY CAR AND I'LL SHOW YOU!



YOU CAN'T DO THIS, MAJOR DE MARCO!... WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?

TO THE POLICE STATION, BIRD-BRAIN! I'LL HAVE YOU LOCKED UP FOR INSULTING AN AMERICAN OFFICER!



THE PHONY MAJOR MADE GOOD HIS THREAT, THEN MAGNANIMOUSLY ORDERED THE GUARD'S RELEASE. BUT LOMBARD SHOWED EVEN GREATER NERVE BY STAGING A SPEAKING CAMPAIGN FOR AN ELECTION CANDIDATE... EVEN THOUGH U.S. ARMY OFFICERS WERE FORBIDDEN TO PARTICIPATE IN ITALIAN ELECTIONS...



LOCAL PARTY LEADERS SHOWED THEIR GRATITUDE WITH DONATIONS THAT THEY NEVER SUSPECTED WOULD BE TRADED IN FOR LIRA AND DOLLARS ON THE BLACK MARKETS OF ROME.

WE'RE PICKIN' UP AN EASY TWO HUNDRED BUCKS WORTH OF FARM PRODUCE AT EACH STOP.

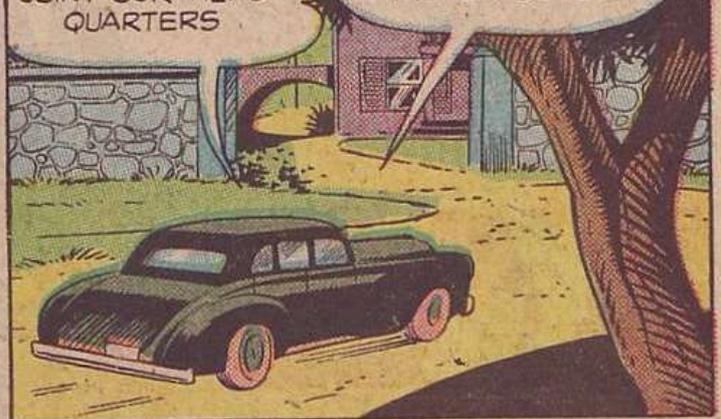
YEAH. IN NORMAL TIMES, THIS STUFF WOULD BE PEANUTS-- BUT TODAY CHICKENS ARE BRINGIN' EIGHT TOTEN BUCKS APIECE.



SOON THE MAJOR AND HIS AIDE WERE INVITED EVERYWHERE BY WEALTHY ITALIANS. THEY DECIDED TO ENJOY THE HOSPITALITY OF A BEAUTIFUL GERMAN BLONDE WHOSE SHOW-PLACE VILLA WAS JUST OUTSIDE ROME...

BRUSH UP ON YOUR EMILY POST, ROCKY! WE CAN MAKE THIS JOINT OUR HEAD-QUARTERS

WHAT A LAYOUT! I'LL BET THIS DAME ENTERTAINS THE BIG MONEY BOYS!



MAJOR DE MARCO,
IT IS BOTH AN HONOR
AND A PLEASURE TO
HAVE YOU HERE.

YOUR INVITATION
WAS MOST GRACIOUS,
SIGNORA. LIEUTENANT
STARK--
MY AIDE--AND I HAVE
LOOKED FORWARD TO
MEETING YOU.



INDUSTRIALISTS, WITH BULGING BANKROLLS
OF MILLIONS FROM WAR PROFITS, WERE
ITCHING FOR QUICK INVESTMENTS TO BEAT
THE MOUNTING INFLATION. AND LOMBARD, THE
SPIDER, BEGAN SPINNING A WEB TO CATCH
THESE GILDED FLIES!

PERHAPS,
MAJOR, IN SOME WAY, YOU
CAN HELP ME TO BUY
ARMY SURPLUSES...

I'D BE
DELIGHTED,
COUNT PETRI.



LOMBARD'S SCHEMING BRAIN SOON HIT
UPON AN ANGLE FOR FLEEING THE
HEADS OF SOME OF ITALY'S BIGGEST FIRMS.

I GOT IT, ROCKY! I'LL
SELL 'EM "PREFERENCES"
INSTEAD OF BUYING SURPLUSES
THROUGH THE ITALIAN GOVERN-
MENT, I'LL SELL
THEM!
DIRECT!

THAT'S A SLICK
GIMMICK, BOSS.
WE'LL CLEAN
UP!



THE PHONY MAJOR WAS BESIEGED BY
"CLIENTS," WHO WERE DULY IMPRESSED
WHEN HE LED THEM THROUGH ARMY WARE-
HOUSES AND SUPPLY DEPOTS...

INTERESTED IN TIRES,
LUBRICATING OIL,
BLANKETS,
CLOTHING?

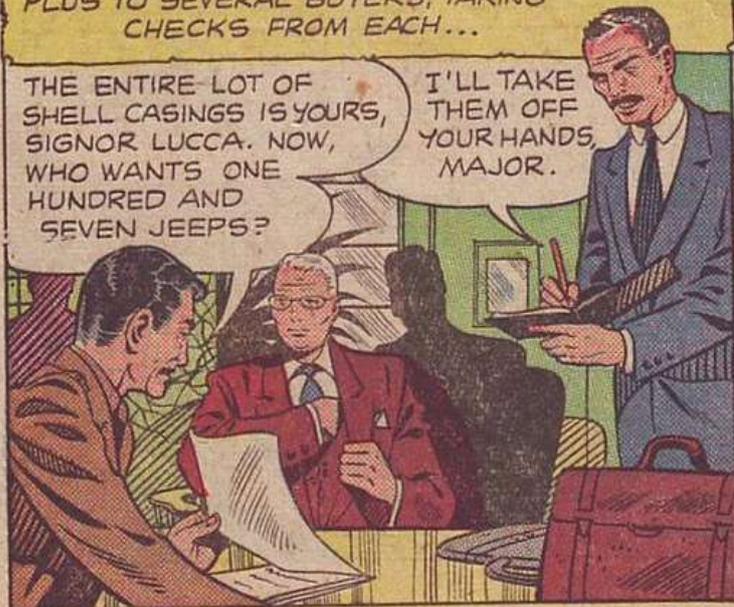
YES, INDEED, MAJOR!
I'LL TAKE FIVE HUN-
DRED DRUMS OF OIL,
PLUS THAT FLEET OF
SURPLUS TRUCKS.



ORDERS FOR "PREFERENCES" POURED INTO
THE VILLA--EACH ACCOMPANIED BY AN
ADVANCE COMMISSION CHECK. OFTEN LOMBARD
WOULD PROMISE THE SAME STOCKPILE OF SUR-
PLUS TO SEVERAL BUYERS, TAKING
CHECKS FROM EACH...

THE ENTIRE LOT OF
SHELL CASINGS IS YOURS,
SIGNOR LUCCA. NOW,
WHO WANTS ONE
HUNDRED AND
SEVEN JEEPS?

I'LL TAKE
THEM OFF
YOUR HANDS,
MAJOR.



LOMBARD PLAYED IT "SMART," EVEN WHEN
THE PRESTIGE COST HIM A MILLION
LIRA. HE REFUSED A CLIENT'S CONTRACT
WHEN THE PARTY WAS LATE...

I'M SO SORRY,
MAJOR. I TRIED
TO REACH YOU
BY TELEPHONE,
BUT--

HERE'S YOUR CHECK
AND TEAR UP THAT
CONTRACT! MY TIME IS
TOO VALUABLE
TO WASTE!



NO STUNT WAS TOO BRAZEN FOR HIM! BUT EVEN ROCKY WAS HORRIFIED WHEN LOMBARD CALLED SIX BIG BUSINESSMEN TO A CONFERENCE IN HIS "PRIVATE OFFICE" IN THE U.S. CONSULATE IN MILAN...

HOW'LL HE PULL THIS OFF? IF THE CONSUL STEPS OUT AND SEES US HERE IN THE RECEPTION ROOM...



WELCOME, SIGNORES! UNFORTUNATELY, THE ALLIED MILITARY COUNCIL IS USING MY OFFICE TODAY, SO WE WILL ADJOURN TO THE HOTEL ACROSS THE STREET!

AS YOU WISH, MAJOR!

PHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE!



BUT LOMBARD'S ACQUAINTANCE MADE GOOD HIS THREAT!

THEY'RE IMPOSTERS... SMALL TIME GANGSTERS I KNEW IN CHICAGO!

MY GOOD MAN! PLEASE DO NOT BOTHER US WITH SUCH ABSURD STORIES!

IMPOSSIBLE!

THEN ONE DAY, A FELLOW-DEPORTEE SNEAKED INTO AN OFFICE LOMBARD WAS USING AND OVERHEARD THEM...

OKAY, PAL! CUT ME IN ON THESE PHONY DEALS YOU'RE PULLIN'-- OR I'LL TALK... IN THE RIGHT EARS!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'M RUNNING EVERYTHING STRICTLY LEGITIMATE! GET OUT OF HERE, YOU CHEAP CHISELER!

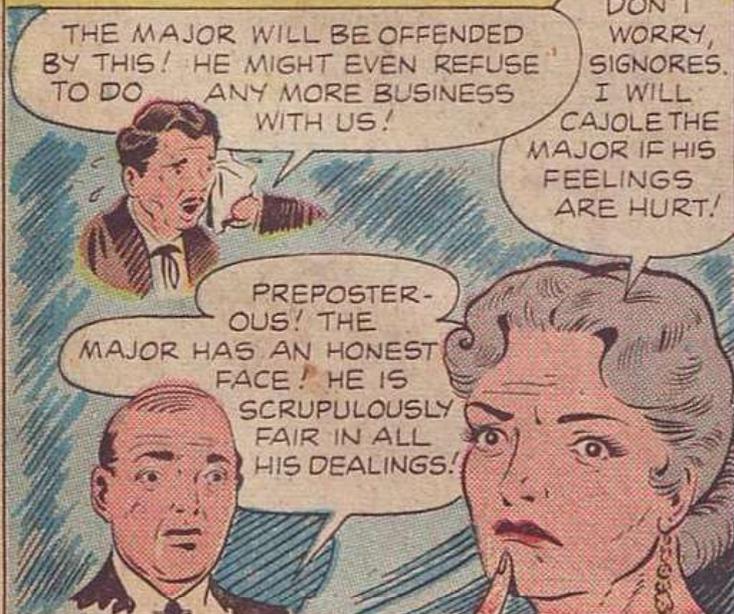


AND WHEN THE INFORMER HAD BEEN SENT ON HIS WAY...

THE MAJOR WILL BE OFFENDED BY THIS! HE MIGHT EVEN REFUSE TO DO ANY MORE BUSINESS WITH US!

DON'T WORRY, SIGNORES. I WILL CAJOLE THE MAJOR IF HIS FEELINGS ARE HURT!

PREPOSTEROUS! THE MAJOR HAS AN HONEST FACE! HE IS SCRUPULOUSLY FAIR IN ALL HIS DEALINGS!



BUT WHEN THEIR HOSTESS INFORMED THEM OF THE SQUEALER'S VISIT...

IT WAS MOST REGRETABLE, MAJOR, BUT I'M SURE WE WILL ALL FORGET THE INCIDENT.

AND JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO CLOSE DEALS AMOUNTING TO MILLIONS! BUT WE'D BETTER SKIP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

OH-OH! SOMEGUY SPILLED THE BEANS! TIME TO RUN FOR COVER!



THAT SAME NIGHT, ROCKY AND THE "MAJOR" SLIPPED OUT OF THE VILLA TO HEAD FOR NAPLES...

WE GOT ENOUGH GAS IN THE CAR, ROCKY?

NO. WE'LL HAVE TO TANK UP AT THE ARMY MOTOR POOL ON THE ROAD DOWN.



DON'T BE A SAP! PLAY IT SAFE! GET OUT OF THAT UNIFORM AN' THROW AWAY THOSE PHONY DOCUMENTS AND CONTRACTS!

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, ROCKY. LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME. I'M NOT THROUGH YET!



BUT LOMBARD'S BOASTFULNESS LED TO HIS DOWNFALL. THE MP'S HAD TIGHTENED THEIR DRAGNET FOR THE RACKETEER POSING AS A MAJOR...

DURING THE CAMPAIGN, I WAS ATTACHED TO THE GENERAL STAFF. YOU MUST BE NEW AROUND HERE IF YOU NEVER HEARD OF MAJOR DE MARCO!

I MAY BE STICKING MY NECK OUT, BUT--



"THE MAJOR" WAS GROSSLY INSULTED WHEN A CLOSE EXAMINATION OF HIS PAPERS SHOWED HIM TO BE AN IMPOSTER...

SIR, I THINK THIS IS THE SWINDLER OUR CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE MEN HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR.

ARREST HIS COMPANION AND LOCK UP BOTH OF THEM!



THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION HAD GATHERED EVERY SHRED OF EVIDENCE AGAINST LOMBARD-- PHONY CONTRACTS, CANCELLED CHECKS AND FORGED DOCUMENTS...

...AND YOU BRAZENLY DEFRAUDED THESE PEOPLE! THEREFORE, UNDER OCCUPATION RULES, WE ARE TURNING YOU OVER TO THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES FOR TRIAL!

YOU GUYS MAKE ME LAUGH! I TRIMMED SUCKERS ALL THE WAY FROM NAPLES TO MILAN AND BACK. THEY BEGGED TO DO BUSINESS WITH ME! THAT'S WHAT A BIG SHOT I WAS!



THE ITALIAN COURT METED OUT THE PUNISHMENT LOMBARD DESERVED-- A STIFF PRISON SENTENCE. HIS PAL, ROCKY, ALSO RECEIVED A LONG STRETCH AT HARD LABOR...

PUT MORE MUSCLE BEHIND THAT SCRUB BRUSH, MAJOR DE MARCO!

LAY OFF THE WISECRACKS, WILL YOU!



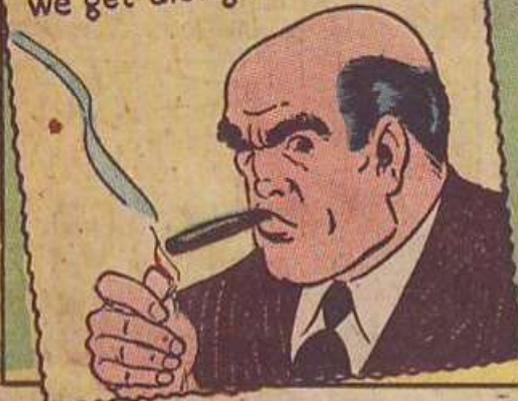
BASED ON CASE No. 235 FROM THE
Authentic Police Crime File

The STILL MURDER



My name's Vic Flint. I was in the Marines during the war. Now I try to make a living as a private detective. Investigator is what some people call me. Others call me worse than that.

This is Inspector Growl of the city police. He's not exactly crazy about private detectives, but we get along.

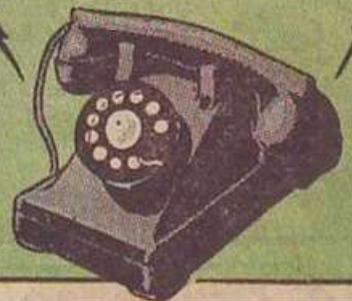


by *Michael O'Connell*
and
RALPH LANE



Bibby Lang is a public stenographer, and just as smart as she is ornamental.

And this is the telephone which yanked me from my sleep and sent me out in a vain attempt to prevent a murder.



I had just finished landing a nasty customer called "The Lip" in jail and was ready for some rest.

MR. FLINT, MY NAME IS STILL. I'M IN SAM'S PLACE, NEAR DELANCEY COURT. GET HERE QUICK!

WHAT FOR?
WHAT'S THE RUSH?



THIS CAN'T WAIT. IT'S ABOUT MURDER--THE SOLVING OF AN OLD ONE AND THE PREVENTION OF A NEW ONE.



WHAT ABOUT THE POLICE--

IT'S YOU OR NOTHING! I'LL BE AT THE DRINKING FOUNTAIN IN DOCK SQUARE FOR 30 MINUTES.



OKAY, DRIVER, KEEP THE CHANGE.

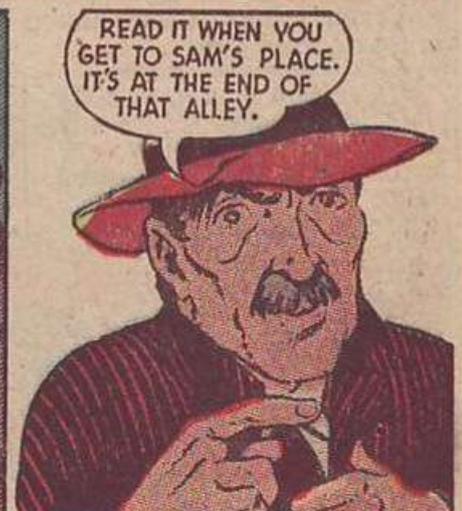
THANKS, MAC.



I'M BEING FOLLOWED, FLINT. TAKE THIS NOTE QUICK. I'VE GOT TO KEEP MOVING.



READ IT WHEN YOU GET TO SAM'S PLACE. IT'S AT THE END OF THAT ALLEY.



Then he was gone in the fog. I went to Sam's place.



A CUP OF COFFEE, PLEASE. MAYBE SOMETHING ELSE LATER.

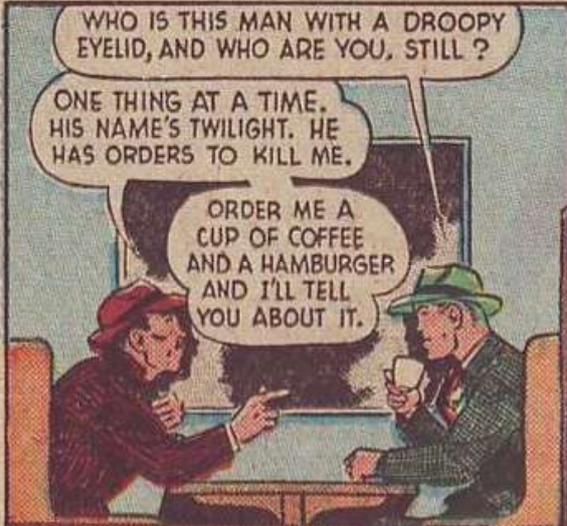
RIGHT.



I'll be at window in ten minutes. If you see a tall man with a droopy eyelid raise one finger and I'll move on. Otherwise I'll come in.



THERE HE IS. NOW TO SEE IF HE'LL COME IN.



WHO IS THIS MAN WITH A DROOPY EYELID, AND WHO ARE YOU, STILL?

ONE THING AT A TIME. HIS NAME'S TWILIGHT. HE HAS ORDERS TO KILL ME.

ORDER ME A CUP OF COFFEE AND A HAMBURGER AND I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT.



IT ALL STARTED WITH THIS MISSING FINGER.



I ordered Still his hamburger and coffee and he started to talk.

EVER HEAR OF THE PRIESTLY MURDER, FLINT?

SURE. ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO. DIAMOND MERCHANT. MOTIVE ROBBERY. NEVER SOLVED.



WELL, I CAN SOLVE IT, FLINT. A MAN NAMED THORN DID IT-- LASH THORN!



WHAT'S YOUR PROOF, STILL?

I HELPED HIM!

The waiter brought Still his hamburger and coffee. Death lurked in that coffee cup.



YES, FLINT, A MAN NAMED THORN KILLED PRIESTLY, BUT I HELPED HIM. PRIESTLY HAD A RAZOR AND HE FOUGHT HARD. THAT'S HOW I LOST THIS FINGER.



THAT WAS 20 YEARS AGO. LASH THORN GOT \$200,000 IN UN-cut DIAMONDS FROM PRIESTLY. I HAD TO HIDE. THORN TOOK MY BABY DAUGHTER AS A HOSTAGE TO KEEP ME QUIET. THAT WASN'T ENOUGH. HE WANTS ME KILLED.

I'M CERTAIN THE WAITER DIDN'T SEE WHAT I SLIPPED IN THE COFFEE CUP AS HE PASSED ME. IT'S CURTAINS NOW FOR STILL.

AND THORN HAS HIRED A MAN CALLED TWILIGHT, A KILLER WITH A DROOPING EYELID, TO RUB YOU OUT?



YES. LASH THORN IS GETTING FAT NOW ON THE SWEETEST RACKET IN THIS COUNTRY. BUT I'LL STOP THAT. YOU SEE, HIS NAME IS NO LONGER LASH -- THAT COFFEE! -- IT --



I should have known it was not going to be as easy as it looked.



ANYTHING WRONG, SIR?

PLENTY! THIS MAN IS DEAD! CALL THE POLICE. ASK FOR INSPECTOR GROWL, TELL HIM VIC FLINT IS HERE, THEN HOLD THE RECEIVER AWAY FROM YOUR EAR!

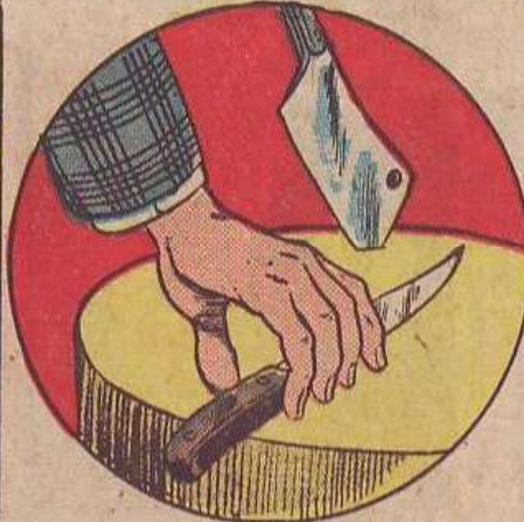


WHAT DO YOU WANT OUT HERE?

SHOW ME THE WAY OUT HERE, COOKIE--- QUICK!



YOU'VE BEEN UP TO SOMETHING OR YOU WOULDN'T BE SO ANXIOUS TO SNEAK OUT THE BACK WAY. WHAT'S UP?



I guess Growl never sleeps. That's one reason why he's so good.



WELL, SHERLOCK, SUPPOSE YOU BE GOOD ENOUGH TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY YOU'RE HERE.



THIS MAN'S NAME IS STILL, INSPECTOR. HE AND I WERE SITTING IN THAT BOOTH WHEN HE TOOK A DRINK OUT OF THAT COFFEE CUP AND DIED.

I'M THE WAITER WHO BROUGHT HIM HIS COFFEE, SIR.



WELL, IF YOU BROUGHT HIM HIS COFFEE, MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN HOW A DOSE OF CYANIDE GOT INTO THE CUP!



COME ON, SPEAK UP. HOW DID THE POISON GET INTO THAT CUP OF COFFEE?

I DON'T KNOW, INSPECTOR. I JUST BROUGHT THE COFFEE, THAT'S ALL.



DID ANYBODY STOP YOU BETWEEN THE KITCHEN AND HERE?

JUST A MAN IN THE PHONE BOOTH. HE WANTED CHANGE TO MAKE A CALL.



HE WAS TALL. HE HAD A DROOPY EYELID.

THAT WAS TWILIGHT! STILL, TOLD ME HE'D BEEN FOLLOWED, GROWL, BY A MAN WITH A DROOPY EYELID WHO WAS HIRED TO KILL HIM.

THIS BEGINS TO SOUND LIKE A DIME NOVEL, FLINT. BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING!

was about to tell Growl the story from the beginning, but I didn't get started.



YOU'D BETTER COME OUT HERE, INSPECTOR. THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER MURDER.

IT'S THE COOK. HE MUST HAVE PUT UP A FIGHT. WELL, A MAN OF TWILIGHT'S DESCRIPTION SHOULDN'T BE HARD TO SPOT.



EASY TO SPOT, GROWL, BUT HARD TO PICK UP.

THE NEXT MORNING:



I CALLED YOU UP, FLINT, BECAUSE I WANTED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?

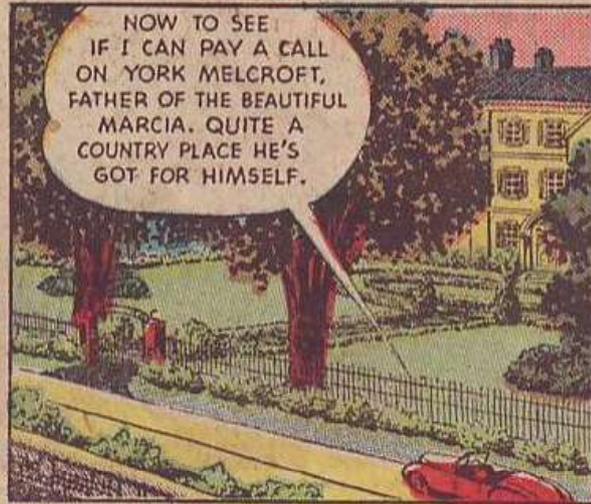


I DON'T MAKE ANYTHING OF IT, GROWL. WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

WE FOUND THAT ON STILL'S DEAD BODY, FLINT. WHAT WAS HE DOING WITH IT?



That's what I wanted to find out.

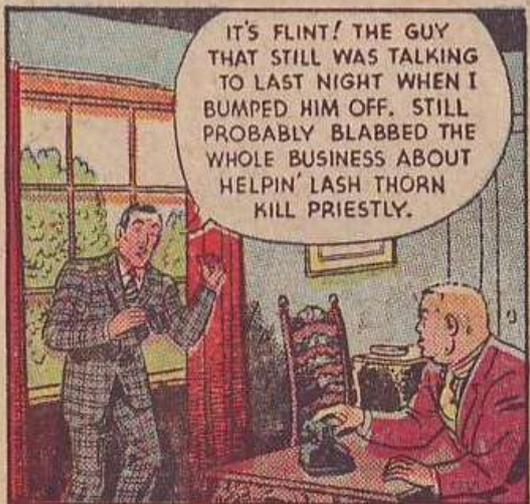


NOW TO SEE IF I CAN PAY A CALL ON YORK MELCROFT, FATHER OF THE BEAUTIFUL MARCIA. QUITE A COUNTRY PLACE HE'S GOT FOR HIMSELF.



YOUR NAME AND YOUR BUSINESS, MISTER.

MY NAME IS FLINT. I WANT TO SEE MR. MELCROFT ON A VERY CONFIDENTIAL MATTER.



IT'S FLINT! THE GUY THAT STILL WAS TALKING TO LAST NIGHT WHEN I BUMPED HIM OFF. STILL PROBABLY BLABBED THE WHOLE BUSINESS ABOUT HELPIN' LASH THORN KILL PRIESTLY.



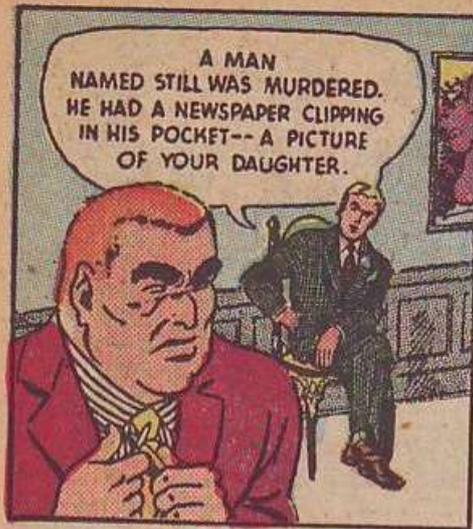
LASH THORN IS DEAD, TWILIGHT. REMEMBER THAT! I'LL TELL KEYS TO ADMIT MR. FLINT.



ALL RIGHT, MR. FLINT, YOU CAN GO IN.

THANKS.

HE GOT AN OKAY OVER THE PHONE FROM THE HOUSE. THAT MEANS I'VE BEEN LOOKED OVER.



A MAN NAMED STILL WAS MURDERED. HE HAD A NEWSPAPER CLIPPING IN HIS POCKET-- A PICTURE OF YOUR DAUGHTER.



A NEWSPAPER PICTURE OF MARCIA? MARCIA HAS HAD HER PICTURE IN THE PAPER MANY TIMES

BUT THIS, MR. MELCROFT, IS THE FIRST TIME, I IMAGINE, THAT IT HAS BEEN FOUND ON THE BODY OF A MURDERED MAN.



HA-HA! YORK MELCROFT, THAT IS A SHARP YOUNG MAN YOU ARE TRYING TO DECEIVE!



COULD I TALK WITH YOUR DAUGHTER MARCIA?

I'M AFRAID NOT, MARCIA IS-- AH-- OUT OF TOWN. ER-- EXCUSE ME JUST A MOMENT.



YOU AIN'T LETTIN' THIS GUY FLINT SLIP THROUGH YOUR FINGERS, ARE YOU, BOSS?

TAKE MY CAR, TWILIGHT, AND FOLLOW HIM OFF THE PREMISES. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.



OUT THIS WAY, MR. FLINT, THROUGH THE SOLARIUM.



I didn't tell him I thought he was lying. A few minutes later I was sure of it.

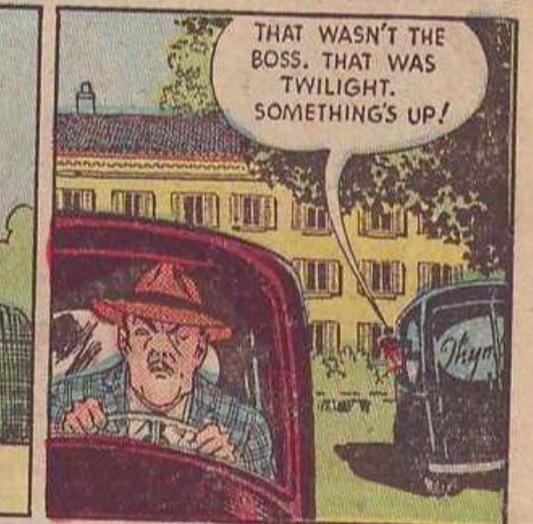
HAVE A NICE DRIVE, MISS MELCROFT? IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

A LOVELY DRIVE, KEYS.

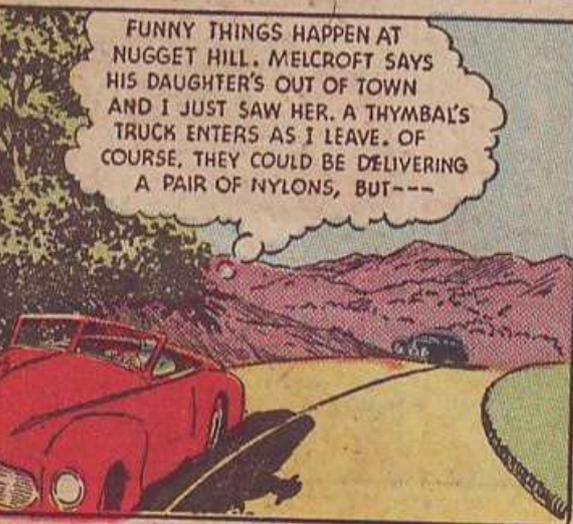


WELL, IF THERE ISN'T THE UNAVAILABLE MARCIA MELCROFT!

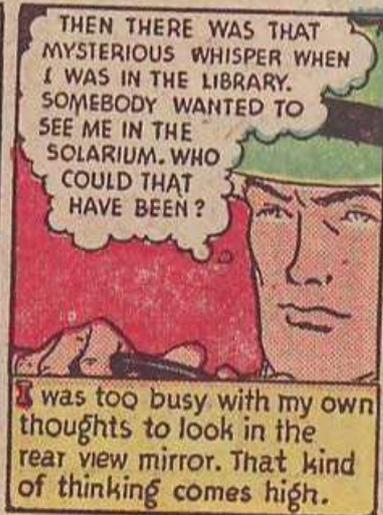
I knew her father was still watching me, so I pretended not to notice her.



THAT WASN'T THE BOSS. THAT WAS TWILIGHT. SOMETHING'S UP!



FUNNY THINGS HAPPEN AT NUGGET HILL. MELCROFT SAYS HIS DAUGHTER'S OUT OF TOWN AND I JUST SAW HER. A THYMBAL'S TRUCK ENTERS AS I LEAVE. OF COURSE, THEY COULD BE DELIVERING A PAIR OF NYLONS, BUT---



THEN THERE WAS THAT MYSTERIOUS WHISPER WHEN I WAS IN THE LIBRARY. SOMEBODY WANTED TO SEE ME IN THE SOLARIUM. WHO COULD THAT HAVE BEEN?

I was too busy with my own thoughts to look in the rear view mirror. That kind of thinking comes high.



I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN THE SOLARIUM, MISTRAL BEEN HERE LONG?

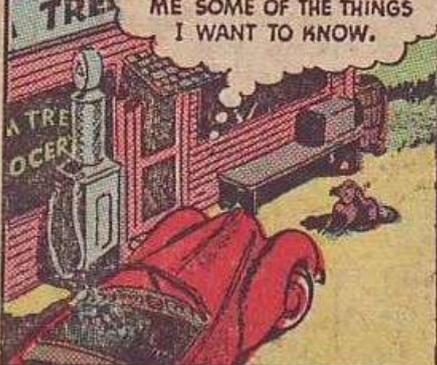
I JUST SAT DOWN, YORK.

WHAT HE DOESN'T KNOW WON'T HURT HIM. I DON'T THINK MY DARLING HALF BROTHER WOULD LIKE IT IF HE KNEW I HAD OVERHEARD EVERY WORD AND THAT I HAD TRIED TO TALK TO FLINT BEFORE HE DID.

I'LL JUST KEEP FLINT IN SIGHT TILL WE COME TO A QUIET SPOT. NO HURRY.



THERE OUGHT TO BE A PHONE IN THIS STORE. I'LL CALL NUGGET HILL AND ASK FOR MARCIA. MAYBE SHE CAN TELL ME SOME OF THE THINGS I WANT TO KNOW.

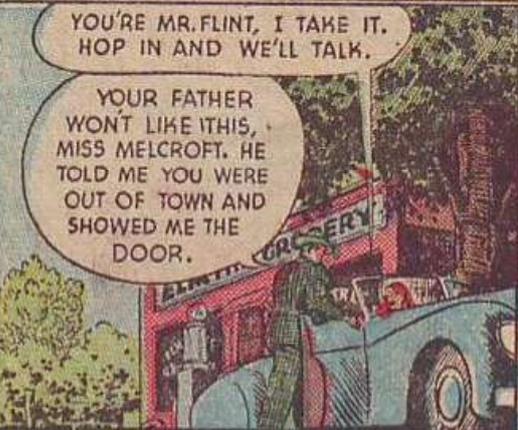


Somebody who knew all I needed to know was watching me.



HE'S GOING INTO THAT ROADSIDE GROCERY. I'LL HANG BACK TILL HE COMES OUT. PLENTY OF TIME.

I phoned Marcia Melcroft and told her who I was. She drove right out to meet me.



YOU'RE MR. FLINT, I TAKE IT. HOP IN AND WE'LL TALK.

YOUR FATHER WON'T LIKE THIS, MISS MELCROFT. HE TOLD ME YOU WERE OUT OF TOWN AND SHOWED ME THE DOOR.

DOES HE HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT IT?



WHEN YOU HUNG UP AFTER OUR CONVERSATION, I HELD THE PHONE A MOMENT. THE LINE WAS STILL OPEN. SOMEONE SNOOPING.

York Melcroft had snooped, all right, and he was doing something about it.



ALL MY CARS WERE OUT EXCEPT THE JEEP, TWILIGHT, BUT THIS WILL SERVE. I TAKE IT THE REASON YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY BACK TO SEE ME WAS THAT YOU HAD SEEN MARCIA.

THAT'S RIGHT, BOSS.

DRIVE CAREFULLY, TWILIGHT. THIS LITTLE ITEM IN MY LAP IS DESTINED FOR FLINT'S CAR. I THINK IT WILL DISCOURAGE HIM.



NOW, MISS MELCROFT, HERE'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW. WHY DID STILL CARRY THAT NEWSPAPER PICTURE OF YOU IN HIS POCKET?



A PICTURE OF ME?

NOT AN ESPECIALLY GOOD PICTURE, NOW THAT I'VE SEEN THE ORIGINAL. BUT IT WAS YOU, ALL RIGHT.



ICED TEA FOR THE LADY. MAKE MINE LEMONADE. SERVE IT AT THE TABLE OVER THERE.

I'M SORRY, MR. FLINT, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY THE MURDERED MR. STILL WAS CARRYING MY PICTURE. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?



YES. HOW OLD ARE YOU, MISS MELCROFT?

VERY WELL. I'M 23, SINGLE, AND IN REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH.



THE PRIESTLY MURDER THAT STILL SPOKE ABOUT WAS 20 YEARS AGO. BY THE WAY, YOU DON'T RESEMBLE YOUR FATHER IN THE LEAST. YOU MUST TAKE AFTER YOUR MOTHER.

MY MOTHER DIED WHEN I WAS BORN. YORK MELCROFT IS NOT MY FATHER. HAVE YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANTED?



I'VE MADE A BEGINNING. A GOOD ONE.





Halfway to the house a strange sound froze me in my tracks.

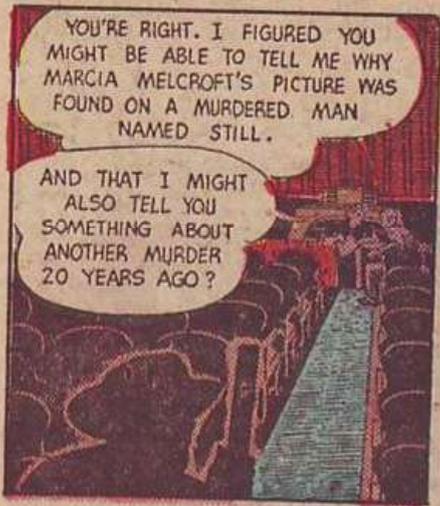


MUSIC COMING FROM THAT WING OVER THERE! SOUNDS LIKE AN ORGAN.



SORRY TO HAVE BARGED IN ON YOU. I HEARD THE ORGAN MUSIC, OPENED THE DOOR AND FOUND THERE WAS A THEATER INSIDE. YOU'RE MISTRAL MELCROFT, AREN'T YOU? DO YOU ALWAYS PLAY AT MIDNIGHT?

YOU TOOK A GREAT RISK IN COMING HERE, YOUNG MAN. AND THOSE ARE NOT THE QUESTIONS YOU CAME TO ASK.



YOU'RE RIGHT. I FIGURED YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO TELL ME WHY MARCIA MELCROFT'S PICTURE WAS FOUND ON A MURDERED MAN NAMED STILL.

AND THAT I MIGHT ALSO TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT ANOTHER MURDER 20 YEARS AGO?



THAT WILL DO, MISTRAL. YOU MAY GO ON WITH YOUR PLAYING. AND, MR. FLINT, SUPPOSE YOU AND I--AH--PLAY OUTSIDE?



QUIETLY AND QUICKLY. SHOTGUN WOUNDS ARE SO MESSY!



I WONDER HOW MUCH YORK OVERHEARD BETWEEN ME AND FLINT. COULD HE SUSPECT WHAT I HAVE HIDDEN IN MY BAG?

So I turned around to face Melcroft there beneath the sycamore. I had a cold lump in the pit of my stomach.



NO CLOSER, FLINT. YOU REALIZE THAT BY BREAKING INTO MY PLACE AT NIGHT YOU ARE PLACING YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE PROTECTION OF THE LAW.



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A MAN SHOT IN THE BELLY WITH BOTH BARRELS, FLINT?



It was my salvation that Melcroft talked too much. A killer should keep his mind on his work.



NOW, FLATFOOT, WE'LL SEE IF YOUR SKULL'S AS HARD AS IT IS THICK!



I WOULDN'T DO THAT, MELCROFT.



THIS PISTOL JUST MAKES LITTLE HOLES, BUT THEY GO DEEP. NOW DROP THAT GUN, AND THIS TIME YOU TURN AROUND.



I could hear someone running toward us from the house. I still had a bear by the tail and a fence to climb.

WELL, FLINT, WHAT NEXT?



WHAT'S UP, MIDGE? I HEARD A SHOT.

SOMEONE SLUGGED THE BOSS. HE'S OUT COLD. I DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY.



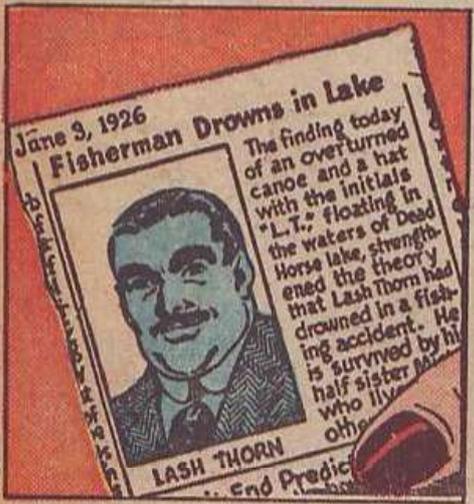
DON'T LOOK NOW, SHORTY, BUT IT WAS ME. I TAGGED MR. MELCROFT ON THE CHIN, NOT WANTING TO BE AROUND WHEN THE CONVENTION GATHERED.



A TRUCK AT THE MAIN GATE, KEYS!

THEY'RE EARLY TONIGHT. I'LL BE BACK.

WHAT BECAME OF THAT YOUNG MAN FLINT? HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THIS PICTURE. BUT IF YORK MELCROFT KNEW I HAD IT, I'D FEEL THE GRIP OF HIS FINGERS ON MY THROAT.



June 9, 1926
Fisherman Drowns in Lake

The finding today of an overturned canoe and a hat with the initials "L.T." floating in the waters of Dead Horse lake, strengthened the theory that Lash Thorn had drowned in a fishing accident. He is survived by his half sister...

LASH THORN



YES, IF LASH THORN HAD ACTUALLY DROWNED I WOULD BE HAPPIER. AND HOW I WOULD LIKE TO TELL THAT YOUNG MAN FLINT THAT HE STILL LIVES! BUT FLINT HAS GONE.



Mistral was mistaken. I was up a tree, like a possum.

WHAT HIT YOU, BOSS?

A SKUNK!



IT WAS A SKUNK, MIDGE. A TREE-CLIMBING SKUNK. HAND ME MY SHOTGUN!



NOW, MIDGE, WATCH CAREFULLY! A TREE-CLIMBING SKUNK IS A RARE SPECIES. WE MUST NOT LET HIM SLIP THROUGH OUR FINGERS-- AGAIN!



To jump out of that tree and run would be fatal. To hide was impossible.

THIS IS LIKE SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL, MIDGE.

I'M WATCHING, BOSS.



I HOPE I'VE TIMED THIS RIGHT.



The clothesline pulled taut with the full weight of my 180 pounds. Just for good measure I gave it an extra yank.

STREET FLOOR, PLEASE!



THERE GOES THE BOSS'S GUN AGAIN, TWILIGHT! I'M TELLING YOU, THINGS ARE SCREWY!

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?



WHILE THEY'RE INVESTIGATING, I WONDER IF I'VE GOT TIME FOR A QUICK LOOK-SEE AT THAT TRUCK?



Eased up to that Thymbal truck, scenting a clue, and walked right into a fast-moving fist.

I'LL GET A NICE LITTLE BONUS FOR THIS NIGHT'S WORK, I'LL BET. MELCROFT DON'T LIKE SNOOPERS!

NOW WHAT TH--!



OPEN THE GATE, PLEASE, KEYS, SO I CAN GET THROUGH.

KEYS AINT HERE, LADY--OH, YOU'RE MARCIA MELCROFT, AINT YOU?



A ROBBER GOT LOOSE ON THE GROUNDS, MISS MELCROFT. I NAILED HIM OVER BY THE TRUCK. HEY! HOLD IT--!

P-S-S-T!



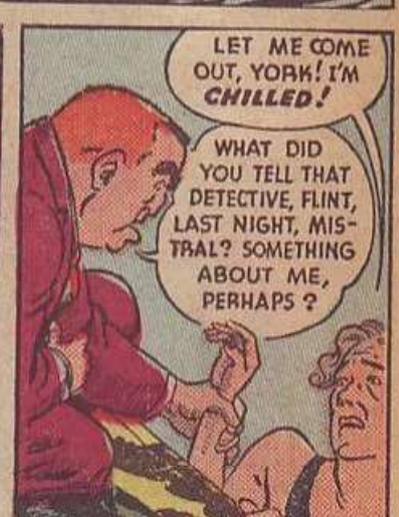
STEP ON IT, MARCIA! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

VIC FLINT!

NO YOU DON'T!









AH! SO THAT'S IT!



SO THIS IS THE THING YOU'VE BEEN CONCEALING FROM ME! THAT WAS UNRESISTINGLY OF YOU, MISTRAL!



"TWILIGHT, WATCH THE GATE," MELCROFT SAYS. SO I SLIP ACROSS THE HALL AND WATCH MELCROFT AND MISTRAL IN THE POOL.



SWIM, MY DEAR SISTER! YOUR LOVING BROTHER, LASH THORN, WILL JOIN YOU!

NO, LASH!

"TWILIGHT," MELCROFT SAYS, "LASH THORN IS DEAD." WELL, LASH THORN SEEMS TO HAVE COME TO LIFE!



DOWN, MISTRAL! DEEP DOWN!

NO, LASH! NO!



BONG!

LISTEN TO THOSE DOOR CHIMES! SOUNDS LIKE A FIRE ALARM!



SOMEONE'S AT THE FRONT DOOR! AND ME DRIPPING WATER-- AND BLOOD!

BONG!



HELP, EVERYBODY! IN THE SWIMMING POOL!



NOW I GET IT. LASH THORN TO THE RESCUE!

I'D BETTER MAKE MYSELF SCARCE. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE THOSE VISITORS LASH SPOKE ABOUT.



WHERE IS THAT YELLING COMING FROM?

FROM THE POOL, SIR. WHERE MISS MISTRAL TAKES HER MORNING SWIM! I'LL TAKE YOU THERE!

HELP!



LEND ME A HAND! HELP ME GET HER OUT!

RIGHT HERE, MR. MELCROFT, SIR!



A DOCTOR! SOMEONE GET A DOCTOR!



YOU DON'T NEED A DOCTOR, MR. MELCROFT. THIS WOMAN IS DEAD!

DEAD!

THAT COAT! FUNNY THAT IT'S SO CAREFULLY FOLDED!



SHE FOUGHT ME WHEN I TRIED TO RESCUE HER. POSSIBLY FROM PANIC, BUT PROBABLY NOT.



YOU MEAN TO SAY, MELCROFT, THAT YOUR SISTER COMMITTED SUICIDE?

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, MELCROFT!

MISTRAL HAD BEEN DESPONDENT, INSPECTOR. WHO KNOWS? SHE IS DEAD. SHE CANNOT TELL US.



I CAN GO BACK TO THE POOL THE WAY THE HOUSEMAN SHOWED US. I'D LIKE TO TAKE A PEEK INSIDE THAT BAG MISTRAL CARRIED.

It was the second time that morning that I missed the boat, for as I was soft-footing it back to the swimming pool--



WHILE LASH THORN WEEPS CROCODILE TEARS IN THE LIBRARY, I'LL JUST HELP MYSELF TO THIS.



THIS, PLUS WHAT I SAW IN THE SWIMMING POOL, OUGHT TO BE WORTH ABOUT FIFTY GRAND TO LASH THORN--



THE COAST LOOKS CLEAR, AND THERE'S MISTRAL'S BAG.



NOW WHAT'S THIS?

I called headquarters. Then I called a newspaper friend of mine.



YEAH, I'M STILL HERE, OTIS. WHAT DID YOU DIG UP ON MELCROFT AND LASH THORN?



THERE'S A FAT FILE ON MELCROFT, VIC, BUT ONLY A FEW CLIPS ON THORN AND A PICTURE--

HOLY COW! THEY'RE THE SAME GUY!

Meanwhile, back at Nugget Hill, the cunning Twilight saw his opportunity.

THIS LITTLE CLIPPING MEANS I'VE GOT OLD MELCROFT OVER THE BARREL. AND (HIC) GLINT AND FROWL HAVE GONE. SO---

**LASH THORN!
LASH THORN!
COME UP HERE!**

LASH THORN! LASH THORN! HUR-RY-HUR-RY HUR-RY!

LASH THORN? WHO'S THAT? THAT AIN'T MELCROFT'S VOICE!

I SHEE YOU, LASH. YOU'VE SHRUNK! YOU'RE WASHED UP! I SHAW YOU DROWN MISHTRAL. YOU KILLED PRIESTLY AND--

I MUST GET TO MISTRAL, LIBBY! I HAVE THE MOST HORRIBLE FEELING!

SHEE WHAT I HAVE, LASH! EVIDENSH! AND I SHAW YOU PUSH THE OLD GIRL UNDER. BUT I'LL KEEP QUIET. QUIET AS A MOUSE--

FOR FIFTY GRAND!

OTHERWISE, LASH, I SNAP THE SWISH--

While I raced back to Nugget Hill, Thorn, already knee deep in murder, plunged in up to his neck.

WHY SHOULD I PAY \$50,000 TO SILENCE YOU, TWILIGHT, WHEN I CAN DO IT FOR THE PRICE OF ONE LITTLE BULLET?

NOW TO KNOCK OFF THE COP WATCHING MISTRAL'S BODY!

WHERE DO WE GO, MARCIA, TO FIND MISTRAL?

I HEARD YOU AT THE DOOR, MARCIA, MY DEAR. MISTRAL IS DEAD-- AND BOTH OF YOU WILL JOIN HER UNLESS YOU GO SILENTLY UP THOSE STAIRS!

YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME, FLINT. SCREWY THINGS ARE COMING OVER THE INTERCOM. YOU'D BETTER GO UP TO THE HOUSE!

FLINT OR GROWL! COME TO THE INTERCOM AT THE GATE. I HAVE A PROPOSITION TO MAKE!

THAT'S THORN'S VOICE!

FLINT! GROWL! IF YOU VALUE THE LIVES OF THESE TWO GIRLS, GET ON THE INTERCOM AT ONCE!

FLINT SPEAKING, THORN. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

AH, SO YOU KNOW I'M LASH THORN! BUT MAYBE YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT I HAVE TWO LOVELY HOSTAGES HERE IN MY OFFICE!

MARCIA STILL IS ONE OF THEM, FLINT. THE DAUGHTER OF A MAN YOU MAY REMEMBER! AND THERE'S A CERTAIN FRIEND OF YOURS NAMED LIBBY. BOTH OF THEM LOOKING DEATH IN THE FACE!

TELL THEM YOU WISH TO BE SAVED!

THIS IS LIBBY LANG, VIC! DON'T DO WHAT HE SAYS! THE MAN'S A BEAST---

YOU WIN, THORN! WE'LL RELEASE KEYS AND WITHDRAW THE POLICE. BUT DON'T HARM THOSE GIRLS.

OF COURSE NOT, FLINT.

KEYS! STOP OFF AT THE GARAGE ON YOUR WAY UP AND BRING SOME ROPE.

"WITHDRAW YOUR MEN", THORN SAYS, "AND SEND KEYS UP TO ME WITH A ROPE."

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO, VIC?

WELL, GROWL?

So Growl withdrew his men, and "Keys" went up the Drive to Nugget Hill to get his orders from Lash Thorn.

THERE GO THE POLICE AND HERE COMES KEYS. WHERE ARE THOSE BINOCULARS?

DON'T THINK YOU WON'T PAY FOR THIS! NEITHER OF YOU GIRLS WILL GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE!

OH! IT'S YOU, KEYS! WHERE'S THE ROPE?

NO ROPE, THORN. NOT FOR THE GIRLS.

JUST A ROPE FOR YOU, THORN! AROUND YOUR THICK NECK! PUT 'EM UP GOOD AND HIGH!

THORN KILLED TWILIGHT AND YOU KILLED THORN. A GOOD JOB, FLINT. TWO GOOD JOBS.

I HAD TO KILL HIM, GROWL. HE HAD A GUN AND TRIED TO USE IT.

DON'T BE BITTER, DEAR. THORN WAS A BLACKGUARD, BUT STILL WAS THE VICTIM OF A FRAME-UP. VIC FELT THAT ALL ALONG.

THAT'S RIGHT, MARCIA. YOUR FATHER WAS ON OUR SIDE. THAT'S HOW I GOT INTO THIS CASE.

I'LL NEVER SET FOOT IN THIS HOUSE AGAIN. I'LL NOT TOUCH ANOTHER PENNY OF THE MELCROFT MONEY.

THE END

POLICE DRAGNET *Traps* The Phantom Fingerman

ALL THE GANGLAND AND POLITICAL MURDERS IN A CENTRAL STATES CITY BORE THE UNMISTAKABLE BRAND OF A CRAFTY FINGERMAN. WHO WAS HE? HOW WAS HE ABLE TO AVOID DETECTION? THAT'S WHAT THE POLICE WENT ALL-OUT TO UNCOVER AFTER THE SENATE CRIME INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE ASKED TOO MANY EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS. BUT THE ONLY WAY TO SNARE THE MYSTERIOUS FINGERMAN WAS TO THROW A DRAGNET THAT WOULD HAUL IN ALL CROOKS--BIG AND LITTLE, WITH "CONNECTIONS" AND WITHOUT. THE BIGGEST SURPRISE WAS THE PLACE WHERE THEY FOUND HIM-- AND WHY NO ONE COULD MAKE HIM TALK!

TURN AROUND AND THROW UP YOUR HANDS, MISTER X.

QUICK!! LET ME SQUEEZE THROUGH!

HE CAN'T FINGER US FOR HIS TRIGGER-MEN! THEY DON'T WANT ANY PART OF HIM NOW!



JUST AS THE POLICE WERE ABOUT TO GRAB THEIR LONG-SOUGHT QUARRY, THE STEEL-CLAD DOOR OPENED AND TWO HOODLUMS DRAGGED HIM INSIDE TO PREVENT THE POLICE FROM TAKING HIM ALIVE...

THANKS, BOYS! I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T LET ME DOWN!



GET AWAY FROM THAT DOOR!

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME! LET ME GO!





A TOMMY-GUN BLAST! THEY DRAGGED HIM INSIDE-- TO MAKE SURE HE'D NEVER TALK!

STAND BACK!

I'M GOING TO TRY TO PUNCH OUT THE CYLINDER OF THAT LOCK WITH A COUPLE OF BULLETS!



THE FIRST BULLET SUNK THE LOCK CYLINDER INWARD AN INCH. THE SECOND SLUG FINISHED THE JOB...



NO! THEY DIDN'T GET HIM! HE GOT BOTH OF THEM!

MUST HAVE SNATCHED THE TOMMY-GUN FROM THE ONE WHO HAD IT AND TURNED IT ON THEM! HE RIPPED OPEN THE STEEL-SHUTTERED WINDOW AND ESCAPED INTO THE ALLEY!



LOOK! THE ALLEY RUNS STRAIGHT OUT TO THE STREET-- AND IT'S EMPTY AS A VACUUM!

YEAH! EXCEPT FOR COMMITTING A DOUBLE MURDER, HE MADE A CLEAN GETAWAY!



PHONE'S DISCONNECTED. GO OUT AND CALL HOMICIDE AND THE COMMISSIONER. DID THAT DAME DO ANYTHING, MITCH?

SHE WAS WITH HIM. SHE MIGHT KNOW HIS NAME.

I'M TAKING HER IN FOR QUESTIONING, LEN. YOU DON'T NEED ME HERE.



AFTER HIS PARTNER, JACK MITCHELL HAD LEFT WITH THE GIRL, DETECTIVE LEN LOGAN WAITED OUTSIDE THE SMALL NIGHT CLUB TO REPORT TO THE HOMICIDE SQUAD CAPTAIN...

HE ACTED SO FAST HE MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN TO WIPE HIS FINGER-PRINTS OFF THE BARREL OF THE TOMMYGUN.

BUT HIS PRINTS WON'T HELP US ANY-- IF THEY'RE NOT IN POLICE OR F.B.I. FILES. SEE YOU AT HEADQUARTERS IF YOU'RE STILL AROUND WHEN I GET BACK!

A HALF HOUR LATER LOGAN AND OTHERS WORKING CLOSELY ON THE FINGERMAN ASSIGNMENT WERE SUMMONED TO THE CHIEF INSPECTOR'S OFFICE...

THIS WAS A TOUGH BREAK, MEN. ESPECIALLY FOR FELLOWS LIKE LOGAN, MITCHELL, KANE AND MULVANY, WHO'VE BEEN WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK!



EVERY RAIL, AIR AND BUS TERMINAL IS BEING WATCHED. FOR THE NEXT TWELVE HOURS WE'RE SPOT CHECKING CARS ON ALL ROADS AND BRIDGES LEADING FROM THE CITY.

BUT CHIEF! HOW WOULD ANY OFFICER KNOW THE FINGERMAN? I SAW HIM CLOSE, BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU A DESCRIPTION OF HIM THAT WOULDN'T FIT MANY MEN!



THAT OBSTACLE CAN WORK IN OUR FAVOR. EVERY AVERAGE LOOKING MAN IS BEING REGARDED WITH SUSPICION.

LET'S THROW OUT A DRAGNET FOR ALL CROOKS-- LIKE YOU SUGGESTED. ONE OF THEM MAY SING AND GIVE US A GOOD LEAD.



THAT'S A BIG ORDER, BUT WE HAVEN'T MUCH CHOICE IN THE MATTER. HOW DO YOU MEN FEEL ABOUT IT?

GO AHEAD, CHIEF.

I'M FOR IT!



SPECIAL ORDER TO ALL PRECINCT CAPTAINS AND DIVISION HEADS! APPREHEND FOR QUESTIONING EVERY KNOWN AND SUSPECTED CRIMINAL WITHIN 24 HOURS!



COULDN'T YOU PUMP ANYTHING FROM THAT DAME WE CAUGHT IN HIS HIDEOUT, MITCHELL?

NO. I DREW A BLANK. I CALLED THE DOCTOR. HE SAID SHE'S SUFFERING FROM AMNESIA.



THE CAPTAIN'S BACK, LOGAN. WANTS TO SEE YOU. HIS MEN CHECKED ON EVERYONE EMPLOYED IN THAT NIGHT SPOT. THEY COULD GIVE HIM NO IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE FINGERMAN.

IT'S FANTASTIC HOW THAT CHARACTER CAN REMAIN SO ANONYMOUS!



NO FINGERPRINT RECORDS OF THE TWO VICTIMS... NO PRINTS ON THE GUN. I'M GOING WACKY, LOGAN. DID YOU EVER SEE THOSE TWO GUYS BEFORE?

SORRY, CAPTAIN. I'VE NO IDEA WHO THEY WERE. THAT FINGERMAN, I TELL YOU, IS THE SLICKEST ARTICLE IN THE ANNALS OF CRIME!

SLICK, MY EYE! EVERY VICTIM HE EVER FINGERED WAS KILLED BY AN AUTOMATIC WEAPON--ON A DOWNTOWN STREET CORNER BETWEEN THE HOURS OF EIGHT AND TEN P.M.

I KNOW THAT, CAP! THOSE FACTS PIN THE JOBS ON HIM... BUT, WHO IS THE FINGERMAN?

I'LL KNOW WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, LOGAN! I'M GOING TO CRACK KNUCKLES AND SKULLS UNTIL I FIND OUT!

AREN'T YOU AGAINST OLD-FASHIONED POLICE METHODS, CAP? CAN'T SAY I BLAME YOU... I'M GOING TO GET TOUGH... MYSELF.

DETEKTIVE LEN LOGAN WAS AGAINST HARSH PRACTICES, BUT HE REMEMBERED THAT THE WIDOW OF A TRIGGERMAN WHO HAD GONE TO THE CHAIR WITHOUT TALKING, MIGHT HAVE CHANGED HER MIND...

A COLD WATER FLAT IS SOME COMEDOWN FROM THE TERRACE APARTMENT WHERE SHE AND RUTZIE LIVED!

OH, IT'S YOU! I WAS GOING TO CALL YOU... HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I'LL PRETEND I KNOW WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT...

PEOPLE NOTICE THINGS, MRS. ANTHONY... AND TIP US OFF.

SHE'S AFRAID OF SOMEONE-- BECAUSE SHE KNOWS TOO MUCH ABOUT CERTAIN PEOPLE...

I SEE THAT YOU'VE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FORCED ENTRY. YOU NEVER GO OUTSIDE, DO YOU?

NO. THE BOY BRINGS MY NEWS-PAPERS AND GROCERIES.

SOMEONE'S AT THE DOOR... WERE YOU EXPECTING A VISITOR?

NO! NO!! NOBODY EVER KNOCKS LIKE THAT!

A DETECTIVE'S MIND IS TRAINED TO "READ BETWEEN THE LINES," AND MRS. ANTHONY'S REMARK WAS STRONGLY SUGGESTIVE TO LEN LOGAN...

NOBODY-- BUT WHO? YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME, MRS. ANTHONY!

THE--THE **BOXER!** HE WAS RUTZIE'S CELLMATE IN JOLIET. HE'S THE MEANEST, MOST CRUEL MAN I EVER KNEW. AND RUTZIE MET THE FINGERMAN THROUGH HIM.



KEEP AWAY FROM THE DOOR, MRS. ANTHONY!

THE BOXER... IF HE'S THE ONE WHO WORKS AS A BARTENDER AT THE LA PALOMA...



DROP IT, BOXER! I SAID DROP IT!

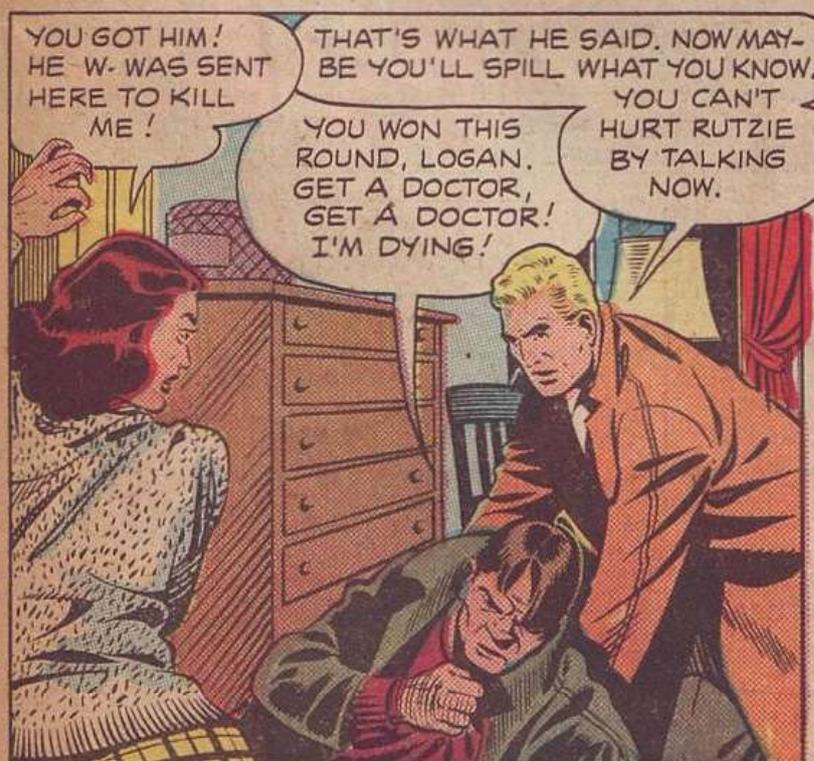
HUH? HEY-- HE DIDN'T TELL ME YOU WAS-- WHY, YOU NO-GOOD SNOOP!

LOGAN HAD GAMBLED ON THE SURPRISE EFFECT HIS APPEARANCE WOULD HAVE ON THE SLOW-WITTED EX-FIGHTER. HE GAVE THE BOXER A FAIR CHANCE, THEN PIVOTED OUT OF THE LATTER'S AIM...



YOU GET IT FIRST, AN' THEN I'LL USE YOUR ROD ON ROSIE.

THE FINGERMAN DOUBLE-CROSSED YOU, BOXER! HE KNEW I'D BE HERE!



YOU GOT HIM! HE W-WAS SENT HERE TO KILL ME!

THAT'S WHAT HE SAID. NOW MAYBE YOU'LL SPILL WHAT YOU KNOW. YOU CAN'T HURT RUTZIE BY TALKING NOW.

YOU WON THIS ROUND, LOGAN. GET A DOCTOR, GET A DOCTOR! I'M DYING!



I DON'T KNOW ANY DOCTORS, BOXER-- UNLESS YOU CAN GIVE ME THE RIGHT NAME AND ADDRESS OF A GUY CALLED THE FINGERMAN!

RUTZIE TOLD ME YOU KNEW HIS **RIGHT NAME!** SPILL IT! IF YOU DON'T, I'LL FINISH YOU MYSELF WHEN THIS DICK GOES OUT TO THE PHONE!

GET THE DOC FIRST. IF I'M DEAD, I CAN'T TELL YUH. GET THE DOC.



THAT HOLE IS TOO CLOSE TO HIS HEART. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM WHILE I PHONE.

OKAY NOW, BOXER! START TALK-- HE... HE'S PASSING OUT! HE'S ... DEAD!



I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE, BUT MY HUSBAND SAID HE HAD AN EAGLE TATTOO ON ONE ARM...

DEAD! THAT PUTS ME IN A TOUGH SPOT-- BUT WAIT! THE FINGERMAN MUST HAVE BEEN OUT FRONT. I--

... AND A RED SCAR ON THE BACK OF HIS NECK.



THE RAG PICKER! GONE! HE WAS THE FINGERMAN! WHY DIDN'T I SEE THROUGH HIS DISGUISE?



HE GOT AWAY! REPORT IN FOR ALL CARS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR A RAG PICKER... MEDIUM BUILD... WANTED FOR ATTEMPTED MURDER. HE MAY BE ARMED!

WHAT-- WHERE'D THIS HAPPEN? WE'LL TAKE OVER FOR YOU, LOGAN, IF YOU WANT...



GET OVER TO 98 MADISON. I JUST SHOT IT OUT WITH A HOOD CALLED THE BOXER! HE'S READY FOR THE MORGUE, BUT TAKE THE WOMAN IN 2B INTO CUSTODY. MRS. ROSE ANTHONY.

OKAY, LOGAN, I'VE GOT IT.



RUSHING TO THE NEARBY PRECINCT STATION, LOGAN WAS SURPRISED TO MEET JACK MITCHELL, HIS SIDEKICK, WHO HAD JOINED IN THE DRAGNET OPERATION...

HEY, LOGAN! COME IN HERE! I WAS JUST LEAVING TO LOOK FOR YOU. I CAUGHT A BIRD WHO'S SINGING HIS HEAD OFF ABOUT THE FINGERMAN!

YOU WOULD PUT ONE OVER ON ME, JACK.

POLICE DEPT.

MITCHELL'S PRISONER WAS THE ONLY ONE "IN SOLITARY". THE OTHER CELLS WERE JAMMED WITH CROOKS, BIG AND SMALL, WHO'D BEEN CAUGHT IN THE DRAGNET...

SHUT UP, YOU! SAVE IT UNTIL WE'RE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS!

I KNOW THIS CHARACTER, MITCHELL. HE'S LITTLE PETE. HIS BROTHER WAS BIG PETE PETERS, THE MILLIONAIRE BOOKMAKER.



"I'M GETTING CITY RELIEF," LITTLE PETE WHINED. "AFTER MY BRUDDER WAS RUBBED OUT, I COULDN'T MAKE A NICKEL. SURE I KNOW WHO FINGERED HIM FOR THE BIG THREE SYNDICATE MOB. THEY TOOK OVER BIG PETE'S TWENTY-THOUSAND A WEEK BOOK..."

HIS RIGHT MONIKER IS RALSTON KRANK. YEARS AGO HE EMBEZZLED FORTY GRAND FROM THE COAL COMPANY HE WORKED FOR. HE WAS PLAYIN' THE PONIES, LOSIN'...

I THINK THIS WILLEXPAIN A LOT. GO ON, LITTLE PETE.



SO KRANK GOT IN HOCK WITH ONE OF THE BIG THREE BOOKS. SOMEBODY PROPOSITIONED HIM FOR A FINGERIN' JOB. HE MADE OUT, AN' FROM THEN ON, HE'S BEEN USED FOR EVERY BIG KILLING THAT'S BEEN PULLED OFF.



I'LL GET BUSY AND CHECK BACK ON KRANK THROUGH HIS FORMER EMPLOYERS AND MY INFORMANT IN THE BIG THREE SYNDICATE.

WHO OPENED THAT DOOR WHILE WE WERE TALKING? I WAS SURE I CLOSED IT.



DETEKTIVES MITCHELL AND LOGAN DIDN'T GET A GLIMPSE OF THE FLEEING NEWSMEN. BUT LATER, WHEN THE AFTERNOON EDITIONS HIT THE STREET, THEY KNEW HOW THE LEAK HAD BEEN SPRUNG...

I REMEMBER THAT COAL COMPANY EMBEZZLEMENT AND THE MAN WHO ABSCONDED. THE CHIEF WILL PUT THE WHOLE STAFF TO WORK ON THIS STORY, HARRY.

HE WON'T IF WE DON'T GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THOSE DICKS GET WISE!



THIS DOES IT, MITCHELL! NOW HE'LL REALLY TAKE IT ON THE LAM! THEY'VE EVEN GOT A PICTURE OF HIM!

WHAT A ROTTEN BREAK-- AFTER ALL THE WORK WE PUT IN. AND I SUPPOSE THE CHIEF WILL PUT US ON THE CARPET. BLAME US FOR THE LEAK.



LIKE MANY OTHERS, LOGAN HAD BEEN WITHOUT SLEEP FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. BUT RECALLING TWO FACTS ABOUT THE FINGERMAN THAT HADN'T BEEN BROUGHT OUT, HE MADE A REQUEST OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR...



CAN YOU WRITE AN ORDER, AUTHORIZING ME TO EXAMINE ALL CHARACTERS PICKED UP ON SUSPICION OR FOR OFFENSES SINCE NOON?

OKAY, OKAY, LOGAN. YOUR HUNCHES HAVE A FAIR BATTING AVERAGE.

THROUGH THE CITY JAILS AND PRECINCT HOUSE LOCK-UPS, LOGAN SEARCHED TIRELESSLY THROUGH THE NIGHT, NOT OVERLOOKING A SINGLE PRISONER REGARDLESS OF SIZE OR APPEARANCE OF FACE...



NO... JUST A WART AND A BULLET-SCARRED ARM.

YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR TATTOO MARKS ON ARMS AN' NECK SCARS, HUH? WELL-- AIN'T YOU?

LOGAN WASN'T STARTLED TO FIND A SUICIDE. THEY ARE NOT UNCOMMON EXPERIENCES IN POLICE CELLS. THIS ONE HAD HANGED HIMSELF BY HIS TROUSER BELT...



SERGEANT DOCKERY! YOU'VE GOT A SELF-MADE CORPSE DOWN HERE. WHAT'S THE STORY ON HIM?

HE WAS CAUGHT ACTING SUSPICIOUSLY OUTSIDE A LOAN OFFICE. WE BOOKED HIM AS A VAGRANT. HE GAVE US NO TROUBLE.

HE WOULDN'T. HE WANTED TO BE LOCKED UP ON A MINOR CHARGE. EAGLE TATTOO ON LEFT ARM. NOW-- THE NECK!



AND THE SCAR, THE PLAIN FACE AND THE AVERAGE BUILD. WHEN HE SAW THE NEWSPAPER--



WE LET THEM ALL HAVE PAPERS... KEEPS THEM QUIET. HEY-- WHO IS THIS GUY?..

SAY! HOW DID HE GET THAT PAPER?

THE FINGERMAN! I'VE BEEN ON HIS SAY-- HOW DID YOU KNOW?



I'VE BEEN ON HIS TRAIL LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. HE KNEW HIS TIME WAS UP. WE CAN'T MAKE HIM TALK-- BUT WE'LL GET THE HIGHER-UPS SOMEDAY-- JUST AS SURELY AS WE CLOSED IN ON HIM.

out to the sidewalk and heading in the direction opposite which Sam had gone. That was just to throw any watchers off the scent.

The rain had stopped and the sun was peeping through thin clouds as Hooper circled the block and hopped a cab for the motor freight terminal. Trucks and empty trailers were parked along the cobblestoned street, but there were no drivers or anyone else along the curb when Hooper left his taxi and went in the door to the terminal office. He'd talked briefly to the head dispatcher several days before, but hadn't hinted at anything definite. Now he drew the man aside.

"Two trailer loads of expensive fabrics should have arrived here today. Where are the drivers and helpers who brought 'em in?" Hooper demanded grimly.

"Both drivers and one helper went out on long hauls," the dispatcher told him. "But one of the helpers, a local boy, is laying over for a couple of days. What are you hinting at? The cargoes arrived under seal."

"You might not have noticed that the trailers were backed up to the railroad siding down back," Hooper said. "It's three-thirty now, but at four a bunch of hoodlums will jump the tracks from the used car lot, break the seals and pass those bolts of fabric back to the lot where a couple of old furniture vans are waiting to lug the loot away."

"You're not going to let them pull a theft in our yard?" the dispatcher piped in a little voice for so large a man. "Aren't you calling for a squad to swoop down on 'em?"

"Sit tight," Hooper directed. "I don't want the hoods as much as I want their boss. And he'll be gone before they tackle the job. No matter what happens, don't allow anyone back in the yard, but pretend everything's running as usual. Get it?"

The dispatcher nodded nervously, and stared after Hooper as he headed for the exit to the rear.

The detective picked his way carefully through the huge trailers so he would not be spotted from across the spur track. He crawled under one that was backed up to the siding, removed his new hat and detached the 8mm. movie camera that was clipped to heavy piano wire stapled to the sweat band. Through a wide crack in the plank fence he shot several feet of film showing Cicero Sam giving a last minute briefing to his five hoods. They were gathered at the rear of the used car lot, beside one of the old furniture vans.

Hooper had timed it just right. A minute later, Sam headed across the lot, hopped into his new Cadillac and roared off. Twenty minutes later he'd be forging an ironclad alibi!

Most of the freight handlers were out of the terminal by four. Until the night shift came on, there was very little activity. Alone and partly shielded by some empty crates, Hooper watched the hoodlums cross the tracks and rip open the trailer tail gates with crowbars. Each of them was pulling out heavy bolts of fabric when eight patrolmen led by Captain Morrissey rushed in to sur-

round them.

There was no shooting. Later it was discovered that only one of the hoodlums was armed. None even attempted to escape. They were herded into a police van and taken to the nearest precinct house.

Hooper told Captain Morrissey about the driver's helper, and two cops in a cruising car were sent to his home to pick him up. Meanwhile, Hooper returned to headquarter and got his footage developed in the photo lab.

He ran off the film in the projection room where it was viewed by the chief inspector, his deputy and Captain Blaine of the Robbery Squad. Besides the scene taken that afternoon, there were shots showing Cicero Sam and a hoodlum putting stolen plates on the stolen furniture vans outside a garage in Evanston, and pictures of Sam talking with the helper on a South Side street corner and outside the apartment building in which Sam lived.

After the screening, Detective Hooper displayed the ingenious fasteners that had held the tiny camera inside his tall crowned hat and also the thin flexible shaft cable by which he controlled the camera from his pocket. When not in use, the cable disappeared beneath the back of his coat collar.

"I want to go over and pick up Sam," Hooper told the chief inspector.

"He's all yours — and so is a promotion to detective senior grade!" the chief announced.

Hooper had to wait outside Cicero Sam's apartment till eight-fifteen before the mobster showed up. Sam was scowling when Hooper walked over to him and said: "Let's go, Sam. We're keeping you this time!"

"Who do you think you're kidding?" Sam asked him. "I know what you're trying to pin on me, but I've got an alibi, see?" But he went along with the detective.

The judge set Sam's bail at fifty thousand and he couldn't raise it. Hooper stopped by his cell to see him the next morning. He showed Sam the three gift certificates redeemable at hat stores that he'd received from the sergeant and two younger detectives. They didn't mean anything to Sam.

"How did you get moving pictures of me and that truck helper?" Sam asked in his low growl. "You wasn't carryin' a camera when you passed us on the street."

"That's a secret, Sam," Hooper told him. "Have to keep it under my hat."

Sam didn't get the point even when the evidence was presented in court. His alibi witnesses were cited for contempt and held for trial. As a second offender, Sam was sentenced to twenty years at hard labor. The helper got five years, and the five hoodlums were sent up for terms ranging from seven to ten years. And with his increased pay, Senior Grade Detective Frank Hooper bought a telescopic lens and other camera equipment. The pictures he wanted to take would put many more crooks behind bars!

THE END

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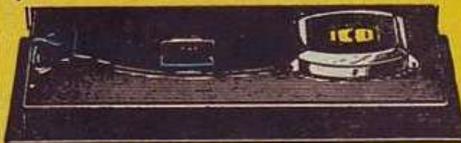
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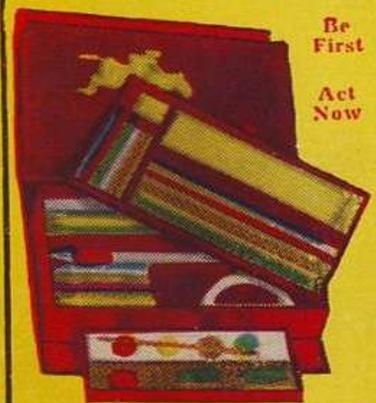


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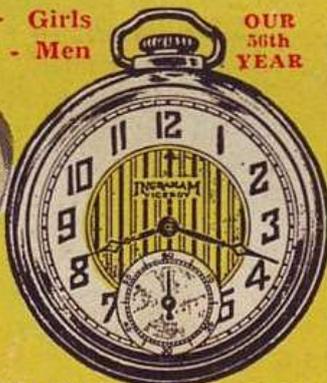
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