

Slip Service

"Dizzy Duo" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

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When a chopper made mincemeat out of Honest Eddie Grub—the Robin Hood of Roxbury—those two screwball newshawks, Snooty and Scoop, stirred up a hot-seat concoction

IT IS a very quiet evening in Boston between the hours of six and seven when everything is at quite a lull everywhere. Me and Snooty Piper walk into a drugstore on Tremont to call a couple of fillies in Waltham. Snooty's doll tells him she has found something better. Mine tells me I would not be a bad soulmate if I wasn't such a heel.

"Who cares?" I says to Snooty. "Mine lips anyway. There is quite a show at the Gayety, so let's get."

Snooty does not answer me. I look around and see him ogling a gorgeous looking cookie that has just come in. She is

not hard for a citizen with cataracts in both eyes to look at. She has a figure like Crawford and eyes like Judy Garland.

"Ah—er—" Snooty says before I can shut him up, "there is a snow storm down south, Toots."

The gal turns sinuously and glares at Snooty Piper. "I beg pardon? You talking to me about a snow s—?"

"Your slip is showin'," Snooty says. "Ha, ha!"

Whack!

"You fresh fish!" the doll says. "I ought to hand you another one."

"No sense of humor, huh?" Snooty says,

testing his front teeth. "It is sloppy lookin'—a slip showin'. It is somethin' in me I can't help when I see—"

"What goes on?"

I do not want to look in the direction of the very harsh voice, but I have to. A big, broad-shouldered citizen who looks familiar to me ankles into the apothecary. He is very handsome in a crude sort of way and is a cross between Bull Montana and Buster Crabbe. He is dressed very smartly in a plaid burlap.

"This weakfish made a pass at me," the dame says and I slide away.

"Now look," Snooty says. "I just mentioned—"

THE big character pulls down the brim of Snooty's green hat with the fingers of his right hand and the thumb goes under Snooty's nose. The big boy puts on pressure. After which he shoves Snooty Piper against the soda fountain and orders a black-and-white in a hurry.

"You let me go," Snooty wails. "I am a representative of the press. I—"

The big customer gets the black-and-white soda and pours it down Snooty's back.

"Let that be a lesson to ya, see?"

"Oh, let's hurry," the dame says, and grabs the citizen by the arm. They go out.

I come out from behind a barrel of molasses kisses and watch Snooty squirm like a cootch dancer.

"Let that be a lesson to you, you crackpot," I says. "Insultin' women—"

Bang! Brr-r-r-r-r-r-t! Bang! Bang!

A slug washes out six bottles of hair tonic on a shelf. Another breaks up a soda that the jerker is shovin' across the marble. I see a black jalopi sliding past the drugstore and there is the natty character who polished off Snooty folding up at the knees. He has got a Betsy in his hand, but he drops it like it is a hot egg. I see the doll huddled

up inside the door with her hands over her ears. She starts in with her shrill pipes and howls like two banshees.

Snooty comes from behind the lending library bookcase punching at a hole in the crown of his skimmer.

"C-call the cops!" I yelp.

"Y-you think they ain't on the way?" Snooty says. "They bumped that taxpayer who assaulted me. That chopper did not have green peas in it, S-Scoop!"

The cops get there in a hurry. One of them takes a quick gander at the citizen lying prone out on the walk and then turns him over to see if he is done. Another says for the dame to stay right where she is, or else. Still another gendarme calls for the homicide squad.

Then all the cops bark at once and tell everybody in the drugstore to freeze where they are.

"W-who was killed?" Snooty asks. "I was almost. Say, you are Officer Magood, huh? I am Snooty Piper of *The Evening Star* an' with me is—"

"Don't remind me," Magood says.

"We know. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy won't like it when he sees it. You was witnesses, hah?"

"We didn't see much," I admit. "We didn't want to git a bullet in the eye."

"That is Honest Eddie Grubb out there," a cop says. "He is deader than last year's styles in dames' hats."

"Talk to the doll," Snooty says. "She was with the lug."

ME AND Snooty are quite shocked. Honest Eddie Grubb was called the Robin Hood of Roxbury, as Eddie was the kind of dishonest citizen who made cops like him. Honest Eddie had a toehold on all the pinball games and slot machines in Boston and Honest Eddie always rounded up the poor kids of Beantown three times a year and took them for a sail and a picnic.

Honest Eddie even made a playground for underprivileged urchins in South Boston.

In due time, Iron Jaw and the coroner and three other flatfeet arrive at the scene of the extermination.

"Anybody touch anythin' here?" O'Shaughnessy yowls, then gets a look at me and Snooty.

"Who let them in so quick?" he yells.

"They was here already," a cop growls. "They saw everythin'."

"By cripes!" Iron Jaw groans, cuffing his derby back over his pate. "If I was called up to the Arctic Ocean to bring back an Eskimo, I would find these crumbs in the criminal's igloo. Well, tell us what happened, Piper!"

"I was in here. A doll slugged me. Her torch ankled in and made somethin' of it. He walked out with that doll there. Then bangety-bang-bang! I ducks. Scoop ducks. I see Honest Eddie do a Leon Errol. A slug goes through my hat and I do not care to see no more."

"Wha-a-a? You didn't identify them killers, hah?" Iron Jaw bays.

"I tried to catch the jalopi," Snooty sniffs. "They wouldn't wait for me. Why don't you pump the cupcake there, as she was on his arm! You waste more time."

Iron Jaw swears at Snooty and then grills the swell number.

"So I meet Eddie here. So is that a crime?" the doll says. "My name? Ziltha Thoth and so what?"

"Say it quick, Iron Jaw," Snooty grins.

The babe says she met Eddie in a night club out on Huntington. "Boy meets gal!" Ziltha chirps. "Ever hear of anythin' like that? It's bein' done, flatfoot. I sing a couple numbers there with the swing band. I make a date with Eddie, but I don't know he is hot. Guns start goin' off. You got all I know. Is—er—Eddie dead?"

"Plenty," Snooty says. "He is not kiddin' out there. He is still Honest Eddie."

"Oh-h!" Ziltha chokes out and swoons.

Cops comb inside and outside the pharmacy. One comes up to Iron Jaw and hands him a warm cigar butt.

"Take a good look, O'Shaughnessy. Lookit the band on that rope. Musta fell out of a hood's mouth. L. V. A guy who has his initials on his smudge pots. Now who would that be, huh? Them initials have got me thinkin'."

"Nothin' could," Iron Jaw quips and keeps looking at the evidence.

"It wouldn't be Louie Vellum?" I ask.

"That's him," Iron Jaw says. "I had it on the tip of my tongue."

"It should've been arsenic," Snooty grins. "Scoop, you are in rare form today."

Now Louie Vellum was a character who was vice chairman of Boston for many moons. Louie was quite crude and got into many tangles with the cops and he did not have Honest Eddie's finesse. Honest Eddie took the play away from Louie and Louie had to sit back and be satisfied with the scratch he took from his dive on Dover Street. It looks like Louie Vellum got to be dissatisfied.

"He better have a airtight alibi," Iron Jaw says. "Tryin' to grab the heavy sugar again, yeah. He finally got up the moxie to knock off Eddie. Gimme your name an' address, sister."

Ziltha says Iron Jaw can reach her any night at the Pink Puma if he wants her. "An' if I was your sister," Ziltha says to Iron Jaw, "I would have a howdah on my back. Ha, ha. That is a divan they put on elephants when they ride 'em. Good luck, boys."

"She is quite a cupcake, isn't she?" Snooty says. "I bet she makes her own slips, too, so would make a good wife."

"Try in' to beat the conscription bill, huh?" Iron Jaw growls at Snooty.

"They are goin' to mechanize you an' use you for a tank, I heard," Snooty counters. "Or was it your overcoat you

enlisted for two years to house twelve soldiers with.”

IT IS all everybody can do to stop a brawl, and the owner of the drugstore asks if he hasn't had enough trouble, for Heaven's sake. We go down to the South End with Iron Jaw and the gendarmes. We find Louie Vellum in his tavern and he says it seems like old times to be visited by so many flatfeet.

“It is a holdup,” Louie says. “Now you bring half the force aroun' t' sell them tickets to a ball, hah?”

“Ha, ha,” Iron Jaw laughs. “Louie, we gotta talk to you. Come in a back room. Honest Eddie Grubb was ventilated an hour or so ago. You couldn't of possibly been in on the job. Where was you the last three hours?”

We go into the back room. Louie says he is very much startled about the news of the assassination.

“I was at a pitcher show from about six thirty until eight,” Louie says. “I kin prove it. I saw Anne Sheridan in Haiti Hotsy Totsy. Boy, has she got oomph!”

“Prove it!” Iron Jaw says. “See anybody who knew ya there?”

“Naw. It was over on Washin'ton Street. Ha, you tryin' to hang a murder rap on Louie, Iron Jaw? Wait, I will call a number.”

Louie fishes into his pocket and gets out a notebook. He thumbs it and finally spots an item. “Gimme Medford 6437,” he says.

“Got the alibi all fixed, huh?” Iron Jaw sniffs.

“Hello, hello,” Louie says nice. “I wish to speak to Miss Millie Minch. Who? I says Millie Minch. She lives there. She's a blonde an'—ha-a-a-ah? Nobody by that name—why I called her there yesterday, you ol' battleaxe. Oh, I am! Well, if I wasn't a gemman, I'd tell you you was a—”

“What an act!” Iron Jaw says. “Now look. Let's stop kiddin' around, Louie. I found this cigar band on a cigar that fell out of the car that had the torpedo in it. You wanted to take over ag'in an' you tagged Honest Eddie. You finally caught up with the character and burned him. Oke, Louie. It will seem like old times takin' you down to the grill.”

“No Millie Minch,” Louie Vellum says very sickly. “Didn't never live there. I—I bet I b-been framed.”

“Wouldn't you think citizens would get more original?” I says to Snooty.

“Lots of guys come in here I know,” Louie says. “I hand out them stogies like a pal.”

“Come on down to the clink, Louie,” Iron Jaw growls. “People will never forgive you for knocking off Honest Eddie.”

Me and Snooty go to the Greek's when we get back to Boston proper.

“That was a fast case,” I says casually.

“I don't think Louie did it,” Snooty says. “He never was a good actor, if you remember. This time he put on a swell act an' brought down the house. If he was kiddin', then you can get filly mignons out of a rhino's knees. There is a terrible crime wave moving in here and we must prevent it, Scoop.”

“A doll would not go to a picture show with a guy,” I sniff, “then pack up an' leave a boarding house where she never was.”

“Oh, I don't know,” Snooty says. “Look at that dame at the bar. Her slip is showin' too.”

“Isn't it awful,” I says. “They all should be arrested. Are you gettin' nutty?”

“It is quite an aversion I have,” Snooty says. “I notice them first thing. Like some citizens shy at painted nails an' shellacked kissers. Let's have another beer.”

The Greek brings it over. He tells us a morsel of news.

“Another faller she ees foun’ shot from in back,” the Athenian gargles. “He ees fran’ of Hones’ Eddie Grubb who she is fin’ shot op in ze first place.”

“Louie had a field day,” I says. “During the next week, the morgue keeper will have to dust off some pallets for more. If I was a taxpayer named Brockton Benny Bilk I would buy me a ticket to Liverpool where it is safer.”

“He is or was Honest Eddie’s closest pal, yeah,” Snooty mumbles. “I have been told that Brockton Benny is quite a bangtail picker and often plunged with three to four figures.”

It is the next day that we hear Louie Vellum is unable to raise twenty grand of bail and so has to stay in the icebox.

“Things ain’t what they used to be,” Snooty tells me. “I can remember when Louie could pick up a hundred G’s overnight. I guess crime pays more than beer taverns and Louie should have knuckled off a bank before taking care of Honest Eddie. I guess criminals get out of practice too, huh?”

“I am glad you admit Louie is guilty.”

“I am not so sure,” Snooty sighs. “But even if he isn’t, what can we do?”

“Check,” I reply.

SNOOTY must be psychic. Just forty-eight hours later there is a terrible to-do in front of the paymaster’s office at the Good Luck Soap Chip factory in Back Bay. It appears that three dishonest crooks seized the week-end scratch or payroll worth eighty thousand fish and did some shooting besides.

The paymaster was rendered defunct, but before he gave up he pinked one of the rough boys with his roscoe and evened the score. The criminals had no time to carry off their corpse so they left him right on the spot.

Me and Snooty go over to headquarters after everything is cleaned up, and listen to Iron Jaw grilling Louie.

“Yeah, they went out an’ tried to raise your bail, Louie. If you git bailed out, we know you was the brains behind this job.”

“I am innercent,” Louie says.

Me and Snooty go over to the morgue and watch them strip a stiff. The morgue attendants unwind a bandage from the deceased’s biceps and toss it aside.

“An old wound,” the guy who lays out cadavers for inspection says.

“W-wait,” Snooty Piper says. “Th-that bandage is not an ordinary—er—I mean that wound is not healed up. He ain’t been shot long.”

“Come on an’ git out of here,” a character with a white coat smelling of the grave grinds out. “You ain’t detectives, are ya? Beat it!”

“Yeah,” Snooty says. His pan is white and I could have knocked the halfwit over if I had breathed hard against him. “I—er—git sick in morgues,” he concludes.

“I don’t take my ice cream there to eat it either,” I admit. “But nothin’ ever scared you before. You are slippin’, Snooty.”

“Slippin’? Er—I—what did you say, Scoop?”

“You heard me. You got drums in your ears.”

“That is what I thought you said. Scoop, Louie did not knock off Honest Eddie.”

“Prove it,” I dare the crackpot.

“Meet me at midnight, Scoop,” Snooty says. “Bring all the dough you got.”

“Sure. I will need somebody to help carry it though. I got four bucks, ha, ha.”

Snooty walks off and leaves me. I watch him almost get hit by a truck. He walks right into a mailbox an’ then lifts his hat and apologizes to it. The last I see of him he is trying to light a paper match with a cigarette and I cannot bear to look any more.

I meet Snooty hours later on Scollay Square. We pool our assets and realize seven eighty.

“Where are we goin’?” I ask quite civilly.

“The Pink Puma,” Snooty replies. “Let us get a cab.”

I am too gaga to put up an argument so I get into a swindle bus at Snooty Piper’s heels. We go down Tremont and Boylston and thence to Huntington. Before I can back out, I find myself turning over my skimmer to the female pirate at the check room.

“Why didn’t you throw it away, chump?” the doll quips. “You would save money.”

“They are fresh here,” I says to Snooty.

‘The headwaiter looks at us nasty too. He finally puts us behind a post and mumbles something about there being too much riffraff in Boston.

We sit there for a while and then we hear a citizen at a mike announce Ziltha Thoth. The spotlight goes on and me and Snooty crane our necks.

Wow! Ziltha is twenty times more gorgeous than when we saw her in mufti. She has got a flimsy gown on that would not keep a pair of partridges warm. Ziltha starts warbling and it is a torch song. She has a very low dulcet voice that she must bring all the way up from her sandal straps.

“Boys,” I gulp. “No wonder citizens rob banks an’—”

“Look over there,” Snooty says. “The character in the tails.”

“It is Brockton Benny Bilk,” I says. “Look at him gape at Ziltha.”

“I am looking,” Snooty says.

When Ziltha ends her song, she gathers up a cloud of chiffon and trips out through the wings.

Brockton Benny gets up and ducks through the tables.

“Our check,” Snooty says to the waiter. “How much, garcong?”

“Seven dollars and fifty cents.”

“A clip joint, hah?” Snooty protests.

“Want to make somethin’ of it?”

“Ha, ha. I am kiddin’.”

We duck out of the Pink Puma without our skimmers as we need the last thirty cents for carfare.

“There is a green limousine outside,” Snooty says. “I bet it is Brockton Benny’s.”

“Let’s go home,” I says. “You saw the initials B. B. on a car, did you? You know what B. B.’s stand for don’t you, Snooty Piper?”

“Shot,” Snooty says.

“Well, does that tell you anythin’, Nero Chan?”

WE HIDE behind a big ashcan and watch citizens come out of Pink Puma. Finally Brockton Benny comes out and there is Ziltha and two husky characters with him. They get into the big jalopi and drive off.

Snooty hails a cab quite nonchalantly when we emerge from our ambush.

“Follow the green limousine, my man,” the nit-wit says to the driver.

We follow Brockton Benny and party to a small apartment house in Brookline. Snooty has the cabby stop about a block away. When the green boiler scoots away, leaving Ziltha, Snooty says for me to follow him.

“I’m comin’ too,” the driver says. “Ha, ha. I ain’t been paid.”

“Take a look at this press badge,” Snooty tells the citizen. “Mr. Guppy of *The Evening Star* is good for anything. You wait for us.”

There is a drugstore making up one corner of the tepee where Ziltha apparently hives up. Snooty leads me in there and steps into a phone booth. He calls up headquarters. I listen.

“So maybe I’ll have trouble and wish you would send over a cop or two here,”

Snooty says. "What? Louie got bail only an hour ago and that cools him an' his gang for the Good Luck Soap Chip job . . . You'll send the cops to stop me from molesting citizens? Well, as long as they arrive. G'bye."

I follow Snooty into the apartment house. We tag Ziltha's flat and go up in a self-service hoist.

"She does not live alone," Snooty says. "There was a name on that same mail box with hers. B. Ware."

"I do not like the name," I says.

Snooty rings a bell and my knees start melting. Ziltha answers the door and peeks out at us. Snooty shoves his foot in the door.

"Remember me?" the crackpot chirps. "I am from the press and I bet you could use publicity, huh?"

"No kiddin'?" Ziltha says. "Who couldn't. Come on in, Elmer."

We walk in. Ziltha says to park the carcasses while she throws a zombie or something together.

Ziltha walks into a little kitchen and Snooty shuts the door on her and turns a key in a lock. Ziltha screeches bloody murder and I wait for guns to go off.

"What are you up to?" I demand of Snooty.

The crackpot goes to a closet and begins to toss various articles of feminine apparel out onto the floor. I tell him to stop at once and for us to get out of there. Something hits me in the face and I see it is a wig when I pick it up. A blonde toupee.

"Put that in your pocket, Scoop. It is evidence. I just found what I wanted."

The door opens. A red-headed dish lets out a yelp and fires off a Betsy. The bullet fans my ear and then I duck behind a divan. Three bullets chug into the upholstery.

"Stickup, huh?" the doll says. "Come out of there, you twerp, you! I'll phl-l-l-b-byph-h-h-ht."

I stick my dome up over the parapet and see that Snooty has got his hand over the doll's mouth.

"C-come h-here an' tie her up," Snooty says. "This must be B. Ware. I g-got this g-gang. Ha, ha!"

ZILTHA is still kicking at the door and howling like a Sioux squaw sitting in cockleburs. I have quite a time getting the dame's feet tied up, and once she loosened three of my molars with a nice quick kick. B. Ware is trussed up just as three cops come in.

"Hello," Snooty says. He waves a robin's-egg-blue dame's slip at the gendarmes. "I have got the cupcake that put Honest Eddie on a spot and I bet this filly on the floor was Louie's alibi. We will put a blonde wig on her and then take her down to let Louie look at her. Call up headquarters and tell them to send some husky policemen to pick up Brockton Benny Bilk!"

A cop lets Ziltha out. She takes a gander at the blue slip and tries to get it away from Snooty.

"Now look," Snooty says. "Just relax or I will have to slug you one. We must wait for Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy and some others."

"You got nothin' on me, punk!" Ziltha says.

"Only a slip," Snooty says. "Tsk-tsk."

We wait twenty minutes for the flatfeet to show up. Iron Jaw puffs his way into the boudoir and wants to know what we are up to now.

"Well," Snooty says. "Look at this blue slip of Ziltha's. Look at her close, Iron Jaw, and you will see she is the doll who was with Honest Eddie when he got the works. Well, the character who was bumped off at the soap company had a bandage around his arm when he was denuded in the morgue."

“It seems that Honest Eddie got a shot or two in before he succumbed. One pinked a torpedo. This same torpedo was knocked off at the soap company—and isn’t it very odd that he should have wore a bandage taken off this blue slip? You see where Ziltha tore it? Now I have the bandage took off the stiff in my pocket here. It should fit nicely.”

Ziltha gets very bilious looking and bites off a painted nail.

“Huh?” Iron Jaw chokes out.

“Yeah. Now this doll who lives with Ziltha was the one who went to the picture show with Louie and then denied ever having known the old crime specialist. There is the wig she wore that night. Scoop, you take it off your dome. This is no time to act silly.”

“Don’t talk,” B. Ware tosses at Ziltha.

“You better, both of you,” Snooty says. “Before Brockton Benny does.”

“Huh?”

“Yeah. We got the net out for him, sugar,” I says.

“Tell me if I’m wrong,” Snooty Piper says to Ziltha. “Brockton Benny plunged on the ponies and maybe was losing plenty. Maybe he did not make dough fast enough with the way Honest Eddie was doing things, and he figured if he could remove Eddie, he would take over the town and get the scratch rolling in faster by knocking off payrolls and banks and such.

“Maybe he got some of Louie’s old gang and organized them with the dishonest citizens working for Honest Eddie., Brockton Benny was not making enough as it was, and besides, a dish like you is quite expensive an’—”

“Nuts!” Ziltha said.

“When Honest Eddie’s torpedo got pinked, he had to get first aid just in case Honest Eddie had garlic rubbed on his bullets. This was one of the hangouts. He ducked here and you bandaged him up after putting balm on his wound. I told Scoop Binney I bet you made your own slips. Ha, ha.”

“I ain’t talkin’,” Ziltha says.

“Okey,” Snooty grins. “We will let Brockton Benny do it. I remember it bein’ said that Benny overloaded a hot seat once by rattin’. He got off with two years. Anybody send for Louie?”

“I did,” a cop said.

“He will identify this other moll as the one who framed him,” Snooty says. “It is lucky I hate to see slips showin’, huh? I remembered Ziltha’s bein’ a nice robin’s-egg-blue with tattin’ at the hem.”

“I’ll—I’ll talk,” Ziltha snaps.

“Y’ think I won’t,” the other cookie says. “Me an’ Ziltha didn’t know they was goin’ t’ put on rough stuff. Yeah, it was like this weak chin here says. I got Louie tangled up so the heat would go off Honest Eddie.”

We take the dolls down to the can. Louie is there and everybody shakes hands with him. Louie is very happy over it all and he should be.

It is not long before Brockton Benny is shoved into a cell. He swears something fierce. He has to let down his locks as the dames are still talking. He owns up to tossing a Louie Vellum Corona out of the bump-off boiler.

“S-say, you mugs,” Benny says to me and Snooty at last. “How did y’ git wise?”

“Ask Ziltha,” Snooty replies. “Her slip was showin’. Ha, ha, ha!”