

Pistol-Packin' Pappas

"Dizzy Duo" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

That crime-chasing crackpot, Snooty Piper, learns that while music may soothe the beast, singing "Lay That Pistol Down" softens no killers.

IT IS quite a block-buster that hits the city rooms of the Fourth Estate in Boston one day just when crime seemed scarcer than Nazis in Moscow. The news comes in that a well-known sub-deb has been removed from circulation while on her way to the Back Bay canteen to help lift the morale of the armed forces. The canteen is not far from the Copley Plaza and is financed by Abigail Hepplethwaite, whose ancestors go all the way back to the fathers of the citizens who drew up the plans for the Mayflower.

Abigail waited three days before she called the gendarmes and the press; she said Bainbridge Brumble was afraid to lest the rough characters knock off Peregrine.

Me and Snooty Piper arrive at the same time as the posse from LaGrange Street, and we have quite a spirited rhubarb with Iron

Jaw O'Shaughnessy before we get into the Brumble parlor. Iron Jaw is called a detective and he never had the courage of his convictions, because he'd never got a conviction.

"Where do you two 4F's think you are goin'?" the big moose says very nastily. "Who said you could?"

"Mr. Guppy," Snooty replies. "He owns *The Evening Star*, remember? *The Evening Star* would not run unless it was backed by a certain citizen of Back Bay, who likes the police commissioner and always campaigns for him. If it wasn't for a campaign, he would not git elected and somebody else would hire detectives. What other commissioner would hire you, Iron Jaw?"

There is some snickering just inside the hall. "Well put, Piper." Abigail says. "O'Shaughnessy, you get seventy-two

dollars if you answer that question. Come in, boys.”

Sometimes you have to feel sorry for the big flatfoot. Iron Jaw fell down on Tremont once and hit his noggin on the curb; they had to call the engineers that raised the *Normandie* to get him to a first aid station.

Abigail explains quite fully.

“I guess you all know that Bainbridge Brumble is nowheres near having to call for an advance on his social security,” the old doll says. “And you’ve seen Peregrine’s picture in the newspapers and magazines. She is no Hopi Indian squaw, is she? If I was as photogenic, I would chase Sinatra until I caught him. Well, Peregrine started out for the canteen and never arrived. For three days we kept mum and figured maybe she got amnesia, but that is too old a gag, boys.”

“You think she was kidnaped then?” a police reporter tosses. “Maybe she run away and is a Wac.”

A BIGAIL sniffs and says she is doing the talking. “No kiddin’. Then it was a general down in the Pentagon wrote Bainbridge Brumble the note sayin’ she could git out of the Wacs if he got a hundred grand. Peregrine is held for ransom, but nobody is going to do anything until the lettuce is paid. They are Brumble’s orders. He has the special delivery bite in his pocket and will not give up. It was in Peregrine’s own handwriting, so you needn’t plan on looking for typewriters or handwriting experts.

“You will write in the papers, boys, that Peregrine is only missing and might have lost some of her marbles. No cracks she was filched, see? In the meantime, you can snoop around and act all the time like you were not very interested, which should not be hard for O’Shaughnessy, huh?”

“You’re a card,” Snooty chirps. “Ah, er, was Peregrine a neurotic?”

“What difference is it what church she went to?” Iron Jaw yelps.

“Oh, brother!” Abigail sighs. “Well, now you mention it, she has been a little upset lately. She has been pitching the woo with a member of the armed forces named Shyzbozky—by that name you know the character has no more colonial blood in him than Tojo, the dog-faced boy.

“Peregrine wants to wed with this Skyz—Slizb—the guy I said. But Bainbridge Brumble would cut her off without a jit if she dared abscond with the Pole. It does not mean anything to Bainbridge that the character once packed the leather for Notre Dame.”

“Aw, it is simple,” Iron Jaw sniffs. “She is pullin’ an act t’ soften up the old miser. She will show up most any day and say she had this magnesia and didn’t remember what she was doin’. Maybe she even run off an’ married the soldier or to make her own way.”

“Peregrine couldn’t support herself if mink wrappers was given away with soap chips and steaks was sellin’ for a dime a cow,” Abigail sniffs. “If she runs away, wouldn’t she take an extra girdle or toothbrush, don’t you think? She only carried two good books and her knitting when she ankled out for the canteen.”

“Ah, was Peregrine a vivacious sort of pigeon?” Snooty asks. “Did she like to be in the groove and let her locks down on occasion?”

“You can say that again, Piper.”

“Hm-m-m,” Snooty mutters like he was almost bright and had half an idea.

“Nope, Brumble won’t let her marry that soldier no matter what act she puts on,” Abigail says. “Compared to the Brumble pride, peacocks are introverts. There is a dictionary in the library there, O’Shaughnessy, if that one floored you.”

“You git Brumble down here and make him tell where he is to deliver the cabbage,”

Iron Jaw says. "We'll just nab 'em."

"Oh, don't be silly, Iron Jaw. Once the bulls showed and the money did not come back to the hideout, the gorillas guarding Peregrine would knock her off and Rommel out of there. Don't none of you ever read detective stories?"

"Awright, what you expect us t' do without clues?" Iron Jaw gripes.

"I wouldn't know, tiny," Abigail counters. "But I have seen what you couldn't do with clues, Iron Jaw. The best thing is for Brumble to deliver the scratch, get Peregrine back vertical if he can. After which, you cops will have to go out and try to catch the culprits."

"No wonder crime pays," I says. "When the public cooperates an'—"

"Let's go up and take a peek at Peregrine's boudoir," Snooty says. "Maybe there is a clue there."

It is a very sweet-smelling hideout Peregrine occupies on the second floor of the Brumble barracks when she is at home. Iron Jaw and his crew look everywhere for something to go on, like farewell notes and such. They find a few mash notes from Shyzbozky of the Tank Corps, but he does not say anything about his doll meeting him off the reservation to get welded.

"What perfume!" Snooty says, and sits there and drinks it in.

"They all smell the same t' me," Iron Jaw grunts. "Don't tell me you'll git a bloodhound and go lookin' for a doll wearin' that stuff, Piper. Ha! Only about four hundred thousand dolls spray that fancy flit on them in Boston."

"But this is instinctive," Snooty says. "There are perfumes and perfumes, and detectives and detectives, and if the shoe fits, put it on. Rembrandt was a painter and so was my Aunt Sooky which means—"

"Oh, shut up," I says. "We are investigatin' a possible crime."

"I wish I knew what kind," the crackpot

says. "Well, we are wastin' time here. Let's go to the Greek's and cook up what we will write for the last edition, Scoop."

"I bet she run off and become a Wac," Snooty says. "Mm-m-m, just let me get one more sniff of that eau-de-paradise, Scoop. Yeah, it is like guys used to do when they were crossed in love or forged a check, join the Foreign Legion. She'll turn up maybe as Mrs. Shyzbozky. Abigail is makin' a subway out of a gopher hole. I could almost forget it."

THAT evening and the next A.M. the journals print about six sticks on the inside pages regarding the lost Back Bay babe. It says for the police of out-of-town cities to be on the lookout for "a very comely canary wearing a thousand fish worth of Persian lamb, talking with an A broader than Beacon Street, and carrying the best sellers, *How Green Was My' Alley?* and *Gideon Varnish*."

It does not seem possible that such a dame would not be tagged right away, but thirty-six hours later the cops have no trace of the Back Bay babe. Snooty starts acting psychopathic. I know he is beginning to think very seriously about the case. I asked him in the Greek's what he thought he knew.

"Not quite nothin'," the fathead says. "But I am sure the doll is in the hands of very bad characters now. They would put a kink in her windpipe or carve up her throat if they got in the mood. Wasn't Brumble supposed to hand over the scratch last night?"

"I thought that was the deadline," I mumble.

It is just two hours later that we are riding to Brumble's in a LaGrange Street jeep as the Back Bay biggie has called for the cops and the reporters. We find Brumble pacing the floor of the library and using very disreputable language never taught at

Yarvard.

“They crossed me,” Brumble yelps. “The dirty crooks! I handed over the ransom and they haven’t given back Peregrine. Oh, do you think—?”

“It ain’t good,” Snooty says. “I guess you never met up with Charlestown and Sing Sing graduates, huh? They are no Phi Kappa Stigmas. Didn’t you get a good gander at the go-between?”

“Of course not. I was told to leave the ransom in an old mail box in front of a deserted farm in Saugus and then get away as fast as I could go,” Brumble said. “Oh, if I could have Peregrine back, I’d—”

“Let her marry Sklizbotxky?” Snooty queries just before Iron Jaw shoved him into a fireplace.

“Never!” Bainbridge Brumble said, and strikes a pose like you see in *East Lynne*. “Better she would be in her gr—”

“Could be,” Iron Jaw snaps. “If I was Peregrine, I would of run away from you without bein’ grabbed. So now we can chase the bad men, huh?”

“Of course. Why do you think I asked you persons here?”

“To cut a melon,” Snooty says. “I’ll take fifty shares of Soy Bean Radiator Caps Preferred. Let’s git out of here, Scoop.”

“Do,” Iron Jaw says. “Before I throw you out.”

COMES night, we get a murder. The corpse is stretched out in a ditch in Allston and all signs show that the unfortunate taxpayer alighted from an auto which had been moving very fast, but which did not bother him as he was defunct before he left the party. He was quite a dude as we all can see.

“Looks like the rackets are goin’ again,” Iron Jaw says. “How long has he been here like this, Doc?”

“I’d say almost twenty-four hours,” the stiff appraiser opines. “Beginnin’ to—er—”

“Yeah,” I says. “The air here—if it wasn’t he had not got a haircut, I’d leave very quickly. His hat stayed on as it fit tight, Snooty, and you can see it held in the smell of the tonic the barber put on his scalp.”

“All identification took off him,” Iron Jaw complains. “Won’t we never git a clue? Them rags he is wearin’ never came out of Raymond’s basement.”

“Wa-a-it a minute,” a cop says and looks closer at the cadaver. “Why, this is the remains of Phidippides Pappas, O’Shaughnessy. He gives us trouble sometime ago with artichokes. He is the biggest wholesale flower operator in the Hub and was supposed to have gone legit. He also has a piece of a night club near Park Square. It look like Pappas tried to grab all the posy territory and was knocked off.”

Well, it is late the next day and the remains of Phidippides Pappas rests in a mournful manse on Columbus Avenue. Me and Snooty get the notice that most of the unlawful citizens of Boston are crowding the snuffle salon to pay their respects. More than that they are more indignant than crooks usually are.

We go down there and find that a special traffic cop is on duty, with about a hundred citizens of doubtful occupation milling about and mumbling down their rain barrels. Me and Snooty recognize some characters with whom we have had business in the past.

“What a convention,” Snooty says. “There is Freddy the Finch and Luggy Leech. Five-by-Five Floogey is over by the bier with Benny the Blood. Let’s chat with them.”

“I would rather be at a lecture,” I says.

Luggy Leech spots us and he comes at us with four other mugs. “Tell us who did it, Piper, if y’ know!”

“I wish I did,” Snooty says.

“You’re stallin’,” Luggy says. “Jus’ give us a tip an’ we’ll take care of the

ginzbo, as there never was a squarer shooter than Pappas. If he was mixed up with a deal, it was a very dignified one where he would not git mixed with the D.A.

"Phid never crost nobody in his life. He even sent dough 't crooks who wasn't doin' so well. He was knocked off for helpin' or defendin' somebody, Piper. You come acrost wit' the mug's name."

"It is nice to have such pals, isn't it?" I says to Snooty. "It is so touchin'."

"Look," Snooty says to Benny the Blood. "Did the Greek have a doll?"

"Yeah. She was a swell number, too. This'll kill that babe," Luggy cuts in. "She models around town an' has got what most other babes ask why they haven't. She ain't been in here yet, but she'll show. Her name is Cozette Castorino; she and Pappas was goin' t' plight their troughs, Piper. Look, if you are holdin' out— Look, we kin save the state a lot of dough by personally pumpin' off the louse!"

"Hold it," Freddy the Finch grunts. "Here comes the chick now. Take a look, pals."

ALL the mourners split up and make a path for the pigeon to Phidippides' bier. Snooty's green hat spins around on his scalp. He gets a little gaga and holds onto me. The deceased's torch is a tall number wearing a black silk dress, which looks like it was just good black ink poured over her, and she wears a black fur piece around her neck. There is a very thin black veil over her pan and her gams—! The doll has more curves than the Revere Beach steeplechase.

"Scoop, she is outa this world," Snooty says. His silly face is as pale as a haddock's bib.

"If she had been with Pappas, you wouldn't be kiddin'," I says. "Yeah, whatever she missed in the way of pulchritude, she went back for before it was too late."

The babe pulls a black hanky out from under a strap on her patent leather bag and starts dabbing at her mascara. Benny the Blood starts weeping and I says to myself I have seen everythin' now. Luggy comes up close and says:

"There, if you know the rat now, you should oughter leave us know, pal. Lookit that gal as she is—"

It was all very touching. All the flowers heaped up around Phidippides Pappas start to smell even sweeter and I turn to ask Snooty which ones give off such a haunting aroma. But the creep is over by the bier and has got Cozette by the elbow, and is steering her back to the exit.

"It is no use t' spoil your makeup," Snooty says to the gorgeous number. "It won't bring him back from across the Jordan. If he'd only gone on the East Boston ferry, then there'd be a chancet. An I would ask when I knock off is t' have a beautiful creature like you let down the floodgates when—"

"Oh, shut up," I says. I see Snooty's knees are weaker than the bereft pigeon's and have to go over and support him. We put the babe in a swindle jeep and watch it go down Columbus.

"Let's go to a drug store and look through a telephone directory, Scoop," Snooty says.

"Boy, you smell wonderful," I says, "Let's start keepin' steady company, Snooty."

"This is no laughin' matter," the crackpot says. I follow him to the nearest apothecary's and he looks through the book, then calls half a dozen numbers. When he comes out of the booth, he says we are going over to Boylston and consult an expert on sweet water.

"The water commissioner?" I ask.

WE ENTER a very snazzy establishment on the second floor of

a building on the very fashionable thoroughfare called Boylston. I read what is on the door. *Lavalliere Freres et Cie.* "Huh," I says. "Parfoomerie—"

A foreign-looking character greets us, then stands with one hand on his hip, while the other straightens out a lock of his coiffure. I expect the citizen to tug at his girdle at any minute.

"Let's git out of here, Snooty," I whisper.

"Ah, you are ze what-you-call-heem—ze axpert on ze perfoomery, *nestle pa?*" Snooty addressed the panty-waist.

"*Oui,*" replies the Frenchy. "You have perhaps ze sample, non? Of course eet ees ze mos' expensive perfume in all ze world we are interest' in, M'sewer. You don't look like ze gentlemen would have more zan ze cheap—"

"I will let that pass, sweetheart," Snooty says. Then, he takes a filmy black hanky out of his pocket and waves it in the Frog's face. "If what is spraped on this nosedoily, M'sewer, is Wellworth five-and-ten delightful dew, then you have beast in you."

The citizen's eyes bug out and he calls his partner who also is no Commando type. If anything, the little foreigner is more repulsive.

"Ah, Onray!" the first perfume expert says. "*Ici,* an' just take ze one leetle sniff, *oui.* There ees only one perfume in all ze worl' such as thees."

"*Oui,* already I know what eet ees, Ah, ze supply she run out when ze Boche tak' Paree, Rainay! Zees ees ze precious *La Lure D'Amour Toujours.* Eet ees incredible, *oui?*"

"An' hard to believe, too, huh?" Snooty says. "How much is an ounce of this—what you said?"

"*Sacre bleu!* One hun' red dollars ze ounce. Now even more, *oui.* Perhaps I would say one hun' red feefty—"

"Come on, Scoop," Snooty says. "When you have no clues, you have t' follow your nose, hah?"

"But, where ees eet you get ze perf—?"

"Huh, M'sewer?" Snooty calls back. "Jus' tear off ze top of a pianer and send it in. So long. I wisht one of you could cook, I might—Scoop, must go to the Greek's and have a couple of snorts and then think things over. Oh, what I am thinkin'!"

"All right," I says when we reach the oasis. "Talk slow and then tell me you know who knocked off Phidippides Pappas."

"Oh, him?"

"Well, who else was rubbed out, you mental deficit?"

"I am not sure if it happened yet," Scoop," Snooty says. "Haven't you caught on?"

"I wish I wasn't so stupid," I reply.

"Who would you go to if you wanted cough drops?" Snooty asks. "The Smiths, of course. If it was pickles, you'd consult Heinzie. You trade with old-established firms. Now if you wanted somebody kidnaped—"

I start shivering and I grab at Snooty's arm. "Y-you mean you are connectin' up the murder of Phidippides Pappas with the disappearance of Peregrine Brumble? No, Snooty—please—"

"Huh? What is so silly about that, Scoop? There was a war in Africa once and it burned Adolph's rompers at Burk's Garden. I called up Mrs. Brumble and she said where Peregrine got the La Lure Damoor—we will go out and hunt up Cozette Castorino and ask her why—you'll find out, Scoop."

GOING out, we walk toward Scollay Square. It is an hour after dusk and the dimout is on. A cab pulls up close to the curb as we are about to cross Tremont. A guy calls to us. We go to the cab door and

then two roscoes are poked right into our pans.

"There is a mistake," Snooty says.

"Come on, smart guys," a very gruff voice says. "Climb in fast, or the white wings will have to mop you up right there."

We get in. There is a doll with the frog-throated character and you only need one guess. It is Cozette and she also holds something that is not filled with jelly beans. The cab heads south.

"I don't git it," Snooty says. I am too scared to make a grunt.

"You will," the babe snaps. "I figured it was you grabbed that handkerchief, weak chin. Pretty bright boy, huh? Know your perfumes?"

"They call him Snooty," I remind her.

"Too bad," the big gorilla says. "Now we gotta bump off three of ya."

"One is Peregrine Brumble," Snooty says.

"Jackpot!" Cozette snickers.

They toss us into a room somewhere in the Hub after tying and gagging us. A doll is sitting in a chair in the same fix and her big peepers are not twinkling. It looks like the end and I try to remember if I paid the last bite on the double indemnity policy.

Snooty Piper starts rolling across the floor and he gets to Peregrine's pretty suede pumps and starts sawing his bonds against a very sharp buckle. It is like a character attacking the wall of China with a nail file.

Out in the next room the dishonest characters are deciding what to use on us, gas, a shiv, the roscoes, or the strangler's necklace.

I have given up. I see the big book on the floor near the Brumble cookie. It is *Gideon Varnish*. I can hear Cozette and the gorilla packing stuff in suitcases. All at once the key turns in the lock. Snooty rolls away from the doll's feet. The tough character grins in at us.

"We'll be back in a flash with the sash—weight, pals," the evil taxpayer says. "We gotta go out an' steal a jalopy 'fore we knock y' off. All comfy?"

The door shuts and is locked again. Snooty goes to work faster than a beaver that is behind on a construction contract. I guess the buckle on Peregrine's shoe is sharper than it looks as Snooty soon has his hands loose. He gets us untied and pulls the gags out of oral cavities and says:

"Now, what'll we do?"

"I wish Shyzbozky was here," I gulp, my mouth still as dry as a Death Valley summer. "It is only about nine stories from the ground."

"We will have to fight to the last," Snooty says and then Peregrine starts ruing her folly.

"Oh, I was a fool," the Back Bay cutey moans. "I arranged to be kidnaped so I could get half the ransom money; then Stanislaus and I could get married. Pater refused to allow it and would have cut me off without—"

"I thought so all the time," Snooty says. "Of all the screwy dames—now you know crime don't pay. The crooks crossed you up an'—"

"Only one of them," Peregrine sniffles. "The other tried to—"

"I know that, too," Snooty says. "You know everythin', you gland case!" I howl. "Now find out how we will live to be eighty, you comic book crime buster!"

"Sh-h-h!" Snooty yelps. "I hear them out there. Get one of the books Scoop, and when the big bosco opens the door, let him have it. I'll take *Gideon Varnish*. Peregrine, you grab those steel knittin' needles and be ready in case we are losin'."

"You are wonderful," Peregrine says.

"Look at him about five minutes from now," I says through clicking bicuspid. "Then tell me. Oh, he is comin'."

THE door opens very slowly and then Snooty heaves the book of the month. It catches the gorilla right in his bay window and I thought I heard glass break. But he is a very tough character and recovers fast.

On top of that, Cozette fires bullets past him and one takes an ear-ring off the Back Bay beaut. I throw the book at the brunette and it bounces off her, stained with lipstick. She lets out a blood-curdling screech and topples onto a divan.

By this time, the big beast has Snooty Piper on the floor like a tiger rug and is pushing Snooty's face as flat as a flapjack, while he reaches for the roscoe that is not far away.

It is then that Peregrine feels the old pioneer moxie in her blue blood and rushes to the attack. Peregrine rams the steel knitting needle into the seat of the gorilla's herring-bones. A roar like you hear in the Franklin Park zoo at feeding time shakes the walls. The tough boy hops off Snooty's person with all the alacrity of a toad spotting a fly. He hits his noggin against the wall and folds up.

The brunette comes through the door, a real live pistol-packing mama, and I stick out my foot and trip her up. Peregrine takes over and puts a knitting needle close to Cozette's Adam's apple and chirps:

"Lay that pistol down, babe, lay that pistol down. Pistol-packin' ma-a-ma—"

"What a gal!" Snooty says as he ties up the gorilla with the ropes we shed. Then four policemen, and the superintendent of the apartment house, and a dozen tenants break in.

"It is all right," Snooty says. "We got the guilty parties. This is Peregrine Brumble who had herself—who was kidnaped. Meet a very rough guy who knocked off Phidippides Pappas, officers. He will soon be saying 'Good mourning, judge!'"

We are all at headquarters. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy sits in a chair and starts

sagging like a punctured balloon. His lower jaw hangs down like a village idiot's.

"You see Pappas was a very honest operator and tried to stop his partners from rubbing out Peregrine and keeping all the scratch. Every respectable crook in town will tell you how the Greek always leveled. Well, they bumped him off.

"But the torch who crossed Pappas, Cozette, went nuts over Peregrine's exclusive perfume and she found a smidge of it in Peregrine's reticule which she put on her nose doily. Having a very sensitive organ of smell," Snooty garbles with hardly a stop for air, "I know I smelled the same aroma in the corpse grooming parlor as I smelled in Peregrine's boudoir. So I lifted the hanky, but Cozette had a hunch I did. It is a miracle that I am here to live to tell the tale."

"So she arranged for her own kidnaping," the D. A. says, looking quite severely at the chastened Peregrine.

"Nobody can prove she did, only me," Snooty sniffs. "I got a bad memory. Anyway isn't a murder rap enough to rid society of a booby trap like Big Bertie? The doll has ratted everything about the double-cross. Anyway, you try and press charges against Peregrine, as her father is Bainbridge Brumble, who is a personal friend of Abigail Hepplethwaite, who owns most of Guppy's stock and is friend of the police com—"

"You aren't kiddin', Piper," Abigail says, barging in. "I would have been here sooner, but I was havin' a run of luck with the pasteboards an'— Why—Iron Jaw, you got a black eye!"

We found out later that O'Shaughnessy had worked the case the wrong way as usual. He went down to Camp Bix to try and force a confession out of Stanislaus Shyzbozky of the Tank Corps. The Pole hit Iron Jaw a honey and was trying to run a tank over the detective when other soldiers

came to the rescue.

“One thing I want to know,” I says.
“How did you know all the time Peregrine hired her own kidnapers?”

“Use your dome, Binney,” Snooty sniffs. “She is a gal always in the groove. Would she go to a canteen filled with swell-lookin’ service guys just to knit and read books? It is silly. She was preparing to be hived up for a week or so until the Brumble

lettuce showed, so she took her knitting and the books. And no model can afford sweet dew at a hundred and fifty and ounce.

“So there you are, Scoop. Pappas tried to level with Peregrine but was outvoted. She met Pappas at that night club near Park Square, as she knew he had a past and would know who was the best kidnaper to trade with. You think she’ll get to marry Shyzbozky?”