

Your Honey or Your Life!

"Dizzy Duo" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

Only nuts would think like Snooty Piper, the Evening Star's newshound. But when a crime was as batty as the killing of Woo Woo Jopp, only Snooty could follow the cockeyed path to the business end of a badman's Betsy.

ME AND SNOOTY PIPER are sitting in the Greek's one afternoon, sipping beer, crime news being as scarce as morale in the Reich. Snooty starts making with philosophy, which is as becoming to him as a fur scarf on a wart hog.

"Life is one thing leading to another, Scoop," Snooty says. "For want of a horseshoe nail once, a big battle was lost. A spider climbin' a wall helped a Scotchman lick England once. Big oaks out of little acorns grow.

"Once my uncle Guthrie dropped a banana skin on the sidewalk in front of his house. He saw a cop slip on it. So he went out the back door and left town so's he would not be sued for negligence and

damages. He took a bus which skidded and went over a bridge. Uncle Guthrie collected ten grand for injuries, settled with the cop for two C's an' made plenty on the deal."

"He could've been killed," I says.

"Nothing is perfect all the time," Snooty says. "Everything you do has some effect on the next thing you do, Scoop."

"I know it," I says. "One beer always leads to another. I do not want to hear any more about—"

The phone rings. Nick comes from behind the bar and answers it. "You won't tell me? Why, what do I know?" Nick says. "Is Piper here? Ha, last time I am taking stock, I put down appreciation on him for furnitures with fixtures yet. All

right, so keep your shirt where she is. Oh, Piper!”

Snooty answers the phone. He comes back and says the cops have picked up a very cold corpse in a flat on Standish Place in Back Bay.

“A cop tipped me, Scoop. I got a tip about two weeks ago he was buying black market butter in a stationery store. I trailed him an’ caught him. I told him it would be a good idea for us to git to understand each other, like if he got a hot bit of police gossip—see how one thing leads to—?”

“Oh, come on,” I says. “You are a one-man Gestapo, Snooty. You are an extortionist and a blackmailer, both. So you did not report the stationer?”

“I did,” Snooty says. “The joint was raided, but the cops did not find even a speck of margarine. The character must have quite a hiding place for the butter. Well, let’s go and help the cops, Scoop.”

WE REACH the murder scene twenty minutes later. Iron Jaw and four other cops are there, as well as a very hysterical redhead wearing a negligee trimmed with maribou that you could have crushed up into a ball and crammed into a dice box.

The character reclining on the rug has been ventilated with more than a jellybean Betsy. The cadaver appraiser claims he has been in the next world for almost sixteen hours.

“He sure is not the life of the party,” Snooty says. “He looks quite familiar to say the least.”

“An’ the least you say the better for you, you weakfish,” Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy snaps. “You as much as pick up a piece of lint and I will slug you.”

“Ain’t we in a nice mood this aft?” Snooty says. “Well, what is the secret, you big gland case? Who is the victim?”

“Woo Woo Jopp,” a cop says.

“Oh,” Snooty says. “He has seen more rackets than Bill Tilden and has had at least forty loves. Ha!”

“That ain’t funny,” the redhead says. “As a widow I demand some respect!” And she starts weeping again. Between long sniffles, she ogles a piece of paper she has in her hand. .

“Now let’s git down to business,” O’Shaughnessy says and pushes Snooty over a divan. “Mrs. Jopp, you got a good idea who Woo Woo’s enemies was? An’ don’t tell me Woo Woo was in an honest business, as I would not believe it sittin’ on a New Testament factory.”

“All I know,” the carrot-top wails, “is that Woo Woo had a chance to buy out the picture-snappin’ business in all Boston night spots, as Nibsy Kush has to sell out an’ go South for his health.”

“Nibsy contracted or-else-itis, huh?” Snooty observes.

“He did not,” the redhead snaps at Snooty. “He has a bad pump. Woo Woo and Nibsy closed the deal when somethin’ happened an’—well, what is the use? What can I lose now besides a chinchilla coat?” The babe starts bawling again.

“Git hold of yourself,” Iron Jaw says. “Give me a suspect.”

“If you ever got one by your own self,” Snooty says, “that will be the day when I play *Don’t Fence Me In* on a harp without a single lesson. That is a very becoming green cravat the corpse is wearing, isn’t it?”

Iron Jaw grits his teeth, then says, “Go on, sister. As you were sayin’—”

“Everythin’ is goin’ along awright, when along comes this Little Musso. I used to keep company with him, but he threw me over when he got pinched for printin’ gas coupons. He has been out to get me. He told Woo Woo about me bein’ over in a night club in Chelsea, that I was sittin’ in a guy’s lap. Well, I couldn’t

prove I wasn't, so Woo Woo says he is not buyin' no chinchillas for a two-timin' babe.

"Then Little Musso comes over. He says he is in the chips once more and will marry me if I can get loose from Woo Woo. He was sorry about what happened and might even buy me a chinchilla, give him time. He would do anythin', he said, to get me back."

"Oh, brother," Snooty says. "What did you say to that?"

"I ast Woo Woo to gimme a divorce, which he wouldn't," the redhead says. "Little Musso said Woo Woo would or else. I heard him tell Woo Woo."

"Now you have no chance to git the chinchilla from either one as Woo Woo is defunct, an' Little Musso has quite a chance of keeping an appointment with the chef in the state rotisserie," Snooty says. "It is quite a beautiful romance, isn't it, boys? Your honey or your life!"

"What's that letter you got there?" Iron Jaw asks sternly.

"It ain't," the babe says. "It is a deposit slip for that chinchilla coat." She starts weeping once more. I am very sure that if Woo Woo had chinchilla fur instead of plain ordinary epidermis, she would have skinned him before the cops got there.

Iron Jaw sniffs at the air. "Who is eatin' bananas?" he asks.

"Why, I smell them strong myself," I says.

"Copperheads, which are snakes, smell like cucumbers," Snooty says. "Maybe Little Musso left the aroma of ripe bananas. Ha—"

"They was just painting the radiator is all," the redhead says. "So you are detectives? You couldn't detect smoke at a poker game."

"That was a nifty, sweetheart," Snooty says, and takes a quick gander at the radiator. "They wasn't quite finished here,

Scoop. They left the can of gilt paint here and it tipped over. There is a heel print in it. Little Musso sounds like a heel. Well, that citizen better have a good alibi, huh?"

"I saw that before you did," Iron Jaw yelps.

THE redhead crumples up the paper in her hand and slams it on the floor. It rolls to Snooty's feet. Snooty picks it up and spreads it open. I look over his shoulder. It is a receipt for a deposit on a chinchilla coat like the babe said it was.

"How much do they cost?" I ask.

"A good one has a bite of thirty grand on it," Snooty says, and I get a brief dizzy spell. "It takes thousands of chinchillas to make a coat as they are smaller than mice I think, Scoop."

"There must be plenty of fish in the photo-snappin' racket," I tell Snooty Piper.

We go over with the cops to pick up Little Musso and do not find him on a balcony. Little Musso is ensconced in a three-story hotel known as The Grand Riviera and which is on Harrison Street. He seems quite surprised at a visit from the cops, and should have been an actor.

"Might as well confess, Musso," Iron Jaw says the minute we arrive. "Collect all his shoes, boys."

"I don't get it, you big slob," Musso says to Iron Jaw.

"You will and not by radar," the flatfoot growls. "Early this A. M. you rubbed out Woo Woo Jopp. His wife come home from a week end in New York an' found him stiffer than Norwegian resistance. The redhead said you had a motive. Where was you last night about one A.M.?"

"Woo Woo was knocked off?" Little Musso says, then starts grinning. "I am sittin' pretty."

"If havin' smoke curlin' out of your shirt collar in a hot squat is pretty, I'll take

vanilla,” Snooty says.

“Where was you?” Iron Jaw repeats.

“Why, I visited Woo Woo at midnight,” Musso says. “I left about quarter to one. I never touched the punk!”

“Right,” I says. “Your bullets did, Musso.”

A cop tosses Iron Jaw a shoe. We can see from where we are standing that there is guilt on the heel.

“This clinches it;” Iron Jaw says. “I am surprised you did not try to lie, Musso.”

“Is this a frame?”

“Frames are often guilt-edged,” Snooty quips. “Come on, Scoop, as this is the most unscientific and uninteresting murder I ever saw.”

We let Iron Jaw take Little Musso in. We go home to our rooming house. Snooty Piper says when I am just fatling to sleep, “It is hard to keep handymen on jobs these days, huh? He starts maybe painting a radiator an’ only finishes half the job. The top part gits dried quick. The middle part is half an’ half, an’ the last place he worked is very wet.”

“Shut up an’ let me sleep,” I says.

“Them chinchillas have short hairs, I think, Scoop. Like moles, maybe. I am very anxious to see a chinchilla coat that is worth thirty grand, aren’t you?”

“No,” I reply. “Go to sleep, Snooty, or I will put you there.”

IN THE morning Snooty looks at the deposit slip the widow of Woo Woo tossed away. “I am quite curious about it, as a thirty G transaction is nothing for nobody to sneeze at. Just for fun, I am goin’ to that fur shop an’ see the chinchilla coat the doll had her heart sat on.”

“I would like to see the babe sitting that way,” I sniff. Anyway we go down to a fur store on Boylston and ask a very natty character to look at a chinchilla coat, the one Mrs. Woo Woo Jopp was looking

at. The citizen almost wilts, also his carnation. He talks French.

“*Non, non*, don’t mention ze co’t, *non, M’sieu*. I get ze stroke. This morneeng she calls me an’ says her husband is dead an’ she weel be in for ze t’ousan’ dollar deposit. Zere goes my beauteeful house in Brookline. I dream an’ dream of ze house. Now I have to call up ze man an’ say I cannot buy the beautiful *maison*.”

“A vicious circle, huh?” Snooty says, and scratches his noggin. “One thing always leads to another, Scoop. Ah, M’sewer, just for ze fun of heem, let us take ze gandaire at ze shinshella co’t, nester pa?”

“*Ah, sacre bleu*,” the Frog says. “All right, I weel show you ze beauty zat almost get me ze beautiful *maison*.”

We go up to the next floor. The citizen takes a fur coat out of a glass case. It is marked thirty-five grand. Frenchy is close to tears as he fondles the crinkly fur. “*Ah, voila!*”

“Who owns the house you were going to buy?” Snooty asks.

“M’sieu Charles Boysenberry,” the furrier says sadly. “Ah, weeth the sale of ze co’t, I could have got ze twenty t’ousan’ I have to pay down on ze line, *oui*. Eet ees a cruel world.”

“I’ll say,” I says. “To slaughter maybe ten thousand chinchillas to wrap around a dame.”

“M’sieu Boysenberry he weel be vary sad, *aussi*,” the Frenchy says.

“An Australian, huh?” Snooty inquires. “Must be in the ostrich feather business. He want to git rid of the joint that bad? Maybe it is haunted, huh? What’s he asking for the chateau?”

“Only seexty thousan’ dollaire. It is ze steal,” the furrier says.

I nudge Snooty Piper. “This is silly,” I says. “You can’t buy a chinchilla coat an’ are not interested in country estates, so

let's go to work."

We go over to the *Evening Star*. Dogface Woolsey, the city editor, eyes us like we were just captured from a Nazi sub off Cap Cod. "I hear there was a murder," he says very repulsively. "Didn't you read it in *The Sun*?"

"We was waitin' for more developments," Snooty says. "Don't forget O'Shaughnessy made the arrest. You want to mislead the subscribers? We can write a follow-up now, if that is what you want. Who is that at my desk?"

"You are expendable, Piper," Dogface snaps. "Take that bottle we found in the bottom drawer with you."

"We are fired?" Snooty asks.

"Correct!" yelps Dogface. "Give that gentleman nine silver dollars!"

"You'll live to rue this day," Snooty Piper says. "Come on, Scoop. Maybe he thinks we was goin' t' git down on our knees an' beg—"

"It is an idea," I gulp sadly. "We are at the mercy of the manpower commish an' you know it. Why couldn't I have met somebody besides you, like Dracula or Hitler? They would have been safer bosom pals for me."

"Stick with me, Scoop," Snooty says. "We will be sittin' on top of the world."

"That is right if you are talkin' about a certain New York paper reposing on a park bench," I counter.

"I must go and find out what business Mr. Boysenberry is in," Snooty says. He leaves the *Evening Star*. I follow him, having no place else to go.

We go into a drug store and Snooty consults a classified book. "Le's see now—Bayberry—Bazooska—Bilgewater—Boskowitz—Boysenberry. Charles K. Boysenberry, 1183 Atlantic Ave., Nuplastic Girdle Co., Inc."

"Awright," I says. "Now tell me why you are goin' to see this Boysenberry?"

"I wish to find out why he has got his house on the market," Snooty says. "There is a reason for everythin', Scoop. Little Musso stepped in the gilt paint, but what color suit was he wearin' when we found him?"

"Grey," I guess.

"Right. I am not attracted by grey as you know, Scoop. Green catches my eye most anywhere. There are citizens who have the same taste in clothes as others. Now take the number I am wearin'. It is—"

"I bet when you bought it, it had a pool ball in the corner pocket," I says.

"You have no style about you, Scoop Binney," Snooty says. "Let's go over to see Boysenberry. We will make out we are real estate salesmen."

WE WALK up two flights of quaky stairs and ask a blonde if we can see Mr. Boysenberry. We give our names.

"He is in a nasty mood today," the babe says. "Worse than usual. Some deal he had fell through the roof. But you can go in at your own risk."

Well, we finally walk into Mr. Boysenberry's private office. The character has beetling bushy brows and has something in his mouth that was once a cigar, but which looks now like a bunch of spinach, "Sit down," he snaps.

Snooty says he understands he has his house up for sale and maybe we could try and get him a client.

"Yeah? Don't remind me of the dump! Look, I had the place as good as sold for more'n it was worth. To a guy named Jacques Dujour, a Frog who has a fur store on Boylston. Then this snail eater calls it off because some babe couldn't buy a chinchilla coat. Then her husband gets knocked off. I ask you—!"

"Very intriguing," Snooty says. "Why should you sell your house at this time,

Mr. Boysenberry?"

"Not that it is any of your cockeyed business, but it is either that or I go out of this business. This new girdle is hard to catch on, as dames are skeptical about the stretch in plastic. Gimme four more months an' I'll be out of the red.

"But it is no use. Without the sixty grand I figgered on, I got to sell out to the Venusform outfit in Everett. I can't git no more credit. The auditors are comin' in the first of the week to go over the books for the Venusform company to see how much they'll pay me to—this is the worst break— Well, what do you want, Mulch?"

We look around. A sallow-faced character with round shoulders is standing in the door. He says, "Er—beg your pardon. I—er—I'll come back later."

"Spit it out now," Boysenberry says. "What's on your mind?"

"Why—er—I just want to say I don't care to go over to the Venusform people," Mulch says. "I'll look around for somethin' else. If I could get what's comin' to me tonight, I—"

"Desertin' a sinkin' ship, huh?" Boysenberry says quite nettled. "All right, go ahead an' quit. It will serve you right if somebody does buy that chinchilla coat. Now, boys, you want to handle that place of mine so let's talk—"

"We got a senior junior partner we must consult with first," Snooty says. He looks quite pale and says, "Scoop, git me a drink of water, huh? It is my heart actin' up ag'in. What did Mulch do here, Mr. Boysenberry?"

"Bookkeeper - cashier," Boysenberry says.

"Hmm, we are lookin' for one at our agency," Snooty says. "Where does Mulch live?"

"Sixty-two Oakum St., Chelsea," the guy says. "Been with me six years. Imagine the breaks, boys. Just because

some guy wouldn't buy a chinchilla coat, the Nuplastic Girdle Company has to go on the rocks."

"One thing leads to another, I always say," Snooty says. "You don't buy bread; mills close up. Have you an aspirin, Scoop?"

We leave Boysenberry's office and go over to a beanery across the street. I feed Snooty two cups of black coffee. "What has come over you, Snooty Piper?" I ask.

"I must see Mulch," Snooty says. "I wonder where in the world he got such a swell shade of green suit. I have been lookin' for the type since—I will not rest until—"

"Here is where I leave you," I says. "I do not like the wild look in your eye. You are one character who can git battle fatigue without ever seein' a gun. Don't make no noise when you come in."

"I'll see you, Scoop," Snooty says. I leave him chewing on the brim of his hat and talking to himself.

SNOOTY falls over a chair when he comes in later and wakes me up. He says he has been to the Greek's and has been thinking everything out. He takes an envelope from his pocket and hides it under the mattress on his side of the double bed.

"It is funny what happened, Scoop. I called on the redhead an' she was in pink mournin'. She opened up a bottle an' we had a couple snorts. She asked me if I didn't think maybe I could buy her a chinchilla, if she agreed to go steady with me. Oh, boys—"

I shudder. "Even I can't believe you would be such a ghoul, Snooty Piper. How many hours was she a widow, hah? An' Woo Woo still taking his siesta in the undertaker's parlor. You are beyond redemption, Snooty Piper."

Snooty starts laughing. "I told her me

an' a pal had a nice bank in mind we was thinkin' of knockin' off. Over in Newburyport. I says my newspaper job was only a blind. She was interested an' asked to drive the jalopy. That is some character, that doll. I hope I don't run across her ag'in. It was nice bourbon, though."

"What was that you hid under the mattress?" I demand to know.

"Three cigarettes, Scoop. G'night. It says in the papers Iron Jaw expects a confession out of Little Musso within twenty-four hours."

"I do not think that is funny. He will, too," I says. "Snooty, have you an idea Little Musso is innocent?"

"I didn't say," Snooty says and starts snoring.

It is a nice chance to murder him. I could just smother him an' get Boysenberry to say Snooty had a heart attack in his office. But I lose my nerve and fall asleep.

The next morning Snooty invites me to go over to Chelsea with him. As I am unemployed, I ask myself what can I lose, only my life? The first thing the halfwit does is go to dry-cleaning and tailoring stalls. Finally at the third one, a little old character says be did have a suit cleaned for a client that looked much like the one Snooty wore. The customer had asked for twenty-four hour service and had received it.

"What was his name?" Snooty asks.

"I'll look it op," the cleaner says and picks up a book that looked as if it had been mislaid by Rip Van Winkle. He thumbs through it, peers at a page through bi-focals, turns, and says, "Buford T. Mulch. Got his address here. I'll—"

"I know it," Snooty says.

"The man asked for the quick job because he says he is moving out of town," the cleaner says.

"I wouldn't be surprised," Snooty laughs— "Follow me, Scoop."

"Yes, Svengali," I sniff.

We finally arrive at a three-story rooming house on Oakum Street. The landlady is a very fat, old beldame with a suspicious eye.

"We would like to see Mr. Mulch," Snooty says very politely.

"Who says they are callin'?" the corpulent doll wheezes.

"Two men from the income tax office," Snooty says. "It seems he put some figures in the wrong brackets an' saved himself five C's. This is government business."

I sigh heavily. The landlady lets us go up. We knock on a door and Mulch opens it. He recognizes us and keeps his foot in the door. "What you fellers want?"

"Why, Mr. Boysenberry says you are a good bookkeeper an' cashier. We would like to quiz you about a new position you are capable of," Snooty says.

"Well," Mulch says, "I ain't interested as I am leavin' town, but it won't hurt to talk. Come right in. Excuse what it looks like as I been collectin' my—"

"It is quite a wardrobe, isn't it?" Snooty says admiringly, pointing to about fourteen suits, half of which are green, piled up on the bed. "I get if men wore chinchillas, you would even have one of them."

"I SPEND all my money on clothes," Mulch says. "Let us talk about this position, shall we? I am sick of hearin' about that chinchilla coat."

Snooty picks up one of the suits. He holds the cloth close to his nose. "Very nice shade of green. I would look wonderful in it, Mulch. What are you goin' to do with your old suits when they take you over to the jail, huh?"

Mulch's mouth pops open. I shake.

Mulch says, "What you say that for?"

"Only because I know why you had this suit dry-cleaned," Snooty says. "Got radiator paint on it when you backed up against that heater in the Jopp flat, Mulch. You leaned against the part that was half dry an' sticky. You left a lot of green lint on the banana oil. Green always draws my attention."

"It is a lie," Mulch yelps. "You can't prove nothin' at all."

"The boys in the lab can," Snooty says in an almost bored voice. "I got the stuff off the radiator with the green lint stickin' to it. If they add up why you had the green suit cleaned and why you left your job and was thinkin' of leavin' town—the cops are very scientific these days, Mulch. They can tell just what cloth certain lint comes off an'—"

"Look out, Snooty!"

Well, Buford Mulch grabs a Roscoe right out of an open suitcase. The bullet spins Snooty's green hat around on his noggin on its way out through the window. We hear a painful yell somewhere outside, but have no time in which to investigate.

I crawl under the bed and yell for Snooty to join me but it seems Snooty was detained. The room starts falling apart.

I hear voices like, "Oh, you will, huh?—Yeah, I will!—That's what you think!—Ow-w-w! Ug!—How's them for cider apples?—Oh-h-h! Ugh!"

Finally there is a great crash. All is still save one pair of lungs filling up with fresh air. I crawl out and hate to look. It is quite gratifying when I do. There is Snooty Piper vertical and Buford Mulch horizontal.

Snooty is no fashion plate at the instant. His coat is turned around the wrong way, and he is pulling his necktie out of his throat. One of his pants legs is gone. Snooty has the handle of a big water pitcher in his hand. Mulch is stretched out

like a bear rug.

"Where were you, Scoop?" Snooty sniffs.

"A.W.O.L.," I admits. "I didn't want to come in the first place. You forget I am 4F in good standin'."

The landlady barges in and says for us to leave immediately or she will call the cops.

"It is what I want you to do," Snooty says. "You have been harborin' a criminal an' are liable. We are detectives."

The fat doll squeals an' runs out. Mulch starts groaning. I see one of his eyes flutter open. Me and Snooty drag him off the floor and throw him into a chair.

"Awright, why did you rub out Woo Woo Jopp?"

Mulch says he had to. "It all depended on the guy buying the chinchilla coat for his wife," Mulch says. "If he didn't, then the Frenchman couldn't buy the boss's house. So the boss couldn't get the dough he needed to save the Nuplastic Girdle Company. So he has to sell out, which meant the auditors hired by the Venusform people would come an' look over the books I kept. I stole about twenty grand from Boysenberry.

"Oh, why didn't the gover'ment close the bangtail plants long before they did? An' I liked night clubs. If the dame had been given the chinchilla coat, I'd had a chance to cover up for awhile—"

"Have you an aspirin, Snooty?" I ask. "Because the redhead didn't git the chinchilla coat—the Frenchman—Mr. Boysenberry—can I review the biddin' please?"

"When I saw the deal was off," Mulch says, very repentant, "I got to broodin' over the lousy break and tellin' myself the dame's husband was the cause of it all. I got hatin' him, even though I never saw him. I guess I am a little unstable anyways, or my worst side wouldn't have

come out. Somethin' snapped in my brain.

"So I went over to this Jopp's place with this gun here and told him why he had to buy the chinchilla coat, as it meant so much to three citizens. He laughed at me, and I let him have it. Nobody would of known, if I hadn't backed into that radiator. How could any cops think anybody who never even saw Woo Woo Jopp would knock him off? How did they, anyway?"

"It is just that I am different than most people," Snooty says. "I got to thinkin' how one thing led to another. So I kept goin' from one place to another where characters were affected by the sale of a chinchilla coat, didn't I, Scoop? Somebody connected with the rubout had to wear a green suit. Woo Woo had none in his wardrobe, an' Little Musso always wears grey, I found out."

Some cops take over. Snooty wraps the Roscoe in a handkerchief and hands it to one of them. "See that Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy gets that," he says. "It is the Betsy that liquidated Woo Woo Jopp. Little Musso is innocent."

We are over in the LaGrange Street gendarmerie later watching Iron Jaw eat crow. The big flatfoot seems in a daze and just sits there gnawing the rim off his derby like it is an ice cream cone.

Little Musso stands there and says Iron Jaw better not go out in the future on dark nights unless he is wrapped up in a Sherman tank. The next murder Musso commits he will be guilty of, but nobody will ever prove it.

"There was a chinchilla coat which a Frenchman couldn't buy a house with," Iron Jaw mumbles. "This Boysenberry lost his girdles because the doll didn't git the chinchilla—Mulch was embezzling so that if the chinchilla coat wasn't sold—the auditors with Venus forms would—"

"I would send for his wife," Snooty suggests. "Come on, Scoop. I can't bear to see any more of this sort of thing, can you?"

We are back at work the next A.M. Snooty made Dogface say please. If there is a secret weapon the U. S. has not used up to now, I would like to suggest Snooty Piper.