

# Mickey Finish



*“Dizzy Duo” Yarn*  
By Joe Archibald

*Scoop Binney and Snooty Piper, those hilarious hooligans of homicide, find a babe in love who says it, not with flowers—but with .45 slugs.*

THERE is a citizen in Boston, Mass.—if Ripley is interested—who throws a shadow as big as an elephant when it stands on its hind legs, but who has a noggin the Harvard Medicals have spoken for as they wish to determine if there really is a brain in it. This citizen is Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy, a detective who has solved fewer cases than the UN has world problems.

Me and Snooty Piper are in the Greek’s, just off Scollay Square, one afternoon when Iron Jaw wallows in and asks for a double snort of brew. The big snook looks quite agitated and he does not even seem to notice that we are present at the bar.

“Why, good afternoon, Peewee,”

Snooty needles him. “Only about ten days now and Randolph Kimper will get himself a little dose of voltage over at the Charlestown crimery.”

Iron Jaw looks daggers at Snooty and bangs down his glass. The cigar in his mouth is ragged.

“You got no more feelin’s than a dead codfish, you knucklehead,” O’Shaughnessy growls. “It ain’t funny, a guy goin’ to the chair.”

“You should have courage over one conviction,” Snooty sniffs. “It is the first you ever got, Iron Jaw.”

The big gumshoe picks up a bottle, but Nick wrests it loose and says he is sorry but Snooty owes him seventeen dollars and it quite difficult suing a corpse. He would

appreciate it if Iron. Jaw would allow Snooty to live long enough for him to collect.

Iron Jaw snarls and leaves the gin mill and I says; "For once he is right, Snooty. It is no picnic, the frying ceremonies at the rotisserie."

"A life for a life, the Good Book says," Snooty tosses back. "It serves anybody right who—"

A character wearing a hat that looks too small for his egg-shaped head comes in and drapes himself over the bar. "A whiskey sour, if you please," he orders. "Put cinnamon in it and a slice of banana."

The Greek blinks and his Adam's apple slides up and down. "Come again, my fran'?"

The customer repeats his order. The Greek sighs and mixes up the concoction and plunks it down on the bar. The customer destroys it with great gusto, pays the tariff and walks out.

"Who says there's never nothin' new under the sun?" Snooty asks.

"There ain't no accountin' for tastes," I says. "Look at the company I keep, Nick. I'll bet that drink didn't look half as whacky to that citizen as that suit you're wearin', Snooty."

"Let's not git personal," Snooty Piper says.

**I** LEAVE my carcass parked against the Greek's bar and take my mind back twenty-nine weeks. This Randolph Kimper is not the low-browed criminal type. He is the sort of citizen you see come out of a flower show at the Garden. Kimper was once a talent scout for a theatrical outfit in New York and made himself a few grand and brought it up to the Hub to open a place for himself. .

He walks into a very crummy joint in Revere one night and gets a gander at a babe giving out with a current blues song.

He sends his card to her dressing room and follows it up with himself five minutes afterward. He says he can get her as far as Hildegard if she'll place him in her hands, which she does.

Kimper spends most of his bankroll on this canary whose professional handle is Keena Montava. He comes through with the bite for her throat exercises, antes up for a Back Bay Emily Post's swindle sheet, and puts the clams on the line for services rendered by the local saloon and maternity ward paragraphers.

While all this is going on, Randolph lights a torch for his pulchritudinous protégé. And then when he has sold the titian trick to one of Back Bay's best bistros, he begins to discover that she is giving him the well-known business. Kimper is fortyish and his locks are getting thin and he does not look exactly athletic in his shorts, so Keena lets her roving eye, as the D.A. put it, seek out and captivate a character by name of Erwin T. Utt, who soon thereafter becomes the late Mr. Utt.

I remember what took place in the courtroom at Kimper's trial.

D.A. to Randolph Kimper: "So! You spent twelve thousand dollars on this woman you had hoped to marry, Mr. Kimper. When you found out she was secretly calling at Mr. Utt's apartment on Oxford Street, you swore in front of witnesses that somebody was going to get 'his wagon fixed!' "

Mr. Kimper: "Sure, but haven't you ever said anythin' you didn't mean? Wouldn't you have been burned up if a dame had given you this kind of runaround, huh?"

The D.A.: "I'm askin' the questions, Mr. Kimper! Well, she said she didn't love you enough to be your wife and you got insanely jealous and went to Utt's place and shot him!"

Defense: "Objection!"

Judge: "Sustained. The prosecution will please confine his questions to the—"

D.A.: "Very well, your Honor. I will prove to the jury that this man had the motive to commit a terrible crime. His whereabouts at the time of the killing have not been established. He told this court, and under oath, that he was at Miss Montava's between the hours of ten and twelve, during the time Edwin Utt was murdered. Miss Montava has denied that he was there. A cuff link was found in Utt's apartment. When Mr. Kimper was arrested, he was wearing just one cuff link." That was the basis of the D.A.'s case.

"He's a dead duck, Snooty," I says. Then an elbow nudges me and I get quite a start and find out I am in the Greek's and remember that Kimper is over in the death house right this minute.

"You should never drink nothin' harder than beer," Snooty says. "Scoop, where is the lepershawn you was just talkin' to?"

"Huh? I was thinkin' back to the trial, Snooty. I got lost in it. This is one time you have got to admit Iron Jaw has the right culprit."

"Yeah? Well, you saw the cadaver," Snooty says. "You have also got a gander or two at the babe. That Utt was much younger than Kimper, but I would not say his pan was so much. And if he had relatives, which he did not seem to have had, they would never fight over the estate he left behind. Even you have got to admit that this doll wants neither an apron or a sink full of dishes."

"I don't mind if I do," I says. "Let's forget it since the citizen has been tried by twelve good men and true, and has been convicted."

"And with her benefactor not far from the last mile," Snooty says, "the Montava canary is smooching quite openly with a certain rich doll's son by name of LeRoy Cavendish. Abigail Hepplethwaite told me

that this pal of hers, Henrietta Cavendish, is at least one-third as well-heeled as herself—which means she could buy out all the used cars in the U.S. Leave us sit down and think this out, Scoop, as if Kimper is to be saved—"

"I will have no part of that," I interrupt. "That is final. I am paying my damages here, Nick. And good afternoon."

TWO hours later Snooty Piper arrives at the *Boston Evening Star* and sits down at his desk, which is beginning to show signs of becoming a spider's playground. Dogface Woolsey, the city editor, has departed but has left a note on Snooty's desk. It says Snooty's services are no longer required. Snooty picks it up and scans it hurriedly and then tosses it into a basket. He yawns.

"When will that lemonhead wise up he can't get along without me, huh, Scoop? . . . I've been thinkin'. You remember it come up in the trial that Kimper was also quite enraged at one time because a bracelet that cost him a grand got lost? He accused the Montava babe of hocking it and giving the dough to the late Erwin Utt."

"Go on," I says. "Can I stop you?"

"Utt, the cops found out, had no visible means of support," Snooty says. "We cleaned out his closet of two suits and an empty wardrobe trunk. There was evidence he was in the numbers racket and that he sold used cars."

"Right there is a reason society shouldn't have demanded the supreme penalty for Kimper," I says tartly.

"The flat he lived in cost a hundred and twenty bucks a month," Snooty continues. "I wonder if a lot of Kimper's scratch went to keep him in board and lodging."

"That sort of thing has happened before," I says in a very bored manner.

"But there is one thing I wisht I could

figure out, Scoop,” Snooty persists. “Utt, just before a .38 caliber slug passed through his ticker en route to his spinal column, was about to mix a drink. There was a tall glass and two bottles on the table in the kitchenette. One of Northern Comforter and one of Porto Rico rum. Then there was a little bottle of tabasco sauce, and next to that, half of an alligator pear.”

“After what you saw in the Greek’s, you know citizens have funny tastes when it comes to hooch?” I say.

“But the corpse appraiser agreed with all the other cops that the deceased’s breath smelled only of straight rye,” Snooty says. “A lot here don’t add up, Scoop Binney!” He assumes a pose like Rodin’s *Thinker*. “It come out in the trial that Kimper was a brass hat in the last war and had a bomb drop too close to him and for a couple years after had lapses of memory. That’s why he forgot where he was during the murder. Wouldn’t you think a jury would remember our heroes an’ give ‘em a break?”

“They had an M.D. testifyin’ Kimper was fully cured,” I says. “Anyways, nobody else had a motive for bumping off Utt.”

“I am riskin’ everything on one thing, Scoop,” Snooty declares. “Namely, that Erwin Utt was preparing a drink for a visitor he maybe expected and who could not have been Randolph Kimper.”

“You get sillier by the minute,” I says.

“Scoop, I wonder what become of Utt’s empty trunk?”

“It is in the cellar of the building where he lived with a police tag on it, I think,” I reply.

“We should go over it more thoroughly again,” Snooty says. “Having found the cuff link of the guilty party, the cops naturally had enough to go on so they did not waste time on briefing Utt’s worldly

goods. We must find a link to his past.”

“Please use the singular if you must use pronouns,” I snort.

“I think I will call on the lawyer who defended Kimper,” Snooty says.

I GO with Snooty the next morning. We enter the firm of Shuttleworth, Shuttleworth, Yarrow, and Shuttleworth, on Milk Street. We are turned over to Mr. Yarrow, an elongated character with an egg;-shaped head and eyebrows as thick as blackberry patches.

“I am Mr. Piper of the *Boston Evening Star*,” Snooty Piper says. “I am not quite satisfied that justice has been done Mr. Kimper.”

“You don’t say!” Yarrow sniffs. “I do. Surprised?”

“Hmm,” Snooty mumbles.

“I shouldn’t have taken the case, Piper,” Yarrow goes on. “Randolph Kimper was found sitting next to a hydrant at three A.M., and he said he was in a woman’s apartment more than three hours before. He claimed she lied on the stand. Huh! Two drinks, he says, but can’t describe them. The police searched her place not long afterward and found no intoxicating beverages anywhere. I suppose he wanted the court to believe that Keena Montava, being in love with Utt, killed him to stop Kimper from being a murderer. Isn’t that silly? No wonder I lost the case.”

“Then you think Kimper’s mind was not a blank between the hours he claimed it was?” I ask.

“No more than the bullet in the victim was a blank,” Yarrow says. “When Kimper was shown the cuff link he lost at the scene of the crime he quickly thought of hiding behind that war ailment he once had. No doubt he got the vile hangover he had when arrested while drinking in a tavern. Murderers for the most part need false

courage. Now if you'll please go away. . . ."

We withdrew. Out in the street, Snooty scratches his dome. "Well, citizens have been known to have lost a whole week end, Scoop, and it should not be hard for one to lose a few hours or a day. Mr. Kimper looks like he's a dead duck, indeed. His own mouthpiece figures he is guilty, and I should keep on thinking he ain't? I guess I'm stubborn."

"You are nuts," I say bluntly.

But I follow Snooty Piper that morning to Oxford Street, where he rings the bell of a respectable-looking lodging house. A fat dame answers and says for us to state our business quick because she has her favorite soap opera on the radio and she is worried because Grandpa Stacey has just fell out of a hospital window. She is wearing a housecoat that must have been made by an awning company and her red toe-nails peek out at us from her sandals.

"We are of the fourth estate, madam," Snooty says. "And the leadin' character of *our* soap opera is about to get the hot squat. You used to have a lodger by name of Erwin Utt?"

"Sure, but he was murdered," the corpulent babe says. "I'll never forget that night. It was like a radio pogrom. Cops and—"

"That we know," Snooty says. "There is a trunk belonged to him still here, I understand. We have been authorized to examine it."

"Of course. Come right in and I'll show you to the storeroom."

She leads us to a large room in the basement and then scrambles back upstairs to find out how Grandpa Stacey makes out.

"I wouldn't worry, ma'am," Snooty calls after her. "He most likely had on his light fall overcoat!"

We pull an old wardrobe trunk out of a corner and into the light offered by a cellar

window. The trunk is unlocked and we look at the inside. There are two old wire coat hangers and some beat-up wood and fabric compartments. They are all empty.

"Let's forget all about it, Snooty," I says.

He pulls out some paper covering the bottom of one of the trunk drawers, and something flutters to the floor. I pick it up and see it is an old newspaper clipping with most of the caption torn off. I hand it to Snooty.

"A guy and a blonde, which was a crummy picture in the first place. Unless it is a picture of himself why did Erwin Utt keep it?"

"Sometimes your intelligence is not altogether subnormal, Scoop," Snooty says, after ogling the old half-tone. "The old express sticker on that trunk says it was put there in Springfield. Mass. Yeah, the caption says, *Detective Cuddy Brings in Allent—*"

"It is Greek to me," I says.

"We will get out the jalopy tomorrow an' go to Springfield," Snooty says.

"Are you serious, just as if I didn't know?" I snap. "That old heap won't make it out of the alley where you keep it."

"You are a pessimist, Scoop. Well, you'd better go to the *Evening Star* and look smart for a while. I have better things to do."

"A dame," I sniff.

"Tell me something they are not mixed up in, Scoop, unlest it is fumbling for a check in a restaurant!"

**WE LEAVE** the Oxford Street lodging house. I do not hear from Snooty Piper until hours later when I am propped up in bed reading, *I Also Knew F.D.R. By Falla*. My buzzer rings twice so I know there is a phone call for me. I go downstairs and answer it. A very unfamiliar and crude voice says, "Look,

this is Pete and Louie's Bar on Dover Street. You know a character named Piper?

"Well, we got him from out in front where he was sittin' against a garbage can," the voice continues. "He don't know his name, where he's been or where he's goin'. Got his name an' address from his social security card. Come over an' take the bum home!"

I do. I find the halfwit propped up against a juke box and his glimmers are looking into the next century. "Somebody must have given him a mickey," I says, and thank the citizens who have been holding him up. We put him in a cab and I take him to the rooming house and manage to get him upstairs where I pull off his green suit. I frisk him and find he has eleven bucks on him so it does not look like a doll rolled him. Snooty, with eleven clams, is enjoying unusual prosperity. I have to wait until he emerges from gaga-land, which takes place in the morning.

Snooty looks like something a medical department took out of a vat to study. He smacks his lips and then grabs hold of his forehead.

"Scoop—how did — I — git here? The last I remember was takin' the second snort an'—"

"I have a question, too," I sniff. "How did half an avocado get on the floor? I just now stepped on one."

"I can't tell you at the moment," Snooty says. "I would like to know why it goes with it."

"Huh?"

"Look, Scoop," Snooty says. "As soon as I drink two quarts of water and take a cold shower for about an hour, we must start for Springfield."

I have no idea what Snooty is talking about, or what the avocado is doing here, but that's the way Snooty is. As easy to follow as the trail of a butterfly.

Snooty Piper cannot be exactly human. By eleven A.M. he looks quite as fresh as a choir boy on Sunday morning. We go out back in the alley and climb into his jalopy, which was second hand when the Titanic hit an iceberg. It finally starts, though, and Snooty backs out into the street and nearly ruins a peddler's cart. However, we manage to get out of the Hub via the Northern Artery.

Twenty miles out of Worcester, we burn out a connecting rod and are towed to a garage. A mech looks the heap over and says he will have to send to the Smithsonian Institute for a new part. We take the bus the rest of the way.

"Nobody stands behind their products nowadays," Snooty gripes.

"Whoever made that boiler couldn't possibly," I retort. "Who lives to one hundred an' ten?"

Well, we reach Springfield and head quickly for the editorial rooms of *The Inquirer* and show them the old clipping. A very blasé newspaper character says it could have come out of a rival sheet but that he would check up in the morgue.

"We clean out them old pitchers every once in a while and only leave the ones of citizen we figure will hit the front pages again," he says.

He can't find the original snapshot. "Seein' as the guy in the picture must have been a flatfoot," the newsman says, "why don't you go to police headquarters?"

We do just that. We learn that Alfred Cuddy, the character in the news item we found in Utt's trunk, was once a detective on the Springfield Police Force, but was heaved out when he was caught protecting gambling joints. A detective takes us to a police lieutenant named McGoorty who has been on the force for thirty years and has a memory sharper than an elephant.

MCGOORTY cocks his big noggin to one side and ganders the old clipping. "Yeah, I remember. She almost scratched Cuddy's ears off when he brought her in. That blonde is Allentown Annie and she was one of the slickest shoplifters in the business. One time she got out of a crowded store with a grandfather's clock. Two or three years ago, I think it was, she jumped a dame's pokey out in Pennsylvania. You guys got a line on her?"

"We don't know," Snooty says. "Even if we have, how could we prove she's guilty of anythin'?"

"Say, are you drunk? Are you kiddin' me," McGoorty growls.

"Don't mind him," I says fast. "Maybe you have the doll's prints on file?"

"We have," McGoorty sniffs. "Now git out of here before I have you locked up for observation."

A few minutes later we are in a tavern having a beer. "Look, Snooty," I says calmly, "would you mind telling me where we go from here? I hope the trail of who you are suspectin' of somethin' does not head for New Orleans from here."

"I have added everything up so far and I am quite sure I know what I am doin', Scoop. I must buy me a black toupee and mustache, and a blue suit."

"What?" I screech. "A *blue* suit? Now I know you're demented, Snooty."

Snooty Piper puts down his glass. "You have been mistaken other times, Scoop. It is not going to be very pleasant, being a blackmailer, I am sure."

I shake my head helplessly. Even if Snooty Piper spoke English, I wouldn't be able to understand him.

I am sitting in the city room of the *Boston Evening Star* late the next A.M., after doing some rewrites, and reading a gossipmonger's stint on page eleven of Mr. Guppy's sheet. One item intrigues me. It

says:

It becomes more evident every day that LeRoy Cavendish of the veddy Mid-Victorian Back Bay Cavendishes will soon present Keena Montava, luscious La Cocobana canary, with a rock bigger than the one his forbears tripped over at Plymouth when they got off the *Mayflower*.

The song that Montava wowed the clients with last night, *Slow Burning Boogie*, was appropriate to an official ceremony soon to take place in Charlestown. Mr. Randolph Kimper, lest your memory fails you, will occupy the chair. . ."

There is another story on page fourteen that says that Kimper's lawyer wound up behind the eight-ball trying to get his client a stay of execution.

Dogface Woolsey calls me over to his desk. "Ah—er—Binney, I have an assignment for you that ain't goin' to be no belly laugh," he says. "It's—"

"I won't do it," I says flatly. "I get chills when I go to a fish fry. Get Snooty Piper— he could look at a burning orphanage with no fire escapes and get a chuckle."

A cub comes out of one of the phone cubicles and says there is a call for me. I get it and hear Snooty's voice.

"Meet me about three P.M., Scoop," Snooty says. "So's you will know me, I'll be wearin' a carnation. A green one."

"What city?" I says tartly.

"Oh, stop!" Snooty says. "I will be on the Commons, near where we saw the three-legged squirrel that time."

I HANG up. I have just refused to see a citizen legally braised and I ask myself if I am moron enough to follow Snooty to something I am sure will be just as hard on the nervous system.

"Trilby must have been one of my grandmas," I says to myself. "Snooty Piper is a direct descendant of Svengali. How can I resist?"

I meet Snooty at the appointed time and

clutch at my throat. He is wearing a blue suit and gray hat, a dark toupee and an Adolph Menjou lip fringe. It is like seeing a pink moose for the first time. I shoo three squirrels off the bench beside him and sit down.

“Awright,” I gulp. “Is Orson Welles directin’ this? How crazy can you get?”

“Pull yourself together, Scoop,” Snooty says. “We are payin’ a social call. Don’t I look like a man of the world, huh?”

“Which world?” I sniff.

“You will recall, Scoop, that the cops couldn’t come up with the gun that rubbed out Erwin Utt. I am quite sure that Kimper couldn’t have done it because he never had a roscoe. Let’s be off.”

“You have been for some time,” I says numbly. “Don’t count me in.”

We journey over to Brookline, and Snooty Piper finally pauses in front of a quality apartment house just off Coolidge Corner.

“It is possible,” he says, “that the babe won’t ever remember seein’ you at the trial, Scoop, but might recognize the two of us together, hence my disguise. Let us go and see Keena Montava.”

“I had a hunch that was who,” I says, mopping my brow.

We go up to an apartment marked B-29 and Snooty says it fits the doll quite well as she has flown pretty high of late. He raps on the door.

“Who is it?” asks Montava in a husky contralto.

“Just an agent is all,” Snooty lies.

The canary admits us. I admit that if I’d been Kimper and had twelve grand I would have promoted her also. She is wearing a black velvet dress that rides nicely around the curves and smells like a Chanel factory that has been bombed. Her eyes are the color of the green fedora Snooty generally wears, and her paint job is reddish-orange.

“Well?” the babe inquires, touching off

a gold-tipped nicotine stick.

“Never felt better, baby,” Snooty says. I sit on the edge of an easy chair and look fondly at an open window. I figure it can be reached in three long steps.

“Don’t be so personal,” Keena Montava snaps. “You can have five minutes to state your business!”

“You can get more than five years if you don’t listen to an old pal of an old pal, Annie!” Snooty flings at her.

The doll’s mouth snaps open and she staggers backward. “Look,” she squeezes out, “‘who are you?’”

“I used to know Erwin Utt, or should we say, Alfred Cuddy,” Snooty says. “He pinched you once for shopliftin’, Annie. Afterwards, he got bounced off the police force in Springfield and drifted this way. Seems he must’ve recognized you here in the Hub, even though you dyed your tresses, and he put the bite on you. You wasn’t two-timin’ Kimper. You was seein’ Utt on the sly only to pay him off. So when Kimper got the wrong idea and said in front of witnesses he would knock off the guy, you saw a way to get rid of your blackmailer.”

“You’re a liar!” Montava says. “You can’t prove a thing. Get out, you lousy—”

“Tsk-tsk,” Snooty says. “You have fingerprints on file in more than one Rogues’ Gallery, Annie. Once the cops come here and ask you to put your pretty lunchhooks on the old ink pad, what do you think would happen?”

I SEE quite plainly that Snooty has the doll on a hook, for she gets three shades paler than an old clam shell. She backs up against a desk in the corner and asks what we want.

“We’re takin’ over for the deceased,” Snooty says. “I figure we’ll be satisfied with the same terms as you made with the late Erwin Utt, *ne* Cuddy. Shall we say a C

note each week? An' we got back pay comin' sugar."

The doll sighs deeply and turns around and yanks out a drawer. She comes up with a Roscoe, whirls, and fires at Snooty Piper. A hole appears in his grey skimmer just as he yelps, "It is what I wanted her to do, Scoop! Grab her!"

He dives over a couch, and another bullet gives him a hotfoot, making him give out with a screech. The doll turns toward me but I run into her boudoir and wriggle under the bed. A slug goes in just ahead of me. Then I hear Snooty out in the other room and the dame spins around and cuts loose with three more shots.

I come out on the other side of the bed and reach up to a little vanity and choose quite a big bottle of cologne. Keena Montava gets it right in the midriff as she pivots once more, and I see a partial plate jump out of her mouth. The Roscoe pops out of her fingers and I dive right over the bed and retrieve it.

Snooty Piper comes charging into the boudoir unloading another Betsy. A bullet goes right through the padding near my shoulder.

"For once I brought an argument with me," he says. "You, Scoop? I thought it was Keena."

"What did you do, leave your weapon out in the hall before you came in, you knucklehead?" I yelp.

"Frankly, Scoop, I forgot I had it," Snooty says, and then the doll sinks her teeth in his leg and won't let go.

While he howls with pain, I wonder what to do. I can't shoot the babe in cold blood or slug her. I get her by the hair and pull and finally she lets loose. But she grabs the gun out of Snooty's hand and points it right at my belt buckle and pulls the trigger!

*Click!*

"It is a good thing I come in shootin'!"

Snooty yelps. "I emptied that cannon!"

Then he taps the doll behind the ear with his fist and she goes to sleep.

Snooty picks up the babe's Betsy. "Exhibit A, Scoop," he says.

I am still sweating ice pills, and keep digging into my brisket to make sure there is no hole there. The night club canary shakes her noggin and sits up and ogles us.

"All right," Snooty says. "You shot Utt. You fibbed to the judge in court that Kimper wasn't with you. You loaded him up with two of those drinks you must have invented yourself. Most likely you added a slight Mickey to them to make sure. Then he passed out and you took one of his cuff links, the Betsy, and stole out into the night. When you came back from erasing the blackmailer, you got Kimper revived enough just so he could navigate and told him to go home. His feet moved but his brain was still on strike. He wandered around until he found a hydrant and sat down against it."

"He was dog-tired," I says.

"This is no time for levity, Scoop," Snooty sniffs.

"Look, I'll give you every dime I've got," the dame says.

**S**NOOTY is adamant. "Utt expected a dame to visit him that night, sister. He was gettin' ready to mix your favorite snort when you arrived. You called him first to make sure he was in, huh? Say, why did you ever invent such a drink?"

"I used to get migraine headaches one time," the babe replies. "I kept experimenting with stuff until I found the right combination that would make me forget the headaches. I did."

"You ain't kiddin'," Snooty says. "I tested them out. I took two tall ones and until I woke up I was walkin' down Purgatory Lane with Dante and Beatrice."

"Nobody could take two and know they

walked away from ‘em,” Keena Montava says. “Kimper got a little oiled on just a glass of plain bourbon.”

“What does avocado do for the drink?” Snooty asks.

“Nothin’,” the doll says. “Some people like olives and onions in their drinks. Others prefer lemon peel or a cherry. I thought I’d be different.”

“And we thought that character in the Greek’s was nuts, Scoop,” Snooty says.

I brush spots away from my eyes and try to remember my birthday and how many fingers I have.

“Cuddy caught up with me because of that stuff,” the comely warbler explains. “The day he pinched me in Springfield I was in a gin mill and I said to him, let’s have a snort before we go to the precinct house. The bartender made him one of the Buzz Bombs. I figured he’d never get me to the lockup, but he didn’t fall flat on his face until he had me booked. He’d never have guessed what I was drinking at the club that night he came in if I’d have left out the slice of alligator pear.”

“So that’s how,” I says. “Why didn’t you plant the gat on Kimper before you cut him loose into limbo? Then even Piper here might’ve had no chance to pin the rap on you?”

“Yeah?” the dame snorts. “And the cops would trace where it came from which was out of a pawnshop in Allentown. I should be that dumb!”

“No criminal is anythin’ else,” Snooty says. “I was sure Kimper had been framed the night I helped view the remains of Utt. Males as a rule do not drink fancy high ones unless a dame forces it on them. Utt’s

breath had only plain grog on it. So I says he was expectin’ a dame.”

“Okay, so you’re smart; Nature Boy,” Montava yelps. “You’re Sammy Spade. Shut up an’ get it over with.”

“Too bad there are so many slips—an’ not only in a lingerie shop,” Snooty says. “How would you know a flatfoot would save his press clippings? Of course, you would commit murder before you would let LeRoy Cavendish find out you was Allentown Annie. And Kimper thinkin’ you was carryin’ the torch for Utt. Ah, the vagaries of this life!”

“You are also a poet?” the babe screams. “Get me downtown and locked up so’s I can’t look at you.”

We take the canary to Headquarters where she dictates a confession. The D.A. calls the warden over at the State pen and tells him Kimper is to be put back in honest circulation. Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy witnesses all this, then utters a strangling sound and stumbles out of the office.

“Somebody should follow him,” the D.A. says gravely.

We hear from Iron Jaw late the next afternoon. He has made the headlines even though he lost Kimper. He jumped off the Charles River Bridge just as the Harvard crew was rowing under it and he swamped the racing shell and nearly drowned the crew captain. Iron Jaw says he fell over while reaching for his derby.

“What the public don’t know will never hurt them, huh, Scoop?” Snooty asks as we head toward the Greek’s.

I still say that Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy is three times saner than Snooty.