

# Murder on Beat

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Author of "Death Wears Black," "Death—Sunny Side Up," etc.

*Getting a Watch for a Neighbor Gives Officer Mooney a Devil of a Time, When He Tangles With a Fiendishly Clever Killer!*

PATROLMAN PATRICK MOONEY'S cheeks burned. His blood boiled. He growled angrily, beating his fists together. In other words, Pat Mooney was mad! In his scarlet ears, Captain Burke's tirade still sizzled:

"You're a cop, Mooney, not a nurse to tenement kids. On duty, your job is to patrol this beat. Watch for suspicious characters, vags, maintain public peace. Sure, an' keep your eye peeled for kidnappers. But, by the good Saints—" Choleric, Burke gasped for breath, his brows beetling. "There's nothing in the regulations book that says you gotta sit with a baby carriage on a front stoop."

Mooney's plea for explanation was silenced with a fiery retort.

"If you gotta change routine, start an escort service. But on the force obey orders! Try to find that stickup guy instead. Or don't you want to?"

Pacing his beat, Pat growled deep in his bull throat. The scathing sarcasm had scored deeply. Hell, Captain Burke hadn't even listened to an explanation. Pat was only minding Mrs. Conn's six-month-old baby. Why, even a stone image would have listened to reason. Mrs. Conn's husband was in the hospital. Another kid was laid up with a case of tonsillitis. How could she drag the baby around? It took no more than five minutes, and the only thing that had happened was the burly captain driving past in a squad car.

"The old billy-goat!" grated Pat. "Bawling me out for a little favor like that!"

But then, his opposing thoughts told him, all the boys on the force kidded him about his friendly-hand stuff, and—yeah, even his studying. But Pat Mooney wasn't intending to tread a rut forever. Not him. Scientific detection, that was the stuff! Someday he might even be a laboratory technician, or a criminologist. Why not?

The merchants on Pearl Street greeted him. The lunchroom owner beckoned with a wedge of apple pie. Pat grinned, his irascibility gone. Cars rolled past. Westward, an elevated train rattled.



Mooney's gun flamed

Hearing his name, Pat turned. An old lady who wore a shawl waved in a tenement doorway.

"Patrick," she said, when he came up. "Would you aid a charming colleen? Sure, an' I slipped on

a rug, and twisted my knee. Would you stop at Papa Greyer's and pick up the watch I ordered for Kathie's birthday?"

"For a kiss I would," Pat retorted, grinning.

Her old eyes danced and twinkled.

"If you were handsome, I would."

Striding on, the thought struck him that Captain Burke should have heard the conversation. He'd probably have a brain hemorrhage, Pat laughed.

Pearl Street settled down to shadowed evening lassitude. Into each store he slanted a keen scrutinizing glance, indexing the customers, mentally gauging them. Always he was on the watch for the elusive stickup artist who had been terrorizing the neighborhood districts. He smiled thinly, imagining Captain Burke's face if he—Pat the Kollege Kid Mooney—brought him in.

Glowing dimly under shaded green lights, Papa Greyer's store loomed close. A bell tinkled as Pat entered. The spicy tang of the little old jeweler's tobacco assailed his nostrils. Pat's gaze swept the empty store.

"Mr. Greyer!" he called. Silence. He called again, got no answer. Frowning, he took a step toward the curtained archway leading to the rear where Papa Greyer lived his bachelor existence. "Mr. Greyer!"

Silence, heavy and oppressive, closed down. An aura of menace that felt imminent and brooding. Brow puckered, Pat parted the draperies. He froze, horrified.

Flat on the bare boards, eyes staring sightlessly toward the ceiling, one thin arm doubled beneath his small body, lay the jeweler. Scarlet had smeared his silvery hair. His skull had been crushed mercilessly.

Papa Greyer was dead—murdered!

**P**AT MOONEY'S breath lost his icy chill, flamed suddenly high. Anger, violent and overwhelming, seethed through his brawny six-foot frame. His ice-blue eyes swiveled toward the dusk-heavy rear rooms. He could see nothing, hear nothing. Yet, as certainly as he touched Papa Greyer's still-warm flesh, he knew the killer was here.

Strolling down his beat, his glance scanning shops and pedestrians, he had particularly watched the little jewelry store. He had not wanted to ask for little Kathie's birthday watch if anyone was inside. Regulations said, stick to your beat,

conform to routine work.

And no one had gone in or out of Papa Greyer's shop all during that time!

Every muscle taut, Pat Mooney drew erect. Against one meaty palm his Police Positive felt reassuringly compact. In the other, his flashlight poked an inquisitive probing ray.

He soft-footed through the small dining room where he saw the heavy burlled oak table with the pathetic meal set for one. A queer stricture tightened his throat. An alien hot fury burned within him.

"Papa," he whispered. "I'll get him. It'll be either him or me."

A small hallway whispered to his tread. Velvet blackness parted before the light's ribboning ray. Suddenly a door at one side—a linen closet, probably—smashed back, rammed his extended left arm. The flashlight shattered on the floor.

A body thudded against Pat's unbalanced shoulder. He reeled, grabbed at the smooth wall, slid to one knee. He fired a shot over his shoulders. Thunder roared through the passage, echoing, drowning the sound of swift-running steps.

A curse ripped savagely from Pat Mooney's lips. He lunged through the hall, the dining room, past Papa Greyer's still form. Over the glimmering showcase he caught sight of a shadowy figure slipping out through the front door.

Pat had a flashing photographic glimpse of thin ratty features, snapping dark eyes, a small scar pinching one corner of a vicious mouth. He swore again.

"Damn, missed him. That's the stickup bird all right. Same description all the victims gave!"

His gun flamed, again and again. Lurid tongues of fire ate avidly through the slammed door. Glass clanked and rattled into a thousand shining shards on the floor and sidewalk.

Hurling his body across the counter, Pat dived headlong through the razor-edged panel. He hit the sidewalk, rolling. He was on one knee in a twinkling, with gun leveled.

The crowd before the store scattered. Voices clamored. He could make nothing of the din. But then he heard a small boy's soprano shriek.

"Pat!" A red-headed urchin waved his arm excitedly. "He went into Petersen's house!"

Across the street the blue-clad figure sped, gun held straight before him. A woman screamed behind him. But Pat's every faculty was centered

on the brick tenement directly ahead. To one side a low-roofed public garage was dwarfed by the dwelling. On the other stood an ice cream manufacturing plant.

Three at a time Pat took the steps. From within the brick building a staccato shot sliced out. Hard on its heels pierced a broken, sobbing cry, dying.

Pat's face was etched in granite, his lips thinned. Bursting through the doorway, he grabbed the newel post, head cocked for the sound of retreating feet. A frightened Scandinavian face, eyes owlsh, peered from the hallway ream.

"Petersen!" Pat yelled. "Where'd he go?"

The janitor gulped. "He ban go oopstairs. I fix cement in backyard, so back door is locked."

His gray head twisted, following Mooney's unchecked upward flight.

**T**HE nightlight on the second floor threw weird elongated shadows. Pat strained his ears to catch a sound. Abruptly, a finger of ice ran along his spine. The terrified scream of a youngster slashed at his eardrums. It eddied and welled in horrible fear. Mooney's head jerked sharply.

"Jimmy Donnelly!" he breathed hoarsely.

A mental picture of the blond, curly-haired kid flashed before him. Papa Greyer's killer clearly intended to use the boy as a shield.

Heavy brogans pounded up the stairs. Mike Dean's stentorian tones bellowed from below.

"Pat! What's up?"

Alert for any signs of shadows, Mooney swerved his eyes from the stairs.

"Mike!" he yelled. "Get to the back—fast! Cover the fire escape. Hold your fire. He's got Jimmy Donnelly with him!"

Dean pounded down and outside. Pat took a deep breath and ascended warily. In his throat a great pulse beat with thick monotony. A half-stifled cry broke the stillness.

"Hang on, Jimmy," Pat called. "I'll have you out in a jiffy."

"Come ahead, copper," a voice rasped half-snarl, half-jeer, "in a jiffy."

Hatred for the killing rat and all his kind bathed Pat's brain in flame. Spots red as blood stained his tanned cheeks. Gripping the gun firmly, he mounted the stairs.

Third floor . . . the landing above . . . fourth floor . . . Distorted shapes seemed created by the genii of the nightlight. Suddenly he was in the

midst of a scarlet havoc of gunfire.

Lead spattered by Pat's head. Involuntarily he ducked, keeping a loose trigger finger. He couldn't chance hitting the boy.

Plaster flaked down as he lunged up the remaining steps to the fifth floor. Two shots *spanged* dangerously close, ricocheting from the banister.

Simultaneously he heard the quick tattoo of fleeing steps, the sharp slam of the roof door.

Panic beat in Pat Mooney's heart. Utterly disregarding the consequences, he plunged the remaining distance. He struck the metal roof door with a hard shoulder. In the next heartbeat he was raking the roof for sign of the fugitives.

The flat, asphalt-surfaced space was empty!

Pounding to the rear coping, he roared.

"Mike!"

Dean's lean figure emerged from a shadowy corner of the yard, gun in hand.

"Didn't come this way," Mike yelled back. "Lose him?"

Fear for Jimmy Donnelly drew Pat's features into a tight scowl.

"I hope not," he muttered.

Gravel rasped as he raced to the east wall and peered down. He saw no chance of escape there. The public garage roof was at least thirty feet below. But looking across to the west wall, his eyes glinted. The ice cream plant roof was only ten feet down, an easy jump for a desperate man, even with a burden in his arms.

Hurling his lean body over the coping, Pat landed catlike on his feet, and out for the roof door. It was locked. His Police Positive barked stridently. The lock shattered.

Squeaking, the door swung back, revealing pitchy blackness. Pat slid inside.

From the stygian pit an orange flower blossomed. A white-hot blade seared against his side. Drunkenly Pat reeled. A wave of nausea struck the pit of his stomach. Gasping for air, he steadied, caught at the stair railing, felt for the step blindly.

Down flight after flight, he crouched from the winking red tongues that spat from the shadows. The stench of burned cordite filled the stairwell. Grimly, holding the pistol he descended.

**T**HE ground floor was dark and dully lighted. Through front glass windows a soft glow

permeated. Towering metal containers reared ghostly obelisks. Long ice cream storage-freezers extended into the darkness. Chutes for loading the icy confections onto trucks made steel cobwebs through the air.

Outside, sirens suddenly split the night air, screaming their eerie wail to the heavens. Tires screeched. Feet pounded across the pavement. Fists hammered at the storage plant doors. Pat heard Captain Burke's rasping voice.

"Mooney! Mooney, are you all right?"

Pat's eyes fought the shadows.

"You're finished, rat!" he barked. "Cornered. Want to walk out or be carried out?"

"Mooney, take cover. We're spraying the place with lead!" Captain Burke's tones were shrill now.

The silence grew protracted almost beyond bearing. Pat heard a growling curse.

"Damn you!" The gun in Pat's hand leveled. "Fire away! The kid gets it first."

"You're out of shells," Pat said shrewdly.

The hoarse chuckle was forced.

"Let the kid tell you. Wait'll I take off the muffler— There. Tell him, kid. How many bullets?"

Thin and quavery came Jimmy Donnelly's treble whisper.

"He ain't lying, Pat. He's got two bullets. Oh-h, Pat! Do something—"

"Satisfied, copper?" the harsh voice rasped. "Now get them buddies of yours away from the door. I want a car there an' the motor running. I'll still have the kid with my gun against his spine. Got that straight, copper? His spine! One move to pick me off with a lucky bullet, and the kid goes with me!"

From the large outer doors, Captain Burke's voice spoke coldly.

"I heard, Mooney. Do exactly as he says. Get out. We'll give him a chance to the car. But he's got to leave' the boy at the sidewalk—or we'll blast him clear to hell!"

Pat centered the killer now. He had been scrutinizing the darkness keenly, from behind a barrier of metal drums. He was concealed perfectly, with only one angle open—the right, and that led to a blank brick wall. Still—

Pat's brain spun dynamo-swiftly. Surprise, that was what he needed! And that surprise must come from a completely unexpected point.

"Mooney," Captain Burke roared. "Obey orders.

Come out!"

Forcing a quaver into his voice, Pat mumbled in reply.

"Yes, sir, I got to sneak out easy, though. This rat's liable to pick me off."

From the corner grated a hoarse chuckle.

"Yeller, like all the flatfeet!"

The freezer lid moved quietly under Pat's hand. He groped silently. Then he slipped in to deeper shadow, toward the water basin against the wall. The clink of metal was almost inaudible.

"Cover me, Skipper!" Pat called frantically then.

Water bubbled softly. Metal whispered. Pat squatted, focusing the objective on the brick wall near the tiered barricade. Abruptly he hurled three metal tins. Straight for the blank wall they arrowed.

To blanket the sounds, Pat yelled at the top of his powerful lungs.

"Look out, Skipper! I'm coming!"

His body poised and leaped— But straight for the massed barrier of drums!

The rolling tins caromed off the wall, exploded deafeningly. Smashing aside the tins, cleaving the air, like a leaping panther, Pat crashed into the lean body below. The killer had been standing transfixed, staring hypnotically at the brick wall. Behind him, by one arm that he still gripped tightly, he held Jimmy Donnelly.

WITH the power and weight of a steel battering ram, Pat hit the white, panicky features. A crazy screech trembled in his ears. And he beat it to silence with his fists that pistoned back and forth. Brain-maddened with Papa Greyer's wrinkled features dancing in the red mist before his eyes, he smashed away—smashed until strong hands tugged at his shoulders, wrenching him away from his inert victim.

Captain Burke's voice quieted him, drove the rage from his brain.

"All right, Mooney! He's cuffed. Not that he needs to be. The boy's safe, too."

Pat weaved erect.

"Okay, Skipper. You—saw Papa Greyer's—shop?"

Sympathetically the skipper's hand patted the big cop's shoulder.

"Too bad, son. But you paid it back in part, anyway."

They went out into the cool evening air. A

crowd had gathered, blocking the street. At sight of Mooney, a wildly affectionate roar burst from them.

CAPTAIN BURKE slanted a keen glance at Pat. "I've been wondering. What were those explosions inside?"

Pat explained his idea of a surprise attack. "The rest was laboratory work," he finished modestly. "From the ice cream storage-tanks I got dry ice blocks. Those ice cream gallon tins furnished the containers. Water was handy, and that was all."

Scratching his chin, Captain Burke grinned.

"In my day we didn't have laboratory training. So what happened?"

"Dry ice, sir, is compressed carbon dioxide. With water added it swiftly generates a gas. Sure, and if it's sealed tightly, the gas'll explode just like a bomb. I know it's crude, but it's effective, all right."

"Good work, Mooney," Burke chuckled. "The

Commissioner'll hear of this. And, suppose we—er—continue the good work. I may have been a trifle—ahem—hasty in my decisions."

Pat grinned. His side was raising hell, but he could overlook that because of the fact that the skipper had seen things in a different light.

An elderly woman pushed determinedly through the police lines. She was broad, buxom and Irish.

"Patrick Mooney!" she snapped crisply. "Where is that recipe for mint jelly Mrs. Barry gave you? I've been waiting for hours. My syrup will be spoiled!"

Pat flushed, gulped.

"Gosh, Mrs. Ryan, I clean forgot about it. You see, I—we, that is, had some work to do—"

Captain Burke purpled and lunged for the police car.

"Delehanty," he growled, "take me the hell out of here!" He rubbed his chin, awed incredulity in his eyes. "What can you do with a guy like that?"

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