

# An Unfair Catch

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**F**UZZY-WUZZY stood near the corner, leaning against the wall of the building as though it were his sole support. The noon whistle had just blown and the workers were hurrying out to connect with a noon-time meal. As they passed the corner, a number of them gave Fuzzy-wuzzy the once-over and indulged in caustic comments at his expense. Fuzzy-wuzzy was impervious to badinage and continued to bask in the sunshine with his back to the wall.

A large piece of orange skin, thrown with unerring aim from one of the upper windows of the building, caught him fair on the top of the head and woke him to life. He turned languidly and gazed upward to locate the offender.

"Hey! You Moll!" he called. "Keep your floral offerings to yourself. This ain't no vodoville act."

"G'wan, you bum," came the retort, accompanied by another piece of orange skin.

Fuzzy-wuzzy side-stepped the offering and nearly collided with a flashily dressed young fellow who had just turned the corner. The newcomer stepped close to the wall, a few feet from Fuzzy-wuzzy, and proceeded to light a cigarette. A third piece of orange skin whizzed through the air and nearly knocked

the burning match from his fingers. He whirled and faced upward.

"Some shot for a Jane," he called to the girl at the window. "Why don't you throw a whole orange, while you are about it? I ain't no prodigal son to feed on skins."

"Catch this and you can have it," called the girl, holding a large orange to view.

The flashy one set himself to make the catch and the orange sailed through the air. It came straight toward his cupped hands, but a fraction of a second before it reached them. Fuzzy-wuzzy made a spring. He deftly caught the golden fruit with one hand and had it tucked in his coat-pocket before the flashy one could even register surprise.

"Hey, you," he snarled. "Come acrost with that fruit. It wasn't intended for you."

"What you getting sore about?" demanded Fuzzy-wuzzy. "The fruit doesn't belong to you."

"It don't, hey?" exclaimed the flashy one. "Didn't the Moll throw it to me?"

"She said you could have it if you caught it," replied Fuzzy-wuzzy. "You didn't catch it—did you?"

"It doesn't make a darned bit of difference whether I did or not," raged the flashy one. "I'm going to have it."

He made a rush. Fuzzy-wuzzy squared himself to meet it, and as the flashy one hurtled forward, he suddenly side-stepped and gave his opponent the heel.

The flashy one tripped over it and struck the concrete pavement, much to the detriment of his suit and his skin. He arose snarling and advanced cautiously. He aimed a wicked blow at Fuzzy-wuzzy, which was neatly parried. The next instant they clinched, just as Carney, the cop, turned the corner in quest of peace and quiet. To have his dreams of a quiet time shattered by a common street fight, aroused Carney's ire and he sailed in, and what he did to those two belligerents would never have been tolerated at a Sunday-school picnic. Then he marched them to the patrol box and summoned the wagon.

## II.

AT the station-house, Carney made his complaint to the sergeant.

"These two guys don't seem to know that there is a war on over in Europe, sergeant. They were fighting on the public highway."

"Names?" quizzed Sergeant Boyd, poising a pen over the blotter.

"Jack Dakin," volunteered the flashily dressed one.

"I think he is a liar, sarge," interrupted Carney. "While these two guys were fighting, a dame up at one of the windows hollers out, 'Give it to him, Tony,' and I don't think she was encouraging the bum."

"Come again, young fellow," commanded Boyd. "Tony what?"

"Tony Ferris," sullenly replied that individual, flashing a menacing look at Carney.

"What's yours?" demanded Boyd, turning to Fuzzy-wuzzy.

"No trouble to show goods," he announced, handing a pasteboard to Boyd.

Sergeant Boyd glanced at the card and an amused smile crept over his face.

"Some class to you for a hobo," he commented. "Pleased to meet you, Chick. But you should have known better than to start something on the public highway. Carney would never have pinched you without cause."

"Oh, that's all right, sergeant," said Chick airily. "I don't mind getting pinched, but when a Moll makes me a donation, I'm not going to stand for any Tony-boy trying to take it away from me."

"What was all the row about, anyhow?" demanded Sergeant Boyd.

"It's like this, sergeant," volunteered Tony. "I was standing on the corner, lighting a cigarette, when a Moll up at one of the windows biffs me with a piece of orange skin. When I asks her why she don't chuck me a whole orange, she's game enough to do it, and this crook snitches it right out of my hands. I wouldn't beef about it if she hadn't meant it for me."

"She told you that you could have it if you caught it," interposed Chick. "You didn't catch it. Did you?"

"It don't make any difference whether I caught it or not," retorted Tony. "It was meant for me. My lady friend ain't throwing no oranges to bums."

"Your lady friend?" questioned Boyd. "Then you know the young woman who threw the orange?"

"Sure, I know her," boasted Tony. "Here she comes now." he exclaimed, as a flashily-dressed girl entered the room.

"Excuse me, sergeant," she exclaimed. "But I saw the officer arrest those two fellows and I just had ta come down and tell you what I know about the case. That bum started the row."

"Are you the young woman who threw the orange?" asked Boyd.

"Sure I am." she replied.

"Whom did you throw it to?" questioned Boyd.

"I threw it to Tony, of course," she replied.

“Tony who?” snapped Boyd.

The girl hesitated for the fraction of a second and then replied.

“Tony Ferris. He’s my gentleman friend.”

“And what is your name, young woman?” questioned Boyd.

“Irene Cheston,” was the reply.

“There does not seem to be any question as to whom the orange rightfully belongs,” continued Boyd, addressing his remarks to Fuzzy-wuzzy. “Better hand it over to Tony before I commit the pair of you for a hearing.”

“All right, sergeant,” he complained. “I think it is pretty raw that I have to give this up after all the trouble it’s got me into, but you’re boss, and I guess what you say goes. But if the girl intended it for him, she can give it to him herself.”

The girl took the orange and handed it to Tony.

“Guess I’ll be going,” she said addressing Sergeant Boyd. “If you want me for a witness at the hearing, you can get me by calling up the M. D. Supply Company on the phone. Main 9824.”

As she started for the door, Fuzzy-wuzzy swiftly strode to the sergeant’s desk and whispered something to him. The sergeant galvanized into quick action.

“One minute, Miss Cheston,” he commanded. “Officer Carney, guard the door. Now, Chick, what was it you were saying?”

“If it is permissible for one prisoner to make a charge against another one,” replied Fuzzy - wuzzy, “I want to prefer charges against this pair. Tony Ferris has been violating the Harrison Act by selling morphin and cocain, and his partner, Miss Cheston, has been supplying him with the stuff. I think that if you search him, sergeant, you will find the goods on him.”

Sergeant Boyd studied the prisoners a full minute and then he pressed a call-button on his desk. A pair of plain-clothes men

entered.

“Frisk that fellow over there,” commanded Boyd, indicating the scowling Tony.

The pair went to the task and turned all of Tony’s belongings out on Sergeant Boyd’s desk. The search brought to light a wallet, a package of cigarettes, a box of matches, a bunch of keys, some loose change—but nothing else. Sergeant Boyd surveyed the collection disapprovingly and turned to Fuzzy-wuzzy.

“Looks to me as if you was barking up the wrong tree, Chick,” he said. “There’s nothing in that junk that looks like dope. What put that idea into your head?”

“I know that Ferris peddles the stuff,” asserted Fuzzy-wuzzy. “But I didn’t know where he got it, until I learned that his side partner, there, was employed at a physicians’ supply house and that she handles the stuff as her regular work.”

“Sergeant Boyd, this is an outrage.” exclaimed Miss Cheston. “That bum doesn’t know what he is talking about. If you call up Mr. Billings, my boss, he will tell you that it is absolutely impossible for any of the employees to carry the stuff out of the place. All employees must be searched before leaving the laboratory.”

“Sure they must,” assented Fuzzy-wuzzy. “But that doesn’t stop it from getting out. There are more ways than one of croaking a cat.”

Fuzzy-wuzzy advanced to the sergeant’s desk and picked up the orange.

“Sergeant,” he said. “If you examine this closely, you will note that there are a number of small circles on the surface where pieces of the skin have been punched out and then replaced. These circles are plainly visible despite the coating of paraffin which holds the disks in place.

“By the simple process of skinning the orange, I believe that we will get the goods on Tony and his partner.”

Fuzzy-wuzzy suited the action to the word and carefully deposited the skin on Sergeant Boyd's desk. Then, as the sergeant leaned tensely forward, he drew from the pulp of the fruit a small vial.

"Hypodermic tables of Cocain Hydrochloride!" Boyd exclaimed, glancing at the label. "We've got the pair of you dead to rights."

"You certainly have, sergeant," said Fuzzy-wuzzy. "And there are six or seven more vials of the stuff in the orange."

"Officer," commanded Boyd, after examining it, "lock the pair of them up in separate cells for a hearing later on."

As the pair were led toward the cell-

room. Tony turned on Fuzzy-wuzzy. "You're damned smart, ain't you?" he shrilled. "Who the devil are you, anyway?"

"Who? Me?" queried Fuzzy-wuzzy, smiling. "I'm not anybody much of importance, but as your curiosity is aroused. it may do you good to know that I am a humble member of the narcotic squad, working in my natural state, without any disguise or make-up. The boss says that if I take a bath occasionally and buy some decent clothes, I may develop into a real detective, some day. What do you think?"

"Aw, go to the devil," growled Tony. "You make me tired."