

SUICIDES ARE SAPS

"Mugs" Kelly, Private Dick,
Tackles the Case of the
Man Who Tried to
Kill Himself Too
Often!



I socked him and he dropped

By **DONALD BAYNE HOBART**

YOU take a rich young dame, one of these smooth dark guys that might be a crook, a detective who is kinda repulsive-looking but nice, a string of pearls worth a hundred grand, mix thoroughly and what have you? I'll tell you, a hell of a mess, and I ought to know because I'm the detective.

"Mugs" Kelly is the name, and I'm big and tough, with a face that doesn't leave any doubt about it. Sometimes I can startle myself by just looking in a mirror, and vice-versa, for I stood in front of a glass one time and it cracked. But I'm a fairly good private detective, even if I have to say so myself with unbecoming modesty.

But this trouble all starts when Miss Susan Foster, of the society Fosters, comes tripping into my office. She takes one good look at me and sinks weakly into a chair.

"You're Mugs Kelly," she says, as though there wasn't the slightest chance of her being mistaken, and I might be Tyrone Power, or Robert Taylor or something.

"The face fits."

That last crack kinda got me. Sure, I have a face that a steam-roller would love to crush, but up to now I hadn't thought it was something that was just pinned on the front of my head care-less-like.

"So does yours!" I snaps, and then when I get a good look at her I see that I wasn't lying. She's a young and pretty blonde with a figure that is something grand. "What can I do for you?"

"Keep my uncle from committing suicide, protect my pearl necklace from being stolen, and—" she looked at me anxiously—"perhaps prevent me from being murdered!"

"All right," I says flippant-like. "But no washing. I only do light housework."

"Please, Mr. Kelly, I'm serious!"

I realized that she meant it, so I dropped the patter and got down to cases. Seems that she lived with her uncle out in Westchester. They were rich, and he had given her the hundred-thousand-dollar

pearl necklace for a Christmas present.

DURING the last couple of months the uncle has been acting strange—talking about life not being worth living. I've heard that line of beefing more times than I can count, and I still claim that suicides are saps. Anything ain't never bad enough for them to kill themselves over; though maybe they think so at the time.

Anyway I learn that the uncle, whose name is Dawson Foster, has insisted that Susan keep her pearl necklace at the house, and not stick it in a safety deposit box where it would be safe. The Foster gal figures that somebody might try and murder her to get the necklace—she keeps it hid in her bedroom—but it don't make much sense to me.

I agree to take the job when she produces some nice new-looking folding money with large numbers on the bills, and I don't mean the serial numbers either. She leaves and it's arranged that I'm to arrive at the Foster residence that evening.

About seven that evening I arrive. Just as I'm strolling up the driveway to the house a slender, dark-haired guy comes running toward me.

"Get out!" he snarls. "No strangers are allowed on these grounds! Get out, I tell you!"

"Boo!" I says softly but firmly.

The dark-haired guy keeps on coming toward me and accidentally bumps his chin against my fist. Oh, all right, maybe I did sock him. Anyway he drops to the ground; out cold. From the house I hear two shots and then a dame screaming.

I made the front porch in nothing flat, and I have my .45 automatic in my hand. Those two reports I had heard hadn't been made by a cap-pistol.

I barge in through the front door. Susan Foster is standing in the living

room, looking down at a gray-haired guy sprawled on the floor. There's a gun close to him.

"Uncle Dawson!" says Susan. "He's done it! He's killed himself!"

"Let me take a look!" I tell her.

I drop my gun back into the holster and examine the old guy. He's got a powder burn on his left cheek where a bullet almost hit him, but that's all. Looks to me like Dawson Foster tried to shoot himself a couple of times, but didn't succeed, and then fainted from excitement. He's not even hurt.

"Is—is he—" asks Susan, then gives a gasp as the old boy sits up. "Uncle, are you all right?"

"Yes, I think so," he says, as I help him to his feet. "Who is this man?"

Susan tells him who I am, and things quiet down around the Foster place for awhile. I learn they have the usual collection of servants: a maid, cook, and butler. But I don't see the guy I had to sock outside. I'd thought he might be one of the help around the place, but it don't look like it.

JUST before dinner is announced a dark-haired guy dressed in dinner clothes shows up. Sure, it was the same guy who ordered me off the place. His name is Juan Manuel, and he seems to rate pretty high with Susan. I can see he doesn't like me any, and if I had my choice of being left alone on a desert island with him or a man-eating tiger I'd take vanilla.

After dinner the evening becomes a nightmare, for by ten that night Foster has tried to commit suicide four times, and made a mess of it every time. First, he tries to shoot himself as I discovered when I got to the house. Next I find him hanging in his bedroom and cut him down in time. There's an overturned chair about twenty

feet away. Next I find him standing on a third-story window ledge just about to fall. I get the window open and grab him just in time. When I find him in the kitchen with his head in the oven and the gas turned on I get tired of it.

“Listen, you!” I snaps when I get him revived. “I’m sick of this. If you don’t stop this foolishness I’ll put a bullet in you myself. You’ll be dead then all right.”

“No!” shouts Dawson Foster. “I don’t want to die. I thought I did when I had Juan ask Susan to help me and she refused—but I’ve changed my mind. I don’t want to die.”

He means it, too. Here is a guy who has tried to kill himself four times and he don’t want to die. It starts me thinking, and then it dawns on me. I remember that I haven’t seen Susan or Juan Manuel for some time, and go looking for them. When I am passing Susan’s room I hear voices—and I stop and listen. The door is standing open a little.

“You understand that I hate to do this, Susan,” says Manuel. “But I must insist that you give me the necklace.” He laughs nasty-like. “You see your uncle hired me to steal it.”

I looked in through the crack in the door. Manuel is covering the girl with an automatic and she has the necklace in her hand.

“I won’t give it to you,” says Susan. “You—you thief!”

“Drop the gun, Manuel!” I tell him as I cover him with my automatic.

He tries to turn his gun on me, so I have to shoot him in the, arm. He drops the gun all right.

“You nearly got away with it, Manuel,” I tell him. “First trying to murder this girl’s uncle—and then stealing the

pearls.”

“Murder!” snarls Manuel. “You’re crazy! He tried to commit suicide.”

“He did the first time,” I says. “He asked you to go to Susan, to tell her that he was in trouble financially.” I glanced at the door. Foster is standing there listening and he nodded when he hears me. “When she refused Foster was so desperate that he tried to kill himself, but lost his nerve.”

“But Juan didn’t tell me of Uncle asking my help,” says Susan. “I would have given it to him gladly.”

“Of course Manuel didn’t,” I says. “He wanted that hundred-grand necklace for himself. He faked those last three suicides that Foster was supposed to have attempted. A hanging man isn’t likely to have strength enough to kick the chair he is standing on twenty feet away. Nor is he likely to climb out on a window ledge and then close the window behind him, or stick his head in a gas oven. Your uncle was knocked out then.”

“That’s true,” says Foster. “I have been afraid to talk—even though he did try to kill me three times. He—he threatened to murder Susan also if I did not remain silent. And I did not think anyone would believe that I had not tried to commit suicide again.”

“Most people wouldn’t,” I says. “But just like I always says suicides are saps—and when a guy like you tries it four times, Mr. Foster, I figure there is something wrong or you are just plain crazy. You didn’t seem crazy to me. Besides Manuel is too anxious to keep me away from this place.” I grin at the dark-haired guy who is glaring at me and holding his wounded arm. “Sure, suicides are saps, but most times murderers are just plain dumb!”