



BALDY SIMMONS AND THE T-BONE MURDER

By JACK KOFOED

An overdone steak is the strange clue which leads Baldy to the killer who gunned down Ace-Deuce O'Reilly of Broadway!

ONE evening "Baldy" Simmons is in police headquarters, chinning with Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy, when about seven cops bring in "Gorilla" Magruder and "Cackles" Callahan. That is to

say, seven cops bring in Gorilla Magruder, and Cackles Callahan trails along to supervise the production. They are legally married, but nobody ever calls them anything but the names by which they become prominent.

He is six feet four inches high, and packs about two hundred and seventy pounds of bone and muscle. She is no more than five feet tall, and if she hits as much as a hundred on the scales it is strictly cheating. Cackles is a very nice little girl, who is interested in peace and quiet, when she is able to get it, but the Gorilla finds life more than slightly dull if there is no big bazoo going on.

So far as Baldy sees, there is nothing wrong with Gorilla Magruder but too much money and too much energy. And, always, it takes from seven to eleven policemen to bring him in, which is a waste of the taxpayer's money.

"What is the charge?" asks Detective-lieutenant McCoy, who fills in for the desk sergeant, while the sergeant knocks off a limburger sandwich and a schooner of beer in a greasy spoon across the street. Knowing these people very well, Detective-lieutenant McCoy expects nothing more than disorderly conduct, and resisting an officer complaints.

So, when the only cop out of the seven who is able to get his breath says "Murder," Lieutenant McCoy knocks the inkwell over the blotter. Mr. Simmons goggles at Cackles Callahan, who, not unnaturally, thinks he is making a pass at her.

"Murder?" echoes Detective-lieutenant McCoy in a thick voice.

"Murder," repeats the cop. "The Gorilla, armed with a pistol, knocks off nobody less than Ace-Deuce O'Reilly, who is fuller of lead than a repeater pencil."

By this time Detective-lieutenant McCoy recovers from his surprise.

"This is no more than nonsense," he says. "In the first place, I know Gorilla Magruder, and if he ever handles a pistol, he kills himself, sure. In the second place, he and Ace-Deuce O'Reilly are better friends than Damon and Pythias, or even Damon Runyon and Bugs Baer."

"These are points beyond dispute," agrees the flatfoot, rubbing a lump on his noggin.

"But no one is able to deny Ace-Deuce is quite dead, and his body is in the living room of Gorilla Magruder's suite in the Savoy-Knickerbocker hotel."

"There is no reason in the world why my boy friend should knock off Mr. O'Reilly," cuts in Cackles. "They are as close as adjoining fingers on the same hand. They work on a deal to open a night club called 'The Gorilla's Den,' which is to make a lot of money for them. Besides, it is well known to one and all that Ace-Deuce O'Reilly has more enemies than Peggy Hopkins Joyce has diamonds. There are probably no less than one hundred and eleven people between Times Square and Columbus Circle who are willing to take a pot shot at him. You can make it two twelve if you want to."

THIS is by no means a Blue Streak Extra to either Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy or Baldy Simmons. Ace-Deuce O'Reilly is beyond any doubt the most disliked character Broadway knows in many years.

"So, you see, there is absolutely no reason why Gorilla readies Mr. O'Reilly for the undertaker," adds Cackles Callahan.

"Let us skip the motive for a minute," says Detective-lieutenant McCoy. "What about the opportunity angle?"

"There, we are out in front, and winging," says Cackles, who is doing a fast job as a mouthpiece. "We are due to meet Mr. O'Reilly at the Savoy-Knickerbocker at midnight. He has a key to our joint, and he goes up there to rest himself until we arrive. We are a little late, because my man figures it is necessary to flatten some galumps who whistle at me as we pass by. After Gorilla lays them out, we proceed to the flat. And, there is Ace-Deuce lying on a white bearskin rug, and it is certainly a mess. What the dry cleaners charge to make that rug white again I shudder to think."

"Then what?"

“Well, these turkeys of yours get wind of what Gorilla does to the whistlers, and follow us to the Savoy-Knickerbocker. They come in just as my sweetie pie is kneeling beside the corpse, and put the old clamp on him. They do not even give him a chance to explain, and this is most unfair.”

“Go on,” says McCoy.

“Unquestionably, Ace Deuce is waiting for Gorilla and me, when some hooligan comes in, and dusts him off. Then, we arrive, and are tabbed with a bum rap. Why do you not round up Gimpy McGuire, Footloose Tomasello and Benny Broadway? Each and every one of them is a gilt-edged suspect.”

“This we do all in good time,” says Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy. “In the meantime, of course, it is my unhappy duty to toss you both in clink, pending the result of our investigations—you, Mr. Magruder, on suspicion of homicide—you, Cackles, as a material witness. Come on, Baldy, the dumb desk sergeant is poking his head through the door. Let us away to the Savoy-Knickerbocker.”

This they do, clanging along in style aboard a squad car. The manager of the hostelry, whose name is Dunhill Turrell, is no end upset by such a bourgeois happening as a murder in his upholstered dump. But he calls in everyone who may have any knowledge of what goes on. These include the doorman, elevator boys, telephone operators, floor clerk, a maid and the house detective. Since the Gorilla is such a well known character, nothing about him, or his expensive suite, goes unnoticed.

It seems that Gorilla Magruder and his ever-loving babe leave the Savoy-Knickerbocker at seven o'clock, or thereabouts. The doorman hears them say they intend to put on the feed bag at the Trinidad, which is three blocks away.

At eight-fifty “Gimpy” McGuire and Benny Broadway had come in, saying they have a date with the Gorilla and “Ace-Deuce”

O'Reilly. They are promptly given the old heave-ho by the house detective, Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh.

“They are the kind of characters who might hand even a hobo flop house a bad name,” says Mr. Fetherstonhaugh. “Besides this, neither Mr. Magruder nor Mr. O'Reilly are in the house. When I mention that, if they linger, I boff them with the old persuader, they depart, though with no good grace. This is exactly eight fifty-three. I take a gander at my wrist watch at the moment they go through the door.”

At ten minutes to nine, according to one elevator boy, Ace-Deuce O'Reilly enters the Magruder apartment. At nine five the maid goes in to make up the beds, and Ace Deuce is sitting there by himself, knocking off what appears to be a scotch-and-soda, though it may be bourbon, since he does not offer to cut the maid in on a quaff.

Mr. O'Reilly says he does not wish to be disturbed, and will she get the blazes out of there as soon as she has her, chores done, as he has some thinking to do, and thinking always gives him a headache. Since he gives the maid a fin, her feelings are not hurt and she goes in a hurry. According to her testimony, Ace-Deuce locks the door behind her.

At nine ten, the operator says, Gorilla Magruder telephones the apartment. Since she is very partial to the Gorilla, operator listens in, it being a Broadway custom to get something on a sweetie-pie if you can, even if you are very fond of him. The Gorilla speaks quite affectionately to Ace-Deuce, and says he and Cackles are likely to show up around midnight. In the meantime they are getting a lot of inside stuff about how to run a night club, plus a couple of steaks, from the Greek who owns the Trinidad.

Both the doorman and the elevator boy remember that “Footloose” Tomasello shows up somewhere around a quarter to eleven. Since Footloose is a very high class mugg

even Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh feels no inclination to urge him into outer darkness. But, he knows Mr. Tomasello has no time for Ace-Deuce O'Reilly, so he accompanies Footloose to the Magruder menage. They tap on the door several times, but there is no answer. The house detective believes that O'Reilly either ignores the summons entirely, or is knocking off forty winks, while waiting for the Gorilla to return. At any rate, Fetherstonhaugh and Tomasello return to the lobby, and Tomasello, shortly thereafter, takes the air.

IT is just short of midnight when Gorilla Magruder and Cackles Callahan arrive. The big man's collar is messed up, and his knuckles are kind of bloody, but this is not unusual, so one pays any attention to it. But, no sooner are they in the flat than seven policemen arrive, very eager to throw the big man into the jug. When they barge into the flat, there is the Gorilla kneeling by the dead body of Ace-Deuce O'Reilly.

Now, the funny part of this deal is that the police surgeon says Mr. O'Reilly is dead for at least two hours, and he cannot be dead that long if Gorilla Magruder knocks him off. Since Gimpy McGuire and Benny Broadway do not even get out of the lobby, and Footloose Tomasello is practically in the custody of Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh while in the Savoy-Knickerbocker, all these suspects look as though they have A-one, unsinkable alibis.

The floor clerk corroborates everything the others say. She is on duty until midnight, and even eats her dinner up there. As a matter of fact, the tray is still on her desk, no more than a medium sized putt from the Magruder door. She is a very nice looking dame named Mitzi Laufenstengel, with blond hair and blue eyes, though not too young. Baldy guesses her to be thirty or thereabouts, which is a very good age for practically anybody.

There seems to be nothing more to be

learned from the help at this time, so they have a look at the room—and the body of Mr. O'Reilly. It is McCoy's idea that perhaps Ace-Deuce is gunned from some adjoining property, but when he and his mentor, Baldy Simmons, study the setup, they see this is quite impossible. The room in which the unfortunate Mr. O'Reilly gets the works faces Central Park, and there isn't a building from which even a Marine sharpshooter is able to draw a bead on him. Besides, the Venetian blinds are drawn, and there are no bullet holes in them. The murder looks like something accomplished by the Invisible Man.

Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy runs his fingers through his hair, a trick Baldy is not able to accomplish in twenty years.

"Do you have any ideas?" he asks, having an immense respect for old naked-noggin's acumen.

"There is no question that Ace-Deuce O'Reilly is very dead, and is murdered by someone most unfriendly to him," says Baldy. "He is locked in his room. No one is able to shoot him through a window, and it is definite that he does not pull a hara-kiri on himself."

Lieutenant McCoy frowns. "You summarize like an expert," he says. "But what does it get us? We are right back where we started from."

"No one ever gloms a million dollars by just wanting it," Mr. Simmons declares sagely. "There are such minor items as sweat and brains and effort needed. You are no doubt a little rusty, Aloysius, because you depend on stool pigeons telling you what the score is. So, when you run into something the stoolies know nothing about, you are baffled. Go along about your business, and I drop in for a little chat with old Damitropulous, who owns the Trinidad."

The Trinidad is about ready to shutter for the evening when Baldy arrives. By this time, of course, the news of Ace-Deuce O'Reilly's passing, and the fact that Gorilla Magruder and Cackles Callahan are in the jug, are

known to one and all on Broadway. There is not a sigh or tear for Mr. O'Reilly and, as a matter of fact, several citizens are heard to remark that the country is the loser because Ace-Deuce is not rubbed out long ago. Old Damitropulous is convinced that Gorilla and Cackles are absolutely in the clear.

"They are here until midnight, and I understand Mr. O'Reilly is given the push along around ten o'clock. My joint is jammed to the rafters at that time, and I am able to produce maybe two hundred witnesses who see Mr. Magruder and his heart throb knocking off my very best steaks. It is my impression," Damitropulous goes on, "that instead of trying to pin a rap on the character who lays this O'Reilly among the daisies, one and all should chip in on a collection to show we appreciate the favor he does us."

"This is all well and good," Baldy agrees. "I am glad Gorilla and Cackles are so far out in the clear, but the police in this town are very touchy about murders. When they fail to solve them, the newspapers begin to make pointed remarks. Then, detective-lieutenants and such go back to pounding beats, which they do not like at all. My interest in this case is not merely to see justice done, but to keep my friend Aloysius McCoy from getting flat tootsies on the streets of Staten Island."

"If there is anything else you want to know, ask it now, because I am about to close up this trap, and go to bed," says Damitropulous.

"It may be that this turns out to be a crime before we are through, where we must go cherchezing a couple of femmes for all we're worth. It is my understanding that Ace-Deuce O'Reilly is not only a fast hand with the dice, but is more than a fair to average performer with the judys."

IT LOOKS as if Baldy has struck something hot this time.

"You are right down the alley with this one," agrees the Greek. "He makes more

passes than Sammy Baugh does with a football. Cackles Callahan even admits to me that Ace-Deuce throws one at her. It is incomplete, because she is the Gorilla's ever loving."

"Does Magruder know this?"

"No. But if he finds out he just pulls Ace-Deuce's arms and legs off. The Gorilla never uses a gun because he is quite frightened of them."

"I have no wish to keep you out of bed," says Baldy courteously. "Yet this woman angle interests me more than somewhat. I know five or six tomatoes for whom Mr. O'Reilly takes more than a passing fancy. A cast-aside sweetheart, or a brushed off wife, perhaps, may be concerned in this, but not one of these Broadway butterflies."

Mr. Damitropulous yawns. "It seems to me you are off on the wrong foot, Mr. Simmons. "Even if they have what appears to be air-tight alibis, I think Gimpy McGuire, Benny Broadway, or Footloose Tomasello does the job. They tell me Ace-Deuce is practically pock marked with bullets from forehead to belt line, and women are not usually that good with a John Roscoe."

Baldy Simmons bids Damitropulous a very courteous good evening, and returns to the Savoy-Knickerbocker. Mr. Dunhill Turrell is still depressed by such a happening in his place, and intimates that even if Gorilla Magruder is cleared, he is barred from the hotel for the rest of his natural life.

"There is one thing I believe," says Mr. Simmons. "Since there is a floor clerk in the hall, and plenty of guests in their rooms, and nobody hears a shot, the killer unquestionably uses a silencer on his equalizer. This is the only thing that seems conclusive at the moment. But, there is another point in which I am interested. Ace-Deuce O'Reilly is known to one and all as a great hand with the judys. Your help says emphatically that the rough characters who might do the deceased harm, are chased away from here. But, nothing is

said about girl friends.”

The manager gets very haughty about this, and announces that girl friends are nothing less than malaprop around the Savoy-Knickerbocker.

Nevertheless Baldy persists. “Isn’t it possible that a lady avoids the searching eyes of Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh, and is unnoticed by elevator operators, and such people, while ascending to the sixteenth floor?”

“It is possible,” the manager admits. “But then this lady of your dreams would have run smack dab into the floor clerk. Mitzi Laufenstengel would not shield her. Mitzi is not the sort to stick her neck out to hide a criminal.”

“Then we come back to the premise that nobody goes into Gorilla Magruder’s apartment, which does not jibe with the fact that Ace-Deuce is dead. O’Reilly does not commit suicide, and it is impossible that he is killed by a shot through the window.”

The manager shrugs his shoulders.

“Where does Mitzi Laufenstengel live?” Mr. Simmons wants to know. He’ is told that the address is in Sixty-ninth Street. Of course, it is too late to go up there this time of night, so Baldy puts it off until next morning.

When Mitzi Laufenstengel comes down into the parlor of the boarding house she has cold cream on her face, her hair is in pigtails, and her torso is wrapped in a dressing gown. But, even with these handicaps Mitzi is by no matter of means a bad looking hay bag.

“Well!” she says. “This is a busted down time to call on a lady. But I suppose it is about Ace-Deuce O’Reilly, so I forgive you.”

“Receiving me is broad-minded of you, indeed,” agrees Baldy. “Do you still stick to your story?”

“I do not know what you mean by do I stick to my story,” says Mitzi Laufenstengel. “I tell the truth, and this is generally sufficient for most people. The person who shoots Mr. O’Reilly into gruesome sections either goes in

before I am on duty, flies through the window, or chops his way through the ceiling. I do not care which, since I am not on the police department payroll. Now, if you do not mind, I will go back to my room, and get my face and body in order.”

“There are just one or two questions first. Would it seem silly if I asked how you like your steaks prepared?”

“Huh?” says Mitzi. “Well, a silly question sometimes deserves an honest answer. I like my steaks rare, if that has anything to do with what is going on.”

Baldy lights a cigarette.

“We will pass it by. It is just a phobia on my part, wondering how people like their steaks. There is something which, at the moment, is more important. When I hear your name it strikes a responsive chord. After all, I am around and about Broadway for a good many years.”

MITZI Laufenstengel looks at him with a sudden startled glance.

“What do you mean by that crack?”

“I check with Billboard, and find out that Mitzi Laufenstengel is once known as ‘Dead Eye Daisy,’ and has a target shooting act which is a darb.”

The lady is a little white.

“Do you think I killed Ace-Deuce O’Reilly?” she asks.

“I do not go so far, but the person who bumps him off is certainly a good shot, and the murder is done in a room where you say nobody but Mr. O’Reilly enters. These facts lead to certain conclusions.”

“I did not do it,” says Mitzi Laufenstengel.

“And, you are able to prove this?”

“You know I cannot, so I suppose you turn me in?”

“It is certainly an idea, Miss Laufenstengel. Dead Eye Daisy has no trouble hitting Ace-Deuce O’Reilly, or anybody else, in the confines of a living room.”

“I hit him if he is a hundred yards off,”

says Mitzi Laufenstengel. "Yet there is no reason in the world why I whack bullets into him. I come to work in the Savoy-Knickerbocker no more than five days ago. I am no Broadway doll. I do my shooting in the sticks, and have no truck with such characters as Ace-Deuce O'Reilly."

"I know you tell the truth, because I spend no less than four hours at Variety and Billboard last night," says Baldy. "Such publications have the facts on anybody who was ever in show business. But, this character is killed very dead. Nobody denies that. You sit practically outside the door, and you see nobody go in, and hear no shots fired. How do you explain it?"

"I do not explain it," says Mitzi Laufenstengel. "Explaining is your line. You tell us what all of the answers is."

"Later, maybe. In the meantime I suggest you do not leave town. Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy would be very much disturbed if you do."

Miss Laufenstengel wipes a blob of cold cream off the end of her nose, and shrugs.

"After spending all my career in the sticks, it is not likely that I lam from Broadway, because of a small detail like a murder."

So, Baldy takes himself off, and looks up Detective-lieutenant McCoy, who is playing klob with the desk sergeant, and wondering if Baldy Simmons has solved the Ace-Deuce O'Reilly murder. Aloysius McCoy is anxious to have the crime cleared up, because Cackles Callahan is raising no little fuss about being kept in the jug apart from her ever loving. Cackles is not entirely unpopular with the Police Commissioner and the district attorney, which complicates matters no end.

"Look," McCoy says. "Being a detective is very hard on the feet, which is all right with me, but when it gets hard on the brain, then I am really mortified. Pry me out of this mess, pal. My wife conks me with a rolling pin if I go back to pounding a beat."

"You are practically safe," Mr. Simmons

tells him. "The whole thing hinges on how certain people like their steaks done."

With this Detective-lieutenant Aloysius McCoy lays down his cards. He thinks maybe it is a good idea to toss Baldy into a cell, and let a psychiatrist look him over. But, it seems that business is very good, and all the cells are occupied, so McCoy reluctantly gives up the idea.

"I have no idea what a steak has to do with the knocking off of Ace-Deuce O'Reilly," admits McCoy. "After all, the man is shot, and not knocked over the head with a T-bone." He shoves aside his cards, and looks questioningly at Baldy Simmons. "Say, are you kidding me?"

"No," Baldy tells him. "In my book, murder is not something to kid about. Solving one means using your feet as well as your head. All you seem to be doing, if I may say so, is putting a shine on the seat of your pants."

The detective looks terribly, terribly hurt.

"This is not quite fair of you," he protests. "As a matter of fact I practically work myself into a nervous breakdown checking the alibis of all suspects. The alibis are air-tight. So, I relax for a little, playing klob. What is the use of putting the collar on a lot of individuals, when they habeas corpus themselves right out of the jug?"

"But, somebody kills Ace-Deuce, and the guilty person is neither Little Orphan Annie nor Superman. All that glitters is not gold, and many an alibi has a hole in it. Because you stop to play klob, when there are still many things to be done, is one of the many reasons why you are not an inspector."

"Tell me more," says McCoy.

"I only tell you this," Simmons answers, nodding his bald dome up and down. "I know who kills Ace-Deuce O'Reilly."

"The devil with it!" says the detective-lieutenant, picking up a new hand. "I know who you intend to put the finger on. It is no one less than Miss Mitzi Laufenstengel, the

floor clerk. I deduce it from the fact that you go to see her this morning. All of which is no more or less than laughable. There is no reason in the world, as I find out, for her doing this kind of a job. My own pet suspect is Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh, the house detective."

BALDY nods his nude head. "Any particular reason but a hunch, and the fact that you do not like house detectives?"

"Yeah. He is a good revolver shot. He is able to wander anywhere around the hotel without attracting attention to himself. It is quite possible that he gets Mitzi away from her desk for a couple of minutes, and then rubs out Ace-Deuce O'Reilly. I find out he and Ace-Deuce have numerous squabbles about this and that, and they do not like each other in the least."

"Passing by the motive for an instant, Miss Laufenstengel says she does not leave her desk for a single minute, and even eats her dinner there," says Baldy.

The detective-lieutenant shrugs his shoulders.

"Any dame is likely to lie to save her job. When I get through with this klob game, I think I pick up Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh, and give him a going over. Maybe he spills a few things of interest."

Baldy shakes his head.

"You are off on the wrong foot," he says. "There is no need to arrest Fortescue yet. If I am wrong, you still have time to give your rubber hose a workout. This evening, about six, come to the Savoy-Knickerbocker with me, and I will hand you the answer."

There is no possible objective Detective-lieutenant McCoy is able to advance to this proposition, so he agrees.

"And, if you do not mind, bring Gorilla Magruder and Cackles with you," Mr. Simmons adds. "I am sure they cannot fail to be interested in what goes on."

Well, this is all arranged. At six o'clock they gather in the manager's office at the hotel. There are Baldy and McCoy, the Gorilla and his ever loving, Dunhill Turrell, and Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh, who admittedly gets as close to the murder as the front door of the Magruder apartment.

"I am quite anxious to get this matter cleared up, because the more it is kept in the limelight the more harm it does our business," says Mr. Turrell. "We give you all the cooperation possible."

"This is indeed swell," says Baldy. "If there is no objection, we go up to the room where Ace-Deuce is murdered."

"Do you recreate the scene?" asks Cackles eagerly. "This is always done in every mystery I ever read, and I am practically full of goose pimples waiting to see something like that happen."

"Well, not exactly," says Baldy. "But come along. I think you do not care to miss anything."

Miss Mitzi Laufenstengel is at her desk when they reached the sixteenth floor. The manager gets someone to replace her, and she goes into the huge living room with the others. They all sit down, and try to appear at ease while Mr. Simmons takes the floor, and begins to talk.

"How long are floor clerks on duty?" he asks the manager.

"From eight in the morning until midnight."

"Exactly. No one is able to go into this apartment unless he is seen by the floor clerk, unless he enters between midnight and eight the following morning. This is impossible, because the Gorilla and Cackles are occupying their love nest, and, big as it is, they cannot fail to see an intruder."

"You mean that I kill him?" says Miss Mitzi Laufenstengel.

"No. But, I mean you know who does commit the lethal act."

The lady lights a cigarette and puffs a whisp of blue smoke toward the ceiling.

“Prove it,” she says. “I believe that is what they make you do in court.”

“You ask for it, and here it is. The police pass you by when they find you just come here a little while ago from Terre Haute and do not know Ace-Deuce O’Reilly. If you are not acquainted with him, why should you have anything to do with knocking him off?”

“This makes sense,” says Miss Mitzi Laufenstengel. “I am not in on the crime.”

“But, I am still convinced no murderer gets in unless you see him. If that is true, the only reason you do not blow the whistle, is because he means a lot to you.”

Mitzi shrugs her shoulders.

“You tell us that you eat your dinner here at your desk,” Baldy goes on.

“That is the truth.”

“And you have a steak?”

“So far as I know, there is no law on the statute books which says I cannot sink my choppers in steak whenever I am able to get one,” says Mitzi.

“Right. You tell me you like your steaks very rare. I notice what remains on your plate is so well done it is almost burned.”

Mitzi looks him squarely in the eye.

“A girl has a right to change her mind.”

“As an old steak eater, I know she does not change her mind about sirloins,” counters Baldy Simmons, “And, now that I think of it, does the Savoy-Knickerbocker supply steaks for its employees?”

“Stew and hash most of the time,” interrupts Fortescue Fetherstonhaugh. “The

chef tells me Mitzi gets steak because she is anemic.”

“Like Strangler Lewis!” says Cackles.

SINCE his mind is on something else, Baldy pays no attention to Cackles.

“It is a logical assumption that you get this well done steak for someone who hides in Gorilla’s apartment, and kills Ace-Deuce.”

“You are ready for a straight jacket,” says Mitzi Laufenstengel.

Baldy ignores her retort. “It is pretty certain you love this character, so I check again on ‘Dead Shot Daisy’ in Variety and Billboard. I find she receives a final bill of divorce from her husband, Vernon Appleby, two weeks ago. Very often dames get divorces to marry somebody else, so I go to the license bureau. It seems Mitzi Laufenstengel marries Dunhill Turrell the day before she comes here to work as a floor clerk.”

The manager comes to his feet, an ugly looking .45 in his hand.

“All right,” he says. “I kill Ace-Deuce! I get away with it, if it is not for this bald headed character. Before I knock off old naked-noggin, I tell you what happens. It does not matter to you why it is necessary for me to kill Ace-Deuce, but it is. I wait in that apartment for him from the time Gorilla and Cackles leave and Mitzi orders me a steak. Then I fill Mr. O’Reilly full of slugs, and go about my business.”

His eyes wander to Baldy, and Detective-Lieutenant McCoy lets him have it—bop—on the head with a blackjack.

Baldy Simmons smiles pleasantly.