

“Single Arrest” Dugan

By PAUL HAWK

“Single Arrest” Dugan never made more than one arrest on a case. But this sensational Larkin murder sorely tried his system.

THE morning newspapers were insulting, but then what can you expect when there is a murder in the police commissioner’s own family and the department is unable to break the case? And a flock of reporters ready to use the whole Police Department as a target. Some of them singled Inspector Dugan out for special jeers: “. . . And in view of Inspector ‘Single Arrest’ Dugan’s laxity in not making an arrest unless there is undeniable proof of guilt, the Larkin murderer may never be brought to—”

Dugan chewed furiously on his cigar and continued to read snatches of print here and there:

Mrs. Larkin, daughter of Police Commissioner Kirk, prostrated by grief—

Commissioner Kirk states he has every confidence in ability of Police Department to apprehend the murderer of his son-in-law—

Kirk denies Larkin connected with underworld. “If there had been any connection between my son-in-law and the activities of the notorious Norrell Gang, it would have become known both to me and to the Police Department,” Commissioner Kirk declared, branding as absurd and “customary sensationalism” the rumors which—

Shake-up in Police Department believed probable unless success in solving the Larkin murder—

“Single Arrest” Dugan promises early solution—

Inspector Dugan muttered a wrathful “Bah!” He strode out of the restaurant, leaving his coffee unfinished. “That’s gratitude for you,” he thought. “I solve two hundred and three cases in a row, and because the next one stumps me— Oh well—”

“No—no statement!” he snarled at the two reporters who met him at the station.

He stomped in angrily, ready to put his men through all the tricks of the trade. Three plainclothes men were waiting in his office.

“You, Cassidy. Get after that dopehead again. Keep ‘im off the white stuff—and get somethin’ out of ‘im this time if you have to squeeze it out!”

“Anything new, inspector?”

“You’re asking me?” Dugan growled

sarcastically. “Anything new! Here’s a respectable guy killed—and then it turns out just another double life thing and everybody’s got a reason for gettin’ ‘im. Why, I’d shot ‘im myself if I’d known it! No clues—and ever’body wantin’ him. And then the papers growl because I don’t run out real quick and pick up the murderer! Whatta they think I am—a detective?”

He dropped heavily into a chair and pushed a button. “Send that rookie cop in here.”

“All right now, Donelli—”

The inspector swerved around as the door opened. “You—what’s your name?”

“Swenson.”

“You—Swenson, take this quarter and get me some cigars.”

He turned back to the detectives. “You—Donelli, check up on Norrell all day last Sattiday. I wanta know every time that gangster raised a finger and why. He says he was outta town. Find me somebody that saw him here—I know he was. An’ pass the word around that I’d like to see Norrell here at the station.”

Swenson returned with the cigars. “Anything else, inspector?”

Dugan was in a nasty mood. “No. Beat it! And you three guys call in right away if, as, and when you find somethin’.”

“Does the commissioner know all this dirt on Larkin?” Dawson wanted to know.

“Naw,” the inspector spat “Think I wanta git fired? An’ that’s what makes it hard on me—with him a runnin’ in here ever’ day askin’ for arrests. Phooie! Can’t arrest ever’body.”

“What do you think—”

“What’s it matter what I think? I *know* Larkin gave Norrell the doublecross but I gotta have proof.”

It was a busy day. Riot calls. Reporters. Telephones shrilling. After dinner, Commissioner Kirk came by.

“I see the newspapers are clamoring for arrests,

Dugan.”

“Sure. They always do. Let ‘em yell,” the inspector rasped. “When I arrest somebody, it’s gonna stick! I’ll have the goods on ‘im right. Then they’ll change their tune. Let ‘em yell.”

“Are you sure you’re not withholding any information, inspector?” asked Kirk. “A little hint of progress—to the papers—might—”

“What makes you think I’d hold out on ya, commissioner? Haven’t got a thing definite. But any minute—”

He groped for the desk phone. “Who? Norrell? Tell ‘im to wait ‘til the commissioner comes out.

“I’m doin’ my best, commissioner. Stick around if you want. But I better talk to this Norrell alone.”

Dugan took one look at Norrell’s nasty smirk and knew the gangster had a perfect alibi all ready. The interview didn’t take long. The gangster had been gone only a few minutes when Detective Cassidy called.

“What? The dope squealed, huh?” Dugan shouted. “Then Norrell’s my meat!”

He dashed for the door. Swenson was the only man on hand.

“You—Swenson!” barked the inspector. “Didja see which way that bird went that just left my office? That’s Larkin’s murderer. Beat it down the street and pick him up!”

Inside again, Dugan bawled at the desk sergeant, “Send out a general alarm for Norrell. Wanted for Larkin’s murder. He’s only got a coupla minutes’ start. And he’s not expecting it.”

Dugan’s telephone rang. “Swenson’s back,” the sergeant’s voice rasped over the wire. “He’s brought Commissioner Kirk in—with handcuffs on!”

“Ouch! Oh, that crazy lunthead Swenson! Arrested Kirk, huh? And lets Norrell get away. Just arrests the commissioner! Well—all right,” Dugan shrugged wearily. “Send ‘em in here—and I’ll get the apologies over. And wait’ll I get to Swenson!”

He looked up as they entered. Sure enough, Swenson had put the commissioner in irons! Couldn’t tell him from a murderer! Kirk looked pale—was visibly fighting down his temper. Oh well, that was something—if only he kept it down.

Swenson was new on the force. He was swelling with pride over his first arrest. “Had hard time convincing him he was the one wanted for murder, inspector,” he grinned. “But I convinced him all right! Yah!”

Inspector Dugan glared at Swenson, and cringed mentally from Kirk’s inevitable outburst. Of all the tight spots!

As Kirk still said nothing, the inspector started: “Sorry, commissioner—”

But Kirk interrupted without resentment, “I know, inspector—all in the line of duty.” He tried to make a little fatalistic gesture with one hand, but the handcuffs clinked protestingly. “I’ve no regrets, inspector. Larkin had it coming. I’d do it again under the same circumstances. But I *would* like to know,” Kirk went on curiously, “how you found out I did it?”