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Poisoned Puppets

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Scoop Binney was ready to quit his partner, Snooty Piper, who insisted on making Professor Dilby their brain trust. For when the absent-minded scholar received the two newshawks he nibbled at the muzzle of a pistol and covered them with a banana.

"NOTHING of very much note ever happens in this burg," Snooty Piper complains one morning. He is sitting in Dogface Woolsey's chair in the *Evening Star* office trying to open a can of beer with the city editor's scissors. "I have a good mind to resign from Mr. Guppy's wet rag an' head for the big town where the dishonest citizens really let themselves go. I—"

It is then that the scissors go right through the tin of suds and it splashes all over Dogface Woolsey's desk and makes quite a marsh out of it. Some of the liquid hops douse Snooty's green suit in three places and in every place the burlap turns purple.

"It is quite a tailor you've got, Snooty," I says. "Maybe the third layer of that green blanket will be orange, ha ha."

"For seven ninety-eight," Snooty yowls, "that is what they sell you! I have quite made up my mind— Why, good morning, Dogface. Why—er—what is that you've—"

The C. E. comes in looking very much uglier than usual, if that is possible. And he is leading quite a mean-looking pooch by a length of chain big enough to moor the *Normandie*.

"What is it?" I asks.

"Oh, it's my mother-in-law," Dogface growls. "She—"

"I *knew* it was the first time I saw her. She resembles you, Dogface," Snooty cuts in. "You have no idea—"

"I don't mean my mother-in-law is the dog, you fresh slob," the city editor yells. "I said—it made my mother-in-law take me out—she says you got to—my dog—" Dogface slams his hat on the floor and yanks the pooch into a corner. "She said I had to take the hound down here because it is not such a good watchdog any more and is gettin' too friendly with people. She says for me to bring it down here for a week, and it will be uglier than all hell. She says to keep it lookin' at you as much as possible, Piper—ha ha. I—" The C. E. sits down in a chair soaked with beer, and swears.

Quite a to-do follows, and Dogface gets very hysterical and even I do not blame him very much. The ends of the scissors have been snapped off and there is beer in the paste pot, and a lot of nice shiny photos of a railroad wreck are all curled up like truffles. Snooty could not have made quite as much of a mess with a fire hose. Dogface sicks the dog on Snooty Piper. It is very funny as the pooch says, "G-r-r-r," and bites Dogface instead.

"Now just turn around an' bite the canine," Snooty advises him, "then we'll have some news. Come on, Scoop, it won't be very pleasant for us around here for the rest of this day."

We are just getting a very fast start for the elevator when a rewrite man comes out of a phone booth and yells for Snooty. He hollers that Mr. Guppy is on the wire and Snooty should talk to him. The crackpot does, and when he comes out of the booth he looks like he has found only half of a very fat worm in an apple he is eating.

"1 shall tell Abigail the way things are going here," he threatens, frowning dourly. "Mr. Guppy says I should come down to the Brunswick Hotel, right this minute, to get a very exclusive story of the South American canned monkey-meat industry. Compared to this stint, Scoop, working for the Methodist Men's Guild would make me feel like a very rugged G-man. If you care to follow, I think you are quite screwy."

"I shall accompany you," I says. "Mr. Guppy will most likely throw quite a lunch our way; I have got ninety-three cents until Friday, and this is only Tuesday. It is the meeting of his very exclusive Talisman Club, is it not?"

"I wish you would not mention anything more about it," Snooty complains and he is quite testy. "If I was a sports writer for Mr. Guppy's sheet, I am sure I would get sent to cover all the chess games. Let's take this cab here."

"I would not put it past you," I comes back. "I prefer to wait for the driver, Snooty Piper."

It is not much of a run to the Brunswick Hotel. When we arrive, who is on the front steps but Mr. Guppy looking quite pale about the chops, and he is yelling very earnestly for gendarmes. There are one or two running up when we alight. Mr. Guppy sees us and waves his cane around his noggin.

"Oh, hurry, boys!" he yips. "It is a murder we have got here!"

"Whoope-e-e!" chortles Snooty like he is welcoming a round-the-world flying citizen.

"That is no way to conduct yourself at such a time, Piper," Mr. Guppy says severely. "It is all very dreadful, to say the least. Follow me, boys."

IT is in the big dining room where Mr. Guppy's club has been meeting that we go. The place is filled up with a lot of citizens who are dolled up like they have been best men at some weddings. Most of the doughboys are very, very jumpy. You

can hear a sound like a large family of beavers nibbling at the trunk of quite a tough tree, and the rugs are covered with finger nail chips. One of the citizens is taking no interest in what is going on, as he is the defunct person. It is very plain to me and Snooty that he will be bothered by no more sales taxes.

"Why," Snooty says, "he has not been stabbed or shot or bopped with a club. What ploughed him under?"

A tall citizen, who looks like a merger of our most pulse-racing movie stars, takes a cigarette holder as long as a wagon tongue out of his kisser, and gets very unpleasant. He also smells very much like a well-decorated funeral, as he is soaked with perfume.

"I do not like your grammar," he says to Snooty, "at such a time—"

Four policemen are starting to throw Snooty out when everybody turns their glimmers toward the door. There is a sound outside like a garage door with rusty hinges being batted around by a very high wind. In comes Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy, who says he is a detective. Iron Jaw is quite a citizen and would have a very hard time locating a billiard ball in a hod of coal. It is Iron Jaw's dogs that squeak.

"Huh," Snooty says, "why you have launched a new pair of shoes, Iron Jaw. Tsk, tsk—and all the navies promisin' to cut down!"

"You shut up—you—you—" stutters the detective. "Where is the corpse?"

Snooty points to the perfumed citizen with the cigarette holder. "Uh—oh no, my mistake! It is the one sittin' in the chair with his bugle rubbing against his stickpin."

"Who killed him?" Iron Jaw roars just as the coroner and more big policemen come in.

"It is very funny that nobody answers, isn't it?" Snooty snorts.

Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy says he will wash his mitts of the whole thing, if Snooty Piper and me are not thrown out. Mr. Guppy says he will not stand for such an outrage against the press, and will call the commissioner immediately, if anyone makes so much as a pass at us. Iron Jaw leans over the table and scoops up some olives. He is very clumsy about it and dumps a pitcher of very thick cream into a very dignified citizen's lap. It is no way to conduct a murder investigation, any way you look at it.

"Would you mind seeing to the murder, somebody?" Mr. Guppy yelps. "Where is there a detective?"

Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy swears, then starts taking a gander at the defunct citizen.

"His pump stopped, that's all," the flatfoot trumpets after awhile. "There ain't a mark on him. Huh, well, let's call the meat wagon."

"I smell cucumbers," Snooty yaps. "That means there is a copperhead snake around. I bet he got bit. Maybe it was in his lettuce."

"I'll stand just so much," Iron Jaw howls. "I—I—" He sniffs like a tiger outside a monkey cage. "Yeah—cucumbers! You been eatin' any of them, you guys?"

Just then somebody opens a window and Snooty tries to see who it is, but when you are standing behind Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy, it is quite the same as if you were hiding behind a warehouse. After a time the coroner finds something on the neck of the citizen who has been erased, and it is only a little break in the skin that would not have bled a moth to death.

"We will have an autopsy," the coroner says. "Mr. Guppy says Mr. Billipp slapped his hand against his neck, like he had been bitten by a gnat, just before he collapsed. Right away we will have an autopsy before—"

"There is a good-sized knife here,"

Snooty chirps. “We could clear the table—”

Several big policemen ask permission to club Snooty Piper’s brains out, and I look toward Mr. Guppy quite hopefully. Mr. Guppy says he thinks that one murder is enough to handle at a time, and he lets the gendarmes throw Snooty out instead. I find him out in front of the hotel a few moments later. He is sitting on the curb brushing quite an assortment of rubbish from his green suit.

“They can’t do that to me, Scoop,” he howls.

“Why, they just proved they could,” I says. “Snooty Piper, you were very disgraceful in there. Is there no place that you could respect? Well, I am going to the madhouse to write the lead on Mr. Billipp’s obit. On my way I must fortify myself with a very stiff hooker of rye.”

Later in the day we have quite a lot of dope on the defunct citizen. It seems that his name was Caspar Q. Billipp and he conducted a rather large laundry business about the Hub. Why anyone should take the trouble to annihilate Caspar is quite a mystery to all of us. Snooty says maybe he might have starched somebody’s socks by mistake. Caspar was quite a religious gink, according to his relatives; and if he had an enemy in the world, it was only a radio crooner.

Just before we go home we find out the results of the autopsy on Caspar Billipp. His giblets had showed no sign of having been treated with arsenic and such, but the coroner says that some kind of poison had been thrust into Caspar’s arteries. All the time the dissection was going on they could smell cucumbers. The coroner says Caspar Billipp was rubbed out without much of a doubt, as his heart looked as strong as an oak knot when they took a gander at it.

“So it is murder,” Snooty says. “I knew it the minute Iron Jaw said it was a heart attack. Well, it is a dangerous citizen who did the job, and he did not leave any more clues than a duck leaves fingerprints. It will be quite a case, Scoop. Why—here comes Mr. Guppy! And look who’s with him.”

IT is the citizen who smells like a valley of lilies in the rain. The boss introduces him as Ramon Casaba and he says he is quite a monkey-meat canner in South America. Casaba says he was unstrung and that was why he could not take Snooty’s jokes. He also says he is quite an amateur detective and will try to help locate the rough character who snuffed out Caspar Billipp’s life.

“Just follow that big flatfoot you saw in the hotel,” Snooty says. “Do just the opposite of what he does and you will be a great man-hunter. Iron Jaw is only on the police force, I am quite sure, to batter down doors for the intelligent policemen.”

“I heard you, Piper,” a voice trumpets, and Iron Jaw himself pounds down the corridor. Snooty takes a banana out of his pocket and peels it. He tosses the skin to the floor right where Iron Jaw is going to plant his size sixteen scow. It is quite a spill the overstuffed dick takes. All the fire pails hanging up on the walls in the whole building shake loose and make a very terrible clamor. Iron Jaw’s derby rolls down a stairway. Maybe twenty citizens step on it when they make their way up.

“I don’t see how anybody falls down, when they have got a very large Eskimo canoe tied to each foot,” Snooty says. “Well, Mr. Guppy, I hope we will see you later. Goodbye, Mr. Casaba, and it you need any help in the way of detective work, look us up. Run, Scoop!”

We jump into a taxi outside the building, just as Iron Jaw hits the sidewalk swinging quite a good-sized cuspidor around his noggin. He lets it fly, and we look out the back window to see the gaboon go right through the window of a street car.

Then three policemen start chasing Iron Jaw.

"We will not worry very much about Iron Jaw for a few hours," Snooty laughs, and sits back in the taxi quite satisfied.

It is a week later that indignant citizens of Beantown demand that the police force do something about the rubout of Caspar Billipp. Mr. Guppy writes very harsh editorials about the boys down in Joy Street. The Commissioner comes up to the madhouse one day and says for Mr. Guppy to come out and fight like a man.

"It is quite baffling all of it," Snooty Piper says to me. "But it had to be a citizen who was at the powwow with Mr. Guppy and his pals. It is very surprising to me that Iron Jaw did not arrest all of them and search their torsos for a hypo needle. There were also six flunkeys at the club, too. Did you note the fruit on the table, Scoop? It is very possible that a black widow spider could have crawled from it and nipped Mr. Billipp. This is one murder that has got me licked.

"Then I don't see why anybody else would try to figure it out," I says quite nasty. "Let's forget all about it, like all the policemen, and go over to the Greek's for a snort."

Me and Snooty are no sooner in the giggle-juice shop than Popopoulous says we are wanted right away on the telephone. Who is it but Dogface Woolsey. He says to hurry down to the corner of Tremont and School Streets, where there is a corpse. He says it is a Mr. Billipp, whereat Snooty gets very indignant.

"Mr. Billipp is every inch under the sod, Dogface, and don't you kid me," he yelps. "Wha-a-a-a? Another Mr. Billipp? . . . Oh-h-h!"

"Run, Scoop!" Snooty hollers to me, grabbing his hat on the way out of the grog shop.

QUITE a mob of citizens are at the scene of the extinction, but Iron Jaw stands out like a hippo sitting on an ant hill. He is yelling for everybody to get back to give the defunct some air.

"To look at him," Snooty says, muscling his way to the corpse, "I would say that if a tornado came along, Mr. Billipp could not get even a smell. Hello, Iron Jaw. Who killed him?"

"You shut up!" barked the flatfoot. "Maybe nobody can solve the other crime because you stole some evidence. But if you have, you cough it up, get me?"

We laugh at the crackpot just as the dead wagon comes up and the corpse tester is there with his little black weekend bag. He looks at the deceased and says to have it loaded in the wagon. There is an eye-witness who says that he saw the deceased walking along minding his own business when suddenly he slaps his hand to his neck and then looks at the hand to see if he has messed up a horsefly or something. It is three seconds later that he sits down on the sidewalk and expires quite permanently.

"It is goin' too far," bawls Iron Jaw. "There is a killer in Beantown!"

"If there ain't," I says, "he will do until a really tough boy comes along, ha, ha."

"I will get him," the flatfoot growls. "I'll track him down, if—"

"You have got to have one track to start on, haven't you?" Snooty says. "He is not a very honest criminal, as he did not leave one for you. Scoop, did you find out the victim's name?"

"It is Darius U. Billipp," a policeman says. "He owned a canary store in Chelsea."

It is quite intriguing all around. We find out that he was no relation to the first victim and was a timid gink. His relatives tell me and Snooty, when we call on them, that Darius never said a cross word to anybody, even to his landlord.

"Did you smell cucumbers when we got close to the late Mr. Billipp?" Snooty asks me. "It must be a poison that is very rare like a spendthrift in Scotland. You know what I am goin' to do?"

"I don't care," I says. "Unless it is to blow out your brains, Snooty Piper. Don't you drag me deeper into these very terrible crimes, because, compared to this criminal person at large, the Borgias were sissies."

"I shall call on Abigail's learned friend, Professor Lucius Dilby, of Back Bay. He is quite a botanist, any way you look at him. You remember him of course?"

"I am afraid so," I gulp.

Snooty sniffs just then and says: "Smell anythin', Scoop?"

"They are workin' on a sewer quite close to this spot."

"I don't mean that, you halfwit," Snooty yaps.

It is that night we ring Professor Dilby's bell. He comes to the door nibbling at the muzzle of a pistol and covering us with a very large banana. Lucius Dilby used to teach the Harvards. He is a very funny looking old citizen with a big schnozzle, a white drooping mustache and no chin.

"Uh—hello. Think I've met you both before, heh, heh," he squeaks, and pockets the banana. "Can't take chances this time of night, no indeed. Step right in, gentlemen."

"I am Mr. Piper of the *Evening Star* and this is Mr. Binney," Snooty explains. "We are on the trail of a very dangerous citizen. We would like to ask a question or three. Have you any idea, Mr. Dilby, where anybody could get a poison that smells like cucumbers?"

Mr. Dilby takes a piece of chewing gum from his pocket, unwraps it, jams the paper into his mouth and throws the stick of gum into the fireplace. He scratches his noggin until I says to him to stop as he is getting down to bedrock.

"Why—er—of course," the professor chirps, and goes to a shelf. He takes down a book that could hold eighteen stories quite as lengthy as Anthony Adverse. He flips the pages, then squints. I can see the name of the book. It is Flora and Fauna. I tells Lucius he has gone very absent-minded again.

"It is about plants we ask," I point out. "Not about dames. It says on the cover—"

"Don't mind him," Snooty gives me a shove. "He is very ignorant, professor. Just go on."

I pick up a book-end that would sink a ship, just as Lucius Dilby tosses out some words. "Why, here it is. I was very sure of it. Yes—yes. The bulli-bulla plant, the most deadly of all plants, my friends. One drop of the milk from this plant would kill three healthy horses."

"How much for Iron Jaw?"

"Shut up!" Snooty says. "Go on, professor."

"It comes from the tropics," the smart old codger tells us. "In several countries. Why do you ask, Mr. Pumper?"

"Piper is the name," Snooty says. "Why, because some very rough character is carrying that cobra milk around loose, and he is stabbing honest citizens. You have heard of the Billipp murders?"

"Why, of course—I saw the movie last night."

"Come on, Scoop," Snooty says very low. "If there was no plants in the world, the old boy would be a nitwit."

"You forgot your hat, Mr. Spinney," Lucius says to me.

"I've got it on, thanks," I comes back. "That is yours."

"Oh, so 'tis. Fancy that, heh, heh! I must be getting old," squeaks Lucius Dilby, shaking his head.

"You ain't exactly teethin'," Snooty flings back when we go out. "Ha, ha! Scoop, he's quite a caution, isn't he?"

"It is bad enough to be with one mental

defective," I says, "but—"

"Well, we know what killed the Billipps," the crackpot says.

"That ought to solve everything, then, shouldn't it?" I counters. "Snooty Piper, you are going to aggravate me a little too much some day. I think I will get on a trolley car and go straight home."

"Tomorrow we will get on the trail again," Snooty says. "There is no such thing as a perfect crime."

"You don't know how very disappointed I am to hear that," I shoot at him. "I have wasted much thought on your assassination. Good-night, Snooty."

IT is quite a shock we get when we arrive for our stint at Mr. Guppy's the next morning. Dogface Woolsey is running around in circles and yelling something about the Boston Massacre. He stops and looks at us when we arrive. Then he yells that another Mr. Billipp has been exterminated. A Mr. Felix Billipp.

"They found him sittin' on a bench in the Common, this very mornin," Dogface says, "stiff as a whale's spine. Oh-h-h, we've got to do something, or nobody will be safe. Can't you think of something, you blockheads?"

Dogface chases us out and we go down to Joy Street to find out the particulars of the late Mr. Felix Billipp. It is all very aggravating, as there is still no clue. Felix was just a citizen who was on relief and was not of much importance any way you looked at him. They tell us that Iron Jaw is out working quite diligently to solve the massacre; so we laugh. They throw us out of police headquarters, too.

"Well, I know where we are welcome," Snooty says. "We will go to the Greek's. Let them find the rough boy themselves, hah!"

"Sure, let's throwaway all the evidence we've got," I snap at him. "We'll show them! Won't we, Mr. Piper?" I have never been quite so sarcastic. We get to the grog shop—and what do you think? Popopoulous says for us to get out, and stay out, until we can pay what we owe him.

"Maybe we could just go to a railroad station and sit down for a minute or two," I says. "I—look, Snooty! Look over there. It is two *Sun* reporters running for that hack. They look very excited about something. Now what do you think?"

Snooty starts running and grabs one of the boys by the coat just as he starts getting into the swindle chariot.

"Leggo, you! Oh, it's you, Piper!" the *Sun* slave yelps. "It's a murder over at the Kenyon Hotel. Another—"

"Don't tell me the name was Bil—"

"That's right."

I feel very faint, so Snooty has to drag me into the hack he called. I don't quite feel anywhere near normal, until we get out of the cab and barge into the lobby of the Kenyon. It is a very ritzy family roost in Brookline near Coolidge Corner, and what is on the floor of the lobby but another very limp cadaver. There are two dames in faints and the manager is running around with his toupee hanging over one ear. A very large crowd of gendarmes are looking at Mr. Billipp, while the long-panned gink with the black bag is shaking his noggin.

"Like the others," he intones, "not a mark except a little spot under his ear. Anybody smell cucumbers?"

"Why I believe I do," Snooty says. "I—why, here comes Jumbo!"

It is Iron Jaw getting to the scene and when he sees the defunct citizen he gets down on his hands and knees and looks all around for clues.

IRON JAW lifts his big noggin to swear at us and smacks it against the edge of a very large gaboon. There is a sound like the gong on an amateur radio hour. Even some

of the citizens laugh. Me and Snooty sprint for the sanctuary of the manager's office, when Iron Jaw picks up the cuspidor. The manager, straightening out his wig, is quite fussed. He tells us that the deceased had registered at his hostelry not twenty-four hours before, and that his name was Bartholomew Z. Billipp, from Chuckville, Vermont.

Snooty shakes his dome and asks the inn keeper could he describe the citizens who were near Billipp when he was put out of circulation. It seems that our host can not—and it is quite exasperating. When we go out, Iron Jaw is sounding off quite raucously.

"It is simple enough," he trumpets. "We will just keep a close watch on the rest of the Billipps in Boston—snag the criminal that way." He sees us then and tells everybody that we are the reasons that justice is being obstructed. He threatens to see to it that the Beantown press is kept very much in its place.

"That is why we policemen are hampered," he bays. "Type-lice like them two clucks! Well, the commissioner will—"

"Nuts!" cuts in Snooty. "Don't let him fool you, ha, ha! It is the inefficiency of the police forces. Iron Jaw could not locate a giraffe in a patch of blueberry bushes. Come on, Scoop."

"Why, hello, boys!" We start to run, which is quite a habit with us but we stop and look at a citizen who comes into the lobby. It is Ramon Casaba, the friend of Mr. Guppy who smokes cigarettes at a distance.

"My, my," he says, "it is getting so we are tripping over murder victims. How is Mr. Guppy?"

Snooty Piper grunts something very impatiently and looks at the remains of Bartholomew Billipp. He sniffs like he smelled fire, scratches his dome and then goes over to kneel close to the corpse.

"Remember this, you two Horace Greeleys," Iron Jaw rumbles, "you keep from under my feet from now on. We will not stand for any more interference from the scandal sheets. The commissioner has told Mr. Guppy what is what. Just try and bother me! And you keep out of this, too, Mr. Casaba. You have been poking around too much thinking you are a detective."

"If they could hang for that crime, Iron Jaw," I says, "you would have been expunged some time ago. Come on, Snooty, I am getting fed up with lookin' at citizens who have ceased to function."

"For once what Iron Jaw says is right," the crackpot groans when we ankle out. "All they will have to do is watch the other Billipps who survive. Well—ow-w!"

Snooty clamps a flipper to his scalp and jumps right off the sidewalk. Two fresh kids start to run. They have got beanshooters in their mitts.

"Ha, ha!" I hear one gurgle. "I beaned the funny lookin' goof in the green suit on the dome, Spunky!"

"I will dust his caboose," Snooty yelps, and chases the small citizens down an alley. They run into a doorway just as a very large, tough looking character comes out. He is very indignant with Snooty and asks him why in the h— he is scragging his kid.

"Maybe y't'ink youse are wise, huh?" he says, and reaches for Snooty's neck.

"Why—er—ha, ha," I says. "It was tag we was playin' with the kids. We never grew up. Run, Snooty!"

When we are eight blocks away, Snooty Piper stops dead in his kicks and says: "Scoop, I have got it!"

"If it's leprosy," I says, "let me congratulate you. Then I can go home and—"

"You come with me, Scoop," the nitwit tosses out. "We are going back to the inn. Listen, Scoop. It is by the alphabet the

Billipps are being exterminated. First it was Caspar, then Darius, then Felix. I—"

"Then Bartholomew," I cuts in. "Maybe the criminal skipped a letter and went back over them, huh? You are screwy!"

I follow Snooty into the hotel and he goes over and looks at a telephone book. He flips the pages to the B's and then his pan gets very white like a head waiter's bib. I hold him up as he looks like he is quite close to a swoon.

"Sc-scoop," he says weakly, "the—the page where the Billipps should be is torn out. The—the murderer is in this hotel, I bet. He has got the sheet and is checkin' them off. The last Billipp was from out of town and he saw his name on the register. That is why the alphabet was mixed up there. The rough boy lives here, I am sure, as how would he know Bartholomew was here if—"

He feels of the spot on his scalp where he was bopped by the bean shooter. He is very green around the gills. I have seen corpses look very much more in the pink.

"What is it?" I asks. "Speak to me, Snooty."

"I just remembered somethin' Scoop," he says. "Two things. I am on the trail of the dishonest character. The citizen who carries the bulli-bulla juice. It's amazing the lack of observation in the police force."

I pushes him away. "If the poisoner is close by me, I shall remedy that. I will write to you, Snooty."

"At a time like this," the crackpot yells, "you should not desert the minions of the law, Scoop Binney. It is your duty to help bring the unlawful character to the jail."

Snooty walks away very indignant and goes to the desk. I don't know why but I follow him. He asks the clerk if Mr. Casaba lives in the inn.

"He does," the guy says. "I think he is in his room right this minute."

"We are pals of his," Snooty says. "Don't bother to ring him. Come on, Scoop!"

RAMON CASABA lives on the eleventh floor. We knock on his door and he opens it. He has got on a very ducky purple dressing gown, out of a pocket of which is stickin' the long cigarette holder. He is quite aromatic as usual—like he had been almost drowned in a rose bowl.

"Why, boys," Casaba gushes, "how did you know I lived here?"

"I got a day letter from an oriole," Snooty says. "Nice place you've got."

"W-who—aw-w-wk! Is the fish-faced – r-r-r-aw-w-w-k swab?"

"Who said that?" Snooty explodes. "Why, ha, ha, it is a parrot. Look, Scoop—a fancy one, too."

"It is some nice murders we have had of late, eh, Mr. Casaba?" Snooty says. "Why—I—believe I smell—cucumbers! Don't you, Scoop?"

"Wha-a-a-a?'' I gulp, and look at Mr. Casaba. The citizen's eyes are nothing you would quite expect to see in a Madonna painting.

"Those cigarette stains are funny on your fingers, Mr. Casaba," Snooty keeps on, "because you use a holder, don't you—or do you? And you use perfume so nobody will smell cucumbers, huh? Well, of course, you know that crime does not pay—"

"Caramba!" Mr. Casaba grabs his holder, shoves it between his bicuspids and inflates his cheeks. Snooty Piper takes a nose dive just as I hear a little plopping sound. A very loud squawk comes from the parrot as I toss a heavy smoking stand at Mr. Casaba's pantry. The citizen from the tropics, proving quite hardy, brushes it aside with little more than a grunt. The spick makes quite a try at breaking his cigarette holder. But Snooty, who is in no position to do very much else at the moment, bites Mr. Casaba very forcefully on the calf. The

Latin yowl that follows proves Mr. Casaba's objections. He drops the holder and reaches for a cannon.

"Look, Scoop," Snooty yelps, "the parrot is already moulting! Boys, that bulli-bulla juice is quite potent. I—"

Bang!

"Shut up! He is shootin' at you," I shout. I jump for Mr. Casaba and hang onto him like a sloth before he can shoot once more. Snooty is sitting on the floor poking at a hole in the crown of his green hat.

"Boys, he missed me," he sighs.

"How can you tell?" I holler. "No brains could fall out of your skull. Will you get up and help me, Mr. Piper? It is your criminal, you—" Mr. Casaba bats me very hard on the scalp and I do not remember anything for quite some time. When I open my glimmers, I see Snooty sitting on Mr. Casaba. Snooty bas a portion of a chair still clutched in his mitt.

"I would think be is quite *hors du combat,* any way you feel him," Snooty says. "Come on, Scoop, and we'll search the Spig."

We find a little bottle in Casaba's vest pocket, and when we yank out the stopper, there is a very strong smell of cucumbers everywhere about. The stopper has got a glass tube in it. In another pocket we find a small box of very tiny needle tips.

"He is quite an ingenious citizen," Snooty says to me. "Now look at this cigarette holder. You drop a needle in and press—pouf! A corpse! Mr. Casaba could stand close to most anybody and make believe he was just blowin' out a stoppage in the holder. Scoop, get some of those curtain cords, as we must tie him up. He is not very safe when he is awake, do you think?"

"He did not miss you by much," I says. "The parrot got the needle and it looks like a taxidermist has already stuffed it quite a few times. Snooty, will you call for a policemen's car—and several big gendarmes to go with it?"

The commissioner is very much amazed at us when we unload our dishonest character at their feet in Joy Street.

"Why, what is this?" a blue-chopped lieutenant tosses at us.

"He is a very dangerous assassin," Snooty retorts. He slew the Billipps!"

"Ha, ha," a big gendarme neighs, "tell Iron Jaw. Why, he brought the culprit in from Medford—an hour ago!"

Just then out comes Iron Jaw. He looks at us and laughs very heartily. "Well, we all make mistakes! We—" Another protector of Boston's beans dashes out and says that Iron Jaw's prisoner has returned to consciousness—that something terrible must have happened.

"You must've hit him pretty hard, O'Shaughnessy," the cop stutters. "He is just able to talk."

"I didn't take no chances," the flatfoot brags. "I saw him snooping inside the garage belonging to Mr. Orville Billipp in Medford. I figured he was the next on the list, so I watched. Ha! Well, you two great big man-hunters, I—"

"But-but, O'Shaughnessy," the cop insists, "the gink says he is Mr. Orville Billipp and wants to be released this instant. He says his wife can prove it, as he was out in the garage looking for a wrench he lost and somebody sneaked up and socked him—"

"Ha, ha," Snooty laughs, doubling up. "Iron Jaw, you kill me!"

"Uh—ugh—y'mean—well, maybe there was some mistake," Iron Jaw gulps.

Mr. Ramon Casaba owns up to everything under pressure. It seems that many years ago his grandpapa was rubbed out by some Ecuador Indians, who dried up his head and sent Ramon's old man the parched noggin for a souvenir. Well, to make a long story short, a citizen named

Billipp came down to South America to look over some gold mines. He saw the dome and lifted it. Ramon's papa made his son swear to extinguish all the Billipps in the U. S., so he would be sure to get the right one.

"That is it," Ramon grinds out, "when I get through here, I go to Pheeladelpheea an' start on the Billipps there. Then I go to all the beeg cities."

"Ugh," Snooty says, "what an assassin. Well, I got wise to you, Casaba, when I saw the cigarette stains on your fingers. When the telephone book page was ripped out in the hotel, I says: 'The rough character lives here.' Every time I looked at you, Casaba, I wondered why you smelled like the inside of a frill's boudoir. Now I know you wanted to kill the aroma of bulli-bulla juice. Let me show the nice policemen your very ingenious annihilator. Boys, look at it! He just loaded it with a needle soaked in bulli-bulla juice and then bopped the Billipps. Now I must get to Mr. Guppy and ask him why he associates with such criminal persons. It should be good for quite a raise. Come on, Scoop."

Just then out comes Mr. Orville Billipp with an igloo on his scalp as big as a darning egg. "Where is the big slob? I will kill him!" he hollers.

"No jury would convict you," Snooty says. "Good luck, Mr. Billipp."

We go out quite satisfied with everything.