

Snooty and Scoop thought crashing a whoopee party would be a pleasant way to solve a murder. But the guests turned out to be quite heavily armed, and the spirit of their revelry was

The Morgue the Merrier



Snooty bounced the bottle off the rough character's noggin.

By Joe Archibald

Author of "Slay Ride," "Bumping-off Place," etc.

ME and Snooty Piper blow into the office of the *Evening Star* one snappy morning ready to do our reportorial stint. The *Evening Star* is quite an important Beantown rag, conducted by Mr. Oswald Guppy, publisher, with the inexpert assistance of Dogface Woolsey, city editor.

"Hello, Dogface, old chap," Snooty chirps as we stick our noggins into his office. "Any more safes cracked lately?"

Dogface looks up at us very sourly and growls "Yes, two of them. What's the matter with the police? What's this burg comin' to? Are the citizens going to take this crime wave lying down—?"

The telephone interrupts his tirade. His eyes pop out like grapes as he listens into

the receiver. Suddenly he slams down the phone and leaps at us.

"Another safe cracked?" asks Snooty.

"Better than that!" he yelps. "Hurry over to seventeen-sixty-one Commonwealth Avenue—a guy has been rubbed out! Get going!"

In just twenty minutes we pull up in front of an ordinary-looking apartment house, the bump-off place. We fight our way through the cops and upstairs to the murder flat.

It is not a very elegant tepee, where the citizen has ceased to function. In fact the flat is quite an ordinary one-room wigwam. When we walk into the joint it is overrun with gendarmes. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy, the biggest and most

unconscious detective in Beantown, is very much in charge. When he sees us, he gets very abusive.

"I thought I stepped on all the cockroaches when I come in," he says. Then he takes off his derby and slams it down on a table. There is a big metal spike for sticking papers on the table and it goes right through the crown of the Kelly.

"There goes what brains he had," Snooty says, and we amble over to look at the defunct taxpayer while Iron Jaw indulges in a convulsion. The victim has been thoroughly dented on the noggin by a bludgeon that me and Snooty are quite positive weighed more than a banana. We find out that his name was Elmer Fudd and that he lived on Uncle Sam's cuff.

"Get away from that corpse," the big flatfoot hollers. "Don't you try to steal any evidence or—"

"Why, has it got some?" I asks and everybody laughs. Even the citizen with the dead-wagon valise cracks a smile.

"Oh, you are smart, are you?" Iron Jaw tosses at us. "Well, this is one time I show you mugwumps. I'm making an arrest inside of half an hour, ha ha! Wouldn't you like to see what was in this letter I found, hah? The boy who was rubbed out was just startin' to write it when he was conked. I'll let you read about it in the papers. I've been waiting a long time for this."

The sleuth waves a sheet of paper right in our maps. Suddenly a gust of wind comes through an open window and blows the paper right out of his big mitt and sends it flying right out the window.

"Run, everybody!" Iron Jaw howls. "Everybody go outside and look for it! Aw-w-w cripes!"

QUITE a to-do follows. Everybody but the corpse runs out of the house to look for the paper, and they all come back

later without it. Iron Jaw swears and stamps boards loose from the floor, but says he has got the murderer's name anyway, so he just sends a harness bull out to keep looking for the paper.

"You two mugs are to blame," Iron Jaw thunders. "I got a good mind to—"

"If you have, you never carry it with you," Snooty interrupts and he starts poking around the room.

Pretty soon he picks up something and looks very quickly to see if Iron Jaw is watching. The flatfoot says it is only a library card, and if he can make something out of it, take it. Then he calls to the husky gendarmes and tells them to go with him to apprehend the murderer of the taxpayer.

Snooty makes no move to leave the place, even when the remains are put into a morgue hamper and toted out to the dead wagon.

"What do you expect to find?" I says. "Some footprints?"

"That is like you, Mr. Binney," the crackpot sniffs. "You always give up too easy. There is something in this that makes me wonder."

"I'll bite—what is worrying you, Mr. Piper?"

"The library card," he retorts. "There is no library book in the joint. It is like finding a badge in a room, but no policeman. It is also quite mystifying to me why any citizen would want to assassinate such an inconsequential gink, Scoop. But of course murder is murder in this commonwealth, whether the victim is a very opulent Milk Street tycoon or just a weary Willie lolling under a railroad trestle. I think we should go to the Greek's and talk things over."

"I am ready to accompany you anywhere out of this joint," I says. "It is no play nursery."

Now, we are in the Greek's not more than five minutes when Snooty Piper takes

something out of his pocket and unfolds it. "Here is the paper that was buffeted out of Iron Jaw's feelers, Scoop," he says.

"Is there nothing you won't do?" I gulp. "You are a dishonest character, that's what you are, Snooty Piper. You send that to headquarters right away or I will have nothing more to do with you. I thought you had a funny look on your kisser when—"

"In due time," Snooty says, "I will return it, Scoop. It is a very odd missive the late Mr. Fudd started to write. Listen, will you?" And he starts to read: "'Dear Louie, Spike is the guy who is wise to that racket. He says he is going to get me—'"

"Go on," I says wearily.

"That is where he was interrupted by the playful character who swings the noggin-crusher. Now, Iron Jaw no doubt looked up in an address book that Mr. Fudd kept and found Spike's address in it. That is probably how he solved the case in such fast time. Or what do you I think?"

"I don't," I says. "Come on, let's forget it, Snooty."

"If you will meet me in the morning, Scoop," he says, quite unabashed, "we will go to the public library nearest the late Elmer Fudd's domicile and check up on the library card. I am still of the opinion that Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy is a liability to the taxpayers."

"Here, boy," Snooty calls out when a pint-sized newspaper monger comes into the Greek's shouting his wares. "An *Evening Star*."

The news on the front page of Mr. Guppy's journal is quite interesting. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy has arrested a citizen by the name of Spike O'Reilly for the murder of Elmer Fudd and claims he will have a confession out of the alleged rough character by dawn. The behemoth of the Boston bulls says he is going to keep on grilling the taxpayer until he breaks down,

as he has enough on O'Reilly to smother him.

"Ha ha," Snooty says, "I would hate to arrest an O'Reilly by mistake. Nothing seems to scare Iron Jaw. Listen, Scoop, Spike says he is very innocent and that the letter Elmer was writing to him was about a radio he could get wholesale for a friend of Elmer's."

"Snooty Piper," I says severely, "you are holding up justice. You get that to Iron Jaw right away or—"

"He would only lose it again," Snooty says. "Well, I think I will be going now, Scoop. Don't forget. Nine in the morning, in front of the beanery on School Street."

"I'm afraid so," I says.

It is the next day that me and Snooty go down to the branch library in Elmer's neighborhood. Snooty walks up to the desk and hands Elmer Fudd's library card to a very neat bit of fluff.

"Good morning," the crackpot says. "I would like you to tell me what book this card represents, as it is very important to many citizens concerned."

The doll looks at the card and says it will be very easy to check up on the number if we care to wait.

"Boy," Snooty says to me under his breath, "she would make a million dollars look like slugs. I wonder if she is married?"

"Just wait here," I scoff at him, "and I will go down to the city hall and find out. Now listen here, you fathead, don't get fresh—"

Right then the doll comes back and says that the book Elmer took out was called "Crumbs Along the Mohair" and that it was a book very much in demand. She asks Snooty where he got the card.

"Near a corpse," the halfwit answers. "Elmer Fudd was rubbed out, as you may have heard. Now, if you could remember whether anybody else asked for the book

the day Elmer took it out, it would help oil the wheels of justice no end.” He takes out that phony detective badge of his and flashes it at her. I pick up a copy of “Anthony Adverse” to brain him with, but can’t quite lift it.

“I seem to recall that a girl asked for that book just as Mr. Fudd walked out with it,” the doll tells Snooty. “Yes, I remember. I told her that she was just a few moments too late and that the gentleman who was just leaving had taken the book. It must be thrilling to be a detective,” she breathes, ogling Snooty.

“Oh, we just do our duty,” Snooty says and twirls his green hat with quite some flourish. “Ah—er—what do you do nights?”

“Sleep, like other people,” the doll comes back. “Do I look like a raccoon? If that is all—”

“I do not think you are very polite,” Snooty says. “If I ever want a book, I am sure I will not come to you. Come on, Scoop.”

“As fast as you want me to,” I says. “You will find out maybe in twenty thousand more years that you can’t be a masher with a mug like yours. And if you don’t get rid of that detective badge, I’ll knock you silly and take it away from you.”

“We have got to keep our heads, Scoop,” Snooty says to me, disregarding my threat. “We will get nowhere fast in this fashion. Let’s get a subway.”

IT is quite crowded in the underground iron horse, and me and Snooty just manage to get the last two straps not in use. There is a very musky aroma permeating the car, and it smells like a very potent mixture of bay rum and elderberry wine. In a very few moments I learn that it is emanating from a blonde doll who is wedged quite close to Snooty

Piper. She is painted up like a totem pole, and her jaws are working very diligently on what I am sure is ten cents worth of spearmint. She is a little round-shouldered from carrying half a dime store’s jewelry counter around with her. No matter how you look at her, she is nothing you would expect to see at a strawberry festival.

Suddenly I become aware that the dizzy doll is giving Snooty the eye, and the crackpot does not mind it. All at once the train lurches and the doll spins around, and a book she is reading slips from her mitts and plunks to the floor. Snooty picks it up first, shoving another citizen out of the way to do it. He hands the book to the doll.

“Thanks,” she says, and flashes three teeth at Snooty. “Rough trip, ain’t it?”

“Yeah, ha ha. Nice day, though,” Snooty says.

“So what?” the blonde ogles him.

I do not know what is the matter with Snooty Piper. His chops are the color of his green suit, and he cannot say anything for a minute. I did not think that anything wearing a skirt could upset the crackpot.

“Nice book, huh?” he says after a while. “I got to get me a copy of it, as it seems quite the rage.”

“Aw, it ain’t so hot,” the blonde dame says, and nudges closer to Snooty.

“Ah—er—what’re you doin’ tonight?” he grins.

“It’s up to you, big boy,” she gurgles. “Tee hee!”

“Have you got a friend?” Snooty asks the doll then, and she nods her dome. The crackpot turns to me and says that it is all fixed. If I had not forgotten my nail file I would have stabbed him on the spot. He gets the blonde’s telephone number before we get off at Park Square.

“Listen,” I says to the fathead, “I could have done much better in a zoo. They have fought two wars since she was forty.”

“Oh, I like them mature,” Snooty retorts. “I guess I can get ‘em, huh?”

“You would brag about shooting a crow,” I snap testily. “I won’t be seen with that bleached-out blister!”

We are making our way up the stairs to the street, when we get caught in a jam, as the entrance to the kiosk seems to have been closed up. In a few seconds we see that it is Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy making his way into the grotto.

“How do you expect to get a ride down there?” Snooty tosses at him. “They don’t have any flat-cars running. Ha ha! Has Spike confessed?”

The King Kong of the plainclothes cops thunders: “Look here, Piper, you hand over that evidence you stole. I know you’ve got it.”

“I wish you would stop readin’ tea leaves,” Snooty chirps. “Just the same, you are right. Here it is.”

Me and Snooty do not remember having seen Iron Jaw in more of a temper. The flatfoot takes the letter and then swings on Snooty, but the boy is very agile, and Iron Jaw’s fist goes right through the side of a newsstand.

“Let us get out of here,” Snooty says.

Three blocks away we slide into a grog shop and make our way to a very secluded corner. Snooty is quite pale and mopping beads of sweat like giant tapioca from his brow.

“What ails you?” I says. “Is it malaria?”

“Scoop,” Snooty gulps, “I almost know who rubbed out Elmer Fudd.”

“Now, look,” I says, “just take it easy. Maybe the breeze that hit you when Iron Jaw missed you gave you a touch of the grippe. I’ll ask if they have any aspirin here.”

“I am in my right mind, I assure you,” Snooty says. “The book the blonde panic is readin’ is ‘Crumbs Along the Mohair.’

But when I pick it up, I see there is no library card in the pocket on the cover. Isn’t that a coincidence, Scoop? Elmer has a card without a book, and the frill has a book but no card. It is quite important that we meet the dolls tonight.”

“We could take them to a gallop in Chelsea,” I suggest. “Nobody knows us there but a few cops. I’d look forward to a tryst with a pair of armadillos with much more palpitation, Snooty Piper. How can you pick them so dizzy?”

“I’ll do anything to apprehend an assassin,” he says. “When the guilty character is where he belongs, I shall start in hunting for that gang of crib crackers who are defying the honest taxpayers. It is every citizen’s duty to help the law—”

“You forget the Canadian mounties and the rangers in Texas,” I sneer. “Don’t you think you should offer them some help, too? Snooty, you are not quite bright.”

“I must find out how the blonde dame got the book that should have been in Elmer’s room,” the halfwit goes on, quite unruffled. “It’s the key to the whole mystery.”

“We will call at a locksmith’s, then,” I says with disgust.

“You are going to try me to the limit some day, Scoop Binney,” he says sourly. Suddenly the crackpot snaps his fingers. “Scoop,” he says, “I have a very swell idea.”

“Good evening,” I says promptly. “They have almost been the death of me more times than I care to count. Tell the blonde horror that I got a very unexpected attack of gallstones and had to go to the cutting room at the hospital. I might see you in a day or so—”

“Very well,” the fathead says, “over the river, Scoop. It is not a guy’s fault if he gets scared easily. I’ll carry on alone until—”

“Oh yeah? Scared, am I? Well, look here, you fan-eared green grasshopper, show me a place you’ll go that I won’t. I’ll show you!”

“Sit down,” Snooty says. “Here is my idea.”

It is a caution what that nitwit can do with me. He goes to the phone booth and calls up the blonde. When he comes back, the numbskull says that the dame told him it would be all right to bring another guy along if he wanted to.

“There are already several rough male characters there, judging from the noise,” says Snooty. “And she says the more the merrier.”

“She meant the *morgue* the merrier,” I remark sourly. “Who’s the third party you’re going to bring?”

“Gorilla Bruger,” Snooty says, and you would think he just said Cinderella.

I choke on my malt brew and get quite watery at the kneecaps. “He just got out of the big house three weeks ago,” I says. “Snooty, you can go too far. That lug’s tougher than horse steak.”

“You and me are going to be very rough characters from Chi,” Snooty says. “Gorilla will front for us, as I am wise that he broke his parole last week. We should find him in the South End.”

I HOPE we won’t find him at any end, but we do. Gorilla is a citizen with a face that would out stare any lion. He is picking his teeth with an ice pick when we find him. Snooty tramps right up to him and says:

“H’lo, Gorilla. How’s every little thing?”

“Listen, Piper,” the tough boy says, “lay off, will ya? You ain’t told the bulls nuttin’, have ya? Listen, I’m your frien’, see?”

“Ha ha!” Snooty laughs. “I am very close-mouthed if I have my way.” Nothing

seems to scare the sap.

“Sure t’ing, Piper. Anyt’ing. What ya want, huh?”

“I just want you to go to a party with me, that’s all. I want you to knock us down as two very unlawful citizens from the West who have just blown in.”

“Yeah! Is dames gonna be there?” Gorilla asks.

“More than enough to go around,” Snooty says. “Meet us in Scollay Square at seven-thirty. Don’t forget, now, or I’ll forget that I did not see you coming out of that handbooking office, Gorilla.”

“Yeah.”

Around eight o’clock me and Snooty and the rough character ankle up to the door of the doll’s flat. There is a noise coming out through the cracks that would make a Bruin-Black Hawk hockey game sound very much like a whisper.

I follow Snooty in when the dame opens the door.

“Hello, big boy,” she says. “Welcome to the Ritz.”

“Yeah,” Snooty says, and tosses a cigarette butt out of the window. “Meet Gorilla Bruger an’ don’t laugh.”

“He ain’t no cherub,” the blonde dame says. “Hey, everybody, meet some friends of mine. Pick up that blackjack an’ crack some ice for their grog, Monk.”

It is no Sunday school picnic any way you look at it. There are two citizens present who would cut a throat or two just for a laugh. Snooty whispers to me to stop shaking and nudges Gorilla.

“Boys, dis ain’t much like Joliet,” the crackpot chirps. “Don’t pay no attention to dis pal here wit’ me, as he needs a load of snow, ha ha. Well, how about a snort, cutie?”

“Help yourself,” the blonde says. “I knew ya was reg’lar when I give ya the once-over in the subway. What’s your line?”

“Crackin’ cribs, an’ they ain’t in nurseries,” Snooty says. “I bet I didn’t fergit me art in stir neither.”

“What’s the monikers?” a tough boy leaning against the radio shoots at Snooty and me. “Or do we haveta guess? Mame picks up most anyt’ing. Ha ha ha!”

Gorilla Bruger takes out a very cold looking cannon and says he will start ventilating the joint and all of the citizens who are in it, if they insult his friends any more. The dames dive under the table, and I would have been with them if there was any more room.

“Ha ha,” Snooty says, “let’s just calm down. Dis ain’t no way to act. I’m Sharps Noonan from Chi, an’ dis guy wit’ de shakes is Baby Face Zingo, who kin close his lamps an’ hit a brass button on a harness bull’s coat at a hun’erd yards. How ‘bout a gallop, Mame?”

“All right, slip me the clutch,” the moll says. Then a big black-eyed doll, reeking with ten-cent nostril delight grabs me when I am not looking and tosses me all around the joint like I am a soft ball.

“You’re a swell dancer, bimbo,” she says to me when she lets me fall into a corner. “How about a scald?”

“I am afraid so,” I says.

I take a drink, and it is very much like swallowing four yards of barbed-wire covered with cockle-burrs. I look to see where Snooty Piper is, and there he is in the next room with two rough citizens and Gorilla Bruger. He catches my eye and calls me in.

“Shut the door,” he says. “We got business, Baby Face. Yeah.”

“W-well,” Gorilla says, “I t’ink I’ll be scammin’, boys. I got me parole to t’ink of. An’ stir ain’t no night club. Be seein’ ya, Sharps.”

“Over da river, cull,” Snooty says, and I gape.

Now, Gorilla has hardly closed the door when the rough characters begin huddling, and it is an unlawful citizen who calls himself Nick Risko that does the talking:

“We ain’t in the habit of just lettin’ any mugs woik wit’ us, but if Gorilla says ya’re okay, ya’re okay. We need a coupla good woikers ta help crack a crib in a chocklit fact’ry over in Somerville. The other guys we had started gittin’ too hoggish wit’ da splits. We hadda bump ‘em off.”

I says to myself that the only way I will leave this very low dive is in a bassinet from the morgue.

“Well, it’s like dis. We got it all figgered out,” Nick says.

The blonde doll breaks in then. She is in quite a dither. “What’s the big idea?” she says. “Are we dames gonna wait for you punks all night? We wanna go steppin’.”

Nick gets up and tosses Mame out, and it is quite a crash she makes when she lands.

“Dat dame is gonna make me sore yet,” Nick says. “If she only wasn’t so dumb. Ya know what? She takes a paper of mine wit’ de combo of da crib over in Somerville a coupla days ago, and uses it fer a bookmark. It was only by the skin of our teeth we git it back. Why, what ails dat pal of yours, Noonan?”

“Huh? Er—nothin’,” Snooty squeaks. “He’s gotta have snow, that’s all. Ain’t you birds got no happy powder?”

I look very wistfully at an open window, but it is five stories up from the ground, and I am no eagle. “C-c’mon, Sn—er—Sharps,” I force out. “I got to git me some snow if I am ta go ta work tonight.” I get up very smartly, but when I start to walk, it feels like somebody borrowed my legs.

“Yeah,” Snooty says, “see ya here tamorrer night.” His brow is quite clammy, and he fishes into his pocket for a handkerchief. When he yanks it out, something drops on the floor, and it is then I smell the lilies. That detective badge is lying there in full view, and who stoops to pick it up but the rough character with Nick Risko.

“Run!” hollers Snooty when the tough boy swears and reaches for the artillery.

“Where?” I toss at him very hysterically. “Up the wall? I told you to throw that damn thing away. Now see what—!”

“Plug them punks!” bellows a rough citizen. “It’s de bulls!”

A slug blasts at the doorknob when I try to grab it, and the blonde Mame grabs Snooty around the neck with one arm and reaches for an empty bottle with the other. I would like very much to see any tackle on the Notre Dames bring down a citizen quite as thoroughly as I bring down Nick Risko, after a very a desperate dive all the way across the room.

“Ha-a-a-lp!” yips Snooty. The other dishonest criminal and the blonde panic are chasing the crackpot around the joint, and each seems quite anxious to spill Snooty’s brains all over the carpet.

“Ha ha!” I laugh nasty as I keep the strangle hold on Nick Risko. “Just go out the same way you come in, you great big detective, you!”

SNOOTY crosses up his pursuers very smartly by making a sudden catty-corner, and the bleached baby and Nick’s crony merge. I am sure it is teeth that bounce off the wall very close to my dome. Mame hits the floor with her eyes quite crossed.

Snooty does not stop to knit a sock while the other rough boy is staggering around collecting his marbles. He hits the

unlawful citizen with the first thing he can grab, which happens to be a full quart of grog. It bounces off the gink without breaking and goes right out of the front window.

An awful roar, like four lions at odds, comes up from the street, and Snooty looks at me.

“Scoop, what else could that be but what I am thinking of, huh?” he says.

“How would Iron Jaw be in this neighborhood?” I ask him. “Shut up and whang this citizen over the scalp, as there is still fight in him.”

Snooty puts Nick to sleep with a poke in the chops, and then the door is broken in very earnestly by quite a crowd of gendarmes.

“Don’t you ever knock?” Snooty yips. “Ha, it is Iron Jaw! Somebody has baptized him very conclusively with a quart of panther sweat.”

“So it was you who tossed that bottle at me, hah?” Iron Jaw bays. “Wild parties you go to, do you? Well, the neighbors complained. You are all under arrest for disturbing the peace. I’ve got—”

“Oh, be still, you two-legged grain silo,” Snooty snaps. “Officers, arrest these citizens who are spotting up the floor. They are the safe crackers that are wanted so badly. The rough boys also rubbed out Elmer Fudd.”

“Wha-a-a-a?” gasps Iron Jaw. “Nuts!”

“As usual,” Snooty says, brushing off his green suit, “you have locked up the wrong taxpayer, Iron Jaw. Now, Nick Risko here has a very dumb moll, and what does she pick up while reading a book but a piece of paper, on which is the combination of a crib in Somerville. She uses it for a bookmark, and when she takes the book back to the library, she forgets the paper is in it.

“Now, Nick finds out,” Snooty goes on, “and he tells her to go and get that

book again or he will kick all her teeth out. But the doll is a few seconds too late, as who is walking out of the library but Elmer Fudd with the book. The dame trails him and then comes back and tells Nick. Nick sends a gorilla to get 'Crumbs Along the Mohair,' which is the name of the book, and he hits Elmer a little too hard with the table leg, or whatever it was he used for the assassination. Quite by accident, I meet the moll and find that there is no card in the library book. So I think of the one Iron Jaw said I could have, back in Elmer's room. I check up. The doll invites me to this party, and who

do I meet but these citizens. Well, I think that is all, gentlemen. It is a caution how simple it all was."

"Simple?" I snarl, and three very big policemen have to hold me away from Snooty's larynx.

It is when we are on our way to a much more civilized section of Beantown that I says to Snooty Piper: "Well, anyway, you lost that detective badge, ha ha! That is a break for me."

For answer he just takes it out of his vest pocket and holds it up for me to see. I am still quite nauseated when we get to the *Evening Star*.