

G-Man Friday



By Joe Archibald

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Snooty and Scoop are out to round up the rough characters who impolitely murdered Mr. Quagmyre—and they follow a clue of egg-stain instead of blood-stain.

IT is very dishonest to snatch a citizen as if he is only a handbag. But that is just what happened to a very corpulent and respected citizen of Beantown one time when the crime wave in the Hub seemed quite dried up by the bobbies of the Burg of Beans and Bluebloods.

The spouse of the snatch victim is in quite a dither when me and Snooty Piper and the other boys of the journals call to get a gander at the ransom note. Mrs. J.

Quigley Quagmyre is wearing a negligee that must have set back the kidnaped taxpayer a very pretty lump of sugar, and there are enough sparkling rocks on her fingers to finance a world's fair.

Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy is sitting on the divan with the old girl. He is promising her that he will have all the snatching citizens in the jug and indicted before the last editions. Iron Jaw is on the books at headquarters as a detective, but he could

not track down a hippo in a fenced-in one-acre lot.

“Take it easy,” he says to the very hysterical social lioness. “I will be in hiding when the dough is turned over to the crooks, and I will nab them.”

“How do you know there is a warehouse handy to the trysting place?” Snooty inquires. “Are you in with the dishonest citizens?”

“You shut up, Piper!” the big flatfoot howls. “Mrs. Quagmyre, if you want me to clear the room—”

“Maybe all you gentlemen have forgotten,” Mrs. Quagmyre sniffs after a very piercing squeal of hysteria, “it is my husband. He has been kidnaped. He has not just left town. Call the G-men this instant! Call somebody!”

“Why, what a coincidence,” Snooty says to the swell dame, and he is just going to reach for that badge he carries in the pocket of his green suit when I kick him soundly in the shins.

“You crackpot,” I growl at him.

“Uh—er—well, Iron Jaw,” Snooty says, “I must read the ransom note again so the public will know the details. They are not psychic, you know. Ha ha!”

“But don’t you dare to steal it, you gartersnake!” Iron Jaw growls.

Snooty picks it off the table with the big detective glowering at him. It has been written in pencil, and the big envelope in which it was delivered contains some cards belonging to Mr. Quagmyre, so that his frau will be quite sure that the right taxpayer has been taken out of circulation.

“It is the real McCoy they have got,” Snooty says,

“Quagmyre is the name,” Iron Jaw snarls. “There, Mrs. Quagmyre, is a sample of what we have writing for the newspapers. They do not remember even who—”

Snooty groans: “Iron Jaw, if you had

four more brain cells, you would be two grades lower than a moron.”

I peek over Snooty’s shoulder at the letter written by the rough characters:

We have got your husband. He is yours for fifty thousand bucks if you want him back. Bring in the bulls on this and we will snuff him out like a light, see? Bring the dough on Monday night to the old cider mill three miles west of Bolton—and have it in one-hundred-dollar and five-hundred-dollar bills. If there are marks on the dough, Quagmyre will be rubbed out like a pencil mark. A guy will be there to meet you at eleven-thirty. Watch your step.

You Would Like to Know Who!

“SO you will accompany the citizen who delivers the sugar, huh?” Snooty says to the flatfoot. “Iron Jaw, you would use a stuffed cat to decoy mice. You would make more noise with your overgrown puppies than a steamroller, even if you were walking through moss. Mrs. Quagmyre, I am very glad to be of service as I will carry the fifty thousand.”

“You screwball!” I whisper in a very weak voice.

Iron Jaw calls Snooty much worse, and Mrs. Quagmyre clamps her hands over her ears and tells Iron Jaw after he is through saying that she will have him arrested for disturbing the peace with such vile language.

“I do not see what is wrong with my suggestion,” Snooty bridles. “Here I agree to risk life and limb—”

“Why—er—I’m very sorry,” Iron Jaw says, “but that is right, ain’t it? Piper, I apologize. You are the very person who should deliver the dough. They are liable to kill you, ain’t they?”

“Ha ha,” I laughs, nasty. “It is a very good guess, Iron Jaw.”

Mrs. Quagmyre says Snooty Piper is a very brave man and she thanks him and says a Mr. Screed will have the fifty

thousand ready by Monday noon as Mr. Screed is Mr. Quagmyre's right-hand man and is the only citizen who has her husband's power of attorney.

"All I have in the house," she sobs, "is eleven thousand, and that is just for ordinary expenses."

"I don't see how you manage to scrimp along on that," Snooty says sympathetically. "What with prices of things up like they are, and all. Well, Iron Jaw, I want no police interference here, as you know what the rough citizens said they would do to Mr. Quagmyre if you showed your mugs anywhere near the old mill. You understand I am the go-between—and you keep your big yap sewed up."

"Well, it is an ill wind that don't gather no moss," Iron Jaw trumpets. "Ha ha, I hope Mr. Guppy will be generous with your folks. Funerals ain't cheap no more. Come on, boys, we know where we ain't wanted."

"Scoop," Snooty says on the way out, "you will go with me and Mr. Screed, as the rough boys would not want to have to shoot three times because that might attract too much attention. If I went alone, one shot might sound like a blowout somewhere. It is very smart figuring, huh?"

"I will not be caught dead with you, Snooty Piper!" I vociferate very determinedly. "I am washing my hands of the whole affair. The dishonest characters who lifted Mr. Quagmyre right off the public highway would not stop at murder, Snooty. I would not be surprised at all if they dismembered you."

"I am not daunted, Scoop Binney," the crackpot chirps. "I will deliver the sugar and keep my eyes open."

"A cannon may shut them quite permanently," I concluded. "Good morning, Mr. Piper. I will see you in a fortnight—maybe."

IT is the next noon that I join Snooty Piper. We go to Mr. Quagmyre's office, which is in a building on Milk Street, and there is Mr. Junius Screed waiting for us. Junius is a very long-faced gink with a pair of ears that are quite like jib sails. Just as we walk in he is talking on the telephone, and he wants to know which goat took the fifth at Narragansett. He does not seem to like the answer he gets.

"Hello," Snooty gurgles. "We are here to inquire if you got the fifty thousand."

"Huh? Oh, yes—to be sure," Screed chirps and takes an envelope out of the drawer of his desk. "You are Mr. Piper and Mr. Binney?"

"I'm afraid so," I says. "Nobody else could be so screwy."

"Tonight we will free Mr. Quagmyre," Junius says, and he wipes at his lamps with a hanky. "It is an outrage—stealing a man like Mr. Quagmyre! He's the salt of the earth, a gentleman of the old school. Why, he would give anybody the shirt off his back. Once I was at his house when the butler came in and told him that there was a hungry and ragged man at the back door, and Mr. Quagmyre said to feed him and give him three suits of his clothes." Mr. Screed is quite teary about the eulogy of Mr. Quagmyre, and it seems to touch even Snooty Piper who is as hard-shelled as a mud-turtle.

"Yes, gentlemen, the hungry man asked for ham and eggs, and Mr. Quagmyre had the butler order a case of eggs—and him a man who abhorred the sight of an egg in the house! That is the kind of a man Mr. Quagmyre is, gentlemen. Oh, we must not fail to deliver the ransom money tonight."

"Check!" says Snooty briskly. "If we do, Mr. Quagmyre will be taking lessons on the harp by morning. Mr. Binney and I will be here at the stroke of ten."

"At twelve," I says to him, "I will know for sure what all the clergy are guessing at,

I am sure. I hope you win the sixth race, Mr. Screed.”

It is very much darker than usual that night as me and Snooty and Mr. Screed roll over the highway in the direction of the hick town called Bolton, and it seems only three minutes before we are getting out of Mr. Quagmyre’s big, sixteen-lunged boiler just across the road from the old mill. There is a brook to cross before we get there, and Mr. Screed leads the way. Snooty Piper pauses when we are on the other side of the mill and tips his green hat back on his noggin and scratches his scalp as if something puzzles him.

“Well, did another brain cell collapse?” I toss out.

“Huh—ha, I was thinkin’ of somethin’ funny,” he chortles.

“You would die laughin’ in a charnel house, wouldn’t you?” I says. “Mr. Screed, let’s hurry and get this over with before my arteries freeze up.”

We walk up the bank and got only a hundred yards when somebody tells us to stop and reach up to see if we can’t get ourselves a handful of very pretty stars. It is not elves who are speaking, either.

“Make a move, you mugs, an’ we’ll cut ya in two at the necks!” a rough boy with a mask on says. There are two other dishonest characters with him, and their pans are bundled up too. “Where’s the sugar?”

“R-right here,” Mr. Screed stutters. “In my pockets. Can we have Mr. Quagmyre tonight?”

“Ya’ll git him when we say so,” the rough boy rips out, and he reaches into Mr. Screed’s pockets and takes the fifty grand. Another tough guy has a flashlight ready, and the rough citizens each take a gander at the legal tender.

“Looks okay, yeah. Well, I giss that’s the woiks. Awright, you Santy Clauses, in about five hours ya git the cops an’ ya’ll

find Mr. Quagmyre all comfy on the floor of the mill. We’ll be in Montreal when ya untie the big shot, ha!”

“Maybe we’ll follow you,” Snooty suggests. “What’s to stop us?”

“Oh-h-h-h,” I groan, “is that a thing to say, Snooty Piper?”

The nastiest laugh I ever heard comes out of the kissers of the criminal characters. “Turn around, you smart guys,” one says.

We do, and that is all we remember until the roosters start crowing. I am quite sure it was a tree trunk that hit me.

“W-well, Snooty,” I says when my brains get unscrambled, “it was quite an answer you got, ha ha!”

“They are cowards,” Snooty gulps. “They would not dare to fight face to face. Uh—er—have you got an aspirin, Mr. Screed?”

Mr. Quagmyre’s right-hand man is rubbing his scalp, too, and he is very indignant about Snooty having aggravated the lawless citizens. He puts on his derby, but Snooty’s green hat won’t fit over the bump on his noggin and he has to carry it in his hand.

“The birds are out early, ain’t they?” Snooty says next. “Hear them sing!”

“It is bees I hear,” Junius says. “Well, it will be safe now to get to the nearest phone and call up the police, won’t it?”

“I am sure Mr. Quagmyre will be pleased if we hurry,” I says. “Did you get any idea as to the identity of the rough boys? I am sure of the one who hit me.”

“Who?” Snooty asks, eyes very much agog.

“Joe Louis, Mr. Piper. Have him arrested at once.”

“This is no time to joke,” Mr. Screed says. “It is a phone we want the most.”

A MILE and a half away we find one in a peasant’s house and Snooty Piper calls for Iron Jaw and a squad of

gendarmes to come out and make Mr. Quagmyre's rescue legal. Then we go out on the porch of the farmhouse and wait. Snooty Piper's dome is swelled all out of shape by the time the representatives of law and order roll up in a couple of police jaloupis.

Iron Jaw indulges in a very loud outburst of mirth when he sees Snooty Piper's noggin. "Haw haw," he brays, "the poultry have been layin' eggs on your dome. You should move out of their way, Piper. What did the rough boys hit you with?"

Snooty ignores Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy and leads Mr. Screed to one of the boilers. "Let's go and get Mr. Quagmyre. And don't you arrest him for kidnaping himself, will you, Iron Jaw?"

It is not far to the old cider mill. When we file into the place I see something that is not pretty like a tulip bed. Mr. J. Quigley Quagmyre is on the floor tied up like Scollay Square traffic, and there is adhesive tape all over the rich citizen's mouth; not that he minds very much, as when we get a close squint at the snatched taxpayer, we find he has been rendered quite as defunct as a mackerel on ice. A lead pill has been inserted in his scalp where it would do the least good.

"This is awful," Iron Jaw says. "They went and rubbed him out."

"No," Snooty says, "they rubbed him out and then went, ha ha."

"I do not see anything funny about this, Snooty Piper," I says. "Have you got no sensibilities whatsoever?"

Snooty is very callous, to say the least, and he stoops down and takes a note off the corpse. He reads it out loud:

"Too bad. Mr. Quagmyre got a gander at one of our pans when a mask slipped. You can't git no worst for murder than kidnapin', so we give the big boy the well-

known works. Try an' find out who done it!"

Mr. Screed is very put out about it all and swears he will get the monsters who committed the foul deed if it takes him across the whole world. Mr. Screed can hardly look at the remains, but he identifies the body to the gendarmes after a look or two and then slumps down on an old keg and holds his dome in his hands.

It is Iron Jaw who bellows something about a find that will put certain citizens in the hot squat. He has picked up a letter that one of the tough citizens lost and forgot to mail, and he finds it in a very dark corner of the old mill.

"Ha ha," Iron Jaw hoots, "they always slip up somewhere. I will go to this address and I will park there until I sweat the name of the writer of this letter out of the guy who sent it. Well, Piper, this is one time I got a case sewed up."

Snooty does not hear Iron Jaw trumpeting. He is kneeling down beside the corpse, and his face is as white as a cherub's soul. "Uh—er—it is the big citizen all right. His name is on the label of his swanky suit. We will have to break the news to his wife. Mr. Screed, what undertaker do the Quagmyre's take from?"

"Well, I will not go with you, gentlemen," Iron Jaw gloats. "I have a place to go by myself. Don't try to follow me either, Piper!"

SNOOTY breaks the word to Mrs. Quagmyre when we get back to the town of beans and pork. I wait outside the spiffy tepee until he comes out of it. The crackpot says the dame is very broken up and does not wish to view the deceased until she pulls herself together. Mr. Screed has gone to his hotel to grieve, and Snooty suggests that we take a hack to the Greek's where we can do our thinking.

"I do not see any use in wasting gray matter," I argue. "Mr. Quagmyre is out of circulation. The dishonest boys have the fifty grand, and by this time should be hiring an Indian guide near Hudson Bay. There are no clues except the one Iron Jaw dug up, so just let us wait until the big slewfoot makes a pinch. It is all quite clear, isn't it?"

"There is one trouble with you, Scoop," Snooty says when we get to the Greek's grog shop; "you are not very observing, to say the least. You have a memory no longer than a phonograph needle. I wonder what Iron Jaw found in the old mill?"

"I think the big oaf has got something there," I says as I pick up a discarded copy of Mr. Guppy's *Evening Star*. "Iron Jaw is due for a break just as much as a skater who keeps on jumping over a row of barrels. Say, look, Snooty!"

The crackpot does not pay much attention to me at first when I read a very interesting article of news about Abigail Hepplethwaite. Abigail is quite an eccentric old doll who lives in Back Bay, and she is as well-heeled with lucre as a whale is with blubber.

"Abigail has gone in for sponsoring spiritualists," I says. "Ha ha, what will she do next—join a voodoo colony? Snooty, it says here that Abigail held a séance at her shack last night, and who was in charge of the spook rodeo but the great Madame Beri-Beri!"

"Huh?" Snooty mumbles and looks at the clock. "I hope Mrs. Quagmyre phones me before much longer."

"What would she want with you?" I asks and yawn very earnestly. "Well, I suppose you remember we had no sleep last evening, Mr. Piper."

"Mrs. Quagmyre is going to call me as soon as she hears from her husband," Snooty says.

I choke on my lager and feel my scalp lift up like a Sioux Indian had it in a death grip. "He—he's dead, you nitwit," I gulp. "Snooty, that thump on the conk did you no good. You just wait here and I will call a conveyance of some kind."

"Scoop," Snooty says, "I do not believe you saw the egg stains on the vest of the corpse, did you? Now you seem to have forgotten that Mr. Screed told us about Mr. Quagmyre's aversion to the fruit of the fowl. I will admit that John Doe looked like Mr. Quagmyre, and that he wore one of the rich boy's well-tailored suits, but you will also remember that Mr. Quagmyre had a heart of gold, too, as well as a walletful, and would give a citizen in want not only the shirt off his back but—"

"Uh—er—you mean that the rough characters snatched the wrong taxpayer?" I gasp. "A citizen who looked very much like Mr. Quag?"

"That is how it looks to me and Mrs. Quagmyre," Snooty says. "I am expecting a call from the dame, as she told me that her breadwinner went fishing in quite a remote spot in New England on the day of the kidnaping. Mr. Quagmyre was fed up with big business for awhile and got away from it all unbeknownst to everyone but his spouse and Mr. Screed. He left instructions to the effect that no one was to communicate with him in any way, as he wished to completely lose himself for several days like a vice president. Now I imagine that Mr. Quagmyre will get the Beantown papers, three days late, where he is at, Scoop, and maybe is just finding out now that he has been kidnaped by criminal characters, ha ha."

My dome feels full of butterflies. I says: "The dame seems to confide in you a lot, Mr. Piper. Why?"

"I showed her my G-man's badge," Snooty says airily. I pick up an empty

bottle, but the Greek grabs me just as I obey a very homicidal impulse.

"Let me go," I insist. "I'll gladly pay the extreme penalty for mashing his noggin."

Snooty jumps up then as the Greek's phone is ringing. He gets into the booth and stays there for five minutes by the clock. When he comes out he is excited.

"Scoop, we must go to see Mrs. Quagmyre. My deductions are quite correct, any way you look at them."

"You mean that Mr. Quag—"

"Don't say it," Snooty interrupts me threateningly.

HALF an hour later we are looking into the dead pan of the Quagmyre butler, and Snooty shoves the G-man's badge right in front of his bugle and says:

"Shake your puppies, Dracula, as it is U. S. Government business."

"Show the gentleman in, Chitling," we hear the missus warble, and Snooty pushes the butting citizen out of the way like he was a cornstalk and walks into the drawing-room.

The rich doll is very elated as she waves a telegram at us. Snooty takes it and reads it while I peek over his shoulder.

JUST READ THE PAPERS STOP
SOMETHING COCKEYED STOP
ARRIVE NORTH STATION TEN P M
WHACKY

"You G-men are priceless," Mrs. Quagmyre chirps. "How do you do it? Why your friend looks quite ill, Mr. Piper. Can I get him something?"

"Arsenic," I says. "Ha ha, could I just sit down for a second or three?"

"I hope that no one knows about this telegram besides us," Snooty says to her. "I don't want even Mr. Screed to know a thing about it. The public and the rough

characters of the underworld must be allowed to think that Mr. Quagmyre is really horizontal for keeps. I'd suggest that you contact the funeral parlors and give orders that the mahogany kimono containing the remains be tabu to sightseers."

"I'll do everything you say, Mr. Piper," the dame says. "But don't you think the Western Union might have read the wire?"

"Ha ha," I says, "answer that one, Philo Chan!"

"Mr. Quagmyre did not commit himself in any way," Snooty says. "I imagine the name he signed was a pet one, Mrs. Quagmyre?"

The old doll titters a bit and admits it is. "Uh huh," she says coyly. "He never did grow up. But what'll we do next?"

"I will talk that over with you alone," Snooty says. "If my man Friday here will leave the room, ha ha. You see, Mrs. Quagmyre, us G-men don't even trust each other at times. Scoop, if you don't mind—"

It is an expensive vase I pick up, but I don't throw it, as the dame squeals and says it is a Ming and cost three hundred dollars.

"You wait, Snooty Piper, until I get into a cheaper neighborhood," I yowl. "I will rid the community of you, you—"

I sit in a room that has more books in it than Carnegie ever endowed four libraries with, and start grinding my teeth. After a time, Snooty calls me out, and I follow him into the street and into a swindle bus.

"Don't talk to me," I says. "I am liable to attack you any moment."

"It is very plain all around, isn't it?" Snooty says, anyway. "The lawless boys snatched John Doe, who was wearing a gift suit from Mr. Quagmyre. Mr. Q. had forgotten to remove some cards, letters, et cetera from his pockets, and the rough citizens no doubt laughed when John Doe argued that a mistake had been made. John

Doe could not argue very much, though, as they plastered quite a supply of adhesive tape over his mouth. Now the late John Doe resembled Mr. Quagmyre to a surprising degree, Scoop, and Mr. Screed took just one look at the defunct citizen and identified him—as you remember. Now, only you and I and Mrs. Quagmyre are aware of the fact that the real Mr. J. Quigley Quagmyre is breathing and eating quite as regular as ever, but we must get to him the moment he steps off the iron horse this evening.”

“Why?” I ask. “Give me one reason, Snooty Piper.”

“Now, John Doe was rubbed out,” Snooty says, “and the State does not brook such lawbreaking, does it? And we must apprehend the rough citizens who got fifty thousand of Mr. Quagmyre’s pin money, to protect other important taxpayers.”

“I suppose Mr. Screed murdered him, Snooty Piper,” I scoff. “He was with us all the time, as you remember.”

“Everybody is quite guilty in a murder,” Snooty says, “unless a good lawyer can prove he isn’t.”

I am too tired to argue with the crackpot any longer. I wonder if Iron Jaw has made an arrest just before I go to sleep in front of the Greek’s.

AT ten o’clock me and Snooty Piper manage to spot Mr. J. Quigley Quagmyre getting off a rattler and Snooty slides up to him fast and shoves that G-man’s badge under the big boy’s schnozzle.

“Don’t say anythin’,” he mutters. “Just draw your hat down over your eyes and follow us to a hack. It is the U. S. taking care of you.”

It is on the way to the Quagmyre mansion that Snooty tells the very dumbfounded Mr. Quagmyre that he does not know it but he is in a funeral parlor being well-preserved for a trip across the

Styx.

“You should keep on giving expensive suits away,” Snooty goes on. “If you had not been so kind-hearted, you would be under glass right now, instead of John Doe.”

“That was a very narrow escape, wasn’t it, boys?” the dough boy says and wipes worry dew from his scalp.

“It will do until a worse one comes along,” I says. “Well, Snooty, what’ll you do next, you great big man-tracker, you!”

“We will get Mr. Quagmyre here out of the cab four or five blocks from his little cottage,” Snooty says, “and walk the rest of the way. Mr. Quagmyre, when you get home, you must stay in hiding until you hear from me. Don’t even let Mr. Screed know you are home. Mrs. Quagmyre fired Chitling this P. M. I hope that is quite clear.”

The old boy nods his dome, but I know it feels just like mine, which seems to be filled with sparrows building nests. We get out of the hack in front of a drug store and walk the rest of the way. We push the well-to-do taxpayer in through his own back door and then call for Mrs. Q. Snooty does not wait to watch the touching reunion, but drags me out fast and heads for the nearest subway.

“Well, Scoop,” he says, “lay low until you hear from me. I will not need you further this evening. I have two more calls to make. Goodnight, Mr. Binney.”

“If you break anything,” I toss after the fathead, “be sure it’s not below the neck. I think you are screwy.”

I read the journals before I hit the alfalfa quite late that night, and I find out that last rites will be performed for Mr. Quagmyre on the morrow. Only close friends will be at the exclusive send-off for the corpse. I fall asleep and dream that I am getting free board and room in a big house on a hill in Danvers. It is where the state

keeps citizens who insist on buying tickets to Waterloo. . . .

It is just twelve hours later when I am in the *Evening Star* office, trying to explain my absence to Dogface Woolsey, the city editor, that a messenger boy comes in and hands me a very expensive-looking envelope. It has Abigail Hepplethwaite's address on the back of it. I rip the missive open, and what is it but a hastily scrawled summons from the old girl.

The note says I am cordially invited to attend a very impromptu séance at Abigail's tepee that very evening and to keep my mouth closed about it. Dogface wants to know what I am reading, but I just put my hat on my noggin and go toward the elevator like a sleepwalker.

"You are fired!" Dogface hollers after me as I enter the lift. "Tell Piper the same thing."

I will never forget the gathering at Abigail's that evening at nine o'clock. Snooty Piper is there with Mr. Screed. There are one or two other citizens whom I don't recognize in the dark. A crystal ball is on the table, and a bony-panned old doll is standing in front of it. She is dressed up like something that would feel quite at home in a tomb.

"What's the idea, you crackpot?" I snarl at Snooty as I sit down.

"Close your trap, Binney," Abigail snaps. "This is no Keystone Comedy picture."

"You're tellin' me?" I grunt and try to stop my hair from shooting out. Then Madame Beri-Beri starts chanting and says we are all gathered to find out who rubbed out Mr. Quagmyre and that she will coax the deceased right out of the grave.

"Ha ha," I laughs, "what fun, huh Snooty?" Abigail whangs me with a lorgnette that would crack open a packing case with one wallop, and I do not come to until I see Mr. Quagmyre walking right out

through a curtain, and he has a bullet hole between his eyes. He is dressed up in a soup-and-fish like they buried John Doe in. His map is the color of a clay pipe, and his eyes look like poached eggs swimming in cranberry juice.

"Tell them, John Quigley Quagmyre," the medium intones. "Tell them who sent you to the grave."

"I am leavin'," I whisper in a hollow voice. "This is too good an act to—"

"Shut up," Snooty whispers. "It is ready for the payoff. Look!"

Just then Mr. Junius Screed lets out a very piercing squall of apprehension. "Don't look at me like that, Mr. Quagmyre," he yips. "Yes, it was I who had you kidnaped, but I didn't kill you. Go away! Go—Awk! I will tell all. Get the p-p-police. I—er—ugh—ugh—"

Abigail switches on the glimmers and says to two big, burly gendarmes to do their duty. Mr. Quagmyre shakes hands all around and says he thinks he will go on the stage.

"Well, Scoop," Snooty says, "how are all your folks? Won't Mr. Guppy be pleased?"

IT is quite a time I have getting my pump back into place, and my hair is still standing up like the fur on the back of a very nettled tomcat.

"Uh—er—congratulations, S-Snooty," I stutter. "Have you g-got some s-smelling s-salts, Ab—er—Miss Hepplethwaite?"

"He scares easy, don't he, Piper?" Abigail sniffs.

Mr. Screed comes to after a time and confesses that he hired a couple of very dishonest characters by the names of Gippo the Leech and Loose Lip Luigi to snatch Mr. Quagmyre, and that he had intended to split the fifty G's with them. Mr. Screed had no idea that the tough boys would do a bump-off.

“I was suspicious of Mr. Screed the night we carried the money to the snatchers,” Snooty says. “He knew just where to cross the brook without getting his feet wet, ha ha. Well, has anybody heard from Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy?”

A flatfoot laughs. “You never saw a madder guy, boys,” he chuckles. “That letter that O’Shaughnessy picked up in the old mill was one he dropped himself. He’d been carryin’ it for a week, and it was written by his wife’s sister to a boy friend

she had in Stoneham. He almost broke the innocent citizen’s skull makin’ him come clean. We don’t know what to do about O’Shaughnessy.”

“Just leave that to Mrs. O’Shaughnessy,” Snooty advised the cop. “It will be quite enough, I assure you. Come on, Scoop!”

I am past speech as I trundle after him. The last thing I hear is Abigail chuckling over Iron Jaw’s plight. It is quite a sense of humor the old girl has.