

China Wary



By Joe Archibald

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Iron Jaw loses his balance, Scoop Binney loses his sense of humor, and Sum Hooey loses his head—all because a hopped-up hatchet man begins playing chop-suey with some choice Chinese citizens.

ONE day me and Snooty Piper are browsing around The Hub when we stop to take a gander at the window of a shop on Court Street. A very old citizen is carving things on pipe bowls. He is a very famous character in Beantown, and once Mr. Guppy's Sunday supplement ran a picture of the pipe on which the old taxpayer carved the whole picture of The Charge of the Light Brigade.

"There's another old bosco in there," Snooty says to me, "who makes heads out of plaster and wax *et cetera*. Let's go in and take a peek."

"It is crime we are after," I says severely. "Did you forget?"

"I am a patron of the arts," Snooty sniffs, and ankles into the place just like I hadn't said anything.

When the old citizens find out we are not buying anything they tell us it is no pool room and to kindly scram. Snooty lifts a cloth that is covering a wax head, and the old sculptor yanks him by the tail of his very green coat and splits it right up the back.

"Awright, I will go," the crackpot says. "Wait until you get pictures in the paper again. It is the press you have insulted."

Out in the street he says: "Scoop, I guess I was seein' things as the face I saw on the wax dome looked like somebody I knew once. Look at me shake."

"If you would only fall apart," I says, "you would do me a favor. Come on as I have got to have some chow mein."

Snooty says it was the power of suggestion that led us into Chinatown just five minutes after a citizen found the defunct torso of Sum Hooey. Now Sum Hooey was not just another Chink in Boston's slant-eyed quarter. The cops said that Sum was rich enough to rebuild the big stone wall in the land of his ancestors, and he lived in a joint that was very lousy with rugs and draperies and teakwood worth the price of all the oil in China's lamps. The cops always had a hunch that Sum Hooey got his shekels by vending the sleep that comes out of the juice of the poppy but they had not been able to pin anything on Sum except a poppy on Memorial Day.

It was no time before me and Snooty Piper was at the scene of the rub-out, and we find that it was maybe the most gory one we ever attended. Some very dishonest character had lopped off Sum Hooey's noggin, and I saw even Snooty Piper turn the color of a celluloid collar when he took a gander at the victim.

"It must even be worse than I thought," I says to him nasty. "Don't look, Snooty, if you—"

"Oh, it's not that," the crackpot says. "I—"

Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy arrives on the scene just then and takes one look. Iron Jaw is a citizen who wears a badge to prove he is a detective. There is no other way he could prove it as he never caught anything but the street car home and he misses that three times out of four.

"Let me in there!" he trumpets. "I'm in charge here. Get out of the way—aw-w-w-wk!" Iron Jaw sways on his dogs, and it is only because they are size nineteen and a half that he doesn't lay down alongside Sum Hooey. The flatfoot fans himself with

his derby, and it is quite a breeze he works up. It sends a little white card against my shoe, and I pick it up and shove it into my pocket.

"Ha ha," I says to myself, "this is one time I will have the goods on a criminal if that is what it is. I will show up Snooty Piper, that smart aleck!"

THERE is one or two Chinks come in close, and Iron Jaw collars them and pushes them up against a brick building like they are trellises that have come loose. "Speak up, you rice hounds," the big cluck bays. "Who killed Sum Hooey?"

Now one of the Orientals has quite a studious pan and it is adorned by thick glasses and a white beard. A little black hat rides his bony dome.

"Allee slamee no nothling," he says without changing expression. "Sum Hooey blad mlan. Me no sleet. Even telescope no sleet if no windlers to stlick out thlough."

"Wise cracker, huh?" Iron Jaw snorts. "Charlie Chan himself, huh?"

"Yeah," Snooty butts in, "derby hat not mlade to plut on blowling blall blut blowling blall wear 'em. Ha, ha!"

"That's all I want to hear from you!" Iron Jaw hollers. "How can we get ahead with—"

"There is one there on the ground not in use," I says. "It would be more use to you than the one you're wearin', I think, Mr. O'Shaughnessy."

Iron Jaw takes it out on the other China boy then, and the little almond-eyed bosco swings a line of chatter that would make an afternoon sewing circle sound like a convention of deaf mutes. After awhile we get his drift and find that he says Sum Hooey has been almost bumped off more than once before by his enemies, but that this was the only time he forgot to duck.

"So!" Iron Jaw barks. "How did you

know he had to duck, huh? A hatchet man, are ya? Tong war on, I bet. Take this Chineese an' lock him up, Murphy! He done it. He give himself away by that crack. Ha, nobody else noticed it, huh? Well, I ain't so dumb after all, am I, you smart-cracking type lice?"

"You couldn't be unless you was brothers," Snooty retorts, and he leans against the wall and watches the dead-wagon boys pick up what is left of Sum Hooey and load him into a basket.

"All Chinks look alike," a cop says. "O'Shaughnessy might just as well have pinched him as any other. Maybe he tagged the right one by mistake."

"Yeah," I says, and I finger the card in my pocket. "Maybe he did and maybe he didn't. Ha, ha!"

"So you are goin' to solve the case, huh?" Snooty says, then he sniffs very loftily. "Why, it is a pushover for Iron Jaw as the little citizen did make a slip, didn't he?"

"It is you who are slippin'," I says.

NEXT morning me and Snooty take a siesta in the Greek's and then we read all about the erasure of Sum Hooey. Snooty tosses one paper over to me and says: "They say they found a hatchet on Wan Hip Lo and that he was wearin' that black cap because he is a highbinder and that is a Chink who is a member of a secret society like a bunch of thugs or blackmailers. It says that Sum Hooey was worth maybe a million bucks and he got most of it sellin' hop and he maybe made a lot of enemies. A lot of China boys says that the only way Sum Hooey would get out of town was in a coffin. Well-liked citizen, don't you think?"

"Some hooey!" I snort.

"Who did you think?" Snooty says.

"I will not tell you," I says. "You would take all the credit, Snooty Piper, but

I have evidence that tells me that Iron Jaw is chasin' rainbows again."

Snooty laughs very sarcastically and reads on: "It says that Sum Hooey will be turned over to an undertaker down on Harrison Street so that they can glue his noggin on for the trip back to the land of his forefathers. Well, I got to call up a dame. You wait here."

"Don't depend on it," I snap. When Snooty goes into the 'phone booth, I take out the card that I found near Sum Hooey's remains, and it has got scrawled writing on it. "You got to see me, Hooey," it says. "I got lots of new customers and will pay up what I owe you." Two finger prints are on the card, too, and I leave the Greek's while Snooty is arguing with the doll. I go down to LaGrange Street and ask to see the files where the dishonest element have left a lot of very interesting trade marks. It is about half an hour when we find some prints that match one of them on the card, and they belong to a citizen who has very little regard for the law and he goes by the name of Louie the Goat because he has two nobbs on his dome which are called wens in the doctors' books.

"If you got any evidence," a flatfoot says, "you let us go to woik on it, see?"

"I have got to work very quietly on this," I says when the flatfoot pushes me out into a lieutenant's office, "as I am sure I can pick up Louie the Goat without a fuss. If a flatfoot like Iron Jaw should walk up to where Louie lives, Louie would certainly know he was not a guy who come to read the gas meter. If I locate Louie, I will call you at once and let your very brave gendarmes make the pinch."

I GET back to the Greek's, and Snooty is sitting there wrapping his lips around a stein of beer. He is not in very good humor. "That's a pal," he complains.

“Didn’t I always take you with me when I solved crimes? Ha, ha, when will you put the cuffs on the dishonest criminal?”

“It is the last laugh I will get when I do, Snooty Piper,” I bridle.

“I am afraid it will be, if you tangle with the underworld without my help,” he sniffs. “It is a strange case anyway you look at it, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. Maybe to you, but you are not very bright,” I says.

The crackpot scoffs at me. “Well, I am goin’ down to the undertaker’s shop and see Sum Hooey as they say it is very interestin’ how the China boys have wakes. Come on, Scoop.”

“Huh? You think of the worst places to go,” I chirp. “But I guess I can stand lookin’ at him if you can.”

It is in front of the corpse parlor that a citizen is talking to the undertaker and he says: “Thanks, Mr. Berryman. I will deliver the new hearse in about a week. Four hundred allowance on the old buggy. You are getting a buy for three grand.”

“Okay,” Berryman says, “in a week then.”

Snooty says: “Hello, Mr. Berryman. I am from *The Evening Star*. This is my assistant with me. We would like to see how you have nailed Sum Hooey’s head on and how the Chinks weep for the departed.”

“Yeah? You newspaper guys want to see everythin’, huh?” the valet for the defunct growls. “Well, come on in but you can’t go beyond the railin’ in there.”

Snooty minces in like he is going to see a swell movie. He has no more feeling than a doorstep. When we get to the rail, we get a gander at Sum Hooey’s dead pan and one is enough for me.

“Well, are you satisfied?” I ask. “What did you expect to see, huh? A strip tease?”

“Who knows?” the fathead retorts. The undertaker tells us that the funeral will

take place the next night and that it is a very interesting thing to see. Snooty says: “We’ll be here, Mr. Berryman. Then the remains go to China, don’t they? On the next boat?”

“Yeah.”

“Now when you patched Sum Hooey up, you had to take off his swell duds, huh?” Snooty goes on. “Uh—er—I used to know Sum Hooey and if I could look at ‘em, it would be like seein’ him—er—boys, I am almost breakin’ down. I—sniff—sniff!”

“Didn’t know he was a friend of yours,” the undertaker says. “Sure, I’ll show you the clothes. This way, boys.”

I says to myself that Snooty Piper is the worst hypocrite I ever saw and, as we go in and look at the clothes, I give him a black glance. The embalmer shows Snooty the long brocaded coat and says there was nothin’ in the pockets but a lot of lichee nut shells and that whoever killed him must have robbed him, too.

“He kept eatin’ them lichee nuts all day,” Berryman said.

Snooty says: “It is a shame to knock off a citizen in such a manner. Come on, Scoop.”

NOW we are walking down Washington Street early the next morning, and Snooty stops and yanks me by the coat tails and says: “Look, Scoop, that is a doll who used to take tickets at the Old Howard. She sure went up in the world as she stuck her nose up at me. Huh, I remember when she would throw her arms around my neck when I mentioned buyin’ her a hamburger. Now that she is Louie the Goat’s moll—”

“Wha—whose moll?” I almost jump out of my pants. “She is? Why—er—how do you know?”

“A stool pigeon told me,” Snooty says. “To get anywhere in detecting crime, you

have to have swell connections, Scoop. Have you caught the murderer yet?"

"I give myself just about four more hours," I says. "Well, I just remembered that I got to go and see a sick friend. Do you mind, Snooty?"

The fathead shakes his noggin, and it is quite a laugh I have up my sleeve as he does not know he has helped me trace Louie to his lair. Snooty says he wants to look at the old citizen carving pipes in the window on Court Street again anyway. He will meet me at the Greek's in an hour, he hopes.

I got into the store out of which the dame tripped and go up to the manager's desk. I flash my fire badge very quick and I says: "I am a detective, sir. I have got to have the address of the dame who was just in here. She wore a red turban and a black silk dress. Maybe she has a charge account or somethin'?"

He hands me the address: Mrs. Louis Slapnick, Breaker Arms, Chelsea, Mass., Apt. 6C.

"Thank you very much," I says. "You have done the Commonwealth a very good service. It is citizens like you who make Paul Revere's ride worth the trouble. Good day."

I can already see my picture in *The Evening Star*. I can already read a headline saying: INTREPID NEWSPAPER REPORTER SOLVES SUM HOOEY KILLING as I trot down to The Greek's. I run into Iron Jaw in front of the grog shop, and he says that he has got the Chink hatchet man already booked for a ride to the land of his ancestors via the high-volted armchair at Charlestown.

"Well, this is a case that don't slip out of my fingers," he brags. "Didn't get a lead on that rub-out, did you, you two mushheads?"

"Listen, Iron Jaw," I says, "would you mind movin' a block or two so I can kind

of edge my way around you? If you was any bigger, you'd be listed under real estate—"

"I will move when I git good an' ready, you—"

Now Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy has a pet corn on one of his puppies, and it jumps like an aching tooth if somebody only stamps his foot near it. But I hop right onto it and Iron Jaw lets out a very terrible yowl of agony and jumps a foot into the air. When he comes down, he goes right through the wooden hatch of a sidewalk elevator and it is the last I see of him for some time. I am doubled up when I go into the Greek's.

Nick says: "Somewhere eet ees tarrible accidents, Mister Binney. I hear somet'ing lak earthquake. All the glasses they fall down av'rywheres."

SNOOTY is not in the joint. I go to a telephone and call up headquarters. "Hello," I says, "this is Scoop Binney. I have located where Louie the Goat is. In about half an hour I want a squad car filled with very healthy gendarmes to pick me up at Nick Pappapoulous's place. Know the joint, huh? That is where I will be. Then we will go and grab Louie the Goat. Okay?"

When I leave the booth, Iron Jaw comes out of a cellar door and he does not know me when I ask how he feels. He goes across the floor with his eyes looking into the next world and he does some steps that would be worth money to him if he could repeat them for the stage. He bumps into a post, lifts his derby, and gasps: "Pardon you, lady." Then he reels out of the joint. His derby is quite wobbly on his scalp as there is a bump on his coco as big as half a turnip.

Snooty Piper breezes in in about ten minutes and he says he met Iron Jaw down the street and that the flatfoot was pointing

at things in the air that were not there.

“We had a very brief altercation,” I explain. “He got quite unreasonable and I put him in his place. But he wouldn’t stay there. Where have you been, Mr. Piper?”

“Ha, ha,” the crackpot snorts, and starts tossing up what looks to me to be a broken peanut shell in his lunchhook. It is just then that we hear the police siren squealing down the street, and I get up fast and yell: “There’s the cops goin’ somewhere, Snooty. Let’s go out and see, huh?”

The squad car pulls right up in front of the Greek’s and I jump on the running board and cry out very lustily: “Okay, boys, let’s go!” I turn and wave at Snooty Piper, and he just stands there with his hat pushed back on his dome and his hands stuck into his pockets like I only hopped a street car.

Then I hear his big mouth yap: “Have a good time, Scoop. But remember we have to go to a funeral at seven.”

WHEN we get over to Chelsea, I tell the limbs of the law to pull into an alley near the apartment house where Louie the Goat and his bride live. “I will take a police whistle and blow it out through the window when I have Louie covered,” I tell them. “You boys be very agile on the getaway when you hear it, as it is no kindergarten I am going to crash into. Here I go!”

Now Louie the Goat fell for the gag I handed him when he opened the door.

I says to him: “I come to look over the joint as we are thinkin’ of plasterin’ here. The landlord—”

“It’s about time,” Louie says. “De joint is peelin’ like it was sunboint. Come in if you’re goin’ ta. Make it fast, buddy, because I got to go—”

It is then that Louie’s spouse lets out an awful squawk and says very shrilly to

say the least: “Louie, it’s a fake! That mug pals around wit’ a punk newshound I useta know. He’s lookin’ for—here’s a gat, Louie!”

“Ha-a-a-a-ah!” I says with quite some gusto. “I have got the drop on you, Louie. Lift the fins or I’ll put leaks in you—” Just then the doll pulls the rug out from under me, and Louie jumps on me like I am a loose ball near the goal line and he starts massaging me very earnestly.

“Plasterer, huh?” Louie the Goat says nasty between punches. “I’ll give ya all the plasterin’ ya want. Git the stuff an’ beat it, kid. While—”

It is when Louie misses with a right that I get a chance to blow the whistle, and it is a good thing the window of the place was open or I would have been out of circulation like Sum Hooey. The doll beats it just as the cops come in, and they all pile on Louie the Goat and a big boy howls: “We got him! We got him! This was easy, huh boys?”

“Ask me,” I says as I look for a bicuspid. “I bet you think the battle of the Marne was quite a skirmish, don’t you? One more minute and Louie would be booked for two massacres. Ow-w-w-w, my dome!”

“Wha’s da big idea?” Louie says in a tantrum. “Ya got nothin’ on me.”

“You assassinated Sum Hooey,” I says, “because he would sell you no more paradise powder on the cuff. It says so right on this card that the Chink had when we found him. The jig’s up, Louie!”

“It’s a lie!” he howls, looking at the card. “I wrote that for a Chink to give Sum Hooey six mont’s ago. I wanna mout’ piece!”

“Tell it to the judge,” a gendarme says. “Come on, Louie. You’ve peddled your last deck of dreams.”

The city rooms of the morning rags are in quite a dither when Louie the Goat gets

put in the jug. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy has to let the little slant-eyed citizen loose, and the prisoner swears very fluently at the big flat-footed detective in his native tongue and draws a finger across his throat very significantly. O'Shaughnessy demands a bodyguard and says he still thinks he has got the right culprit.

Just then Snooty Piper walks in and says: "Why hello, Scoop. It is some front page you are makin' up, huh? Well, come on as we have got to go to the Chink funeral."

I chide Snooty: "I bet you're jealous, Snooty Piper."

Well, we go down to the Berryman undertaking emporium. Three or four very big policemen are standing out in front to scare away tough highbinders who might try to kill Sum Hooley twice. The services for the extinct Chink are just starting when we ankle into the chapel. There is a kind of Buddha affair on a small altar with joss sticks burning all around it and a lot of China boys are banging their cocos against the floor. A very ancient slant-eyed taxpayer, wearing a white robe, starts jabbering under his breath and I says: "Do we have to do this, Snooty? Let's get out of here."

SNOOTY PIPER gets off a chair, and I breathe much easier. But not for long. The crackpot walks right up to the coffin and then he hollers: "Come on in boys, and do your duty! Arrest the murderer!"

I am all dried up inside when I see the gendarmes gang around Snooty. Mr. Berryman is very indignant and very pale at the same time.

"The murderer?" I squeak. "Snooty Piper, what is the idea, you nitwit? This is no place to—"

"The murderer, gentlemen," Snooty says, "is in the coffin. It is Sum Hooley!" Then I almost pass out as Snooty dumps

the coffin right off its stand and a head rolls out onto the floor. The Chinks howl and stampede for the door, and then I see a very surprised oriental sitting on the floor all dressed up in silk pajamas and a cop catches me as I swoon like a dame.

When I come to, the cops are hustling Sum Hooley and Mr. Berryman out of the corpse store, and I stagger along after them and crawl into a police car. It is at headquarters that Snooty Piper tells us what it is all about and it is all I can do to keep from fracturing his skull as he has let me do a run-around without so much as making a peep.

"It was almost as much fun watching you solve a crime as it is to watch Iron Jaw," Snooty snickers. "Well, to make a long story short, it is like this. I wondered the day me and Scoop walked into that place on Court Street where I had seen the likeness of a wax noggin that the old citizen had made and then I saw Sum Hooley's head—or what everybody thought was Sum Hooley's head in the coffin. I began to smell a rat, ha, ha! Now I have talked to Sum Hooley at times, and he is a hound for lichee nuts and there was lichee nut shells in the pocket of the coat that Berryman took off the bogus Sum Hooley's corpse. Well, I went over to Hooley's place after I left you that night, Scoop, and a Chinese flunkey showed me how he had cleaned up the place just after he heard Sum Hooley had passed on, as the Oriental likes to leave his house in order after kicking in with his chips. Then I go into a room and see lichee nut shells near a chair where Sum Hooley always sat and I says to myself, he took a run out powder when he heard me coming. Then when we went up to the undertaking parlor to see the corpse, Mr. Berryman was buying a new dead wagon and was paying quite a sum for one for a man in his position as he is not, after all, a valet to the best corpses

in The Hub. So I says to myself, Mr. Berryman is getting quite a fee for arranging for Sum Hooey's departure from this vale of tears. Something has to be quite screwy. Am I going too fast, boys?"

"Go—go on," I says, and I feel very miserable to say the least.

"Well, the second time I left you, Scoop," Snooty proceeds, "when you ducked me to trail Louie the Goat's dame, I went down to Court Street and saw that the wax model of Sum Hooey's head was gone. He had that made for the coffin as he knew his friends would take a closer look at him than they did at the real corpse in the alley. The old citizen who made it squawked when I flashed him my G-man—er—my fire badge, ha, ha! Berryman ordered it, he said. Now when I first looked at Sum Hooey in his coffin, he was laid out much flatter than he was today because he was not really in the box. But tonight they were putting Sum Hooey on board a ship, and he had to be in it because you remember what his countrymen said about his getting out of Beantown? Only in a box. Well, Sum Hooey is a very shrewd chop-stick wielder and he got an idea from that. He found a China boy who looked near enough like him and he had the boy massacred after dressing him up in his own glad rags. Then

he became the corpse at Mr. Berryman's and was to be shipped out of town and onto a packet for his native land with plenty of legal tender. Look at the five hundred dollar bills he was packed in. Boys! Own up now, Sum Hooey! Then it is the toils for the scamp of China, ha, ha! Get it, boys?"

"Allee slamee smart bloy, yep," Sum Hooey nods at Snooty. "Slum Hooey lose jackplot, yep. Klill Willie Chu for look like me, yep. Plant Louie Gloat's clard near bloody so foolee detectives. Bling Willie flom New Lork so allee slamee no China bloys know ploor Willie. When I dlead mlan no other mlan tly thlow hatchlet at Slum Hooey no more. Catchee idea? Slum Hooey leady to slit in hot sleat. Mlister Pliper velly smart bloy. Like to cluttee off his head tloo, yep. Oklay!"

"Well, let Louie go," Snooty says. "If you have any others locked up—Scoop, you have lost a tooth. Tsk, tsk!"

"Kid me, will ya!" I says, going berserk. "Let go of that club, officer. I will mash him down to a pygmy. I'll—"

Snooty gets away safely and goes down to *The Evening Star* to write the lead on the Chinatown rub-out. Dogface Woolsey stands near him with a chair leg in his hand when I tear out of the elevator. But I will get the crackpot yet. You wait.