

SPORTSMAN FLIES HIGH

by Lawrence A Keating

Synopsis: Detective Dan Colwell of the Graber-Vael private detective agency is assigned the job of shadowing lawyer Arthur McDonald whose wife fears gangster enemies are plotting to murder him. McDonald is murdered in spite of Colwell's watchfulness. Dan is hot on their trail and suspects a sinister plot. . . .

THIRD INSTALMENT

It was not a new idea for a ruse but it was a good one. As Colwell expected, Bradshaw came hastily and closed the corridor door. Already he had some gleaming object in his hand which he had whipped out of the lining of his coat. Already Quillen was on his feet, the heart attack forgotten, his long oval face that ended in a lantern jaw wearing the crafty, sneaky look which proved they had merely wanted to get rid of that girl.

Each time an elevator neared, Colwell wandered around the elbow of the corridor. Then he returned, his hawk-like vigilance on that McDonald suite masked as again he shifted weight and stared at the elevator signals or paced impatiently up and down.

He did not care to go into the office. That wasn't his game. He wanted to follow these fellows and their movements. A hard smile wrinkled the crow's feet at the outer corners of his eyes. Dan sensed what they were up to. Something was in McDonald's office that they wanted and they intended to get it before investigators of the murder arrived.

He felt a slight tremor. It slid along the floor and shocked his ankles just a little. Chance was, no one else in the building particularly noticed it. He was not even sure he heard an explosion. It was neatly, beautifully done.

As a red light flashed overhead, Colwell lounged again to the elbow of the corridor. The car delayed its arrival by a long halt at the floor above. The door of McDonald's office opened and Quillen came out. He carried a square package done in brown manila paper and corded, a package roughly six or eight inches by five by eight. The faint pungency of the explosive they had used to crack the hinges and lock of McDonald's safe wafted to Colwell's keen nostrils, smelling like a disinfectant. The outside office window was open. The suite would be fresh as ever when the

girl returned from the pharmacy. Quillen's furtive eyes found the corridor vacant. He stood motionless, his back half-turned to Colwell. When the elevator at last reached the floor Dan heard the operator and Quillen talk.

"Say Jack, want to earn a buck? Take this package down to the newsstand fellow in the lobby, see? Ask him to hold it for a Mr. Sweeney. Sweeney—get the name? He'll call for it in a few minutes. He doesn't know just where I am and I got a conference on—haven't time to wait down there for him myself. You got it straight—Sweeney?"

"Sure, boss. I getcha: leave it at the newsstand for Sweeney. Thanks!"

The boy accepted the package by its cord. Colwell pictured the lad's happiness at so easily earning a dollar. The cage door clanged shut and Quillen turned away. The car and the package were gone.

Dan waited. This time the McDonald suite door was left ajar as it had been when the men first entered. There was a hum of talk between them, and as Colwell finally walked for a red-light he saw Bradshaw—a temporary name, of course—stopping in the inner office. The safe was closed as if it had not been tampered with. Dan went down in the next elevator.

He reached the street through a haberdashery but walked back into the lobby. This was necessary to effect a proper entrance. He stepped near the newsstand and seemed to scan all persons who came off elevators. He kept an expectant, somewhat irritated expression on his face. As a matter of fact, he was exceedingly apprehensive lest Bradshaw surprise him.

Quillen, of course, must wait up there for the office girl's return. He would be "feeling better." Protesting, he would accept a glass of water, rest awhile, and finally, when McDonald still failed to arrive because of course he was stretched out on a morgue slab, Lefty

would tell the girl he could wait no longer. His friend Bradshaw had been unable to wait even as long as Quillen.

Dan stepped to the newsstand. "You don't know a man named Quillen in the building, do you? I'm expecting to meet him and wonder if he's in or out. Thought you might have noticed him pass."

The old fellow peered over thick glasses. "No, mister, I don't know any Quillen. Sorry."

"Well he was to bring a package here. Some samples. I've—"

"Oh, You Sweeney?"

Colwell smiled and nodded. "Yes. Did he leave the samples with you, by chance?"

The grey haired chap ducked out of sight. He came up with the manila package which he laid atop a pile of magazines. "There you are, mister. Elevator boy told me to hold it for Mr. Sweeney and Quillen—Irish, hey? I'm Irish myself, name of McNamara."

"I'm obliged for your trouble. When he comes along just tell him Sweeney got the package all right. Thanks." Dan seized it and hurried out. Going through the doorway he cast a backward glance that found Bradshaw. The man stepped from an elevator wearing a Chesire cat look of complacency and satisfaction.

He would have a sad awakening when he asked the newsstand chap

plainclothes men, Harry Deane and Joe Harper. He realized they were on their way to the office of Arthur McDonald on a routine check-up. The body had been identified then.

A sympathetic cloud crossed his face at thought of Miss Jennings, the office girl. The poor kid was soon to get a heavy blow, news of her employer's murder. It would mean the office closed and her job gone.

Neither Quillen or Bradshaw was in the lobby. Colwell turned back the way he had come and slowly became aware that the people hurried past him with an air of excitement and curiosity. Then a squad car siren whined and the vehicle twisted in a sharp right angle to plunge down the alley. Dan moved faster.

Sure enough, deep in the alley was a close-packed knot of people. By standing on tiptoe Colwell could see over the heads of his neighbors two uniformed men who rose and stood aside for the squadmen.

"Soup Catterby," one growled. "Somebody jammed a knife right through that pretty striped tie. Say, that's the niftiest tie I seen today, and it's my birthday. Thirty-nine. I got two swell ties from Clara, and from—"

"What the hell—Catterby?"

"How come Soup went out from

a knife? Who did it?"

One of the policemen shrugged. "Where's the quack? I told Sarg. to shoot over one of them doctors. Not that he could do much: Soup was plenty dead when we found him."

Straining to see better, Colwell did at last attain a partial view. Bradshaw, alias Soup Catterby, huddled grotesquely in alley filth, his shoulders against the brick wall of a skyscraper. A look of unspeakable agony etched lines from his twisted nose to his mouth, from the corners of his mouth downward, and in parallel grooves in his gaunt cheeks. He had the same terrible expression McDonald had worn.

A knife, its handle slimy with blood, was sunk to the very hilt in his chest.

"Betcha it's his own?" one of the policemen exclaimed. Look, he's wearin' the scabbard under his pants, and it's empty!"

Colwell threaded his way out of the crowd. It appeared that Quillen thought his pal had tried to double-cross him—that he figured Brad-

shaw, alias Catterby, had obtained that package from the newsstand by the magic name Sweeney, and had sent it to some hiding place by a confederate.

Dan felt genuinely sorry for Soup Catterby. It was his fault that he had been murdered by the revengeful Quillen jumping at conclusions. Although the dead man himself participated in a murder an hour or so ago; he was a rat.

I am very sorry, Mrs. McDonald, Dan reported over the telephone later. "I have some very bad news and I don't know how to tell you. Brace yourself, Mrs. McDonald. It's very bad indeed."

"If you want it straight out then something has happened to your husband. I thought perhaps the police had been there? Something very serious. I'm sorry, Mrs. McDonald, but your husband was murdered an hour or so ago."

He waited. Several gasps came to his ears and a wailing "Oh dear! Oh dear!" She went through her act, but it did not strike Colwell as a very good act. She never could

earn a living in the smallest shape that required emotion. Of course, when one poses as the wife of a man who lived and died a bachelor. . . .

There was no Mrs. McDonald and never had been. Colwell had been aware of that from the first.

He listened attentively, putting in a word here and there. Gradually the lawyer's imposter wife calmed her tumultuous grief that should, to be convincing, have been a trifle less tumultuous and a bit more hysterical.

"I know who the murders are, Mrs. McDonald."

That stirred her! Colwell had thought it would. She was breathless an instant. "You do?"

"Yes. But I haven't informed the police yet. We'll have to, soon, of course, but your instructions in Mr. Graber's office— Yes, there were two. It was with a knife, in a taxi cab during a traffic tieup. Corner of Broadway and Alton."

"What's that? No, but I'd know them. Later, one killed the other with his own knife. Both desperate

characters." Dan's eyes roved to the corners. That jarred her too. "I thought there might be some little thing, unimportant, of course, which you might not care to have get out?"

Mrs. McDonald was very disturbed that he knew the remaining killer. . . . Colwell had the impression she paused to confer with someone at her elbow, although he could not be certain. "I have your phone number but haven't looped up Mr. McDonald's home address yet; will you give it to me? Oh, I see." Colwell nodded to the mouthpiece.

(Continued next issue)

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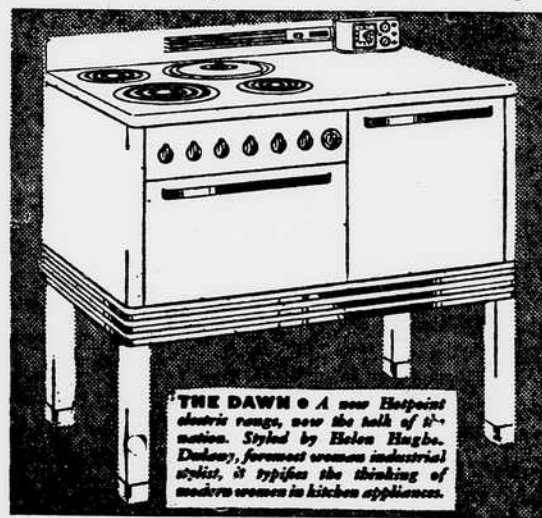
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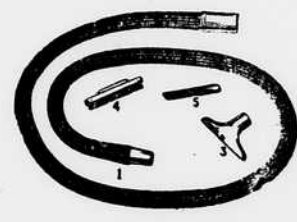


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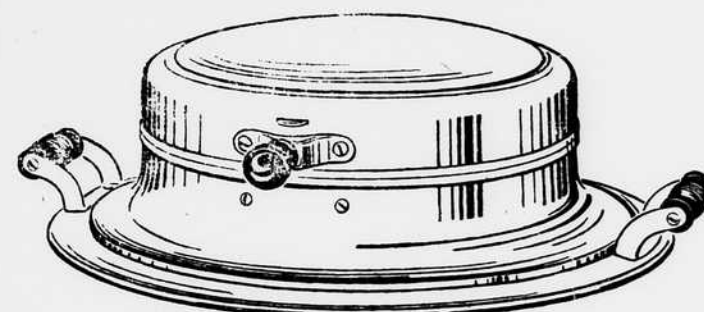
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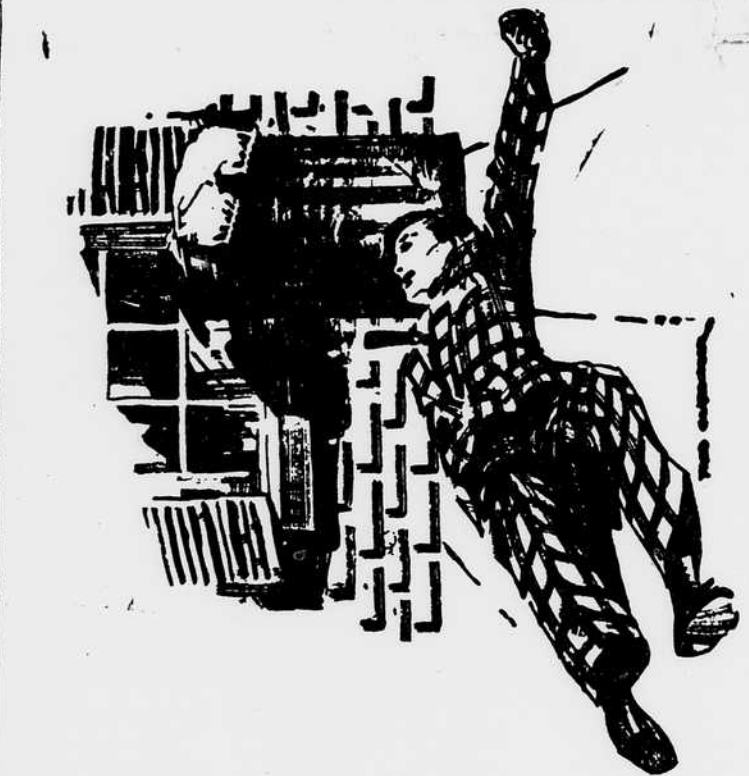
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Bradshaw, alias Soup Catterby, huddled grotesquely in alley filth.