

The Bribe Wore Red

"Alvin Hinkey" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

When irate apartment hunters took to knocking off rent collectors, Hambone Noonan was sure to lodge his first simple suspect in the clink. And it took Noonan's second-rate assistant, Hinkey, to slap a bullet deposit on the real killer's real estate.

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DEAR LOUIE: I thought I would write you instead of coming over there to see you, as I get seasick awful quick, even on a ferry. Hambone Noonan says hello and wants to know how you rate being in a general hospital when you are only a sergeant. It is amazing to me why people who get to be New York cops never seemed to have bothered with schools.

I hope that piece of shrapnel that is still rattling around inside of you will come out through somewhere soon. Hambone says

he hopes it will come out of your head, as then no scars will show. Don't mind him. Louis—he knows he won't be headman when you finally get repaired.

Hambone has gone wolf lately, ever since he found the address and phone number of a dame in a telephone booth. He called the blister up. The doll has a sense of humor and dates Hambone. A couple of hours later in a joint on Tenth Avenue, a big character with ears like truffles and a busted beak asks Hambone has he heard of the unwritten law and sticks a Roscoe in Hambone's pan. Just as Hambone jumps out of the gin mill, the irate husband fires. Hambone got the nearest doctor out of bed who could find no bullets anywhere in the

gland case's tail assembly.

"You must have got shot at with blanks," the M.D. tells Hambone. "It was auto-suggestion you thinking you got hit."

"I run all the way here," Hambone told the doctor, Louie. "I wa'n't in no auto."

Which is by way of softening you up for what happened later on when me and Hambone are put on quite a mystery rubout at West Sixty-seventh Street.

Mr. and Hambone are sitting in the assistant D.A.'s office one morning discussing atomic energy when a very jittery discharged service man is ushered in. He is a diminutive G.I., still wearing his field jacket and combat boots. His name is Rushmore Doe.

"Sit down," the prosecuting attorney's non-com says to the soldier. "An' don't mind these two as they are only detectives."

"Look," Doe says. "What did I fight this war for, huh? I got me a wife who is soon to give me a heir. I been huntin' all over for even a pianer box to live in, an' all I git is the air. If I'd knowed what would happen, I'd never tried to help take Cassino or no other place. I would of chewed some cordite, got a heart condition, an' become a 4F like that guy over there."

"You leave me outa this," Hambone says.

"Go on," the assistant D.A. says.

"Well, after awhile I git a tip I can get two rooms in a joint on West Sixty-seventh. I git up there right off quick an' see the super. He shows me the two rooms which are furnished. The rent is fifty-five a month which is okay with me. Only I can't have the place unless I buy the furniture for two thousan' bucks, an' the stuff wa'n't worth more'n three hun' red when it was new. The bed was held together by wire an' rope, an' the studio couch must of been one tossed out by Mary Antoinette before she lost her noggin. It was a holdup an'

highway robbery an' extortion. What are you goin' to do about it?"

"Why—er—I can't see we can do anythin'," the under-limb of the law says, his ears getting red. "You didn't have to buy it. No more'n housewives have to pay eighty cents for a pound of sixty-five-cent butter. I agree it is an outrage, Corporal—"

"T-5 if you please," Doe says. "Awright, so I got no rights, no perfection, hah? I got no four freedoms like I read about. Awright, so I'll do it my way, pal."

"Now, I'm sure everythin' will come out all right," the law says. "Don't do anythin' rash or—"

"Blow that out your pipes," T-5 Doe snaps. "I am sick of snow jobs from brass hats, an' now you Keystone cops give me the old razz m'tazz. I'll see you sometime, an' I hope it is in an iron lung." Rushmore Doe goes out and slams the door so hard a picture of LaGuardia falls off the wall and his hat pops off too.

"He'll calm down," the assistant D.A. gulps.

"A fine state of affairs," I sniffs. "If I was him I'd feel like commitin' murder!"

"We could use one," Hambone frets. "Our department has been deader than a Scotch town on tag day. Let's go out an' have a beer, Alvin."

"You two drones go up to the Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street railroad station an' see if you can spot the gee who has been robbin' the phone boxes! The telephone company is pretty sore an' wrote the mayor a letter!"

"Sure," I says. "I am a natural for the job, having an uptown dial-ect. Get it, D.A.?"

"First order I git to cut down on expenses here, you go first, Hinkey!"

"Come on, Hambone," I says.

WE HAVE no success hunting for the public utility pirates, and figure they

have gone up a notch in their profession and are working Penn Station. For the next three days we do odd jobs like tailing shoplifting suspects and crap game organizers. I am about ready to resign from the force when we get word that a citizen has been murdered on West Sixty-seventh Street.

Me and Hambone go there with some other cops. The corpse is reposing in a hallway in the rear of the first floor of a sizable apartment building. The cadaver diagnostician says the victim has been this way for maybe three hours. It is now only nine P.M., Louie.

"Looks like he was shot close up with a weapon of about thirty-eight caliber," the medical examiner says. "Name's Herford Smew. About seventy-one years old."

It was a janitor who stumbled over the stic. He is there and says Smew collected rents for the owner of the apartment house. "Somebody waylaid him," the regulator of the steam heat opines. "We don't never use this back way much. I bet Smew had about three thousan' dollars on him."

"The motive was robbery all right," I says. "This Smew wa'n't beatin' anybody's time with a cupcake, not at his age."

"Look, Alvin," Hambone says in a fatherly fashion. "Nobody ast you. Don't forget you are still a little green at this business. You should be seen an' not heard while you watch how I do things."

"I am very sorry, Noonan," I says. "But it is quite a coincidence that this is West Sixty-seventh an'—"

"Of course I thought of that," Hambone snaps, and starts casing the joint after the stiff appraiser takes his leave.

"Don't nobody touch a thing!" Noonan cautions, and bends low and looks about for clues like a beagle hound sniffing for fox tracks. It is quite dimly lighted where we are and we have to use our flashlights.

All at once a cop lets out a gleeful yelp and picks up something near a baseboard. "Look, Noonan, a service pin!"

"What? Gimme it." Hambone cries out. "Well, the case is closed, boys. I will have the guilty party in the icebox before midnight. A war vet, huh? What do you think, Alvin?"

"Yeah," I gulps. "Rushmore Doe got into civvies an' put on his ruptured duck. He come here an' slew Smew an' lost his pin. One of the most difficult cases you ever remember, huh?"

"Don't git sarcastic, Alvin," Hambone sniffs. "Huh, I forgot what *I* found, though. Piece of note paper, an' what you think is on it? A dame's address an' phone number, Alvin. It is always good to mix pleasure with business. After we arrest the ex-G.I. I will give her a buzz."

"You will most likely die quite young, Hambone," I says. "Anyway, maybe Doe dropped that, too."

"There you go, showin' how much you know of human nature, Alvin. The vet has a wife who is expectin'. You think he'd be crosstin' her up? You won't never git far in this business."

"Maybe not," I retort. "When I git that far, I'll have to look back to see where you are."

Hambone is trying to think of a retort, Louie, when who comes up but a very indignant taxpayer wearing a coat with a fur collar. He has a long narrow face as bony as a herring, and his eyes are olive color. "I am Lattimore Veech," he says. "Owner of this building. What foul fiend shot my rent collector down in cold blood?"

"If you'll come downtown to headquarters in about three hours, I will show you," Noonan says. "We don't take long to apprehend such criminals, Mr. Leech."

“Veech, you flathead!” the real estate typhoon yelps. “Smew would have had quite a sum of money on him. The rents for all this month an’—”

“Smew was bonded, no doubt,” I says.

“Of course,” Veech snaps. “But what good does that do him now? What good is a bottle you find that says it is bottled in bond if it is empty?”

“You got somethin’ there,” Noonan grins. “Now maybe you will keep your trap shut, Alvin. We will go to where this vet lives—”

“Remember?” I says. “He didn’t have a home.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah. Well, we’ll send out an alarm for the crook! We’ll case all the second-rate hotels. Most likely his wife lives with her ma an’ he boards out or—”

“Well, go an’ get him!” Veech yowls. “Don’t just stand there! Maybe even now he is layin’ in ambush for another of my rent collectors!”

RUSHMORE DOE isn’t located that night, but late the next afternoon. That is, Rushmore walks into headquarters and gives himself up. He says he heard he was wanted for murder. He sure was some surprised. Rushmore is wearing a pre-war suit which fits him too late. There is no ruptured duck on the lapel.

“Where’s your service pin?” Hambone Noonan asks him quick.

“I lost it the other day,” Doe says. “Takes a little time to git another one. What gives you the idea I knocked off this rent collector?”

“Because the ruptured duck was found close to the dead man,” Noonan says in a very disagreeable voice. “It was found in the building where they tried to shake you down on the old furniture, Doe. You said you’d do things your way! What’s more, the ballistics boys in the lab tells us Smew was eased off by a slug fired from a

Beretta, which is a Eyetalian gun. You was in Italy, wa’n’t you?”

“If I was found with chop suey on my necktie, I would be a suspect in the killin’ of a mandarin in Chungking, huh?” Doe wails. “Here I got enough troubles. Now I am an inductee for the hot squat! You think I was the only G.I. that was given a ruptured duck?”

“Nope,” Noonan says. “But only one so far has lost his, as far as we know, Doe. All the circumstances point to you as bein’ the assassin. Where was you durin’ the time Smew was bein’ booby-trapped? Answer me that one an’ prove it!”

“Let’s see,” Rushmore Doe says and scratches his dome. “That night I—yeah—I was like I was every night for almost a week. In the bag—plastered—crooked to the eyeballs. Didn’t I have a reason? Goin’ to be a father. My wife livin’ with her mother who hates me like I hate Army hash. No place to set up housekeepin’. Just bein’ kicked around. What did I fight this war for, huh?”

“You ast us that before,” Noonan snaps. “No matter what your troubles was, you got no excuse to bump off citizens. You got spiffed an’ didn’t know the foul deed you committed. That will most likely git you out of the sizzle armchair but—”

“Git me a lawyer!” Rushmore Doe yelps. “Or are they all just workin’ against the G.I. bill of rights?”

“If you hand over the dough you got stashed somewhere to pay for the furniture so’s you can git the flat, I’ll try an’ see if they’ll knock a few years off your sentence, Doe.”

“I told you I didn’t do it, you big hunk of gorgonzola,” the ex-G.I. screeches. “Oh, my poor achin’ back—”

Well, it looked good enough to the D.A. to lock Rushmore up without bail. We went up to see Mrs. Doe, Louie, and she did not help any. She said Rushmore

brought a Roman Roscoe back with him, but he went out and sold it somewhere, he told her. Hambone asked did she have proof he sold it. She said she didn't.

Mrs. Unkbrinker, Mrs. Doe's ma, said it wasn't anything but what she expected, as Rushmore was never anything but a no-good bum. We left the flat with Mrs. Doe trying to inflict bodily harm on her parent with an ironing board.

"Know what, Alvin," Hambone says. "I am goin' to call up the dame whose address I found in the buildin' where Smew was erased. Her name sounds excitin'. Miss Moxie Lovewell. I'll tell her a friend tipped me off, an' that I own a chain of night clubs in the south."

"With your accent," I says, "that is a stroke of genius, Hambone. You do not sound anymore like Robert E. Lee than an Eskimo. Better make it the Midwest."

"Sometimes you prove to me you are only half a moron, Alvin." Hambone says. "But I can't think of everythin'. Let's go in this cigar store."

Hambone squints at the piece of paper, then holds it out to me, his big thumb covering most of it. "Looks like I got to git them readin' glasses," he say. "The writin' is pretty small. What is the number, Alvin?"

I tell him. Hambone goes into a booth and dials the number. "Hello," he finally says in a wolfish purr. "This Miss Lovewell? So do I—ha ha. A friend said to call you if I should be in town seein' about how to operate my string of night clubs out in—what was that? Who do I think you are? Look; Babe—what was that ag'in? Go hang myself on the line I just throwed? Look, you kin get arrested for talkin' like that over a phone! Awright, I will offer the mink coat to somebody elst. G'bye!"

"She was too smart, huh?" I ask. "Hambone, you are about as subtle as a kick in the teeth and you got no more finesse than a charging water buffalo."

"Awright, you try your luck sometime, Cassemova," Hambone says, and crumples up his piece of paper and throws it at me.

"Do I look that silly?" I sniff. "Come on, let's go an' see if there's a game on at Mike's."

IT IS too bad for me there was. When I get to my rooming house, Louie, I am out seven bucks. I never did have no luck with gin rummy as you know.

I start peeling off, ready for the sack, when something drops to the floor and I pick it up. It is a little ball of paper. It must have gone down inside my vest when Hambone fired it at me. I flatten it out to make sure. Then I see there is some fine print across the top of the little square of paper that must have been ripped off a pad. It says, *Veeday Realty Associates, Christopher Bldg., Columbus Circle.*

"Hambone needed glasses awright," I says to myself, Louie. Then it occurs to me that Herford Smew must have been quite an old lobo and must have had a little scratch to draw the interest of a doll like Moxie Lovewell must be. As a rule the swell chicks do not go for store teeth and snapping arteries unless there is a mile or two of hay on the side, hey?

Louie, if Herford Smew lost that note he jotted down out of his pocket when he was liquidated, he must have figured the babe a prospective client. Anyway, I am curious to get a gander at the mysterious doll so I go over to the apartment house where she lives.

It is no pueblo for the lower brackets. It has potted plants out in front, and a marquee a half a block long. Moxie Lovewell's name is over the brass mailboxes. Her unit is designated as 7C. I go up in the elevator and walk nearly a quarter of a mile along some halls before I press a button.

Moxie Lovewell opens the door and

ogles me. My knees start melting like gobs of butter thrown on top of a hamburger grill. My red corpuscles multiply like rabbits. The dame has long locks the color of a new copper kettle and eyes that would make Dietrich's look rheumy. Moxie is wearing a negligee and over it she has tossed a short mink wrap which still has a tag dangling from a sleeve.

"Er—Nood gafternoon, Miss," I says. "I am sellin' vacuum cleaners, but of courst I have no samples as on account of reconverting an' strikes, we must wait for delivery. If I could see your rugs I could tell just what kind of vacuum cleaner you should use an'—"

"Who is that, Moxie," a gravelly voice says. My teeth click together and make a sound like a wolf trap snapping shut. I am sure I have heard the voice before, Louie. "Git rid of him as we are late now. The coat fits nice and—"

"You see me some other time," Moxie says. "In a few days perhaps."

"I will sure follow this lead up, awright," I tell the babe, then walk away.

I am hiding behind a big potted palm in the lobby about half an hour later and see Moxie and a tall thin character come out of the lift. I have to hang on to the palms as who is the babe's guide but Lattimore Veech. One of the palm fronds gets into my nose and I give out with a sneeze that lifts my hat right off. Lattimore says, "What's that?" He spins to around and comes over to investigate.

Moxie trips right behind him and she chokes out, "You! Snooping around, huh? Look, you are no vacuum cleaner salesman!"

Veech looks cyanide at me and gets a little pale around the gills. "What's the big idea, you?"

"Er—awright," I says. "You got me, pal. I was hired to see if you was chasin' dames, Mr. Veech. It is a way of makin' a

livin'. I—"

"My wife hired you, did she?" Veech gulps. "Look, Moxie, you go out an' get in the car. I got to talk to this punk!"

Veech talked all right, Louie. "Look, Mister," he says. "I can't let no scandal git out about me as I am a respected citizen and have a social station to maintain. How much is it worth to you to forget what you saw up to now? Three hundred dollars?"

I don't know why I let him cram the dough in my pocket, Louie, but after all, it was got honest in a way. "Sure, Mr. Veech," I says. "My report will go in. It will say I have seen nothin' two-timin' about you at all."

"You're a smart boy;" Veech says. "Don't try to shake me down for more or I might get a notion—"

"I am young and love life very much, Mr. Veech;" I says. "I'm leavin' town anyway, maybe."

WHEN I get to my room, I stash the three clams into a bureau drawer under my clean socks. I feel like a heel, Louie. I am reading a comic book when I get the signal from downstairs that I am wanted on the phone. I go down and answer it. It is Hambone.

"Where you been, Alvin?" the crackpot shouts at me.

"I have not been feeling at all in the pink," I says, "It is my allergy ag'in. Ragweed, I bet. What's new with you besides the brain you never use, Hambone?"

"Don't git so smart, Alvin. We are tightenin' the case against Rushmore Doe. A citizen who corporates with the law called us yesterday an' says for the police to watch out for a hun' red buck bill that must have been part of the rent money took off Smew. It was a Mrs. Bridget Goldfarb. She says her fountain pen leaked all over her pocketbook. The red ink got into her

face powder and her rent money. She kept red ink in the pen as she and her husband own a delicatessen that seems always to be in the red."

"How could Rushmore circulate the lettuce when he is in the hoosegow, Hambone?" I inquire. "Let's talk sense."

"Look, mental midget. His wife could. You fall for her story, hah? She acts innercent, sure. But you can't tell about dames," Noonan says.

"I guess I'll never learn to be a smart detective like you, Hambone."

"Oh, now, now, Alvin. I was discouraged at the start myself. It might take some time, but you'll git there some day, pal."

"Oh, you really think so, Hambone? You give me the courage to go on."

"See you tomorrer, Alvin. We got chyciatrices comin' to look over the criminel in the mornin'."

"It should be interestin'," I says. "You better keep away from them, Hambone." And I hang up, Louie. You know Noonan. He does not know a rib from a clavicle.

At ten o'clock the next morning, I call to see Rushmore Doe's legal adviser, after I contact Hambone and tell him I don't feel as though I could be in shape to do my best work until the middle of the day. "We don't need you, Alvin," Noonan says. "Don't act like you was so important and that crime will start payin' if you don't hurry back."

The ex-G.I.'s barrister is no live wire and admits his client has no more chance than Rudy Hess. So he is quite eager for any suggestion. "Look," I says. "When you see Doe, ask him where he went the day he said he lost the service pin, and say a prayer he wasn't spiffed."

"Yeah, I'll do that, Hinkey," the mouthpiece says, "but you are wastin' your time. He ain't got no more defense than a blind and armless pug."

"I can see that," I say significantly, "I've passed more bars than some lawyers I see around."

Well, that afternoon I call again. The mouthpiece gives me a list of five places Rushmore Doe called at the day he lost the pin. One is the Veeday Realty Associates on Columbus Circle where he went to beg them to rent him even part of a coal bin in a basement anywhere.

Louie, I suddenly feel a little faint and asked for a glass of water. The barrister snickers and takes a bottle out of a file cabinet. "Here, you never should drink water, pal. It is only good for waterin' geraniums an' runnin' under bridges."

Well, you meet all kinds, don't you, Louie? I got out of there and hurried home. When I got to my room I fish out the three bills and notice one of them is quite spattered with red ink. I sit down on the bed and wait until the blood rushes back into my dome once more. I feel sorry for Hambone Noonan.

THERE is no use beatin' around the bush, so I go up to Columbus Circle right away and go up to the office of the Veeday Realty Associates, Inc. I ask the girl can I see Mr. Veech. She says would Mr. Day do instead and I shake my noggin. "No, it must be Mr. Veech. Tell him a Mr. Hinkey is out here."

The babe picks up the phone, presses a button and gives Veech the message. Louie, you could hear Veech screech from where I sat with two other citizens. "Tell that chiseler to get out before I lose my temper, Miss Chishowski! The dirty hijacker! The—"

A beefy character leans close to me. "He means you, hah? Owes you or your outfit some dough, too? Well, I been tryin' to collect a flower bill fer six weeks an'—"

"Slow payer, huh?"

"Slower'n a turtle with his pocketbook

under his shell, pal. This guy next to me is a guy who sells furs. He has a bite on Veech too. He told us last week to show up today an' he'd pay us. Looks like you're outa luck, though."

"That's what you think," I says.

I got up and says to the blonde dish at the reception desk, "Tell Veech he better see me, Sister. Tell him he shouldn't frame a citizen who has fought for his country."

Just then Veech bangs a door open and looks wildly about him. His peepers focus on me and he goes into quite a tantrum. "Look, I warned you if you tried to shake me down for more—"

"Look, Mister," I says. "I am comin' in to talk to you. Maybe I could sell you a service button, a ruptured duck, as you might have use fer one again."

Veech's lower jaw drops suddenly like the Empire State elevator. Then he lifts it up with a snap and says, "I'll give you two minutes, no more!"

"I might give you about fifty years," I says as I pass him by. He follows me in and shuts the door. "What was the idea of that crack, you dirty blackmailer?"

"Let's be calm, Veech," I says. "I have not spent the lettuce you forced on me. I am not a vacuum cleaner salesman any more than I am a flatfoot hired by your wife to tail you. I did not spend the dough you gave me because two of the bills were spattered with ink. Mrs. Goldfarb's fountain pen leaked in her reticule and got all over her rent money. She paid it to Smew; so how does it happen you give them to me? Complicated, ain't it?"

"I found Moxie Lovewell's address on a bit of note paper bearing the name of the Veeday Realty Associates—near the corpse. You knew Rushmore Doe was desperate and beggin' to rent an apartment. Your agent tried to stick him all that dough for some second-hand junk he called furniture. Your agent told you the squawk

the ex-G.I. put up. You are bein' hounded by creditors, but you buy Moxie mink coats an'—"

"You talk too much, pal," Veech yelps, and I see he has a Betsy. "Seems you almost hit a jackpot, you blackmailer. Let's go out the back way, pal. Got a car out there."

"An' I'll end up in the river, huh?" I choked out.

"Thanks for the suggestion," Veech says. "Start movin', Buster."

It looks bad, Louie. Veech picks up a heavy book and aims the Betsy at me. He says he will shoot just as he bangs the book down against his desk. But the door bursts open and the blonde yelps:

"They think you're stallin', Mr. Veech! I can't hold 'em off any longer—why, you have a gun, Mr. Veech!"

"Yes, ha ha," Veech says. "I was sellin' it to this chap, yeah. Was goin' to show it would shoot a bullet right through a book an'—"

I WENT in at the crumb, Louie, before he could get set again. Veech let go with the cannon but too fast. The slug went into the files marked *Ad to Burp*.

Miss Chishowski faints and falls in front of Veech. The realtor goes headfirst over her shapely chassis. I cover him like he was a little orphan child picked up from a snowdrift and start banging his pate against the floor. It is pretty tough. I am about ready to use a desk chair when the creditors rush in.

"Good work, chum," one says. "I bet he don't welch no longer. Hard to git dough out of him, ain't it?"

Veech makes a big try to get out from under me. I massage him with a wire wastebasket. Somebody must have called the cops quick, because two big ones rush in just as I pull Veech to his feet.

"He murdered his own rent collector," I

says. "I am Alvin Hinkey, attached to the D.A.'s office. He owed some citizens and was in a spot. So he framed a G.I. for Smew's rubout and took nearly three grand of rent money that was insured, so he paid himself off double. I got enough proof to fix his wagon!"

"It is a lie!" Veech says.

"Mrs. Goldfarb will testerfy," I snap at the crook. "You tell the D. A. how come she paid Smew the inky cabbage and how come you had it to pay me not to tell your ball-and-chain about Moxie Lovewell.

"Mrs. Goldfarb will take her fountain pen down to the lab. The boys there will prove the stuff on the hundred buck bill come out of her pen as I guess you know two inks are not alike, even if they come out of the same vat. Bottles made a chemical change in it, an' so do different fountain pens." I didn't know what I was talking about then, Louie, but neither did Veech. "Hah, the bribe wore red!

"An' furthermore, you losin' that old piece of note paper with Moxie's address on it near a corpse you made, Veech. Who would believe it fell out of a seventy-odd year old character's pocket? An' you thinkin' to use a Eyetalian gun! An' we'll accuse Moxie Lovewell of being a excessory. Do you think she won't let her tresses down clear to the floor! What a stinker, framin' a poor G.I. with that ruptured duck he lost here—"

"Why, Mr. Veech!" Miss Chishowski yelps. "Are they talkin' about the service button I found that day and brought to you?"

"Shut up, you dope!" Veech yips. "No, it is too late! Dames! They are all poison. Wasn't for dames, I'd—"

"Let's go downtown, boys," I says.

It is almost midnight by the time the stenog has Lattimore Veech's confession

down. Hambone Noonan looks very hurt and about ready to blow his top. He says I am a fine pal to hide all the evidence from him and hog all the credit.

"I don't see how you could do it, Alvin."

"That's the reason right there, Hambone," I snaps. "You can't see! If you'd noticed on that piece of paper it come from the Veeday Realty Associates, you might have smelled a rat like me."

"I do," Noonan yips. "Well, I'll git my readin' glasses first thing tomorrer. An' you lied to me besides, Alvin, sayin' you was sick. I got a good mind to give up on you as you'll never git nowhere doin' things like that."

"I guess I ought to give up, huh, Hambone?" The D. A. grins and winks at me.

"Well, it is an ill wind that blows nobody around," I says to Rushmore Doe when he is cut loose legally. "Smew gittin' knocked off, you got a chance to rent a flat. I am sure a widow won't be able to swing it herself or wants to. Hurry the first thing in the morning and put in first call on her flat. Everythin' comes out right, if you just have patience, Sarge."

"What is your name?" Rushmore says all agog. "We will name our baby after you."

"I won't tell you," I says emphatically. "You want you should have a son, if it is one, to start out with two strikes on it. I wouldn't call a airedale Alvin—"

"Why, that is a swell name," the ex G.I. says, shakes my hand, and rushes out.

"That proves he is a psycho," Hambone sighs. "We still better watch him."

What a dull world this would be, Louie, without characters like Noonan? Hoping you are the same,

Alvin