

# Some Like It Shot

*"Alvin Hinkey" Yarn*



*By Joe Archibald*

*When Noonan, Gotham's gummiest gumshoe, went on vacation, his biggest boner was hauling Patrolman Hinkey along. For that beat-pounder was bound to cross up Noonan's detection fish stories by dragging a blood-red herring of homicide across the path of hayshaker justice.*

Sgt. Louis Garfunkle,  
Yokohama, Japan,  
C/o Postmaster, San Francisco

**D**EAR LOUIE: While I am writing this, it looks like maybe you are riding around in one of them jinrickies with a geesher girl. Hambone Noonan says to try and get him a souvenir like a Harry Carey sword or a meatball off a Jap Zero. A broad told me the other day that Japan is full of cherry blossoms that don't smell. I says if they don't it is the only thing there that don't.

Well, to get down to business, me and Hambone had the darndest thing happen to us. And all because we took our vacations together to get away from the big city and rest our nerves. "Let's git away from the madding crowd for awhile, Alvin," Hambone suggests one day, "We will relapse in the country and forget sordid things like robberies and murder and confidents games."

It sounded good. Louie, so I packed a bag and went up to New Hampshire which is full of beachheads. Me and Hambone alight from the train at a little station

called Wopper Falls. We go to a real estate office in the town and ask if there are cottages to rent on the ocean front. We quiz a character named Alsop Frick who looks as much like a rube as Jimmy Walker. He says even the stone crabs at the beach are having a housing problem and are causing a nuisance climbing into lobster pots.

"You better grab a room in town or out in some farmhouse," Frick says. "I think I can put you up. Wait, I'll phone."

He does. He calls about fifty citizens before he gets results. "Fine," he says. "I'll send them right out. How much? Eleven dollars a day includin' breakfast. We'll take it."

"Go ahead, pal," Hambone says. "What do we care how you spend our dough? Alvin, we stay three days instead of a week or two. They are gittin' smart up here, already. Well, where is it, Jessie James, an' how do we get there as our ceilin' fell on our limousine last week?"

Alsop seems as jumpy as a baby kangaroo. He fills his pipe, knocks the tobacco out into an ash tray and fills it again. He calls his secretary and says if he is out when he calls to tell himself to wait until he gets back. We go out and get into his auto which is quite sharp. He swears because it won't start. "You didn't put the key in the egginition," Hambone says.

Well, we go out to a little farmhouse two miles out of town, Louie, and do not smell satchet. It seems that Darius Dewlap specializes in pigs and goats. The pigpen is almost under the window of the room we draw. It is no bridal suite. The bed reminds me of a swayback horse.

"No cookin' in the room," Mrs. Dewlap says.

"How could we?" I ask, "unless we rubbed two sticks together. How are the mosquitoes here?"

"Very well, thanks," the country dame says, nicks us for eleven bucks each, and makes her exit.

"It was your idea, Hambone," I says.

"The simple life, Alvin. And so are we," the lemonhead says, "Quite a nice view out over that swamp, ain't it?"

QUITE a first night we have. The mosquitoes come in like junior B-29's in formations. They peel off and dive, each employing tailing tactics as they strafe us. They are hypo needles with wings. I can feel them brace their feet against my epidermis when they pull the bayonets out. Owls and bullfrogs start hooting each other, and in the next room, the hick is sawing six cords of wood per minute.

"Wouldn't it be peaceful attendin' a nice murder, Hambone?" I ask.

"Pass the citronella," Noonan sighs.

"If this is life, some people I know should get sentenced to it," I says.

We go down to breakfast the next A.M. early. The flapjacks must have been made three days in advance as all they needed was a pom pom on top of each one to make swell berets. There is also some kind of cereal we are sure was made out of hayseed. Hambone says, "Let's check out, Alvin."

"They wouldn't refund us no dough," I gripe. "We—"

Darius Dewlap hops into the kitchen like his most ferocious bull has its horns close to his seat. "Amantha, a awful thing has took place down at the beach. Feller—Feller found dead in Frick's cottage. The police—"

"An' Feller was supposed to pitch for Cleveland today, Alvin," Hambone says. "How could this hap—"

"Oh, my achin' back," I sigh. "He means a citizen was found. Hambone, maybe we got a murder!"

“Stop openin’ your mouth an’ closin’ it like somethin’ trappin’ flies, Darius,” Mrs. Dewlap says. “What happened to the feller?”

“Dead. Sometime durin’ the night he got shot by a prowler, Ma. He was visitin’ Frick. When he went to call him, there was this feller as dead as all git out. Name of Chauncey Trickle. All the police from Portsmouth are there—”

“We are detectives, at least I am, Alvin,” Hambone yelps. “What are we waitin’ for? Let’s take a ride in your flivver, Dewlap. Let’s not just stand here, as justice must be done! The killer must not excape!”

“Awright, fellers,” Darius nasals. “Let’s start loopin’.”

The jalopy is pre-war and I do not mean the Second World War, Louie. It steams up quick and belches all the way to Campton Beach two miles away. It is a small beach havin’ about forty or fifty cottages. We stop in front of the one which is surrounded by natives. There is a cop pushing them back.

Hambone flashes his badge and says, “I am a New York detective. Where is the body? Have you touched anythin’?”

“You couldn’t have hired me to go in there when my husband told me,” Mrs. Frick says.

We go into the cottage. The doll must have suddenly flown out of the Stork Club in N. Y. and landed here for the investigation. She is a blonde, and you should see the way her slacks and sweater took the curves, Louie. She is smoking a chain of cigarettes and gnawing all the polish off her nails. Alsop is also in quite a dither and is filling his pipe with dirt out of a nearby plant pot.

“The corpse is in there,” a cop says, and points. Me and Hambone go in. A character wearing maroon rayon pajamas is in a bed close to the window. He is

about thirty-five years of age and looks like a night club operator, with a black mustache all trimmed up like Gable’s. There is a hole in him where it did the least good.

“Stand back, Alvin,” Hambone says smugly. “Leave me git the facts here. Why, there is a Roscoe right close to the stiff!”

“Yeah,” a cop says. “Seems like he was expectin’ an attack to be made on his life, don’t it?”

“He was shot from that winder there,” Hambone says. “Git Frick in here, Alvin.”

I call the real estate gee. He comes in and sits down. “Oh, this is awful,” he says. “Why did it have to happen in here?”

“If we knew, we wouldn’t have to investigate,” I sniff. “Hambone, look for tracks outside the winder.”

“Who is the detective here?” Noonan barks.

“We looked already,” a cop says. “The ground is pretty hard out there, and mostly covered with clam shells. There ain’t no prints. Look, Frick, you should! know who’d want to rub out your friend.”

“I hadn’t seen Trickle for years,” Alsop says. “All of a sudden I get a call from Portsmouth a week ago sayin’ he is comin’ to stay awhile.”

“Last night,” Hambone says, as I mosey around. “You an’ your wife must of heard the shot.”

“We sleep in the front of the house,” Frick replies. “We sleep heavy, and besides the surf pounded pretty hard durin’ the night.”

“An’ you didn’ come in this room until this mornin’, huh?”

“That’s right,” Alsop says.

“Look, Hambone. I—”

The big lout shuts me up, Louie. “Looks like this Trickle had enemies, Frick,” he says. “They trailed him here. You notice anybody around here the last

couple of days who looked like a criminal?"

Alsop shakes his dome. His wife lights up another king's size and asks for heaven's sake when is the body going to get removed. Then she jumps up like a sand crab had sneaked up behind her. "Alsop, you don't think Mervin would—"

"Why, Baby," Frick says. "He might've. Only two days ago he said if he caught Trickle wolfin' around his place, he would give him what's what."

"Who is Mervin?" Hambone snaps.

"Owns a garage a mile from the beach, up toward the village," Frick says. "Got a cute little wife, and Trickle—"

"Ah, now we're gittin' somewheres, Alvin," Noonan yelps. "Same old story. The city slicker an' the shy country maid infatuated by the attentions of a glamour boy. We better go an' see Mervin."

**L**OOK all around, Louie. Alsop is trying to light the plant dirt in his pipe. Hambone has a cigar protruding from one corner of his mouth. The doll keeps inhaling nicotine by the pint. "We better send a description of the corpse an' some of his prints to Boston and places, Hambone. If somebody was chasin' him, there was a reason. He might have a record a mile long."

"Of course, Alvin," Hambone snorts. "That is always elemental."

"You take care of that, boys," he says to the Portsmouth cops. "Two of you come with me an' my assistant, Mr. Hinkey."

We ride up to Mervin Jopp's garage. A little mouse comes out and picks up the gasoline hose. "We don't need no fuel," Hambone says.

"No," I says, gaping at the pretty country wench. "One fool with us is enough." Mrs. Jopp wears coveralls, which is a shame. No wonder her husband is the jealous type.

"Where is Mervin?" I ask her.

She tells us, and suddenly gets the jitters. She runs out back and we follow close at her heels. Mervin is sitting on a nail keg fixing an inner tube. He is a sandy-haired citizen with big blue eyes and freckles. He looks as much like a criminal as Hambone looks like Charles Boyer, but those are the kind you have to watch closest, Louie.

"Awright, Jopp," Hambone snarls. "Where was you last night—all night?"

"Home," Mervin says, his Adam's apple wobbling a bit. "That is, mostly."

"What you mean?" Hambone snaps.

"Well, that is, I was home since one o'clock this A.M.," Mervin gulps. "I was s'posed to be in Portsmouth lookin' for a radiator for a 1931 Gnash Eight, but I was really watchin' this Trickle sharp. He's been callin' here when I wasn't around an'—"

"Hmm," Hambone mutters, and Mrs. Jopp's face gets red. "Oh, how could you, Mervin?" she chokes out.

"The M.D. says Trickle was shot around midnight," Hambone says. "Looks bad for you, Jopp."

"Huh? You tryin' to hint I killed him?" Mervin yipes.

"You got the motive, an' maybe the murder weapon," Hambone says. "Let's search the premises!"

"Huh," Alsop Frick says. "Trickle told me Mervin Jopp threatened to kill him if he caught him huggin' his wife just once more. I told Chauncey to lay off these apple knockers around here, an' he just laughed."

"He was stronger'n me," Mrs. Jopp says desperately. "I fought him off, Mervin. I swear I never encouraged his advances!"

"I didn't kill nobody," Mervin says.

"Come on," Hambone says. "Let's comb this garage as it ain't very big. Let's

look everywhere.”

We hunt for an hour. We are in a corner of the shed when Alsop Frick slips on some oil and knocks Hambone Noonan against a pile of old tires. They topple over and one rings Noonan and pins his arms to his sides. We start piling up the old shoes again. Alsop Frick is putting one on top of the pile when something falls out of it and clatters on the floor. It is a Betsy.

I look at Mervin. He is paler than Darius Dewlap's cow's milk.

“Don't touch it, nobody!” Hambone says. “I'll pick it up with my han'kerchief. Won't be no prints on it, as the killer wore gloves. Let's take him into Portsmouth, boys.”

“Oh, Mervin,” the garage man's wife squeaks. “How could you of done it?”

“Don't say another word as it will only be used against him,” Hambone warns her.

“I wish I knew,” Mervin says.

“You see, Alvin, this is just routine is all,” Hambone says. “The city slicker an' the jealous country husband. We got the motive an' the Roscoe. They hang in this state, huh?”

They take Mervin into town and we go back to the cottage. The corpse has been whisked away. Mrs. Frick is sitting on the porch with a tray filled with butts at her elbow. “Er, Mrs. Frick,” I says. “You made the beds fresh every mornin'? You didn't forget yesterday?”

“I did not,” the pretty doll says, quite huffed. “What business is it of yours?”

“Yeah, Alvin, you can ast the most foolish questions sometime,” Hambone says. “You let Mrs. Frick alone. Look what she's been through.”

“Awright,” I says.

**H**AMBONE struts around Wopper Falls the next day as the papers tell everybody for miles around how a big New York detective solved a murder case

in an hour and a half flat. Mervin is locked up in the jailhouse with lawyers calling to see him.

The Fricks invite Hambone out to dinner. He gets all slicked up and says, “Sorry you wa'n't ast, Alvin, ha! I bet they have a swell dame for me. These things go with success.”

“I'll try an' bear up,” I says. “I'll sit here an' remember what you taught me about huntin' criminal characters—like not forgettin' the little things that are sometimes bigger than the big ones.”

“Do that,” Hambone says. “An' you won't be poundin' that beat very long back in N.Y. I've borrowed your new tie, Alvin, as you won't mind.”

It is two days later when the Portsmouth cops call us up and say they want to see us. We go in. The chief says they got a report on the prints they took off the remains of Trickle. It seems Trickle was at one time a gee named Swifty Pitzer who did eight years of a ten year rap in the Maine rockery.

“Huh,” I says. “Frick had swell friends, if he knew who Trickle really was, Hambone.”

“He couldn't of,” Noonan snaps.

“We better grab his prints, though,” I says. “When he isn't lookin'.”

“He gimme his card,” Hambone says. “Maybe they are on it, but this is all mullarkey. Here is the card. You can't overlook nobody even the innercent.”

Twenty-four hours later, the cops get back from Boston. They tell us there are no prints on file like the one they found on the card. Hambone says triumphantly, “You see, Alvin, we got the right culprit.”

“Ayah,” the chief says. “You'll get called up here for the trial, Mr. Noonan. How about comin' around to see us tonight an' tellin' us about the big cases you worked on?”

“Don't mind if I do,” Hambone says,

and thanks the chief for a big cigar. As we go out, the big lug says, "It must be awful lonesome around here for you, not gittin' invites like I do."

At eight o'clock the next A.M. Hambone is still pounding his ears like an opium eater. It looks like the cops really rolled out the barrel for the flathead. Well, I dress an' have breakfast, and ask the Dewlaps can I borrow their flivver as I wish to go in town and see places of historical interest. Hambone wouldn't have been interested, Louie, as a Plymouth Rock, as far as he is concerned, is only a hen.

When I get in town, I go to the bank to cash in a twenty-buck traveler's check. There is a rhubarb goin' on at a cage.

"I simply was being friendly, was all," the teller says to a gee in front of me. "Up here we know everybody. It just seemed funny you come here an'—"

"You mind your own business," the customer says. "Just hand me the dough, Bub."

He turns away from the cage, shuffling some hundred dollar bills. I gape.

"Didn't you ever see real lettuce before, hayshaker?" the unpleasant boy snaps at me.

I pass the traveler's check through the cage. The teller says, "Some guys was born sour. I just ast him did Alsop Frick buy some property off him, was all. Frick come in here a couple of days ago for two five hundred dollar bills. It seemed funny that feller just come here with a five hundred dollar bill to get changed. So soon after—so I thought I'd be neighborly."

I hardly hear the native, Louie. I had gotten a gander at the customer. He looked about as much at home in this town as a penguin in a palm tree. There was something about his walk that needled my noggin. You ever get a hunch, Louie? Do five hundred buck notes grow on trees?

Why not ten C's, Instead? But they make a bulky package, don't they?

I go and look at some colonial houses, and spend the afternoon in the movies, but I can't concentrate. I go back to the farm. Mrs. Dewlap says Hambone is still in his room and that she has been toting senna tea up to him all day. Also ice. I go upstairs. The lemonhead is propped up in bed with a towel full of ice tied to his pate.

"I thought I was dyin', Alvin," Hambone says. "An' you leave me all day. Bring me up the newspaper, huh? My picture is in it. I got to speak at the Rotary tonight. Ain't that awful?"

"You can say that ag'in," I says. "Well, that is somethin' I can't bear to be at. I'll just kill some time somehow."

**A**FTER supper I walk down to Campton Beach. It is about nine P.M. when I knock on the door of Frick's cottage. Alsop's wife lets me in. She is in halter and shorts, and holding a highball. I try not to look too hard.

"Some of the hair of the pooch that bit you last night?" I quip, "Noonan is still seein' pink men, the dumb elephant."

Frick calls out, "Come in and have a snort, Hinkey."

"Don't mind if I do," I says, and fires a shot before the babe can pour one. "Did you buy some real estate too last week or two? How is the market?"

"Haven't put over a deal in a month," Alsop says. "It is lousy, Hinkey."

"Funny," I says. "Maybe you bought some black market steaks with that grand you drew out of the bank."

The doll's drink slops over. Frick jumps like a Mex bean.

"You got a friend maybe who was a little short, Frick?" I goes on. "If you have, I saw him in Portsmouth a little while ago. Changin' a five hundred dollar bill."

The doll gasps. Alsop Frick clicks his

teeth together. “Guy about five foot, six. Long nose and eyes like little lumps of coal,” I says. “Plaid brown suit.”

They didn’t have to say a word, Louie. Their eyes told me so.

“Somebody went in to see if Trickle was dead after he was shot,” I says. “There was cigarette ash on the covers. You smoke only a pipe, Frick. If Trickle smoked cigarettes, that little lump of ash wouldn’t have stayed where it was while he tossed about in bed on a hot night. None of the cops were smokin’ cigarettes. You said you wasn’t in the room in the A.M. to look at the stiff, Mrs. Alsop.”

The doll gets up from a chair. She has a Betsy in her hand. “Al,” she says, her voice as hard as the petrified forest. “This punk knows too much, more than that dope he came here with. We got to do somethin’.”

Frick sighs and gets to his feet. “Yeah, Baby. I’ll go and get the car. I know a place they won’t find him for two years. Don’t shoot your mouth off, as there’s no tellin’ where the other blubberhead is. We got to work fast. If we have more company tonight—”

I look around for a loophole, Louie, but there isn’t one as big as a needle’s eye. The doll comes up, gets in back of me, and shoves the muzzle of the Roscoe against my spine. “One peep outa you, and you go for a ride, cold! Some cop. Blabs what he knows without packin’ a gun. Let’s go. Al has the car goin’.”

Why do I always forget to have a gun on me, Louie? But who’d expect I’d find them guilty so quick? I walk out to the car and get in. The doll tosses the Betsy to Frick and says she’ll do the driving. “Like Noonan said,” she tells her spouse. “These two punks are never workin’ together. We won’t have to worry about that chowderhead bein’ around.”

Me and Hambone should get more

unity, Louie. It is an awful way to die, not knowing if the Yanks’ll ever overtake the Red Sox. They drive up from the beach to where there is a dark road going through a woods.

Frick says, “A pool of water in a stone quarry they say ain’t got a bottom, pal. You can find out if it has. Just to play safe, Meg, we’ll tie the auto jack to one of his legs. I got a crowbar in back for the other.”

“You won’t git away with this, you fiends!” I yelp.

“Only another half mile, Al,” the doll flings back. “Say, there is a car following us! Just parkin’ lights on. It is comin’ like a bat out of—!”

“Good old Hambone,” I says, faking.

“Let him come up, Meg,” the character with the Roscoe snaps. “We’ll kill’em with one stone. That fathead, Miggsy, comin’ back to town. If he thinks he’ll git another buck, he—look out!”

**T**HERE is a crash. I fly off the back seat and dive headfirst under the dash. Then everything collapses, even the sky and all the stars pour down on me. Afterwards, I discover they are little pieces of glass, Louie.

When I get my marbles back, I am stretched out alongside the road and looking up at a citizen standing over me. It is dark and he cannot tell whether I am defunct or otherwise, so I stay as stiff as a frozen cod. I hear a groan, then somebody gets up and it is the dame. “Al, where are you?” she gulps out.

“Never mind, sister,” a rough voice I have heard before, says. “If he ain’t where I think he is, the crumb, that’s where I’ll put him.”

“What’s the idea?” the babe squawks. “You got your cabbage.”

“Yeah,” the criminal person says. “A grand for bumpin’ off a Alsop Frick. But did I? I did not. I see in the papers I

rubbed out my old sidekick, Swifty Pitzer. Quite an idea, Sister. Frick finds out the perfession I'm in an' where to find me on West Ninety-Second Street in N.Y. He says he has only three months to live an' so wants to git knocked off violent, so's his wife can collect double identity. He tells me just where he'll be sleepin' in that house.

"Then he takes me into town, an' lets me watch him mail a letter addressed to J. D. Doe, General Delivery, which has my grand in it. He says if he is alive in the A.M., he'll know I didn't do the job and would be at the post office to stop payment. What a character!"

Louie, I wonder if I am knocked goofy.

"So Frick wanted my old pal knocked off for some reason or another, and framed it so's he wouldn't take the rap." Miggsy steps over me and leans over something I know must be Alsop Frick.

"The punk ridin' with you looks quite dead, Sister. This lug is breathin', though. Come on, help me lift him up so's I can put him in the car an' cave in his conk with a jack. It will still be an auto accident, see? I'm in the clear. I've got hunk for Swifty. You better walk home an' keep your trap shut!"

They forget to look for the gat Alsop had. I am off the road and away from the one light burning on the jalopy and start feeling around in the grass with one hand. My fingers come in contact with something that is not a Tootsie Roll.

"Ug—er—where am I?" Alsop mutters.

"What do you care?" Miggsy says. "You won't be around long, Buster."

"How about us meetin' in New York, Miggsy?" the dame says. "Me and you could go places together, huh? I have been gettin' awful sick of this hick town. You an' me could really hit it off."

"You—you dirty little two-timer!" a voice jumps out of the heap that is Alsop Frick. "I'll—"

"Get the jack, Miggsy," the babe says.

I says quick from the dark, "Don't make a move or I'll plug both of you crooks! I got a gun, pal."

"Who is that?" the doll yipes.

"Lazarus," I says. "Back from the bone orchard. Get that rope you got in that car and tie it around Miggsy."

"A bluff!" Miggsy lifts his cannon, and I shoot his legs out from under him.

"A bum guess," I says. "Do like I says, Babe."

Mrs. Frick trusses up the painful Miggsy. Alsop is too limp to show fight, Louie. I come up on the road and supervise the works. When the dame finishes her chore, I sit on the running board of a wrecked jalopy and fire more shots into the air.

"I hope game wardens are about," I says, "and it is off season for huntin' partridges. I got my quarry, didn't I, Sister? Not the one with the watery grave in it, though. You was smart, you and Alsop plantin' that gun in Mervin's garage. You figured he would get suspected. You accidentally knocked them tires down on purpose, Alsop."

"Git me to a hospital," Frick groans. "I have compound fractures all over."

I WAIT for an hour, Louie, then I hear a sound like coffee getting ground up in a village store and see one headlight. It is Darius Dewberry and Hambone Noonan.

"There, I told you," Hambone says to Dewlap. "He is always gettin' in jams. Here he is in an auto wreck an'—"

"Worse than that," I says. "I got the crook that rubbed out Trickle, Hambone. An' the one that hired him to do it, plus his wife. It is a long story, so let's wait until we get into Portsmouth, huh? He is a louse

who lives on Ninety-Second Street in our town.”

“We got the murderer already, Alvin!”

“You mean you did, which always is the wrong one,” I says. “You ask Mrs. Frick here as she is in state evidence mood right now.”

“Yeah,” the doll says. Hambone lets out a choking cry deep in his throat.

We take the trio to town. There Alsop Frick says he is guilty all right. Eight years before he turned in a bank job with Chauncey Trickle, alias Swifty Pitzer. Swifty got caught. Frick promised him to keep his share of the take until Swifty got out of stir. Only he ran away with the whole kaboodle and spent most of it, and changed his own name to Frick. Trickle traced him to Wopper Falls and threatened him. So Frick had to start payin’ off a grand at a time.

“He would have ruined me if I’d paid it all back,” Alsop says. “So I figured a swell way to knock him off, only something went wrong. How would I

know Trickle was once Swifty Pitzer, an old pal of Miggsy’s?”

“Don’t look at me,” I says. “All I know crime does not pay, an’ that crooks mostly are related to each other by some misdeed or another.”

“I’ll tell everything,” Mrs. Frick says. “Where is there a pencil and paper?”

“You are an excessory,” I snap, remembering what she was going to do to me, Louie.

Me and Hambone go back to the Dewlap farm and give notice we are checking out. “If things are so bad in rural communities,” I says. “We’d better get back to the big city and help check the wave of lawlessness.”

Well, Louie, I have to close, as me and Noonan are going downtown to see a detective picture. A busman’s holiday, huh, like you takin’ a Sunday off over there to shoot some Jap war criminals. But Hambone says it will help some young detectives like me to get to the top. Your pal,  
*Alvin.*