

Hot Spot on the Air

"Alvin Hinkey" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

Flatfoot Hinkey stumbles onto the right answer in a quiz program where a corpse cops the jackpot and the D.A. acts as master of ceremonies.

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DEAR LOUIE:
Well, Hambone Noonan says that he wasn't a bit surprised to hear what happened to you, and that you was a member of the police force once and should respect superior officers by this time. You should get ten years in the stockade, he says. Just because a second looney demands to know why you don't salute him on the Ginza in Tokyo while you are strolling with a Wac from Yakima does not give you no right to slug him.

Me and Noonan won't be a bit surprised if you should return to the U. S. as a buck private or even a yard bird. I don't see why they call them armies of occupation as it seems to me and Noonan that you GI's don't kill yourselves with the chores you get to do. But maybe the army figures having citizens like you all over the globe will help the housing situation somewhat, and believe me, Louie, we have not enough roofs over people's heads over here to go around. Which leads me to the screwiest story you ever heard of in the annuals of the police.

First off, I become a victim of the house shortage, as my landlady has a

friend who has a nephew comes back from Korea who needs a room. "Hinkey," she says to me one night after a hard day trying to help Noonan find certain delinquents who robbed a Chinese laundry, "this I would hate to do to a dog, but I must tell you to look for another room beginnin' next Saturday."

"This is murder," I says to her. "I could easier find a clean face in a coal mine than a room."

"Leave us not have no arguments about this, Mr. Hinkey," the old babe says, and we don't, Louie, as she has a chair rung in her hand. I says to myself there is just one out for me which is my sister-in-law's mother who runs a common man's hostelry on West forty-ninth. I hurry over there.

"Look, Mrs. Flugzermeyer," I plead when she demurs. "Without no place to live an' sleepin' in poolrooms and on park benches will break my spirit. Besides, I will lose my job which means I could never git around to payin' Gracie's husband back the fifty I owe him which I intended to take care of just next week. There must be some room here—in the basement or—"

Louie, the babe evicts a citizen who has her skylight room and gives it to me. It is about the size of an elevator in an 1899 office building and I have to step out into the hall to put on or take off my coat, but any port in a storm is okay if you can't get stronger brew.

ONE morning soon after, me and Hambone Noonan stop into a tavern on our way uptown to case a joint where citizens believe horse bets are being made and we listen to some news coming over the radio.

". . . The police of this city are still baffled over the disappearance of Ronald Ramekin, master of ceremonies of the

famous *Come and Get It* program sponsored by the manufacturers of Agnew's Ant Paste. Ramekin disappeared shortly after last week's program and is believed a victim of amnesia. A brother, living at – D Street, South Boston, told the police. . ."

"He couldn't take that malarkey no more, Alvin," Hambone says. "They will find him somewheres, screamin'. You have heard that pogrom. 'Don't say uncle when surrounded by ants! Git Agnew's ant paste an' exterminate! Don't run on somewheres and hibernate.' Oh, brother."

"Yeah," I sniff. "But only a couple weeks ago a lucky guy wins himself just twenty-one hundred fish on that program by just answering right who it was shivved Julius Caesar. I got a cousin who picked up a refrigerator an' a baby grand pianer on one of them wingdings because she knew where Timbuktu was."

Hambone says, "Sh-h, Alvin, they're givin' the gee's inscription."

". . . When last seen, Ramekin was wearing a pale green soft hat, a plaid topcoat, and brown shoes. Age about thirty-three, sallow complexion, and has dark mustache. Any information regarding this man. . ."

"Come on," I says. "We have work to do, Hambone."

On the way uptown in the subway, I pick up a used tabloid and peruse it absently. I spot a news item from Saugus, Massachusetts. A corpse has been found there and the cops suspect foul play. The citizen's name is Fresco Foody and the townfolk claim he was a very quiet and retiring character with no enemies in the world. He kept a canary bird and goldfish shop over which he made his home.

I ask Hambone to read the news in the sticks. The gland case sniffs and says there is a motive staring the cops in the face if they got the brains to know it. "I knew a

housewife who was singer of solos in a church choir once, Alvin. She half murdered a guy who sold her a canary guaranteed to sing an' then wouldn't."

"Forget it," I sigh. "How is it important police news breaks everywhere at once except here where we could use some!"

Me and Hambone case the joint suspected of being a bangtail brokerage house, but pick up nothing we can use for an excuse to have the place raided. "Let's call it a day, Alvin," Hambone says. "I have a date with a doll at six. How's about me askin' to git you a friend?"

"I am not in the mood," I says. "Some other time, Noonan."

I spend a quiet evening at my new home, Louie. I meet some of Mrs. Flugzermeyer's clients, one of whom is a very breezy character named Wesley Wenag. He invites me to his room and I admire a very nifty polo coat tossed over the bunk.

"It is worth a hundred an' fifty bucks, Alvin," he says. "How about a little gin?"

"I wouldn't mind," I says, being quite lucky at the game as you know, Louie. But Wesley brings it out in a bottle and I take a swig or two to be sociable. He says he represents a razor blade outfit by public relations. When I head for the sack under the skylight, he says to come and see him again soon as he would like to hear how detectives work.

Three days later me and Hambone Noonan meets his doll by accident coming out of a drugstore at Times Square and she is not alone. There is a mouse with her that warms my ears and makes me radioactive. Her name is Flossie and she works as a nurse for a molar extractor.

"Dental Floss, huh?" I quips.

"Oh, no!" Noonan says, and then groans.

"Ha, ha," Flossie says. "That was cute. I like your friend, Hambone."

IT ENDS up by us planning a foursome to go to a bistro some place two nights hence. Louie, this babe should happen to Gregory Grant and he would like it very much. Well, when the zero hour draws closer, I get up my moxie and knock on Wesley Wenag's door. He invites me in and we have a snort and then I come to the point.

"I have to make an impression on this chickadee, pal, and I can't with the burlap I got. If you aren't goin' out, I wonder if you would mind I should borrow your camel's hair coat. I would take very good care of it, of course."

"Why, Hinkey, you go right ahead," the roomer says. "I am stayin' in to catch up on some paper work. Maybe you could promote one of her friends for me sometime."

The polo coat fits very nice, Louie. A little long, but I take up some of the slack at the belt. We meet the dolls in front of a little joint on East Fifty-first called Connie's Casbah which holds maybe only three dozen citizens when full. We have three or four snorts, a couple of dances, and are thinking of leaving when three very sharp-looking males walk in. One stays close to the checkroom and the other two unlimber Roscoes and announce that it is a stickup. Some dames faint. The gorillas get the contents of Connie's till and then line us up for frisking.

Louie, they are very experienced citizens at their trade and have finished the job inside of ten minutes. They get away in a cab and Hambone goes into a tantrum. "Two detectives here an' they git cleaned like ordinary punks. I would leave my Betsy home at a time like this. This is the worst ever happened to me, Alvin. Why-"

"Of all the false alarms," my dame says. "Cops, they says. Ha! My diamond ring, my wrist watch gone! Come on, Hortense, they got robbed, too. I know a couple of salesmen stayin' at the Greeley Square."

Most of the clients have already fled the joint, Louie. Me and Hambone sit there quite gaga and watch our babes walk out on us. "Well, let's go an' report we was robbed, Hambone," I says. "Now where did I put that check? I had it when I finished that last dance. When they frisked me it must of dropped out of my pocket an'—"

I go to the checkroom where a doll is still sniffing smelling salts. She says most of the customers picked out their own hats and coats and then scrambled. "Hambone," I gasps. "It is gone. Wesley's polo coat. He'll kill me! It c-cost a hundred an' fifty bucks an' —I don't dare go home."

"This is a nice kettle of flounders, Alvin," Hambone sighs.

"Dames," I yelp. "Don't never mention one to me ever ag'in, Hambone Noonan!"

It is about one A.M. when I knock on Wesley's door under which a light still shows. He lets me in and I nearly get on my knees as I tell him the worst. He picks up an empty bottle and says he is going to knock out what brains I have. He says I have got to pay him back a certain amount each week or he will say I stole the polo coat and hocked it. I says it is a bargain, thank him for the clemency, and go to my stall.

At eight A.M. the next morning, Hambone Noonan calls on the phone. "Hurry down to the morgue, Alvin," he says all agog. "They have found the body of Ronald Ramekin, and will you be surprised? Hurry, as you got to indentify somethin'."

"A murder, huh? Well, it is about time," I says. "I'll be there in less than twenty minutes, Hambone."

I AM in the stiffatorium even sooner than that. A custodian of cadavers pulls out a drawer and shows me and the other interested parties what was picked up on a corner of Eighty-third and Lexington the night before.

"No mustache," I says. "And any character on ice is bound to look sallow. Prove he is Ronald Ramekin!"

"Leave me break the news to Alvin, boys," Noonan snickers. "Then hold him up. Alvin, inside the polo coat the cops took off him was a wallet with no dough nor identification cards in it. The initials R.R. was on it as we will soon show you, and the gee had scraped the gilt off the letters so's they wouldn't show up close."

"P-p-polo coat?" I gasp. "Ha, for a second there I fell faint. I guess they sell a couple of dozen a week in New York, huh?"

"Alvin, this one had a sleeve scorched by a cigarette which I asked you about at Connie's Casbah, remember? Leave me get the coat, somebody."

They show me the polo coat, Louie. I sit down and count my fingers and ask myself the day of my birth and what my father's name was. "Look, somebody picked up a coat check I lost, Hambone. Maybe he was Ronald Ramekin with amnesia, but he had marbles enough to know enough to claim somebody else's Benny, only to find it was his all the time? So he was last seen wearin' a plaid one, so how did he lose that? And can you git a camel's hair coat sent by wire? Hah, it is just that he took the old wallet from his suit coat and stuck it in the pocket of the polo coat. Well, Wesley will be glad to get it back."

“There’ll be a couple of guys down from Boston, Station WBVD,” a cop says. “They will tell for sure if it is him or not.”

I keep trying to add up, Louie. “Who would want to murder him?” I asks the cops. “It wa’n’t no stray bullet hit him from no pistol-shootin’ arcade as he was shot twice.”

“This is gettin’ awfuller by the minute, Alvin,” Hambone chokes out. “We are robbed in a bistro where all the time is a missin’ person, Ronald Ramekin. Maybe we should keep our traps shut ‘fore we get the heave-ho from downtown.”

“I’ll take the polo coat with me,” I says.

“Yeah? We will have to see if it can be indentified, too, Alvin,” Noonan says, “But I guess it is a sure bet this is Ramekin.”

Well, Louie, you know how newspaper reporters are. By noontime, the front pages have pictures of Ronald Ramekin all over them and is the D.A. burned! The headlines of Hambone’s rag read:

RADIO M.C. MURDERED IN MANHATTAN
Police Stumped by Sixty-four Dollar
Questions! Ramekin Shot After Leaving
Bistro Holdup! Detective Claims Corpse’s Coat!

“This is strictly from a Hope flicker,” I says to Hambone. “It can’t happen. But Wesley will be glad to get his camel’s hair back. Let’s go and see if the Bostons have made sure it is Ramekin.”

Again we go to the morgue and there we find out that the remains are not those of the Ant Paste Program M.C. A gee from WBVD, a close friend of the supposed late Ronald Ramekin, looks for a mole on the corpse’s left shoulder which is not there. Ronald, he further assures the finest, had no partial plate in his uppers. There has to be a mistake!

“Will the newspapers get the blasts from the D.A., huh?” Hambone says. I sit

down and mumble like Mortimer Snerd.

“It looks like this ex-bum was just lookin’ for a chance to get a new coat,” Hambone goes on. “He got into an ill wind which was a holdup an’ it paid off good with a polo coat, only he must have been a crook and had citizens looking for him to put the heat on him. That pal of your’n won’t like the two holes in that burlap, Alvin. Now, all we got to do is wait until the boys in the rogues’ gallery match his prints up with others they might have on the books.”

“The initials on the wallet,” I says dreamily. “R. R., Noonan.”

“What’s your’n, Alvin?”

“A. H., of course!”

“Okay. Most anywheres you could find an Artie Hatch, an’ citizens named Albert Horton, Abner Hubble, or a hundred combinations. There could be a Russell Ratchet or a—”

“Oh, stop,” I says. “I am goin’ to claim that polo coat before somebody snitches it ag’in.”

LOUIE, there is no record of the stiff’s fingerprints anywhere, even in Washington. It looks like he is to be billeted permanently in a potter’s field. I go and get the coat from the D.A. and he does not seem quite sane as I thank him and bid him good afternoon. It looks like whoever the corpse really was was mistaken for a hot character who also owned a polo coat, and rubbed out. Without having a victim indentified cops can’t find a motive besides, Louie. It looks like it will go down in the books as unsolved.

Well, at the end of the day, with newspapers apologizing to the public for their reporters getting to be such inopportunist, I walk up the steps of Mrs. Flugzermeyer’s fly and mouse trap, quite happy and willing to forget the whole

thing. I am sure Wesley will be overjoyed as well. I knock on his door and get no response. I call out his name, but that does not bring results, and then Mrs. Flugzermeyer comes puffing up the stairs like a tired porpoise and says Wesley Wenag packed his things earlier in the day and informed her he would be away for an indefinite period and she could rent his room during the meantime.

"Huh? Why, I got his coat here," I says. "Well, that is a break, too, as while he's gone I can have it mended up and dry-cleaned."

"I don't care much if he don't come back," Mrs. Flugzermeyer says loftily. "He run up my electric bill somethin' awful with his toaster and razor. Now I can jack the rent up ag'in."

"Isn't that illegal?" I ask.

"An' who would beef to the OPA, Mr. Hinkey? If he wanted to find himself out on the walk with his straw suitcase?"

"Touchay!" I says.

On my way to a mending and dry cleaning establishment I try to think of something Mrs. Flugzermeyer said, but can't seem to. I leave the coat with a citizen named Henri Goldenheimer.

"H-m-m," he says. "These ain't moth bites, buddy. Look, I do not care for hoodle bum business. Someday a pineapple comes through the window—"

After a while I make him understand how it all happened, Louie, and he takes the job. On my way back home, I wonder why Wesley didn't at least leave me a note reminding me about the dough I owed him and where to send it. But maybe the citizen was flush enough to take his time and anyway he could always pick me up at headquarters.

The next day the D.A. calls me and Hambone into his office and says how long does it take us to get the goods on the joint where he knows bets on hayburners

are taken. "You lemonheads," he says. "I placed a bet over the phone there myself! Now go out and get it on those punks right or you'll both be pounding beats up near the Yonkers line."

Hambone Noonan shows his real colors then, Louie. They are bilious. "Awright, I'm expected to do a job on this force wit' an amateur like Hinkey, D. A.," he alibies. "He always manages to say the wrong thing at the right time an' he couldn't walk on plush without sounding like he is wadin' through dry sticks. I—"

"That is enough," I boil. "Leave him get another guy, D.A. I'll take another assignment. An' remind me when I see you ag'in, Noonan, to tell you not to speak to me!"

"Awright, awright," the D.A. says. "I'll split you two up an' I won't have a half detective then. Git out of here!"

"You'll rue this day, Hambone," I says. "You could easier do without your right leg than the help of my brains."

"Ha, ha," Noonan counters.

NO LONGER attached to the D.A.'s office, I got some very menial jobs during the next forty-eight hours, Louie. There would have been more glamour in baby sitting. The cops do not come up with any new angles on the rubout and WBVD in Boston says they will pay a thousand bucks to anybody answering where Ronald Ramekin is, without having to give the correct answer, at the same time, as to who invented the zipper. It is about five P.M. the next day that I call at Henri Goldenheimer's.

"Here it is the coat and as good as new, my fran'," he says. "An' why is it everybody always never deans out the pockets, huh? Some papers is stock in the lining which was tore an' that I fix, too. Three dollars, thank you.

Louie, the dry cleaning citizen hands

me three crumpled pieces of paper that have been torn out of a little notebook. Some character, Wesley Wenag, no doubt, has scribbled words on same with a pencil. But it is not about razor blades. I read with my eyes bugging out like I am a bullfrog with thyroid trouble, and this is it:

Questions—Series. B. Famous assassinations. Pay-off question for jackpot—who stabbed Julius Caesar?

Louie, I walk out through a door and run into a sink. “The wrong way,” Goldenheimer snaps. “Maybe you get dizzy spells, yes?”

I turn around and go out the right way and then Goldenheimer chases me when I start across the street. “The coat, Mr. Hinkey. You forgot maybe?”

“Oh, yeah, the coat,” I says, and stagger across the street against a red light and a cop calls me things I can’t repeat here, Louie. In a tavern I take two stiff snorts and then go to a booth to check up. A radio begins to blast. After it gives results of hayburner gallops, it says Ronald Ramekin is still unaccounted for, and then things start moving inside my dome like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Some slide into the right places and I see a picture shaping up, Louie. I go out of the gin mill and to a drugstore, and I call up WBVD, Boston.

“This is Detective Alvin Hinkey in New York,” I says to the dame that answers in the Hub. “Put me on with somebody can tell me who has hit the jackpot on the ant paste quiz the last two or three weeks. I might have a clue where Ronald Ramekin might be, sister.”

The babe switches me over to a citizen with a voice as smooth as a mink pelt. He gives me three names, and one of them is Fresco Foody of Saugus, Mass. My knees sag and I can’t get up high enough again to talk into the phone. I go out, leaving the receiver dangling.

“I will have a Coke with three aspirins in it,” I says as I reach the soda fountain.

“Couldn’t that knock you for a loop?” the soda jerk asks pleasantly.

“If what I just heard didn’t, Bub, don’t worry a bit. Make it four.”

Louie, I have tied up the Foody bump-off with the disappearance of Ronald Ramekin as now I am sure the real Ramekin was in that polo coat once, and is somewhere blessing me for borrowing it and having it snitched by a character who took the slugs that really did not have his name on them. Involved, huh? I arrive with bated breath at Mrs. Flugzermeyer’s rooming house and ring the female Boniface’s bell. She comes out with her face smeared with cream and her bleached locks done up in curlers, which is quite an improvement in her.

“Look, can we take a peek into the room where Wesley Wenag holed up? It is important as he could have been—”

“I rented that room the same day he left, Alvin,” she says. “I cleaned it out thoroughly and threw all the rubbish out.”

“Oh,” I says, discouraged. “Well, there wouldn’t be no clues where he went. He say nothin’ to you?”

“That’s right, he didn’t,” the old babe says.

I chew my knuckles for a while. “Maybe he made phone calls when he was here?”

“I don’t snoop around, Alvin Hinkey.”

“I didn’t say—” I snap my fingers, Louie. “Never mind, Mrs. Flugzermeyer,” I says.

I right away think of something and walk away. The landlady slams the door and goes back to her cosmetics.

NEXT to the telephone in the hall is a piece of white cardboard she always keeps tacked up there so that clients will not jot down telephone numbers on the

plaster. I remember a fresh one was put up just four days ago and so when I take a gander at it, there are only seven numbers scribbled there, one of which I put there myself.

I start dropping nickels in. A doll answers the first call. She says her name is Gwendolyn and I must have made a mistake. I apologize and she says why give up so easy? Well, I have no time for romance, Louie, at the moment, so regretfully call another number. It is a fish market.

I hit the jackpot with the fifth call and nearly give myself away. A guy answers and his voice is very very familiar. I change my voice fast. "Er—this is the home for displaced pets, sir. We are telephonin' for contributions an'—"

"Nuts!" the male says and hangs up. I hang up, too, and now I know where I heard the voice before, Louie.

I wait until the butterflies in my stomach get grounded, then rush out of the rooming house. Just fifteen minutes later I am at a certain telephone exchange flashing my badge. A dame in her late forties takes a gander at the telephone number I have copied off Mrs. Flugzermeyer's wall. She looks it up and tells me it is listed under the name of Maybelle DeSalle who lives in an apartment house on West Eighteenth.

Louie, why is it that no matter what town a guy goes to he always happens to know a dame there? And why don't they know better?

I jump a cab and go to the not so swanky pueblo which proves to be a walkup. On the fifth floor I pause and get my breath back and listen to sounds coming out of the door marked 5G. Somebody laughs. The neck of a bottle comes in contact with the rim of a glass. A gurgling sound makes my mouth water. I knock boldly on the door.

A blonde wearing a green housecoat opens the door and ogles me. A lock of hair hangs down over one of her peepers and she giggles. "Don't want no brushes today, sonny. Been brushed off awready—ha, ha! Run along as I'm entertainin'. That'sh a nice feller—"

"I would like to see Ronald Ramekin," I says loud, and then somebody drops a glass. The doll reels a trifle.

"Bring that guy in here," says a voice I know too well, and then he comes out and grabs me by the lapels and pulls me in. "You, Hinkey! A detective, yeah?"

"Look, I got your coat fixed up," I says. "Is this the way to thank a guy. Why, I looked all over for you an'—"

"How do you know my name?" the character says, and now I see he has a Betsy.

"You might as well give up," I says. "You know the citizen that was rubbed out wearin' your coat is where you would've been if he hadn't swiped it at Connie's Casbah. I found proof in that coat, pal, that made me call up WBVD and ask if a Fresco Foody ever won a *Come an' Get It* jackpot! Of course you know what happened to Foody. A bullet in his brisket. That gat did it, I bet. You've heard of ballistics an' they don't miss, Ronald ol' friend."

"Go on, Hinkey."

"You scrambled out of Boston because maybe two other citizens were looking for you, or was it one? There were two bullets in the unidentified character they thought was you," I says, and watch the radio M.C. close. He is the master at the moment, Louie, having a Roscoe, and I know he would let me have it without much ceremony. He is standing on a big tiger rug right next to the big cat's dome with all the sharp fangs. The blonde is three sheets in the wind and seems ready to jump somewhere.

LIGHT a cigarette, Louie, after the third try. Ronald Ramekin says, "Go into your boudoir, baby," to the doll. "What I got to do will sober you up an' you would hate that."

"Now, don't make too much of a mesh, darlin'," the blonde says. "Jusht had the joint cleaned."

"So you admit it, huh?" I says.

"What can I lose, Hinkey? Sure, at times I made a deal with some boys, so they wouldn't miss questions. Had my way of planting them on the program." He rubs his fingers along the Betsy's muzzle. "Fresco Foody didn't kick back. When I threatened him, he says it was about time such a racket was exposed and that he intended to tell the cops and return the dough to the sponsor.

"About the other jerks. Sure, two of 'em were on my neck because I owed 'em three grand on the ponies, Hinkey. If I'd done business with Foody and he hadn't been such a jerk, I could have paid 'em half. It was that guy or yours truly. Well, I had to pull an act after I killed Foody. Like the papers said, it was amnesia, ha! I switched clothes when I left Boston, dumped the others."

"Nice thinkin'," I says. "You will have quite a time hitting the jackpot with the D.A. acting as M.C., Ronald," I sniff. "Maybe one will be, do you know how much a switchman gets at the state pen for turning loose the volts on such as you?"

"They can't burn a guy twice, Hinkey," Ronald says, and the dame yelps from the other room. "Hurry up, Ronnie, as we will be late for the movie. It'll take us time to hide the corpsh an'—"

"Shut up," Ramekin says. "You got a voice like a sea lion, baby. Look, when I say ready, you slam a book against the floor."

"I got the book, sugar. It'sh *Forever Ambrosia*, Ronnie. Ought to make lotsh of

noish. Awright, I'm ready."

The radio faker points the Roscoe at me and I lift a hand. "Even Natsies, I heard, left a guy finish his last cigarette before they threw him in the bake oven." I stall.

"Okay, you get three drags, Hinkey!"

I take two, then throw the butt into the tiger rug, and the blonde comes running and yelping. "Stamp on it, somebody. If that burns my—"

The crook pushes the blonde and she pushes him back and he loses his balance as he trips over the tiger's dome. I get him in the solar plexus with the top of my head and the gat flies out of his hand as he slams against a wall. A five-foot shelf of books comes loose and showers him, and then the blonde dish grabs the Betsy before I can and starts unloading.

It was very lucky for me, Louie, she had her lamps crossed by beaucoop bourbon, as she aimed at Ronald Ramekin to fire at me. The leaden pellet creased his locks too close and filled his noggin with the sounds of peanut stand whistles and busy bees.

I reach down and yank the tiger rug from under Maybelle and she sits down with such vigor that pictures shake on the walls and the windowpanes rattle. She loses the Roscoe and Alvin Hinkey is finally in possession of same.

"Okay, there is two shots left in this heater," I says, and edge toward the phone. "I would as soon take you both in dead as the way you look." I call the cops.

SEVEN of the best flatfeet in town arrive soon after my S O S and for some reason I can't figure out, they bring Hambone Noonan along.

"I just git in your way, huh?" I snap at Noonan. "Well, there's Ronald Ramekin, who is really the citizen I borrowed the polo coat from and who should have been

picked up on the corner of Lex and Eighty-whatever street it was. He will tell you the rest.”

Ronald does, later. “Yeah, they’ll hang it on me now they got the gun,” he sighs. “But I am not goin’ to the rotisserie alone. Boston cops should also have the slug they took out of Fresco Foody. An’ you New York flatfeet will have the ones took out of the guy stole the coat I lent Hinkey here. Just pick up two bookies’ hoods in Boston. Curtains Como an’ Last Chance Loogani, and check their guns against ‘em. Guess they trailed me from the time I took a powder an’ right to that roomin’ house. Even with my mustache off and different clothes—I wish I knew how they did.”

“You can ask ‘em soon,” I snap. “Same time, same station. Huh, I bet they trailed me from that rooming house— Oh, I feel sick, D.A. Do you follow me?”

“Hinkey, I’m so far behind you, it would take three days for you to get a postcard from me,” the D.A. gulps out.

“Oh, I sure thank the crooks that held up Connie’s Casbah,” I sigh. “If I hadn’t had the camel’s hair coat lifted, I would have been plugged an’ not the unidentified character.”

Hambone does not say anything. It looks like he won’t even utter a sound above a whisper again. He has a banana in his mouth and is trying to peel a cigar. Ronald tells about the deal he made with citizens and how Fresco Foody crossed him up after tipping him off ahead of time as to who shivved Caesar.

“Well, maybe this will help discourage other silly quiz programs,” the D.A. says, “Hinkey, you might get the Nobel Prize.”

“Oh, I’m not knockin’ them sixty-buck questioners,” I says. “Where else would I get a washin’ machine or new radio? Do I look stupid? Don’t answer that.” I glance at Hambone and is he squirming! “If I was you, Noonan,” I can’t help but say to the poor slob, “I would send for some of Agnew’s ant paste as you look as if you needed it quite badly.

“Wa-a-ait a minute! Why didn’t I think of that before? Agnew spelled backwards is Wenag, the name Ramekin took when—and he was a publicity man for razor blades, hah? An’ all the time used an electric razor? I have got to sharpen up myself more, D.A.”

“Hinkey, we have no complaints to make against you,” the D.A. says. “Noonan, however—well, if you think he ought to be walkin’ a beat, Alvin—”

“I am not that indictive,” I says. “Give the lemonhead one more chance, D.A.”

He wouldn’t have done as much for me, Louie. Well, I guess you will be coming back soon and I might as well tell you that you will only be another drug on the black market. If you wasn’t a dope you would not be in a stockade. Slugging an officer in broad daylight in front of everybody! You could of easily got him later in an alley. You are slipping, Louie.

Your pal,

ALVIN