

Stripper Sal

By EVAN SLYTER

*Just a nice dame with a swell proposition—either play with her and stick up a gambling joint or be dumped into the middle of the Loop with nothin' on but their undies—
Now, I ask you, what's a poor, modest guy to do in such an embarrassin' situation?*

YOU'D think that when three decent guys from the North Woods—meaning Crusty Royles, Sam Petarsky, and me, Bill Akers—come to Chicago for a little vacation, they could have a good, respectable time without getting mixed up with a lot of crooks, gangsters, and other politicians.

Yeah! You'd think so unless you knew we had Sam Petarsky in our midst. If Sam had let me and Crusty follow the even baritone of our ways, everything would have been jake. But with Sam on a vacation there ain't no logical plot to it. Sam just makes life into one thing after another without no more sense to the whole thing than there is to an arithmetic problem about a chicken and a half

laying a egg and a half.

And it wasn't Crusty's or my fault either. After the first few days of trouble in Chi we'd made up our minds to be peaceful. We started out like this:

"Bill," says Crusty in our hotel room on the evening we was going to be doves, "let's go to a show tonight without Sam. This is a vacation, and we ought to start enjoying ourselves."

"Right," I says, grabbing for my lid. "Sam, you can go to hell."

"Hell ain't open this early," answers Sam, dropping his hold on a bottle of stomach-bitters. "I'm comin' with you guys."

When that dumb onion says he's associating

with somebody, it's less bother to let him associate. Crusty shakes his head when Sam weaves to his feet, all bittered up and feeling sweet with the world.

“I’VE got a hunch I ought to smack you lasleep and leave you here,” Crusty remarks, “but my ma brought me up to be kind to animals. Now if we let you go along will you promise to behave yourself?”

“There ain’t going to be any of this shooting paper-wads at the chorus sisters tonight. You remember what the desk sergeant said to you about that last night. And in the Apollo Theater you pull things like that too. Tsk. Tsk! You ought to be ashamed.”

“Yeh, I forgot where I was. Seein’ them dames in short dresses made me think I was back in the grades. But what did I do to get away from the desk sergeant, hey? When he says that if I gotta shoot at chorus sisters I should aim for the whites of their eyes, what did I say? Didn’t I tell him that I thought I was still handlin’ a machine gun in France?”

“And didn’t he say was I in the machine-gun corpse, and didn’t I say that I was a hero in that corpse, and he says discharged because the law couldn’t blame a man for defendin’ his country? Gettin’ around a desk sergeant on a army record is what you call tack, I’m here to tell you.”

Well, we quit arguing. We left our artillery in our suitcases, and moseyed toward the elevator. Sam insisted on running the damned thing and we nearly went through the roof. One more floor of skyrocketing with Sam at the controls and the elevator boy under his knee and we’d have landed in the basement of heaven. Crusty knocked Petarsky down just in time, and I sat on him till the elevator boy put us out at the ground floor.

I never see anything like the way stomach-bitters puts confidence into a man. Sam would have tackled the job of running the Uncle Sam Congress the way he was feeling, and a feller told me that driving a cantankerous mule and an asthmatic elephant in harness through a suicide tariff is just as hard as to cross-haul maple logs with binder-twine. But Sam would have tackled anything that night.

With our chests kinda sagging toward the knees, Crusty and me got Sam past the girl at the

cigar-stand and hailed a taxi. That’s where we made our first big mistake. We should have picked a steam-roller.

No sooner than Sam was in that taxi than he wanted to ride in front where there was more air. We humored him to keep the bitters from souring, and the next thing we knew the taxi-driver was stuck head-first through the little window between the front and back seats. Sam wedged him in so tight that we couldn’t move him either way. Before we could do anything, Sam grabs the wheel and off we go.

When Sam ain’t bittered up he can drive any car and do it decent, but when he’s full of medicine he always thinks he’s Barney Oldfield’s son. We went shooting through Chicago Loop traffic like there was a fire on Michigan Avnoo and we had to go to Cicero after the fire department. Crusty and me says some pious words and drops down in the tonneau to keep from looking at the scattered scenery. Besides, we had no reason whatever for wanting to meet any cops. They was poison to us. From our dugout we figgered we could sneak if a cop showed up. Then Sam could go to jail for life and we’d have a little peace.

AS IT happened, I guess Sam’s bitters didn’t make him blind. We skittered along at a healthy clip and there wasn’t no funny noises like come from hitting a soft member of the suicide clubs that will keep walking city streets in spite of all the death notices in the papers.

The taxi-driver was looking down at us with a desperate look in his eyes and howling for help about every two blocks. He couldn’t move back or forward and was in a real jam. Crusty told him to shut up on account the cab had a horn and Sam was using it regular.

“When you’re stuck,” howls Crusty as a finish, “never get nervous and lose your head! Shut up and think! If you can’t think, just shut up! Death always comes quicker to these strong, silent men!”

The cab-driver wriggles in reply and shuts up. Sam’s pushing the horn-button made enough noise anyway.

“Will we live through this?” I yells at Crusty.

“I’ll tell you when we stop,” returns Crusty.

That was good sense, so I just keeps

repeating, "Now I lay me...", until my tongue got twisted and made it, "Mow I nay le..." Nobody could understand a prayer like that so I shut up.

All of a sudden the cab swings to the curb and Sam yells, "Taxi, lady?"

Before Crusty and I could get untangled, the door opens and in hops a dame and a man. Sam bangs the door shut and away we go.

The dame wasn't none of these screaming kind. She put one of her high heels into my chest, and when she finds out what I am she sticks a nasty little lead-hypodermic into my map and asks:

"What is this? A holdup?"

She had a voice like a concrete aqueduct, high and hard. While she was throwing it at me her pal was poking twin automatics at Crusty and the cab-driver, both of which was helpless, Crusty on account of the dame's pal having both feet on his chest.

"I don't know," says I. "But it looks like one."

"You wouldn't kid a lady, would you?" asks the dame sarcastic.

"You're no lady," I answers. "Ladies don't ride with strange guys in taxies."

"Wise-cracker, eh? You're right. I'm no lady. I'm the girl they call Stripper Sal. This looks like a rich evening. Four boys instead of one."

"My name's my business. The pleasure is all yours."

"Every bit of it," says the dame. "Stop that driver and we'll get their cash."

"Ma'am," puts in Crusty, "if you can stop that driver you can have our cash with the Lord's blessing."

"I'll stop him all right," says Sal, producing another foot for me to squirm under. She leans forward and taps on the glass back of Sam's dome. "Pull up to the curb!"

"Hey?" produces Sam.

"Pull up to the curb or I'll blow your head off!"

The cab was going so fast then that the ticker didn't have any meaning to us. Sam just laughs.

"That'd be foolish," says he. "You'd get your neck busted if I let go this wheel. Heh, heh!"

THE cab makes some funny sideslips and the dame flops back in the seat, pushing her

heels here and there on my landscape. It was my chance to disarm her, but I was too busy trying to fight off them heels. That dame knew more footwork than Tunney, and was careless about my health.

I don't know how long the thing would have kept up if Sam hadn't turned around to see what all the fuss was about. Right away that dumb onion eases in toward the curb and stops.

"What's goin' on back there?" he asks.

Right away he looks into Sal's gun.

"Turn off the motor!" she orders.

Sam blinks kinda foolish and does it.

Our two robbers hopped out and looked around. Nobody was in sight. They ordered us out. We pulled the cab-driver loose under orders, and lined up with our hands reaching for nothing.

The man goes through our pockets and takes all our cash and valuables, worth about a hundred and fifty bucks. We'd left most of our cash in the hotel safe.

The robbers step back and still hold guns on us.

"Off with your pants!" orders Sal.

"Aw-aw, listen," says Sam. "You don't mean that!"

"Off with your pants!" repeats Sal, waving her gun. "And make it snappy!"

"Now, Sal," I says, "you know that ain't nice right out here in pub—"

"Quick!" snaps Sal, her voice crackling.

Well, what could we do? In a few minutes us four boobs was doing the short-and-cool act in our new fancy panties what we'd bought just a few days before. Sal takes our nice new pants and drapes 'em over her arm. She laughs out loud.

"Now I know why men cover up those funny-looking knobs they call knees," says she to her pal. "Some joints!"

Sam was blushing so you could see it in the light from the street-lamp, and he was stooping to make his shirt-tails do more'n they bargained for.

"Here comes a car!" says Sal's partner. "Quick, you birds; into the back seat!"

We didn't need no pushing. Sal and her pal got into the front with him at the wheel and she holding a gun on us. We drove away from there fast.

We went out toward the city-limits, Sal tossing away our pants as we passed a vacant lot.

We huddled there pretty hopeless when we saw our embarrassment-savers shot to the winds that way.

It seemed like the man robber knew where he was going. He made a lot of twists and turns and brought up where there was a lot of vacant lots with a few dark buildings scattered around. We was ordered out of the cab again and stood on the sidewalk waiting.

Sal and her pal walked us out into the middle of the nearest vacant lot and then looked us over grinning.

“Boy!” says Sal. “Won’t the papers have a sweet time writing this up?”

“How’ll the papers know?” asks Crusty, his voice uneasy.

“I’m going to phone the news into the reporters myself,” laughs Sal.



SAYING the word *reporter* in front of Sam is like waving a red flag at Congressman Fish. Sam gulps and, says in a funny voice:

“You’re goin’ to tell the reporters about this?”

“I’ll say,” grins Sal. “I’m going to give the names of you boys. I found ‘em on some letters in your pockets, you see.”

“Oh!” says Sam.

The way he said it made Crusty and me perk up and take notice. There was going to be action in about a second and we sort of gathered our legs under us like a cat about to jump.

“That’ll be a good joke on us, won’t it?” asks Sam, shifting on his feet like he was cold.

“Will it! And how!” haw-haws the dame. “Well, s’long, boys. Those panties will keep you plenty warm in this weather.”

The robbers turned to run off, saying something about us staying quiet till they was out of sight.

“There’s a cop!” says Crusty.

As the robbers turned just for a glance, Sam and us went into action. It happened so quick that a gun didn’t have time to go off. Crusty’s fist caught Sal’s pal behind the ear and he skidded to a heap ten feet away. Sam and I hit Sal together, as light as we could. I managed to break her fall by tackling her around the waist.

Sam’s hand clapped over her mouth. I didn’t mean to look, but I could see that Sal had on the same kind of panties I did, besides a petticoat, her dress and coat.

“Tell the reporters, will you!” grates Sam as we stood Sal on her feet.

Sal just mumbled under Sam’s hand. Crusty and the cab-driver woke up the other robber and we took back all of our belongings. Then we made Sal take off her coat and slip off her petticoat. Her pal lost his pants. After some argument we let the cab-driver have the pants while Crusty, Sam and me did our best with the robber-boy’s coat and Sal’s coat and petticoat.

“And Miss Stripper Sal,” says Sam, “only because you’re a woman and we’re gentlemen are you goin’ to have that dress to get home in.”

Of course, we weren’t much to look at. I had Sal’s petticoat wound around me so that it reached almost to my knees, and Sam and Crusty was rigged out any old way in the coats. But we felt more modest that way anyhow.

WE MARCHED our prisoners back toward the taxi. We paid off the cab-man out of our funds and stuck the rest of our rolls in our coat-pockets. While we was arguing what to do with Sal and her boyfriend, that rotten cab-man jumped into his cab and beat it full speed. We started to chase after him and right away Sal and the boyfriend took advantage of us and run off toward the nearest alley.

We had their guns, but we had no hankering to use ‘em. And there we was, dressed up like a circus and no place to go. We didn’t know where we were, and in that deserted street there was no

sign of a car. My watch said it was only about half past nine. "Well," remarks Crusty, sitting down on the curb, "that's that. If a cop comes along we'll go to jail and get a write-up in the papers that'll make us fools for life."

"Hell, let's get outa here quick and hide in a doorway or something," suggests Sam.

"And have ourselves arrested as burglars," says I. "That's out."

"So're we. Outa our pants," remarks Sam.

"Sit down," orders Crusty. "We won't be noticed so much that way. Maybe a cab'll come along."

"Yeah. And maybe there's a Santy Claus," I sneers.

Anyway, we all sits down. There being nothing to say, we says only that much. We watched the street in all directions, but it was deserted. In the distance we could hear traffic moving, but we was in a back-water. Anyway, we didn't dare to go where there was much traffic. Sweet stuff, I don't think!

"Gosh, maybe we're in Evanston," I happens to think. "They arrest people there for taking off their gloves in public. I bet they'd electrocute us."

"This ain't Evanston," Crusty disagrees. "It's too lively."

We subsides, praying no cop would come along.

It was maybe fifteen minutes later that a big sedan comes idling down the street. Sam stands up and yells, The sedan stops across the street from us. There's a man at the wheel.

"What do you want?" he yells.

"We want to get back to our hotel. Ten bucks if you'll take us." This from me.

"I don't like the risk. You might be holdup men," shouts back the stranger.

We stand up and show him how we're fixed. The man chuckles.

"I'll take a chance. Come on."

We got across the street and into that car in a hurry. We explain as we sit back with a sigh of relief.

"You can't get into any hotel like that," says the man. "I'll take you to a place where you can get some pants. A friend of mine runs a restaurant about three blocks from here. I'll get you in the back way."

That sounded like good sense to us, so we

told him to hop along. A few minutes later we turned into an alley, to stop back of a three-story building.

"You sure you don't know where you are?" asks our driver as he gets out of the sedan.

"Well, we think we're still in Chicago," says Crusty.

THE feller says all right and for us to follow him. We go into a dark hallway, filled with smells of stale onions and hamburger. Our guide pulls us into a little room, switches on a light, and tells us to wait for him. Pretty soon a beefy guy walks in and gives us the twice-over. He tells us to explain all about ourselves and he'll see what he can do about some pants.

Crusty unloads the dirt about who we are and how we come to be pantless. The beefy guy listens and nods.

"Is all this on the level?" he asks.

Crusty does some more talking and he looks like he's convinced.

"I guess you boys are all right," he admits. "Wait a minute. I'll see what I can do."

He popped out of the room. We sat around the table and waited. We was too worried about some pants to talk. It was maybe five minutes later that we hear footsteps and in comes the beefy guy with another feller. They look us over and then throw guns on us.

"Put 'em up!" says the beefy guy.

"What! Again!" howls Crusty, but we put 'em up.

You can imagine that we wasn't feeling any too good when in strolls Stripper Sal, smiling sort of smart.

She walks around us and relieves us of the guns we'd got from her and her pal. Also she relieves us of her duds, so that we was all back to shorts again. Maybe it's tough to get caught short on the Stock Market, but we was in just as bad a fix.

Sal puts the hardware into the pockets of the two gunmen, and turns to us.

"I thought we'd find you hanging around where we left you," says she. "No guys can take my clothes and get away with it if I can help it. Now, if you want to help us out tonight we'll slip you some pants."

"What do we got to do?" asks Crusty.

“Help us pull a little holdup job we’ve been planning for a couple of weeks. All you have to do is to act as lookouts for us. We’re sticking up a gambling joint, and there won’t be any squawking to the cops if we pull it right. You in?”

“And if we ain’t?” asks Crusty.

“If you ain’t?” Sal grins. She ain’t such a bad looking dame, only she’s polished like steel. “Boys, if you ain’t, we’re going to put you into a car and throw you out in the middle of the Loop with nothing on but your undies. If I’m any judge, you’d rather get bumped off.”

Sam turns pale and I sort of feel my stummick back kick. Imagine it! Being turned loose in the middle of a big city with only undies on. The cops would pick us up and maybe trace us to a mix-up we’d had with them just a few days before, when we bumped-off Three-Torch Tony in self-defense. The reporters would get our pictures and make fun of us.

“**S**HOOT us!” begs Sam. “Nobody could be as mean as to do nothin’ like that!”

“Shut up, dumb-bell!” orders Crusty. “Explain this holdup. You say it’s a gambling joint?”

“Yep,” says Sal. “We always stick up places that can’t make a squawk to the cops, see? Gambling joints, speakeasies and rotten roadhouses. They’re our meat. You won’t be doing much wrong, because such dumps are illegal anyway. Get the idea?”

“What’ll we have for defending ourselves?” asks Crusty.

“Which one of you can shoot straight?” asks Sal.

“Bill, here.” Crusty waves to me.

“Yeh, with my own gun I can shoot the eye out of a flea at ten paces,” I admits. “But not with a strange gun.”

“Oke,” says the dame. “Joe, take the heavy-set guy down to his hotel and let him bring back pants and that gun. Keep your own rod on him all the time so there’s no funny business.

“And, Mister,” she says to Crusty, “remember that if you try any funny stuff, your two pals will be pushing up daisies inside of an hour. Beat it.”

Joe takes a pair of pants from under his arm and hands ‘em to Crusty. Royles slips ‘em on and

the two go.

Sal takes up the next ten minutes or so explaining to Sam and me that she and her gang couldn’t pull this job without some help from people that was strange to the owners of the gambling joint. She tells us just what we have to do.

It didn’t look so bad the way she explained it, but I’d been around enough to know that if anybody was going to stand a chance of getting killed, that anybody was going to include three guys from the north woods. It was just Sal’s cold-blooded way of getting her revenge on us while maybe doing some good for her own pocketbook.

Crusty was back with our stuff inside of forty minutes. Sal took my gun, saying she’d hand it to me, loaded, when the time was ripe. Then, when we was all dressed in decent clothes again, Sal puts a guard on us and we sit and wait. Crusty looked like he wanted to tell us something, but he didn’t dare with the guard present.

It was nearly midnight when the party started out in a big car. Of course I was lost, so I didn’t know where this gambling joint was when we reached it. Anyway, Sal took my arm and we led the way up a short flight of steps to a dark hallway.

At a door Sal stopped and rapped. A slide opens and Sal whispers something. There was a slipping of bolts and all of our party was admitted except the beefy restaurant man who’d looked us over at his place. He had disappeared along with the driver of the car that brought us.

Well sir, talk about a surprise! You could have knocked me over with a cant-hook stock when we walked into a swell dump filled with tobacco smoke and human volcanoes. We was in a big room, all decorated up with rugs on the walls and floor. There was tables around the outside, where you could get something to eat and drink, and in the middle there was card-tables, and some crap-shooting stands. On the other end of the room there was another door. People was going in and coming out pretty regular.

SAL leads us to a couple of tables to the right of the door. We sits down and orders some ginger ale highballs. We gets ‘em in a hurry. Sam sips at his suspicious, finds out there’s something in his glass besides ale and ice, and then gulped

the whole thing down without no manners. He wants another immediate, and he gets it.

"Pretty soon," says Sal, "we'll hit for the back room and play a little roulette. Bill comes with me, while Crusty and Sam stay near the door over there with Joe."



Joe was her pal. Sal takes a stiff pull at her liquor and adjusts her evening gown, one of these with a bathing-suit top and a balloon-size from the waist down. "Bill and I will play a little roulette and then edge toward the guard in the coop above the door. Sam will make believe he is drunk and start climbing toward the coop from this side, while Crusty follows him trying to quiet him down. Joe will pop off the guard if he tries to use his gun.

"Otherwise, Crusty will sock him and the two can jump down into the roulette room. Bill and I will do the rest. We make our getaway by the back window in the roulette room. Our car is waiting in the alley."

"What kind of a gun has the guard got?" asks Crusty.

"He's got an automatic rifle, a sawed-off shotgun, and a half dozen little rods," informs Sal. "But you gotta see he doesn't use any of 'em."

Sam swallows. "I'll say we do."

"Well, I'm glad I paid off the hotel bill with a check," observes Crusty. "It looks like the hotel will be glad too."

"Buck up!" says Sal. "It's a pipe."

"But I don't smoke pipes," complains Sam. "Waiter, another fizz with lots of ice."

We sat around and tried to look natural for maybe twenty minutes. Then Sal gets up and

gives me the high-sign. As she takes my arm she slips my six-gun out of her purse and into my coat-pocket. We strolled across the room to the door, and into the roulette room. The waiters seemed to know Sal, and nobody asked us any questions.

I'd never played roulette since one time when I was up in Alaska, looking for the root of all evil and finding nothing but a few stray twigs. I got rid of fifty bucks of Sal's money trying to guess where the little old ball would stop rolling. Then I made believe I was disgusted, and let Sal try her luck while I edged toward the door.

There was a little coop stuck in the wall right near the ceiling and in it was a guy smoking a cigarette. There was no stairway from the roulette room, but in the main lobby there was a little one leading to a balcony which opened into the coop. While I was leaning against the wall, smoking, I hear Sam's voice from the other side.

"Oooh, lookit the little dove-coop!" says Sam. "I wanta see it!"

"Cut it out, you sap!" says Crusty's voice. "Just because you're green to city ways is no sign you gotta make a fool of yourself. Come down outa that!"

I could hear scuffling and Sam's laughter. Right off the guard above me turned to the other side. I measured the distance to that coop. I'm six feet two, and my reach is long. I caught Sal's eye and she wanders over.

"I'm going up," I whispers. "Get your gat ready."

She was a cool one, that dame. "Oke," says she, without batting a lash.

I LOOKED around the roulette room. Everybody was interested in the wheel. I measured the distance with my eye, gave a short run, caught the sill of the coop window and hoisted myself up. I put my gun on the guard.

"Stick 'em up!" says I.

He whirls, a gun in his mitt. I plinked him where the hair on his wrist was short. He howled and stuck 'em high. Crusty and Sam was with me and each grabbed a rifle. They swung 'em on the crowd, while I turned to line my gun with Sal's. We'd been forced into this, and it was our business now to get out alive.

I rapped the guard on the chin and put him to

sleep before I jumped down and joined Sal. She scooped money off the banker's side of the table and ran to the window. She raised it as the rest of us backed to join her. Joe held his rod on the crowd while we crawled through.

Then I was going to cover his retreat when the roulette-banker reached for his gat. Joe gave that foolish little bird a black spot between the eyes; he went down without even a groan. I put my gun on the crowd to let Joe come through, and then banged the window shut. We beat it down the fire escape and crawled into our waiting car.

"A good haul," remarks Sal, as we roared out of the alley. "I must have over eight grand here. You boys were good for a bunch of hicks."

We came into the light of the street just then, and the guy up front with the driver turned around to stick his gat into sight.

"We're policemen," says he. "Don't try any funny stuff."

Joe made a move, but Crusty grabbed him and took his gun away. Sam and I was too surprised to move.

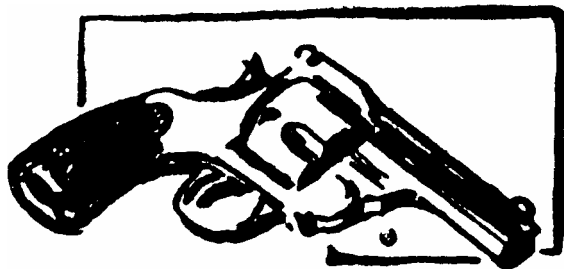
"Nice work," says the copper. "Which one of you guys is Crusty Royles?"

Crusty admits he's himself. The car swings up to the curb and all of us are ordered out.

"We got your note, Royles," says the dick. "That was damned clever, writing it on a check you paid your hotel bill with. Our man followed your car out, and sent for two squads to keep track of you. We've got the two who were in this car, and the other boys are raiding the joint now to get some witnesses. Who're your pals?"

Crusty points out Sam and me.

"I had to get out of this mess somehow," explains Royles, "because I knew once we were in that joint with this robber gang we would have to keep playing with 'em. Will it be all right to let us go now? We don't want to get mixed up with these different gangs."



THE dick thinks that over. "Well, it ain't regular, but I can see your side of it all right. We got these birds with the goods, and we'll have plenty of witnesses. Yeah, I guess the judge would overlook it if you was to escape by luck.

"Well, well. So smooth St. Louis Lizzie got so hard up she had to play Stripper Sal's little game, eh? Well, old girl, you'll have plenty of time to think this over."

"The dirty hick double-crossed us, did he!" snaps what used to be Sal, but was now Lizzie. "The rotten bum! I'll get you for this, Royles!" She does some fancy swearing for a minute, and then grins. "Anyway, big boy, that was a smart trick. I gotta hand it to you, but wait till my friends find you!"

"That's going to be tough on your friends," says I. "If I was you, I'd tell 'em to lay offen us."

"Oh, yeah!" sneers Joe, and then ducks when Sam doubles his fist. The dick takes a better hold on Joe's collar.

"Never mind, boys. Lizzie's friends won't find you in a hurry. But if I was you I'd hike out of here before you're recognized by that gambling ring. There's some reward money coming to you on Lizzie. I'll bring it to your hotel in the morning. After that you'd better skip. Well, we'll be moving. S'long."

"You won't put our names in the papers!" asks Sam.

"Nope," says the cop. "I want all the credit for this capture myself. Don't worry."

"Thanks," says Sam. We went away from there.

Back in our hotel room, Crusty explains that he got his guard to let him pay our bill with a check, and by making believe he couldn't write so very well he stalled around long enough to turn the check-blank into a note to the cops. The hotel clerk caught the wink and did the rest. All of which shows that Crusty ain't dumb like Sam is.

The dick brought the reward money the next morning. There was two thousand bucks from a banker's association what was interested in seeing Sal, or Lizzie, back of bars. Of course we offered to split with the copper, and maybe you think he refused it. Like hell he did! When he got through telling us about the policemen's benefit fund for widows and orphans, we had only five-hundred left. I hope the orphans got it, because at least we got some new suits out of it.