

# **Catty Cornered**

**by Amelia Reynolds Long, 1903-1978**

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# Chapter 1

## That Catnip Sniffer.

Snooty Piper does not do anything like a civilized citizen should. He even eats very silly. We are in a School Street beanery one night, and he orders herring and fried eggs for dinner. It is almost a riot he causes, and I says to him will he excuse me a minute as I wish to go next door. Two minutes later, when I come in with a handkerchief tied over my pan, the peroxide-toupeed doll at the cash register yells very loudly: „Ha-a-ah! Pole-e-ee! Robbery!“

„Oh, rest your pipes,“ I says testily. „I am only trying to shut out a smell.“

It is some time before I can convince the proprietor of the joint that I am not an unlawful citizen. Then I says to Snooty Piper I wish a bone would get crisscrossed in his windpipe.

„That is an awful mess to eat, you crackpot!“ I toss at him.

Snooty pays no attention and completes his gastronomic orgy with quite some gusto, and when he eats his pie, he says it tastes awful funny.

„It’s the same fork you mauled the fish with, dope,“ I says. „Did you expect it to taste of persimmons?“

„Bring me a clean fork,“ Snooty squawks at the dame who juggles the trays. „What kind of a jernt is this, anyhow?“

Snooty and me go down later to the Greek’s, where the crackpot drinks six steins of suds without taking a breath. He still smells of Nova Scotia cologne, and a couple of alley cats come into the grog shop and climb all over him.

„You should get air-conditioned, Snooty,“ I tell him, „or go and buy a nice lavender sachet.“

I am still thinking up some more very cutting insults when the phone rings like it meant business. The Greek answers it and yells that it is for either me or Snooty Piper.

„Queek, she soun’ like she is been the hurry for wanting to see somebody. She ees the ceety’s editor for what works for you.“

Snooty says, „Answer, Scoop,“ and I do. It is Dogface Woolsey over at Mr. Guppy’s *Evening Star*, and what he says to me is quite startling. I jump right off the floor, half of my noggin going through the top of the phone booth.

I says: „We will hurry to her side right now, Dogface. Oh, that’s awful!“

I run out and grab Snooty and holler: „Hurry up and grab your skimmer, as what do you think has happened?“

„They’ve found Judge Crater,“ the crackpot says, taking a pull at another beaker of hop elixir.

„How does he look?“

„It is Abigail. There has been a murder out at her house. Her—her pet Angora cat has been kidnaped. She is hysterical. Somebody bumped off the bosco who was takin’ it out for its evenin’ constitution. Step on it. Snooty!“

„Abigail?“ he gulps and forgets his thirst. „To horse!“

Now Abigail Hepplethwaite is a rich old jill who lives out in Back Bay. She could finance three wars in Europe for ten years and still not make a dent in her rock pile. Me and Snooty are quite well acquainted with the old girl and have even joined her at times in a game of rummy.

„That catnip sniffer!” Snooty pants as we dive into a swindle chariot. „She thought more of it than her right leg. It’ll kill her, Scoop! Here is where we fight to the bitter end. I will track down the dishonest criminal, if I have to crawl all the way to Little America on my hands and knees.“

## Chapter 2

### Catnipper—Kitnappers—Nipcatters.

When we get to Abigail’s tepee, which is all lighted up like the Boston Garden and which is twice as big, we find that Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy is already there looking for clues. Iron Jaw is a detective who has solved as many cases in Beantown as a fish has feathers. One or two big policemen are trying to calm Abigail, but the old girl is quite furious. She is giving them quite a bashing around with her lorgnette, which weighs almost as much as the stone bench she is sitting on.

„Do something—find something that will lead me to Queen Victoria’s abductor!” she wails.

„O’Shaughnessy, why are you here? You could not find the tracks of a twenty-ton truck in the snow! Oh, where are those reporters? Where’s Piper an’—Oh, there they are!“

„Hello, Ab—er—Miss Hepplethwaite,” Snooty says briskly, stepping on Iron Jaw’s fingers as the big, talking boxcar moves around on the grass on his hands and knees in search of clues. „We did not tarry. Where’s the remains?“

Iron Jaw’s howl of pain almost drowns out the answer, but Abigail hollers lustily: „Over there by the rose arbor! It is my gardener, Olaf Kumquat.“

The old girl wrings her hands in distress.

„Somebody hit him with the top of that bird bath, and I think he is dead. Oh, poor Queen Victoria, where are you, my lambie pie?“

„You think he is dead, huh?” Snooty queries, while Iron Jaw breathes on his digits. „I never was so sure of anything in my life, even that Iron Jaw is a moron. Olaf is out like the Chicago fire, I am quite convinced. It was quite a hefty taxpayer who massaged him with the masonry. What do you think was the motive?“

„Murder,” I says, and Snooty kicks me on the shin.

„Oh, I know,” Abigail cries, „it is ransom they want for Queen Victoria. Oh, I’ll pay it! Anything up to a million smackers. Life doesn’t matter to me without that cat. I will pay it, and don’t you dare interfere, any of you policemen. I—“

„There is a citizen who has been rubbed out,” Snooty reminds her. „That is very illegal, and you will be aidin’ an’ abettin’ criminal characters if—“

„Yeah,” Iron Jaw bellows, „we will not stand by and let a criminal evade punishment just because of an alley cat!”

Bingo! It was Iron Jaw's number, and it seemed to be up. The lorgnette smacked the flatfoot right on the scalp, and I says to the coroner who just trotted up with his valise: „You can look at either body first. It does not matter.“

„Anybody else want to insult my cat?“ Abigail growls belligerently.

„Nice kitty,“ I says fast.

The coroner looks at the late Olaf Kumquat, and he states that the gardener is quite dead.

Iron Jaw begins to move just as the corpse diagnostician feels of his pulse. The big slewfoot scrambles up waving his arms and sounding very energetic. „You bet, men, let's start trackin' them catnipper—kitnappers—nipcatters. We'll leave no tones unturned. We'll—Where am I?“

„Here, Iron Jaw,“ Snooty says. „It is a murder—remember?“

„Yah,“ I says. „And it's the cats!“

## Chapter 3

### The Muscle-Bound Biscuit Burner.

Abigail gets very impatient and threatens to call up the mayor and have everybody fired. I do not blame her very much and ask her a question very quickly.

„Who have you fired lately?“

„Why—er—I had a cook I had to let go,“ the old girl answers me, loosening up her nerves. „She was almost as big as Iron Jaw, but even dumber. She put meringue on a meat pie and washed the celery with soap flakes.“

„She could have nailed Olaf with the chickadee font, easy, huh?“ Snooty suggests.

„Why—er—she certainly could!“ Abigail exclaims, and Iron Jaw steps in close.

„I saw her lift the back end of an ice truck one morning to get it off her foot. I'll bet she came back here and stole Queen Victoria! All right, go and arrest her, somebody! She did it to get even. She—“

„It is quite hasty we're getting,“ Snooty observes. „It is circumstantial evidence. Let us look around a little more first. I am sure that criminals always slip up and leave a clue.“

„Piper, I am disappointed in you,“ Abigail sniffs. „Iron Jaw, maybe I have misjudged you. That muscle-bound biscuit burner's name is Henrietta Trilby, and she lives in East Boston. I've got her house number somewhere. I'll get it for you. You'll find she has stolen Queen Victoria, I'll bet. Oh, Victoria'll die if she doesn't get her liver on time! She is a very delicate cat, and—Poor Olaf! I have been very neglectful of him, haven't I, boys?“

„Well, you have overlooked him a bit,“ Snooty agrees. „Did Olaf have any relatives?“

Abigail shook her head. She said that the horticultural citizen had always been very close-mouthed and that his tongue must be as good as new.

„Well, get the body outta here,“ Iron Jaw trumpets. „Let's get goin', men. All we got to do is grab that kitchen mechanic an' put her on the griddle. The victim here with the mashed noggin caught her sneakin' outta the joint with the

cat, and he got put on ice for keeps with the bird bathtub. Now—er—Miss Hepplethwaite, if you'll give me the address of that Powerful Katinka—"

„It's in the house," says Abigail, and she starts up the walk. The dead-wagon boys put Olaf Kumquat into a wicker smock, and that is the last we see of him.

I follow Iron Jaw and another very large gendarme up to the house, where Abigail has already handed over the address of Henrietta's manage. Suddenly I miss Snooty Piper, and so does Abigail.

„Where is that halfwit?" the old doll asks. „If he is walkin' in my pansy bed, he'll never sleep in his again. Pi-i-i-ip-er!"

„Well, good-night everybody." Iron Jaw thunders. „I will have Henrietta all trussed up for the braising boudoir when I see you again."

„Volts for women, huh?" I says.

Nobody laughs, as somebody is coming in singing. It is Snooty Piper, sounding like a mighty pipe organ, as he hollers: „*Ma-a-a-any br-r-ra-ave hear-r-rts are asle-e-ep in the dee-e-e-ep, so be-e- war-r-re, be-e-e-ewa-r-r-re! O-h-h-h, the bell e-e-eyun the-e-e o-o-old t-ower r-i-i-ings, Oh sa-a-ail-or be-war-r-re!*"

„Snooty Piper," Abigail yips, „if you've been in my wine cellar, I'll—"

„Oh, I was eatin' fish earlier this evening, and I feel very salty, ha, ha," Snooty chirps. „How are you, Scoop?"

„I'll send the wagon back for him, Miss Hepplethwaite," Iron Jaw promises. „Just humor him a little."

## Chapter 4

### „I'm Innercent."

Ten minutes after Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy has pulled out of the estate, Snooty says he is quite sure that Henrietta has not stolen the long-haired feline and that everybody has been acting quite hastily about it all.

„We should look into Olaf Kumquat's room over the garage and see what kind of a past the taxpayer had," Snooty declares.

„Go ahead," Abigail says. „My feet hurt. I am sure Queen Victoria will be back in her basket before midnight. It should look quite simple even to you, Piper. I fired the cook. The cook got burned up worse than her cakes. The cook came back. She stole the cat."

„Did Henrietta knit?" Snooty asks.

„Huh? Why, yes, she did," Abigail answers. „So what, Watson? Ha, ha, you find a needle?"

„It looks like I can expect no co-operation here, Scoop," the green-suited crackpot sniffs. „I will leave. Come on."

„And don't cross that flower bed, Piper!" the old girl hollers.

„Oh, go drop a stitch!" Snooty snorts, and Abigail sickens a great Dane on us. We beat it to a taxi two blocks away by the length of the Dane's whiskers.

„Now she is mad at us," I says to him. „You would stab Santy Claus, you nitwit."

„The old girl's slipping," the numbskull declares. „She believes that Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy is right."

„I am bettin' on Abigail,“ I says. „I suppose you picked up a footmark in the grass, huh? What were you doin' out there while—“

Snooty ignores me and tells the driver of the hack to go down to headquarters. When we walk in we find that Henrietta Trilby is already quite securely in the hands of the law. After one look at the kitchen flunkey, I am sure she could have murdered Olaf Kumquat with a corner of Fenway Park just as easy as with the bird bath. Henrietta is built like a concrete mixer, and a blacksmith could very easily bend horseshoes into shape over her lower jaw. The amazon keeps trying to land a fist on Iron Jaw's chin every time he sticks it out to ask a question.

„Come clean, Henrietta,“ the big flat-foot bellows, keeping up his footwork. „Look at the white hairs on your coat. They are from the tabby cat. You are guilty of rubbing out Olaf Kumquat. You crocked him with the b—“

„Ya're a liar, ya big hogshead,“ the cook says. „Them white hairs was offen a furpiece I had stole from me in a movie joint. I'm innercent, an' if I ever git outta this can, I'll sink my fist into ya so far they'll have to operate t'git it out! Ha-a-ah, I caught ya a pretty one that time!“

Iron Jaw reels around, feeling his bugle, and when it comes away, it looks like a stop-light. Me and Snooty have to laugh, and the gendarmes throw us out into LeGrange Street.

„Well,“ I says as we head for the Greek's, „you saw them white hairs on her coat. That tags her. Boy, is she dumb not thinkin' to brush herself off? I will 'phone Dogface all I know.“

„That will take but a second or two,“ the fresh yap says. „You are just as dumb as Iron Jaw an' Abigail. I will show the commonwealth that they are persecuting a defenseless woman.“

„If she is,“ I snort, „a saber-toothed tiger is a pushover for a mouse.“

„*Oh-h-h sa-a-ailor be-war-r-re. Sailor be-war-r-re—*“

„Listen,“ I says, very solemn, „I can stand just so much, Snooty Piper. Look, everybody is watchin' you—and that cop is getting' ready to—Hurry up and let's get to the Greek's.“

## Chapter 5

### **Fifty Thousand Dollars for Queen Victoria.**

Snooty Piper takes something from his pocket at a table in the Greek's, and it is a long piece of steel with some yam sticking to it. „I found it in the rose bower,“ he says. „It is Exhibit A.“

„You take it right down to headquarters,“ I says, „you crook! You are stoppin' the wheels of justice, an' it proves that Henrietta Trilby assassinated Olaf, the plant nurse. Snooty, you hear me?“

„How could I help it even if I was deaf?“ he retorts. „Don't you notice anything unusual when I show it to you up close? Concentrate, Scoop.“

„It is still a knittin' needle, and a big one,“ I says. „If that female Carnera weighed another pound, she would make doilies with crowbars. That will land her right on the toasting sofa.“

Snooty shakes his noggin quite wearily. „You will never be a criminologist, Scoop. Still, how could you think like a citizen who eats a lot of fish like me. Ha, ha!“

„I shudder when I think what you would be like if you never ate any fish,” I counter. „Well, let’s go and pick up a morning journal and read the news.”

„If you was a subway guard,” Snooty says, „you would spend your two weeks’ vacation in a coal mine. But maybe we should read and improve our minds, huh?“

The early edition of the Beantown morning rag only tells us what we already know. Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy promises the public that he will have Henrietta’s confession on the records before the next lunch hour before the workaday world heaves into sight. The paper says that Abigail Hepplethwaite is quite ready to forgive Henrietta if she will only take down her hair and own up where she cached the feline. But Henrietta is quoted as saying that she does not have any idea where the liver destroyer is, and what is more, does not give a hoot in Hades. The morning rag says that the prisoner has assaulted one Aloysius O’Shaughnessy, among other things.

„I would imagine that if Henrietta ever proved her innocence,” Snooty remarks as we evacuate the beer joint, „Iron Jaw would purchase a one-way ticket to Tahiti, don’t you think?“

„I wish to forget the whole thing,” I says. „Let the law take its course, as Henrietta Trilby is a very dangerous citizen.“

The next morning, Abigail comes to the *Star* office waving a letter around her skimmer. She yells for Mr. Guppy, but he is not present. Dogface Woolsey has to do.

„They have written me,” she says. „That woman’s confederates want fifty thousand dollars before they’ll give back Queen Victoria. We can’t let the police know. Er—hello, boys!“

„Mornin’,” I says, but Snooty snubs her.

„I want somebody to go to where they tell me to put the money with me,” the old doll says, getting her grammar quite scrambled, „so they won’t dare to grab me, too. Huh, this is to be kept quiet, as I am willing to pay. What is fifty thousand dollars?“

Snooty snaps his fingers. „I would not even stoop to pick up such a pittance. You are a sucker, Miss Hepplethwaite! You are encouraging crime and should be ashamed of yourself. You will let the unlawful element go free to snatch other things. Maybe somebody’s mother will lose her little child. It is appalling, to say the least. I will tell the public if you—I will call the police, for I will not stand aside and—”

Abigail picks up Dogface Woolsey’s bottle of ink and throws it at Snooty, but it goes right through a brand-new pane of glass in the door that has OSWALD GUPPY, PRESIDENT, on it in gold letters.

„Come on, Scoop!” Snooty yells. „I am going to find Olaf’s murderer before the state’s chef roasts Henrietta. Well, anyway she is a cook and can tell them when they have her well done!“

I only follow Snooty because Abigail tries to hit me with a paste jar. I get into a taxi with him and almost swallow my bridgework when he tells the bandit driving the cab to go to Back Bay.

„We got to get there before Abigail gets home,” the crackpot says. „I must look into Olaf’s shanty.“

„That will be breaking and entering,“ I tell him. „Don’t you ever get scared of anything?”

„Only school teachers,“ he retorts. „Is this as fast as you can go, driver?”

„Go much slower and I will pay you double,“ I says.

„Drive faster!” Snooty snaps.

„Say, I ain’t no Siamese twins,“ the swindle-bus jockey snaps. „Make up your minds.”

I refuse to follow Snooty into Abigail’s grounds when we get to her place. „I’ll sit right here,“ I says. „I have met that great Dane, and he don’t purr. Ha, ha, I will be prayin’ for you!”

## Chapter 6

### How’s Your Liver?

The crackpot could crawl into a sewer and come out with a bouquet of orchids. In about fifteen minutes he comes over the hedge, and he is grinning like he won the Irish Sweepstakes.

„A big guy tried to stop me,“ he says, „But I showed him my G-man’s badge and he gave me three dames to call up and held the pooch while I looked into the place where Kumquat used to live. Come, come. *Oh-h-h lou-oudly the bell e-eyun t h e-e-c o-o-old to-ow-wer ri-i-ings. Sa-a-ailor, ta-a-ake care. Sa-a-ailor be-wa-rr-re!*“

„Where ya wanna go?” the hack driver snarls. „I ain’t physic!”

„Sailors Snug Harbor. Take us to India Wharf. Maybe I’ll sign up for a hitch around the Horn. Stow ya gab, matey, or I’ll keel haul ya! Thar-r-r she blows!”

„Ah—er—s’long, Snooty,“ I says hastily. „Driver, stop this cab and then keep on goin’ to Danvers. I been expectin’ this for weeks. He is violent an’—”

„Huh? A nut? Er—ya mean—” The citizen stops the cab very suddenly, and when I pick myself out from under the dash, he is gone.

„Let him go,“ Snooty says serenely. „His picture and address are here. We will give him back the boiler after we are through with it. Quite skittish, ain’t he?”

„Listen here,“ I says, „what is your name? What day is this? Who is president? Where was you born?”

„Don’t be silly, Scoop,“ the crackpot says and gets into the driver’s seat. Before I have my marbles all back, we are getting out of the cab near India Wharf and walking into a butcher shop.

The citizen at the block bangs the leg of a cow in half with one lusty wallop and then roars: „What’ll it be?”

„How’s your liver?” Snooty asks him.

„Don’t git fresh, or I’ll rip that green burlap from top to bottom an’ it’ll fall right away from you!” the meat carver bays, eyeing Snooty’s bright-green suit.

Snooty flashes that badge. I try to reach for a cleaver, but he pushes me out of the way and asks: „Have you sold much liver lately, sir? I am of the F.B.I. and demand some respect. Any guys come in and buy liver? Beef liver from a cow?”

„You couldn’t git it out of no turkey,“ the butcher counters. „Er—say, dat’s right—I was tryin’ t’figger it out. Mostly it’s skirts what comes in an’ buys the



meat, but this time it was a big swab what walked like a duck. He bought all I had.“

„Describe him!” Snooty demands, like he had authority.

„Aw, he had an ugly mug wit’ a beezzer that looked like it lost in a argyment wit’ a pile driver,” the butcher says. „The guy had a big gold tooth, an’ his ears was as big as flapjacks. I fink he was a sailor from one of them scows out there. They come in here this time of year wit’ salt mackerel. I says, what ya want wit’ all that liver? An’ he says: What ya t’ink, nosey? A guy’s gotta have a spare, just in case. An then he gives me the laugh.”

„I suppose he killed Olaf Kumquat, huh?” I sneer. „I s’pose a tough citizen like that one that bought liver, crochets ? What if he did buy liver? Ifs been bein’ et.“

„What terrible language you use,” Snooty chides me. „Let’s go down and look at the ships, Scoop. The sea is in my blood at times. *O-h-h-h, sa-a-ailor, be-war-r-r-e! Sailor, ta-a-ake car-r-r-e—*“

„Ha, ha,” I says. „Okay, Snooty, it is all right. I understand. Jus’ take it easy, as Scoop Binney understands you!“

„You think I’m nutty, huh?” he bridles. „I’ll show you.“

The crackpot goes down to the dock, and I don’t have no more sense than to follow. There is a schooner tied up, and big white letters on the stern tell the world that she is BETSY BOOP. A bosco is hanging over the rail, looking at us, and he does not look like Freddy Bartholomew.

„Ahoy!” Snooty hollers as he climbs aboard the packet, which does not smell like it carried coffee. „Where ye bound?”

„Huh?” the very tough tar grunts. He is wearing a big sweater, which looks home made, and Snooty says in a whisper to me: „I bet you think a citizen with that awful mug would have a dame to knit for him, huh?”

„Where’s the skipper?” he asks out loud. „Maybe I’ll sign on.“

„Ha-a-a-h!” laughs the big tar. „You panty waists couldn’t outfight a smelt much less a mackerel. Don’t make me laff, ’cause me lips is cracked. If ya want the skipper, he’s down in his cabin.”

## Chapter 7

### Skullbuster Boody.

There does not seem to be a crowd of seagoing citizens on the tub, and Snooty explains that they go ashore and get scalded to the ears after being out on the fishing banks for months.

„What’s the idea?” I whisper at him as he goes down a ladder. „You think Henrietta’s confederates are here, huh? Maybe they will fool you and show cards that say they are in the Union Army. Ha, ha!“

„Shut up,” Snooty breathes back at me. „Don’t look now, but I think the very tough citizen on deck is follerin’ us down.” He takes something from his pockets and drops it when we get down into where the crew of the BETSY BOOP gets in out of the weather. It is the knitting needle with the yarn around it. I open my mouth, but Snooty closes it.

„Shh-h-h! I am lishin’,” he says.

Just then I hear something. It says, „Me-e-o-ow!”

„What was that?” I gulp.

„A dog, Scoop,” Snooty snorts. „What did you think? We’re getting warm.”

„I am afraid we will be as cold as a cod on ice in very short order,” I quaver, „if we don’t get out of here.”

„Avast there, ya swabs!”

It is not a very musical voice that turns us around as if we are on casters. A big bosco is standing in a doorway. If he leaned against the Statue of Liberty, France would have to send us another one.

„Uh—er—look at the nose an’ his ears,” Snooty gulps. „Er—we are lookin’ for the skipper of this tub. We would like to go fishin’. Are you the captain?”

„Yeah,” the massive mariner blows. „I’m him! Skullbuster Boody, that’s me! Who wants ta know?”

„Why—er—” I begin. „Snooty, tell him.”

It is just then that the big bosco from up on deck comes down and hands Boody something. „I foun’ it, skipper,” he says. „Dat knittin’ needle ya lost. Right at the foot of the ladder.”

I am almost ready to faint when the rough sea citizen says: „Huh, I been lookin’ all over for it. I wouldn’ never git them mittens done without it. T’anks, Keelhaul.”

„You knit, huh?” Snooty laughs. „Ha, ha! I’ll never be surprised at anythin’ any more, even if I see Iron Jaw O’Shaughnessy hemstitchin’ lace curtains.”

„Iron Jaw—who?” Skullbuster trumpets, his glimmers getting very meanlooking. „Ain’t he a dete—”

„Ah—er—I got to git some air. Snooty,” I says. „I will see you upstairs.” Snooty is taking a gander at a yellowed sheet of paper he has in his hand. Before I can stop the crackpot, he says: „Boody, once you sailed on the MINNIS HA HA, didn’t you?”

Skullbuster looks at the other salty bosco, and I can see he almost swallows his chew.

„What if I did?” he growls at Snooty and almost blows off his green hat.

„There was a taxpayer on the same boat by the name of Olaf Kumquat. He was the skipper. I s’pose you know Olaf is already as cold as a stepmother’s kiss down in Davey Jones’ tepee, huh? It seems that Olaf was taking a very longhaired, white tabby cat for a trot around a garden and a very dishonest character hit him with a birdie’s bath and stole the liver punisher. Own up, Boody. Where is the feline? That is the knitting needle I found near the scene of the crime!”

„Run, Snooty!” I holler, and I have quite a good start. I do not reach the ladder, because something smacks me on the coco, and it is not a truffle. I go head first into the tub’s galley, and I can hear Skullbuster’s swearing as he goes about killing Snooty Piper. I see a tea kettle on a stove when I get my marbles back and it is steaming.

Just as the tough tar who has smacked me comes in to deliver the coup de grace, I pour the hot water right on his tootsies, and he tries to pick up both Great Danes at the same time. He howls very earnestly. I hit him with a soup kettle and then go out to help Snooty. He needs assistance very badly, as Skullbuster Boody has got him down and has his neck in both hands.

There is quite some slack at the back of Boody’s pantaloons, and I pour the contents of the teakettle right into it. You never heard even an Indian on the

warpath make more of a fuss. Skullbuster lets go of Snooty and rolls all over the deck. Then I hit him over the scalp with the empty kettle.

Snooty Piper's face is quite blue, like fountain pen ink, and I am sure Skullbuster took two half hitches in his windpipe, for it is almost three minutes before the crackpot can talk.

„Th-thanks, Scoop,“ he gasps. „How did you do it?“

„Shut up,“ I tosses back at him. „Let's get the cat and vamoose. Oh, you can get me into the worst—“

## Chapter 8

### Queen Victoria.

We go into Skullbuster's cabin, and there is Queen Victoria sitting quite cramped up in a parrot's cage. She is very indignant and even makes a pass at Snooty when he springs her. I jump for a very ugly-looking roscoe that Boody has right next to his bunk, and it is a very smart move because the two tough boys are ready to get quite nasty again. They come in waving fish knives around their noggins and tell us they will insert them right into our gills.

„Oh ye-e-eah?“ I says, pointing the cannon at the rough tars. „M-make a sh-sh-shoot an' I'll m-m-move. P-put up y-y-your bb-b-rains or I w-w-will blow y-your h-hands out. H-hurry, Snooty! Up the stairs and h-holler for help!“

Bang! It is very nervous I am, and I do not mean to shoot. The slug goes right through the top of Snooty's hat and kicks a knife out of Skullbuster's hand.

„Did you f-forget I was with you?“ Snooty hollers.

„Go and yell for help,“ I says. „We are not in the Y.M.C.A., you halfwit!“

Snooty Piper gets by the rough mariners and is carrying Queen Victoria by the collar like she is a valise. In a minute or so I hear Snooty hollering, and I am sure even the Northwest Mounted heard him. In a very few minutes we have three big policemen and some waterfront taxpayers down in the BETSY BOOP, and they have at the pair of dishonest characters and truss them up.

„This is the Hepplethwaite cat!“ Snooty yells. „Skullbuster Boody here is the assassin of Olaf Kumquat. He dropped a knittin' needle, the sissy! It'll send him to the toasting salon at Charleston. Hello, Scoop. I am quite pleased with you.“

„Wait until my nerves get unwound,“ I says.

It is not long before we are up at LeGrange Street and have the rough boys in the cooler. Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy won't believe us, so Snooty says:

„Listen, when I picked up the knittin' needle with the yarn stickin' to it, I smelled fish. It is like a steel fork you have been eatin' fish with, as the smell sticks to it. I says to myself the assassin is a character who is around fish a lot. I knew that the Popeyes who sailed the briny did a lot of knitting. Ask anybody. So after they arrested Henrietta for having white hairs on her coat, I went and looked into the deceased's affairs and found that he used to be a seagoing taxpayer and was once skipper on the MINNIE HA HA. I found a list of his crew, and one was named Boody.

„So I went to a butcher shop near the docks and found out a criminal character had bought out every smack dab of beef liver. Then I says I am on the right trail. I says to myself that the bosco who rubbed out Kumquat found out

that his old skipper was a landlubber and was working for a rich old doll. So I figured that the assassin went to see Kumquat to get him to tap Abigail's safe. But Olaf was indignant and told the tar to scram. Skullbuster figured that any old dame thinks more of her tabby cat than anything, so he snatched the liver guzzler and held it for ransom. Olaf tried to dissuade Boody, but got tapped with the sparrow basin for his trouble.“

„Guessin' again, huh?“ Iron Jaw moans. „I—er—You let me have a half hour start before you let that cook loose! I've got a right to protection. I—“

„It wasn't all guessing,“ Snooty argued. „That knitting needle was big enough to pry open a strongbox. And I am a connoisseur of fish. Just give me any knife that has been messing with fish and I will name what brain food it was by the smell. Boody, as you are all quite aware right now, reeks of the finned denizens that he chases. I wish you would open a window here.“

Iron Jaw goes out very scared and almost bowls over Abigail Hepplethwaite, who rushes in to get her arms around Queen Victoria.

„Oh, Piper,“ she squeals, „name your reward! I hope you'll forgive me. Name anything!“

I feel very happy as I am quite sure me and Snooty Piper will be taking at least a cruise on the Mediterranean very shortly. I says to myself, Snooty will at least ask for ten thousand.

„Ah—er—“ he stammers. „Why—that new maid you've got, the one witty the big dark lamps and that ooo—la-la I If you would put in a good word for me—fix it so I can take her out—“

„If she don't go out with you, Piper,“ Abigail says, „she is fired!“

Everybody makes a grab at me because, by now, I have got a cop's roscoe in my hand and am ready to slay Snooty. Two big policemen drag me into a cell and lock me up.

„It has been quite an ordeal he has been through,“ I hear the crackpot tell everybody. „It has unnerved him. Let him out when you think he is all right.“

Right now I am hiding around the corner from where Snooty Piper rooms. He always gets home about one in the A. M. I will leave no clues, as I have already dug a hole to put the iron pipe in.

