

THE FICTION CORNER
THE PORK BANDIT
 By DEE RANDALL

NOSEY COLLINS, as you know, is the Number One Egoist of the day. Just as Napoleon once laid claim to the title. But that was back in the 17th or 18th century. And nobody bothers much about him any more. Except those who like to dig and delve into dusty old history books.

Napoleon had only an Empire to conquer. Nosey had a newspaper office and an ever-loving Tillie as his territorial grounds.

It's true, it proved rather expensive this ego-building business. But no matter the cost, Nosey is acclaimed as a self-made man. One of the finest men on the staff of the Daily Gazette.

Besides Tillie and the newspaper office, it must be revealed, Nosey has still another love. She now lay cozily in her private retreat . . . the right hand drawer of Nosey's desk.

There was a quiet purr as Nosey patted the soft, dirty white fur on Dermie's neck.

Dermie was the nickname for Hypodermic. A name fitting to the oversized cat because you really had to stick a needle in her to make her stir.

There was only one other thing that would rouse this reflexing feline. That was the smell of boloney or liver, even from the farthest corner of the ink-smattered city room.

Originally from the restaurant on the corner where she was expected to rid the place of mice and make herself generally useful, she had found refuge in Nosey's comfortable desk drawer. The clatter of dishes and hustle bustle of the crowded restaurant had proved too much for her sensitive nerves.

Nosey stopped his tender patting. This annoyed Dermie no end. Raising her head, which was more energy than she cared to use, she perked a quizzical eye at him.

"Dermie," Nosey spoke seriously, "If we could get a beat on this Pork Bandit case, we'd sure have something."

Dermie's answer was an assenting hiss.

"Seven butcher shops in seven days," Nosey went on, "that's a record for any criminal. He's plenty nervy, too. Sent them all a notice beforehand. He's got the cops in a quandary. Must be a ghost bandit." Here he snickered scornfully at the idea of a ghost ransacking a cash register and sticking a butcher knife in a man's back.

"What puzzles me," Nosey went on with his one-sided conversation, "is how he gets in and out with the cash right under their eyes. And why does he always pick on pork

stores? The same chain all the time. If we could get to the bottom of that, we'd be getting some place."

Dermie's boredom with this conversation was evident. She settled back on the comfortable pillow installed in the drawer. But not before looking at the empty plate before her. Soon she was snoring peacefully. She knew the plate would be filled later on.



The stranger's hand quivered nervously as Nosey motioned him to a chair.

Nosey read and reread the unsigned note on his desk. "Maybe I'll be able to get a lead out of this after all," he reflected. Some butcher has received a note saying his store would be next. He was coming in to speak with the editor. The editor had turned the whole business over to Nosey disgustedly. News seldom walked right into a newspaper office. Leads that came in by mail might better have been called "misleads." Usually some quack seeking publicity.

Grim determination could be seen in the set of Nosey's features. The editor had faith in him. He would have to get to the bottom of this thing. As number one egoist, he felt certain he could.

AN INDIGNANT public was becoming boisterous in their vehement denials of this Pork Bandit who slew and robbed at regular daily intervals. The editor had hinted at a bonus or something equally satisfying financially to the guy who got a lead on this story. It would sure come in handy, Nosey dreamed. Next month he and Tillie were getting married.

A glint of happiness filled his usually placid eyes. Sweet Tillie with her flaxen curls. And how she could cook! Nosey's mouth watered in anticipation of the daily meals, like those he had already sampled at Tillie's little apartment.

Dermie opened drowsy eyes and looked reflectively at the still empty

plate. She let out a growling hiss and rousing herself, waddled off indignantly. She wasn't used to such shabby treatment.

Nosey had no time to worry over this breach of friendship in Dermie's indignant stamping off. In fact, she was back in a few moments, rubbing her face against his pants leg as a reminder of her gnawing vitals. She hadn't been fed in two hours.

Nosey paid no attention to her pleading. He was waiting for the stranger who was to visit him. At precisely three o'clock, as the note stated, a tall, shabbily dressed man appeared. His dark hair was sleeked neatly back, but otherwise he was hardly a picture of sartorial elegance.

"Mr. Collins? You received my note?" Nosey noticed the stranger's

hand quivered nervously as he beckoned him towards a chair. He took the paper the man handed him.

"I'm manager of the store on East 80th street. Received this note early this morning. I left the place and hurried right down here as soon as I could. Didn't have time to change my clothes," he looked down apologetically.

"Your store will be next. This afternoon," the note read. It was signed: "The Pork Bandit."

Nosey scanned the writing carefully. Nothing there to give much of a clue. "Have you seen the police?"

"No sir, thought I'd speak to you first. They seem to be getting no where fast," he laughed ruefully. "There has been a note before each crime, you know," he reminded him. Nosey absent-mindedly patted Dermie's neck. She stirred languidly at the visitor and dozed off again.

Nosey asked him a lot of questions and the visitor seemed anxious to supply all the details possible. "I'm flattered you have so much confidence in us," Nosey told him. "Will you pardon me a moment while I get my notebook. I want to jot down all the information you can give me."

Now Nosey never bothered with a notebook. Any old piece of copy paper did for the hottest scoop.

Outside the city room, Nosey headed for a telephone booth. He made a call, picked up a notebook from a protesting stenographer and returned to his nervously waiting visitor.

He wrote down sentences scrupulously, making sure to dot every "i" and cross every "t." To anyone looking on, it was evident Nosey was stalling for time.

It was only a matter of a few minutes before the two husky cops arrived. A pair of handcuffs were clinched on the now sputtering visitor who demanded to know the meaning of this.

"Here, boys," Nosey addressed the cops. "is your Pork Bandit." He kind of sneered over the name as only a real egoist could do.

The man suddenly stopped bawling. "How did you know?" he asked.

"Well, you see," Nosey drawled, his five feet four swaying magnificently, "you said you just came from your pork store. When Dermie woke up and just went right back to sleep again, I knew that was a lie. If you had really come from there, she would have been over there sniffing your pants and licking your leg, maybe even chewing a piece out of it. It's past her meal time now," he smiled down fondly at Dermie who had stirred at mention of her name, looking expectantly at the empty plate.

He went on: "Then you told me some details that the police have carefully guarded from the public. Nobody but the Pork Bandit himself could have known them."

The man hung his head despairingly. "I used to own half of the chain of stores," he spoke bitterly. "Until my partner swindled me out of my share. It was the only way I knew of to get back what really belonged to me."

For a moment Nosey's gaze was sympathetically bent towards the man's back as they led him away. Then he returned to Dermie.

"Have patience, old girl," he patted her head. When he returned, there was an extra cushion in Dermie's drawer domicile and a brand new plate. It has two sprightly mice painted on it. This has caused no end of concern to Dermie, who, minus her once sharp teeth, can't figure out just how to bite into the little rascals. She doesn't have any trouble with the extra helpings of boloney, though.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- Horizontal**
- 1,760 yards
 - To encourage
 - To put on
 - Persian poet
 - Girl's name
 - To obtain laboriously
 - Sacred word
 - Large cross
 - To seize
 - Molten lava
 - Thailand
 - Isinglass
 - To engrave
 - Twofold
 - High craggy hill
 - Capital of New Caledonia (var.)
 - Edge of a hill
 - Symbol for nickel
 - Irrigation ditch
 - Italian tenor
 - Note in the chromatic scale
 - Foreteller
 - European song thrush
 - Consumed
 - Layer of metal
 - Spanish coin
 - Author of "Fighting Men"
 - Numbered disk
 - By
 - Tavern
 - Third person of the Hindu trinity
 - French for "and"
 - Slang: roll of paper money
 - Ireland
 - Unaspirated
 - Before
 - Part of the skeleton
 - Tardy
- Vertical**
- Cow's cry
 - Unripeness
 - Note of scale
 - To be wrong

Solution in Next Issue.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13					14	
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67										69

- No. 28**
- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 5 To shun | 43 Dried grape | 60 Golfer's mound |
| 6 To smear | 46 To leave out | 61 You and I |
| 7 Teutonic deity | 48 Eastern state | 62 Land measure |
| 8 Light brown | 51 Printer's measure | 64 Artificial language |
| 9 Entry in an account | 53 55 | 66 Babylonian deity |
| 10 Correct | 56 Beak | |
| 11 Compass point | 58 Wholly | |
| 17 Symbol for osmium | | |
| 19 Part of "to be" | | |
| 21 Highest point | | |
| 23 Grape refuse | | |
| 25 Uniform | | |
| 26 Vocal solo | | |
| 27 To ensnare | | |
| 28 Barnyard fowls | | |
| 30 Clayey soil | | |
| 33 Slang: holes-in-one | | |
| 35 Shawl | | |
| 38 Careful attention | | |
| 40 Part of the eye | | |
- Answer to Puzzle Number 27**
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