

THE FICTION CORNER
HARD GUYS
By MILTON BRACKER

THE dead man's foot protruded from the blanket like a discarded boot. A pan of water rested on the sidewalk; they had tried to do something for him, without being able to. Just an ordinary sidewalk, a speeding car, a rat-tat-tat and that was all. Another not-so-big shot was through.

Five minutes after the cops came, a squeaky sedan jolted to a stop at the opposite curb. Half-a-dozen men piled out.

"Reporters," someone in the crowd decided.

The newcomers took in the scene in a matter-of-fact way, then swarmed about the lieutenant and the homicide squad man and plied them with questions. One of the newspapermen was chewing gum. The others were smoking and one rotund fellow laughed raucously at something the homicide squad man said. Soon a few broke away and headed for the drugstore across the street with the blue and white telephone emblem outside. Within twenty minutes all of them squeezed back into the car.

"S'long, Mac, see y'in church," the man at the wheel yelled to the lieutenant as the gears meshed.

"Hard guys," the man in the crowd muttered, as the machine turned the corner.

"You said it," his companion agreed, dryly.

An hour later, Joe Melsner of the City News Federation, "Old Man" of the borough's police reporters, left the smoky-walled pressroom on the ground floor of the Supreme Court Building to buy an afternoon paper. Johnny Hennessy, of the Globe, the kid of the shack, sat in a corner figuring out his expense account. Jim Reide, of the Post-Flash, Nason, of the Mail, Cohen, of the Reflector and Lenox, of the Home Press, with a few of the usual pressroom hangers-on, were at the inevitable rummy game. Opposite, Delany, of the Star, legs stretched majestically across his desk and feet high in the air, sat back reading a fat book with a scarlet cover and yellow edges. Levito, who was with an up-county paper, fidgeted in a phone booth, waiting to "clean up" the shooting story.

A voice thundered in the corridor. The others looked up; they always did when Melsner spoke. He was pointing to something huddled at the doorway.

"Now what d'ya call this?" the Old Man grunted, stooping over.

He picked up the cringing something and deposited it gingerly on his desk, a massive roll-top affair with "Private: Keep Out!" on it in forbidding letters. The "something" was a very tiny dog, a bedraggled puppy that looked as if it hadn't eaten in as long as it hadn't bathed. Its eyes were red-rimmed, as if with weeping. But there was a pink spot on the end of the moist black nose. And the eyes themselves

sparkled, giving a pert look to the whole tangle bundle.

Hennessy stopped pondering. Delany tossed his book aside, and both ambled over. Reide turned his head from the card table.

"The mutt probably has fleas," he remarked. "Keep it offa my desk."

As if understanding, the puppy turned to its critic appealingly. Melsner laughed gruffly, ignoring the complaint.

"It's a cute-lookin' mutt at that, ain't it, kid?" the Old Man winked to Hennessy. "Send out and we'll give it a feed."

One of the ever-present bootblacks was dispatched across the street. In a minute or two, the pooch was sipping milk and sniffing chopmeat, oblivious to further criticism, or his audience.



"Hennessy caught the clerk with a hard left to the jaw."

"We'll call him Ginger," Hennessy suggested. "Lookit the fire in his eyes, will you?" Ginger yapped appreciatively, provocatively. That finished the card game. Reide, the most die-hard of the players, threw down his gummy cards, and with the others, gathered around Melsner's desk. Fondly they watched the grimy little mutt push his snout into the worm-like chopmeat.

Two days later, Ginger was part of the life of the shack. A bootblack had been commissioned to give him a bath, to provide a lined box for a bed, to continue general caretaking. While the men were out on stories—holdups, suicides, fires, whatnot—Ginger tripped around impatiently, until they came back. Then he greeted them joyously, with quick, short barking yelps.

The pressroom was crowded one sultry afternoon, crowded with sweaty men in shirtsleeves. At the card table, next to Reide, was Al Brown, a thick-necked hardware clerk who spent his idle hours with what he called the "newsounds."

Ginger, temporarily deserted, sniffted in and out of the chair legs, feeling for Reide, who always petted him. The dog rubbed against Brown's trousers by mistake.

"Why, the ———," the startled clerk swore. He reached down, picked up the pup clumsily, and tossed him carelessly to the floor about a yard away. "Wonder you guys wouldn't keep animals outa here," he growled, drawing a card. "You'd think it was a zoo."

Nobody replied. Hennessy looked up queerly from his typewriter.

Ginger, not having sensed the rebuff, returned to the table. Again he brushed Brown's trousers. As if having anticipated the annoyance, the clerk kicked vigorously. There was a sharp squeal, then Ginger, living up to his name, bit.

Brown roared, grabbed the pooch from his leg, and before anyone could protest, hurled him with crushing force against the wall. There was a crunch, then a whimper.

Every eye in the place turned to the battered little body on the floor. But in a split second, every eye was glued on the centre of the room,

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ASK ME ANOTHER? A quiz with answers offering information on various subjects

- The Questions**
- Up to 1889 what large city was called Yedo?
 - Where is the native home of the Hottentots?
 - Who possessed the face that "launched 1,000 ships"?
 - How many workers in the world earn less than four American dollars a week?
 - Do dogs dream?
 - A misogynist is one who does what?
 - Nevada is sixth in land area but what in population?
 - What do we call the barren worlds in the sky, having no air, water or living things?
- The Answers**
- Tokyo, Japan.
 - South Africa.
 - Helen of Troy.
 - Half of them. The Chinese, one-fifth of the world's population, had a low of \$1.40 per week before inflation.
 - It is generally believed that they do, because of their actions while they are asleep.
 - Hates women.
 - Forty-eighth.
 - Asteroids.

Covered With Decorations
The most decorated man in the U. S. army is Col. Edgar Erskine Hume who is connected with the civil affairs division of the war department. Since 1914, he has received 56 medals and other decorations—12 from the United States and 44 from 20 foreign nations.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- Horizontal**
- To surpass
 - To diminish
 - To stimulate
 - To be indignant at
 - Egyptian deity
 - Cupola
 - Poker stake
 - German river
 - Unusual
 - Hint
 - To require
 - At no time
 - Note of scale
 - Of longer standing
 - Person named for an office
 - From a distance
 - Comfort
 - Comfort
 - Fails to follow suit
 - Post of a stairway
 - Bovine quadruped
 - Souvenir
 - Roman emperor
 - Consumed
 - Ecclesiastical council
 - Tier
 - Kind
 - To redact
 - Prefix: in one
 - Three: down
 - Expunging instrument
 - Small drum
 - Withered

Solution in Next Issue.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65

- Vertical**
- Outer coating of the teeth
 - 90
 - Spanish hero
 - Short jacket
 - Citrus fruit
 - Landmeasure
 - To exist
 - Man's name
 - Movable shelter

No. 34

10 Complete
11 Goddess of peace
12 To put off
13 Ascended
14 Rants
15 More recent
16 To depend
17 To ridicule
18 To gain by compulsion
19 Trigonometrical function

20 Ate away
21 To decrease
22 Systems of rules
23 Silkworm
24 Dreadful
25 Vat

26 Viscous substance
27 Not any
28 Comparative suffix
29 Compass point

Answer to Puzzle Number 33

BOA AS PHASE
EXTANT LOCUST
GEORGETOWN
SNAKE TONGUE
BLENDEN EPT
GLEE ETON OR
LA PROSEA AI
IV THORS PULP
BAA CHRIEGER
LE EVIDE NOT
ADAM LAVALDO
GEMINI EDITOR
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