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W. B. Ziff Co., 608 Dearborn St., Chicago  
Advertising Representatives

THE ILLUSTRATED FEATURE SECTION—September 19, 1931

BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN  
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## ONE LAST BEEF

A Story of the  
Underworld

When Crook Robs Crook, It's Time to Take the Matter to the Police



### The New Police Commissioner Had Clamped the Lid Down Tight, Blacky Martin, "Stick-up Man", Couldn't Earn A Living. He Tries One Last Crime with Startling Results

By EDWARD H. LAWSON, Jr.

"Blacky" Martin was a heist guy by trade. The only trouble was that there wasn't any trade.

Time was when he could have packed his rod for a single night, staged a few easy stickups, and come home several grand richer. But those days, it seemed, had passed forever. Pickings had dwindled. Money was scarce.

It was old "Cracker" Long, the new police commissioner, who had spoiled everything. "This city must be cleaned up!" he had thundered when they put him into office. "I want every crook, every gambler, every gun-

rounded up and brought in for questioning. I want to talk to 'em all, personal."

And the coppers had made a pretty thorough job of it. They had swept a dragnet across the city. They had penetrated the speakeasies, the vice dens, the hideouts of every known gangster within the city, herded them all together, and haled the entire bunch before the commissioner.

Blacky was in the bunch, but he was lucky. They didn't have anything on him—at least, nothing that could be proved. The commissioner looked him over with a baleful eye, but had to let him go. "Just see that you don't get brought in again," he added. "We're in earnest about this cleanup, and it's fellows like you that we're out to get. I'll have a couple of men to keep a close eye on you, so watch your step. That's all."

Blacky knew better than to back up against the chief's orders, but there were other things that called

for attention. One of them was his stomach. He had to have food. He needed clothes, too. Being broke was no fun at all.

If he only had about \$20 now, that would help. He could get a square feed and a ticket out of town. Even a ten-spot would have looked like a pot of gold to Blacky just then.

But there were no loose ten-spots, or even twenties, lying around for him to pick up. "Cracker" Long had clamped the lid on, and he had clamped it on tight. The big shots were clearing out, and Blacky was vaguely aware of the fact that he was being left behind.

He was therefore not in a very happy state of mind that afternoon when he drifted into Ike's place. His idea in going there was to bum a little something to eat and borrow enough to hop a rattler. Ike Dorgan, the manager, was out just at the time, and so he sat down and waited.

At the table opposite him, he noticed particularly a small dark man who regarded him with curiosity. The man appeared to be well-fed and well-clothed, but there was something about his manner that marked him as a crook.

Blacky surveyed him closely over a glass of water. Several times the man turned and looked over his shoulder at Blacky. At last he arose, paid the waiter, and joined the forlorn heist guy at his table.

"You look kind of hard up," he said cordially. "What's the trouble?"

Blacky shied away at first. He didn't like the man's looks any too well. "Oh," he said, "I'm all right."

"You're hungry," said the dark man. "You can't fool me. Here, let

me treat you to a feed. I never like to see a pal go hungry."

He hailed a waiter. Blacky sheepishly ordered ham and eggs.

"Bring him a steak," the unknown monstrel chimed. "A big one, smothered in onions."

Blacky grinned. "Thanks," he said. "You sure know how to treat a guy."

"Oh, that's all right." He surveyed Blacky critically. "I'd do the same for anybody that's down and out." Then suddenly he said, "Tell me, what's your racket?"

"I was a heist guy," replied Blacky. "But right now the lid's on. There's nothing stirring."

"Broke?"

"Flatter'n a pancake."

"How'd you like to work for me, kid?"

"Doing what?"

"Shoving the queer."

"Passing counterfeits? Not on your life. I'm not crazy yet."

"There's fifty per cent in it for you."

"And five years in jail, too."

"Think it over, fellow. I'll give you two hundred spot cash. You pass it, get whatever you want, and bring me a century note. Ain't that fair enough?"

"Maybe," said Blacky. "But I'm off the rackets."

"O.K.," grinned the man. "But think it over, like I said. I'll be here tomorrow, this same time. Drop in and see me." He pushed back his chair, arose, and left the place.

It was only after Blacky had tried every other means of floating some kind of loan without success that he returned to Ike's place next day.

"I'm on," he told the slim dark man.

"O.K." The two walked out into the air, then plunged into the darkness of a neighborhood theatre. Blacky felt a small wad of bills pressed into his hand. He placed them carefully in his wallet and put it into his back pocket. A few minutes later, the two left.

Blacky figured that the best thing for him to do would be to get a ticket to New York and scam before things got too hot. He therefore made his way first to the railroad station, purchased the pasteboard, gave the agent a queer ten-spot, and collected a small amount of change. Enough, at least, to get him one more square meal before leaving.

He left the station and boarded an uptown subway, headed for Ike's place. The cars were crowded, but even in the jostling mob he noted that a couple of fellows who had been loitering about the ticket window had followed him into the car. Suddenly he remembered their faces. Plain-clothes men! With a deft motion he tried to reach for the tell-tale wallet, but the two detectives were upon him. Quickly they hustled him to the door. At the next stop the three left the car and proceeded to headquarters.

"So!" growled the commissioner, when Blacky was brought before him. "This little boy thought he could get away with something, did he? Pass-

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