

A Black Eye For Miss Millington

By HUGH PENTECOST

Illustrated by John McDermott

But the pretty schoolteacher didn't lose her nerve — even when she found that her mysterious assailant was a murderer



MISS MILLINGTON caught a glimpse of a soot-blackened face, and then, to her amazement, the man struck her a solid blow in the eye

Miss Grace Millington was always referred to as "the pretty one" when anyone in Lakeview had occasion to discuss the grade school faculty. Being unmarried, Miss Millington devoted her spare time to special "projects."

On a crisp, fall afternoon with the countryside a blaze of color, an unbelievable thing happened to Miss Millington. Three of her entirely admirable projects met head on in an explosive two hours which included murder and criminal assault.

Miss Millington's first project was rather personal. He was Mr. Patrick Aloysius Molloy. Mr. Molloy had recently been elected County Prosecutor and had come to live in Lakeview. He was handsome in a redheaded, pugnacious kind of way. He had taken dead aim at Miss Millington before he had been in Lakeview a week.

Miss Millington was moved, intrigued, toppling. But Patrick was the most dogmatic young man she had ever met. He was never wrong. Miss Millington, taking a long view of the future, knew that a marriage would be pretty tough going unless some time, under some condition, Patrick Aloysius Molloy would concede the possibility of personal error.

Miss Millington's second project was the Grabowski boy. He was the eldest of an impoverished family of twelve children. He had been in constant trouble with the juvenile court, charged with petty thefts on a rather endless scale.

Miss Millington felt sorry for him, because he was without malice. He stole from need — the need of his hopelessly bogged-down family. Yesterday the State Troopers had come to her with the hint that young Grabowski was stealing automobile parts somewhere and selling them to young hot rods in the town.

The boy claimed he'd found the parts in old Dave Champagne's junk yard up the mountain and taken them with Dave's permission. This needed checking.

Miss Millington's third project was young Joey Trimble, who was in her sixth-grade class at the Lakeview Center School. Joey was a bright, extremely quick, altogether charming little boy. Joey's problem was not obvious upon an examination of Joey. But it had been conveyed to Miss Millington by Joey's father, Hector Trimble, the local druggist.

Hector sat in Miss Millington's office, locking and unlocking his hands, which he washed at least twenty-five times a day.

"Most boys are interested in sports," Hector told Miss Millington. "Baseball, football, stamp collecting — or something. But not Joey! He is going through a stage of hero worship which may eventually ruin his life."

"And who is the undesirable hero?" Miss Millington asked.

Hector squirmed in his chair. "That is the problem," he said. "My wife's brother, George Crowder. You may have heard of him."

Miss Millington had heard of Uncle George. Uncle George had once been quite a figure in Lakeview — a brilliant attorney, county prosecutor, talked of as a possible incumbent of the Governor's mansion. Uncle George, at the height of his career, had sent a man to the electric chair for murder. Some months later a confession, plus corroborative evidence, had made it clear that the wrong man had been executed.

Uncle George closed his law office, built himself a small shack in the woods and lived there, hermitlike, with his setter dog, Timmy. He hunted and fished and kept to himself; a sad, knowing man, with a wry humor that made him often quotable.

"Joey plays with no one his own age," Hector told Miss Millington. "Every spare moment he is with George. George is shiftless." Hector lowered his voice. "I have no proof of it, but it is possible that he drinks to excess upon occasion. Joey — well, he should have friends his own age."

Three quite admirable projects almost anyone would agree. On the October afternoon when these three projects met head on, Miss Millington had driven up to Dave Champagne's junk yard. She had to make sure about the Grabowski boy's story.

As she approached Dave Champagne's shack on foot, stepping daintily around old engines, old furniture, old iron, Miss Millington saw — Continued on next page

HUGH PENTECOST is the author of that baffling mystery, "The Day The Children Vanished," which appeared in THIS WEEK two months ago. We've brought him back to "Lakeview," the scene of that earlier story, and turned him loose on another crime.



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