


**The Funny Papers Trilogy - Book One**



**FUNNY  
PAPERS**

**Tom De Haven**

---

**FUNNY PAPERS**

**FUNNY PAPERS**

A Novel  
by Tom De Haven

---

# **COPYRIGHT**

## **COPYRIGHT**

Diversion Books

A Division of Diversion Publishing Corp.

443 Park Avenue South, Suite 1004

New York, NY 10016

[www.DiversionBooks.com](http://www.DiversionBooks.com)

Copyright © 1985 by Tom DeHaven

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.

For more information, email [info@diversionbooks.com](mailto:info@diversionbooks.com).

First Diversion Books edition February 2013.

ISBN: 978-1-938120-77-0

---

**For Kate, and for Jessie and Santa**

---

I'm grateful to the National  
Endowment for the Arts and the  
New Jersey State Council on  
the Arts for their generous  
support. Let's do this  
again sometime.

---

“A comic artist ain’t no different  
than you or me or anybody excep’ he  
knows how to draw pitchers an’ is  
crazy in the head.”  
—*Popeye the Sailor*

---

# HOW PINFOLD LOST HIS HAIR

## HOW PINFOLD LOST HIS HAIR

**D**own in Awful Alley, many years ago when the sun was higher in lithe sky and a much brighter yellow, there lived a strange small boy called Pinfold. His mother was dead, and his father—whom knows? Home was under a wooden stoop alongside a backyard tenement, and every morning out he crawled to take a leak and air his blanket, and then he was gone for most of the day, off selling condoms furtively as dope—at saloons and hotels and penny arcades, at City Hall Park, and the whels, of course. Late in the evening he'd return carrying a pail of beer and a loaf of black bread in his wagon, and maybe in the crook of an arm some pushcart fruit or a fish wrapped in the *New York World*.

But then one time on his way back home, he ran into the Homicide Flats gang, older boys in checkerboard suits who were killing each other like pirates with stolen rolls of wallpaper and oilcloth. They jumped him and robbed him and set his hair on fire. When he finally showed up, drooling Holy Marys, at the stoop, Pinfold's ear was bleeding, and his scalp had blistered and was smoking. Overnight, he had fever. It soared and burnt to ash whatever hair he still had left, the few clumps and the stubble, so by daybreak he was bald. Then the chills took him, and his teeth made such a loud clacking sound that Albert Shallow heard it down in the tenement's coal bin, where he lived. Albert the Negro was a condom maker who supplied Pinfold with all his merchandise.

Albert came at once and peeked in under the porch. When he spotted Pinfold huddled and shivering there, he fetched dice from his coat, rattled them in his derby, then flung them hard against the wall, and they bounced off as an ice cube and a dried golden herb. Nothing to it. Things behaved differently in those days, somewhat. They just did. Why, back then rabbit blood and buffalo salve reversed human blindness, and milk-fed whales in fancy harness powered great yachts across the ocean. Sea monsters were captured and colossal forests of fungi were discovered by European princes on holiday with the American brides. Men of science could open your chest and wash your heart clean of sin. And yet certain dice could end a fever and heal a bad burn, if your wrist was supple and your will strong enough.

Black Albert charged Pinfold twenty-five cents for the doctoring, and the boy paid in full a few days later, just as soon as he was on his feet and in business again. This all happened in late September, 1894. Winter came and passed, but Pinfold's hair never grew in, and by the following April, when he saved the fuzzy dog and his life changed, Pinfold had taken to wearing a hat, a high-crowned yellow derby with a bullet hole—a found thing.

---

One

**WRECKAGE OF THE WORLD**

**WRECKAGE OF THE WORLD**



Park Row is a little street at the foot of Manhattan, just south of the plaza entrance to Brooklyn Bridge, and in those days nearly all the city's newspapers were published there. The *Sun*, the *Herald* and the *Tribune*. The *Times*, the *Star*, the *Mail & Express*. The *Commercial Advertiser*, the *Daily News*. The *Evening Telegram*. The *Press*. The *Recorder*. The *Morning Journal*. And the *World*, the mighty *World*. Its building—53 to 63 Park Row—was the tallest in New York, twenty splendid stories. Everything else around it, including the *Tribune's* clock tower, looked puny, and the shadow that it cast was immense. You entered, as though you were entering a castle, through an archway. At the top of the building was a gilded dome which could dazzle a man in sunny weather. Inside the dome, so it was said, were leather wainscoting, and ceilings with frescoes, and who knew what other trappings of magical American wealth. This sanctum had been constructed for Joseph Pulitzer, the *World's* owner and publisher, but he had never used it, not once in twelve years. Picture a mouse on the window sills and everywhere cobwebs like Florida moss.

Pulitzer controlled his newspaper by telephone and encoded cable, spending his days in soundproof mansions or on board slow steamships crossing the seven seas. He was totally blind and a nervous wreck. Noise, any sort of noise—the scratch of cutlery, a sprinkle of salt—threw him into violent tempers which left his long, frail body thrumming and exhausted. Often it seemed to his wife and male secretaries that he would surely burst apart, sending chunks of himself whizzing in every direction.

As a young man, Pulitzer had emigrated from Hungary, arriving in St. Louis shortly after the War Between the States. Picture big side-wheelers, and levees crowded with barrels and bales, ornate southern hotels, and the Slave Market to let. He worked as a hack driver, a stevedore, a gravedigger—during one cholera epidemic he buried hundreds of bodies—and then as a reporter for a German language daily. Eventually, he bought a newspaper of his own, merged it with another, and became editor of the *Post and Dispatch*. Work, work, work. Money! More work. His health started to fail. His vision browned. He began to look tubercular. He developed a stoop. He shouted angrily at the birds singing in the trees; their songs sounded like cannons. His nose grew beakier. His red hair faded almost to pink. Rest, his doctors warned him. Take a good long rest, Joey.

Instead, he moved to New York and acquired the *World*. A penny paper for the common man. Pulitzer launched crusades for clean government and tax reform, he lambasted the trusts and privileged corporations, but he always remembered to feature a grisly murder or a botched hanging on Page One. He widened the news to include the sordid and the sentimental, especially on weekends. Criminal Surgery! Monster Ape Men! Society scandals, homicides in Mackerelville. Is Cycling Immoral? She Drank Poison for Love.

Circulation climbed and climbed. Half a million, three quarters. . . .

Under Pulitzer, the *World* paid the highest salaries in the Row, and clever reporters were drawn there like cats to fish. Artists too. There were no halftones in the newspapers before the turn of the century, no photographs. There were drawings reproduced by zinc etching. The swearings-in at Ci

Hall, the visiting battleships and Coochee-Coochee dancers, the shootings and stabbings and other sudden deaths were all turned out by a great crew of sketch artists dispatched every day, near and far with large pads of cheap paper. Picture a young stick of a fellow dashing through the streets, coat tails flying, pencils clutched in a fist. . . .

His name was Georgie Wreckage—really, it was spelled Reckage, but who was to know? “Wreckage” looked smarter, it looked plucky, and he’d always signed his pictures that way, even the ones he’d made as a very young boy on old calendars and grocery bags, on pavements and his tenement’s roof. By the time he was eleven, he’d already begun to underscore his signature with a scribbled rebus of smoking ruins.

Georgie had not easily mastered the fork and spoon, but the lead pencil was a cinch. He loved the feel of it in his hand, he loved applying pressure to it, or loosening up the pressure, as he moved it—slowly, quickly, decisively, doubtfully—across paper. Zigzags, then big circles, smaller circles and stickmen, then cats and dogs and horses and fish and watermelons and apples. That’s rain. See my cart? He used to copy—he never traced—news sketches and ink portraits of public officers from the penny papers that his father, a watchman at Portnoy’s Brickyard, would bring home, but he much preferred doing pictures of his own. A hill of boots in a shoemaker’s window. Two men in caps talking at a wine bar. A fat baby girl in a laundry’s doorway with a rope tied round her waist. Scenes from the neighborhood. Germans playing scat and pinochle.

He trained himself to look closely and shrewdly at posture and gesture, at expression and clothing and context; to look, *look*, and to remember afterwards whatever it was he’d seen—except for color. (Colors didn’t much matter since he used only grease crayons and pencils, chalk and chunks of carbon.) Some image would strike him, or some tableau, and he’d stop suddenly and just start recording in his brain a picture of, say, a blind old Jew in a sandwich board or a Bowery tough swinging a kitty by its tail. His memory drawings—which often he didn’t get to sketch on paper for several hours or even several days—became more and more accurate, more full of detail, as he grew older. People said, He’s a regular camera, ain’t he?

He drew his mother at the spool table sewing linings into coats for Ziftel the Polack.

He drew his father down on his knees, vomiting fish cakes into an empty quart growler.

He drew his retarded brother Jack, still in diapers at five, rocking on the floor and staring at the baseboard with a thumb stuck into his mouth.

But he very rarely drew himself. Why look into a mirror when he could look across the room? When he could look out the window? Except for some nattering (eye patch added) self-portraits done in grammar school and given away as valentines, the only early picture of Georgie by Georgie was a charcoal sketch that he made when he was fourteen. And under very stressful circumstances.

He got nabbed in a drugstore one morning shortly after midnight with a gallon of root beer extra in his arms, register cash in his jacket, and an opium derivative in his back pocket. The cops took him to Houston Street station house, beat him a little with daysticks—across the back—and then one of them slipped a gallows hood over his head while another squeezed his throat and a third slammed the door shut. Let this be a lesson to you, lightfingers. Georgie tore off the hood and flung it down. He tried to act tough, but he’d peed his pants. *Chunk!* he’d heard as the door closed, and for an instant he really had been falling through space and choking. Later, after his father had come and gotten him

taken him home and worked him over with a razor strop, Georgie crawled through the front-room window onto the fire escape, then climbed to the roof. It was dawn. His thighs were sore with a urine rash, his trousers smelled like ammonia. He still felt humiliated. He'd peed his pants. Damn. *Damn*. He'd taken up some manila paper with him, and a charcoal stick, and, hunkering alongside the chimney pot, he drew a picture in the poor gray light: him wearing that black hood, his knees buckled, his fingers splayed, and three fat cops in unbuttoned tunics laughing with their mouths wide open. Then he burned the picture. Then he felt better.

When Georgie was sixteen, he took a portfolio of drawings around to the M. Lauderhill Advertising Company on lower Broadway. His pictures weren't very good, but they were good enough for an outfit on the verge of bankruptcy, and Georgie was hired, at a weekly salary of \$9.53. For almost a year, he sat at a board ten hours a day, six days a week, drawing gloves and shirts, chewing gum, shaving sticks, collars and cuffs and pneumatic boats. The novelty of working by electric light quickly wore off, and the job became tedious. But it was a beginning.

The art chief there was a squashy redhead with billions of orange freckles. There were freckles on his face, on his scalp where his hair was centrally parted, on his throat, and on the backs of his hands. He dressed in cheap blue suits, the coat pockets lumpy with plums, and three times every morning and twice in the afternoon he rose from behind his table on a platform at the front of the room and went to the toilet, trudging like a tired postman. Otherwise, he never moved. He called you and you came. He used a Cornell cheerleader's megaphone. His name was Philly Finck, and once upon a time he'd been a regular contributor to the weekly humor magazine called *Our Favorite Uncle*; for half a dozen years an ink drawing of his for a short story, or a political lithograph in color, or a captioned cartoon appeared in almost every number. A sharp wit and a fluent brush line, and a very solid commercial reputation. He'd illustrated books, too. But that was then. And now he was a ruin, and radically unhappy, thanks to drink and alkaloid drugs. Forty, forty-one years old. Headaches and shaky hands.

Finck took an instant liking to Georgie and crabbed especially loud whenever his drawing was mediocre. He'd say, That's the sorriest-looking nigger baby I ever saw. We're trying to sell tar soap and not subscribe for a charity. But then he'd wink and end up complimenting Georgie for his cross-hatching. Ask if he wanted a plum. Good spots Finck would overpraise. Now *that's* a cup of instantaneous chocolate! Where'd you learn to draw steam like that?

Wednesday evenings after work, Finck usually walked up to the Penman's Club, and a few times he invited Georgie to come along with him. The Penman's Club was on Lafayette Street, in the cellar of an ink factory, and there some of the most successful illustrators and cartoonists in New York—A. Frost and Ed Kemble, F. B. Opper and Palmer Cox, Grant Hamilton, Tom Worth, Syd Griffin, and Zina—met to drink claret punch, eat Welsh rarebit, and put on skits. These were some of the fellas who drew for *Collier's* and *Scribner's*, *Harper's* and *Uncle*, as well as for *Puck* and *Judge* and *Life*, the holy trinity of humor weeklies, and in their company Georgie was awestruck. They'd ask him, You draw? and he'd mumble. You *draw*? Yes, a little. He stared at their hands.

During this period, and encouraged by Philly Finck, Georgie tried to break into the weeklies himself, but it was always sorry, sorry, sorry, this isn't for us. His problem? He couldn't draw pretty

enough girls, or dream up jokes about insects on a picnic or Negroes or Jews, and since he didn't know any golfers or farmers or emancipated women, he didn't know how to make fun of them. And he had no aptitude at all for political satire. He'd never cared much for symbols and second meanings. He liked his wrecked engines to be wrecked engines, not the state of the union or the currency.

Finally, he decided to forget about magazines and try the newspapers, and he started leaving drawings for examination at practically every one on Park Row. But nothing doing. Finck thought Georgie ought to look older, or at any rate less boyish; editors weren't taking him seriously, maybe. He suggested that Georgie grow a mustache. When it grew in peach-blond, though, he told him to shave it off, shave it off. Is that what you got on your balls? Is it? Is it? Georgie wasn't so friendly with Philly after that.

One morning, everybody except the bosses showed up for work at the Laudermilch Company, the doors were padlocked, and there was a sheriff's bulletin on the glass. Georgie was in big trouble now, a pickle. How was he supposed to pay his rent? He'd recently moved out of his family's tenement—you leave, said his father, you don't come back—and into a boardinghouse, Mrs. Bennett's for Quality People in lower Sawdust Street. Mrs. Bennett was not a sympathetic person. You paid your rent or she locked you out, your things in. But also living in the boardinghouse were several music-hall artistes—a Female Hercules, an Irish tenor, a Metal-Eater, a human lizard, and a songbird—and they kindly helped Georgie to get a job at LeFebre & Chill's Theatre and Musee on the Bowery. As the Charcoal Caricaturist. As the fella who made great big sketches of folks like Buffalo Bill and Lillian Russell while scenery was being changed. He'd sit down on the stage apron, pull off his left shoe, stocking and garter, fit a carbon stick between his big and second toe, and draw a dinosaur—Taller, ladies and gentlemen, than even Brooklyn Bridge!

Georgie stayed at the theatre, which he loved, *loved*, for six and a half months. Then he was hired on at the *World* by pure accident. Somebody mistook him for an office boy late one afternoon when he'd gone up to the eleventh floor of the Pulitzer Building to drop off some more art samples. Suddenly he found himself running around collecting flimsies from reporters, sweeping the floor, sharpening pencils, and slaughtering cockroaches on demand. He returned the following day, and the day after that. For almost two full weeks he worked there without any salary. Finally, an editor asked him, What's your name, how do you spell that? And next payday there was a cheque waiting for him. He earned nineteen cents more a week than he had at the advertising company, and two dollars less than he was making at the music hall, Ah, well. He was part of the *World* now. It was the summer of '93. Georgie had just turned eighteen.

Every now and then, and by dint of his making an awful pest of himself, Georgie got to draw little sketches illustrating jokey news in a Saturday edition, but he was, officially, an errand boy, a speed little nobody. You, George! Run downstairs to Perry's and get us a drink. George! There's a wasp flying around in here, dammit! Say, George, see that lady at the door? Tell her I was just sent to the Hook of Holland on special assignment. George, George—pickup, pickup, pickup! Until the Bits and Pieces Murder Case, the most notable drawing that Georgie made for the paper was a phrenologic portrait of a Tammany politician with the zones of avarice, cunning, lust, egoism, and mother-love clearly indicated. (He'd been given the labels and told to draw the bumps.)

The Bits and Pieces Case! Thank God (Georgie did) for that wonderful homicide—the legs turning up in Chelsea, the torso in Harlem, a foot in York ville, and several fingers in the Gashouse District, one arm in Brooklyn, the other in the Bronx. And thank God (again, Georgie did, fervently) that the poor galoot was brained and carved in sultry mid-August, the very week that five quick-sketch artists, a staff illustrator, and a crime reporter were away canoeing the Delaware. Can you believe the luck?

The day after the story broke, when the headlines had grown from an inch to an inch-and-a-half, Georgie presented himself at the city desk with a batch of gruesome illustrations that he'd drawn overnight, using a copy of the *Police Gazette* for inspiration. All right, all right. Grab your hat. He went sent up to the morgue and spent one of the happiest mornings of his life sketching a headless, armless, legless torso. Next day, he did drawings of the bloated legs, then was told to go out and search for the missing head. Everybody in town by then was looking for that head—the *World* had announced a big reward. In due course, three were turned in at the paper, but none of them fit the trunk. The right head never did turn up. The murdered man was never identified. The case was never solved. But so what? Before the story was abandoned, Georgie had been given a five-dollar raise and his reporter's derby.

In his first few months as a sketchman, Georgie described in line so many gang wars, so many boiler explosions and ferry catastrophes, so many showgirl suicides and bungled abortions, so many frozen vagrants, vitriol mutilations, and other acts of vengeance that his fellow artists on staff began to call him Bloody Wreckage. There goes Bloody Wreckage, dashing through the streets, coattails flying, pencils clutched in a fist. And look, he's smiling. Must be something good. Mayor get shot?

Georgie was antsy, waiting for the trouble about to happen. “You sure it’s today, Clarky?” He picked at side teeth with a bent-out-of-shape paper-fastener. “You sure it’s this morning?”

Clarky didn’t even bother to reply. Was he sure? Come on. Was the earth a ball? Was the Pope a fiend?

They were sitting on a bench at Cooper Square, the two of them watching Canary Ella pester all the clerks and shopgirls and messengers who passed by in a hurry. They’d been there a quarter of an hour long enough for Georgie to have finished a sketch of the woman: fat and bosomy, tiny legs, tiny feet. Dressed in heavy twill trousers and a man’s shirt. Splayed on a camp chair with a sign next to it that read FORTUNES—5¢/AMERICAN-BORN—NOT A GYPSY. Several yellow birds hovered above her head, a few others nested in her snarled fontanelle. A card table, a baby’s cradle on top.

Clarky got up now and went over and gave a nickel to Ella. She blew a kiss to a canary, and swooped into the cradle, nipped out a piece of folded paper. The paper was blue-lined and flecked with wood fiber. The bird flew to Clarky, delivering the paper into his palm. BUY POTS TOMORROW “I’ll be sure to,” Clarky said and touched a finger to his hat. “Thank you.” He walked back to the bench and sat down again beside Georgie. “Any minute now.”

“You’re *sure* the cops are coming. *Today? Friday?*”

“Is today the twelfth of April? I heard what I heard. Just sit tight, you’ll get some pictures.” He glanced at Georgie’s boots, and finding them dull, the uppers speckled with dried mud, he frowned. Then he stuck his fortune into his jacket. “I feel sorry for her, though.”

Georgie grunted.

“Maybe we should warn her.”

Georgie closed one eye and widened the other, as if to say, Get off the earth!

“Only joking,” laughed Clarky, and still smiling, he looked back at the fortune-teller. “I heard she comes from South Carolina.”

Georgie took out a pencil, nibbled at the wood below the point, then picked off splinters with his fingernail.

“A place called Dog’s Hair. That’s what I heard.” Clarky thought for a moment. “Funny, her being a witch and she don’t know what’s coming.”

“Maybe she does, she don’t care.”

“Could be. She’s bugs enough.” And if Clarky said she was bugs, she was; you could believe it. He’d know. He knew, for example—he’d heard—that she lived by herself in the old Maloney & Gru Pickleworks and that she slept, but never bathed, in a large metal tub with painted lovebirds and garlands and monograms on both sides. Wedding gift from her husband, who’d made a blockheaded wager one summer night and jumped off Brooklyn Bridge. Eleventh to jump, seventh to die. Poor Ella, Clarky thought. The things you hear.

Georgie was sharpening his pencil point against a tiny patch of sandpaper. “You sure the cops won’t just pinch her?” he said. “They’re going to brain her, for certain?”

“It’s what I heard,” said Clarky. “As a lesson. She told a roundsman to go jump in the lake. It’s free country, she has the nerve to say. It’s a free street. Stupid woman, when all he wanted was five dollars a week. Five dollars is what I heard. The same cop gets ten from Mr. Next-Thursday, he thought he’d give her a break. This is America, she says. Ain’t this America? Sure it’s America, you stupid woman. Where you pay as you go. Or hasn’t she heard?”

Well, Clarky had. Heard that, and a lot else besides. He heard things all the time. Nothing spooky about it, no secret voices—he just used the big jug-shaped ears that God had given him and listened. Eavesdropped. Asked questions. And regularly quizzed all his shoeblacks. Is that so, is that so. He would hear about it first if there was to be another strike at the meat-packers or a boxing match in the Long Island barn. He heard things. Knew things. That it was Nigger Jake, not Jimmy Dalton, that killed Annie Beck; that preferred stock in Amalgamated Greed was about to take a nosedive; that the Chinaman on Mott Street had turned three-hundred-and-two last Friday, making him the second-oldest person in New York. And who’s the oldest, Clarky? The Jew of Scold Alley—you didn’t know that. Where you been all your life?

Because Clarky heard so much, and because what he heard was generally true, reporters sought him out, as did coppers, occasionally even financiers. Georgie Wreckage had put him on retainer. Three beans a week fair enough? You know the kind of stuff I like.

Clarky was twenty, a husky blond with a bad complexion. His clothes were disintegrating from constant wear, but his shoes always had a high glossy shine. He did that, shine his shoes, more often than he did anything else, except breathe. Tell you why. When Clarky was still a kid, a frail old man dressed to the nines had called to him one evening from a private carriage. Mahogany. Clarky strode up to the window, and the old man—who’d been drinking, but that didn’t matter, so had Clarky—took him to mind his shoes. Just like that: Mind your shoes! He said that if Clarky minded his shoes and always kept them gleaming, he too could become a millionaire. Here was sudden wisdom, like in the Bible story. It made Clarky lightheaded, and from that night forward, he’d kept his shoes more immaculate than even the headwaiter at Rector’s kept his. The rest of his attire, and the rest of him, looked pure bum.

Clarky was no bum, however. Maybe once, but not anymore. He was still far from turning millionaire, but he did have some money in the bank, a three-room flat in the Village, and a blooming little business.

Following his epiphany, Clarky had quit selling newspapers and become a shoeshine boy. There’d been several years of that. Then he rented a storefront with some money he’d saved. Bought shoe wax in quantity and slapped his own label on the tins. Clarky’s—The Paste That’s Remarkably Black. Then he went up to Inwood, where an insane asylum had recently burned down, and purchased three dozen white staffers’ uniforms. He recruited as many teenaged boys, the majority of them Negroes and swarthy Arabs, and suddenly Clarky’s Shoeblacks—You’d Have to Be Crazy Not to See the Difference in Our Shine—began showing up at train depots and ferry slips, in city parks and on the streets. And because he’d trained and drilled all his boys in the art of waxing and buffing—The Clarky Method, swift but finicky—their suits were always as spotlessly vanilla at the end of a shift of work



they'd been at the start. Good idea? Clever? Clarky thought so. He *knew* so. People were saying, think I'll go have my shoes clarked. It's what they were saying. My shoes *clarked*. That's what I heard.

A monkey man was crouched on the pavement picking up monkey shit with a fireplace shovel while his wife, up ahead, pushed along the organ. He banged the shovel against the curbstone, and when he stood up, Canary Ella called to him. He shook his head, no; smiling, no. But she called to him again, calling, "There's one for you," in a husky drawl. "There's one for you." The monkey was pulling at its leash, straining toward Ella. And finally, after he'd checked and seen that his wife had turned down into Astor Place, the monkey man succumbed. He dropped five pennies into the saucer of Ella's lap, while his animal sniffed avidly at her signboard. The monkey man laughed when a bird selected his fortune, but as he read it, his expression clouded; he rubbed the back of a hand across his mouth, slowly. Then, starting to slump away, his monkey gabbling behind him, he crumpled up the paper and flung it into the curb. Georgie ran over and retrieved it. DONT'T TRUST HER. And for a moment he was tempted to follow the monkey man—who *did* have that shovel, maybe he'd use it. Picture of the wife with her skull bashed in, the barrel organ in pieces, and the panicked monkey up the telegraph pole. Yes? No? No. Just wishful thinking.

Georgie looked around to Canary Ella, found her looking back at him.

He noticed then that one of her eyelids was droopy.

And wondered suddenly why she hadn't badgered *him* to take a fortune-paper. He would've turned her down, of course, but still. Funny she hadn't tried.

It was almost noon. In five or ten minutes, the square would be thick with clerks and managers and pinched-faced little typewriters all scurrying to lunch. So where were the cops? What did they want for an audience?

"What's all the fuss—hey!"

Two of Clarky's shoeshine boys, a skinny-belink Armenian and a big soft Irish, had just come along, arguing loudly. Clarky, on his feet, was crooking a finger at them sternly as a nun. "What's all the fuss? You're in uniform—you don't behave like jugheads!"

"Aw," said the Irish kid, pointing to his companion, "this big dope says Kernochan's got more dough than Huntington. That's a lot of bunk!"

"Bull," cried the other. "It's not bunk, he *does*. Mr. Clark, tell this dense mug who has more millions. It's Kernochan, right?" Then, turning to Georgie, who'd just sat down again on the bench, he said, "You can get in on this too, mister. What do you say?"

Georgie shrugged. He couldn't say one way or the other; he'd just be guessing. Industrialists, even their lackeys, had great celebrity among street boys, but Georgie couldn't have cared less about them. Big shots. Big deal. Just let me know if one of the bastards gets shot in the face or goes down with his yacht—any women aboard?

"Kernochan!"

"Huntington! Tell him it's Huntington, Mr. Clark."

Clarky was shaking his head at the Armenian, clearly disappointed in him. "Huntington," he said. "What kind of question is that? You're nutty. Kernochan's a bankrupt, compared."

Ashamed, the Armenian lowered his eyes; then, tucking his chin against his shoulder, he walked away. But the Irish boy dogged him, jabbing him in the ribs, whispering against the nape of his neck, needling him.

"Hey!" Clarky called after them. "Come back here and give us a shine."

Georgie said, "I don't want any shine. I want the cops. I got a job, I got a boss."

Clarky said, "If I were your boss, I'd fire you. Your boots, George, are a disgrace."

The boys squatted—a Clarky Shoeblack did not kneel, ever—and started pulling cloths and tins of wax from their boxes. Georgie inspected their bright suits for speckles of paste, for any traces of soap. He found none. How the hell did they do it? What talent! Couple of street arabs. No wonder the count was crackerjack.

Canary Ella ran out into Fourth Avenue, after a bird of hers that'd found a piece of corn bread in the street. Georgie heard her call the bird Seelie. She carried Seelie back on her wrist.

"So tell me, Clarky, what else have you heard?"

Clarky pretended not to notice the sarcasm. "Interested in the French comedienne who's got syphilis?" he said.

"No."

"Then how about this. There's a pizzeria gonna open up next month on Spring Street."

"What's a pizzeria?"

"I don't know. Nobody does. But whatever it is, it's gonna open on Spring. Maybe it's like a wop penny arcade, I don't know yet."

"What else?" Georgie's boots were done already. Clarky wouldn't let him pay.

"What else? You know about Hearst?"

"The Senator? The Comstock Lode guy?"

"The Senator's dead, George. Holy Christmas. And you work for a newspaper?"

"Yeah, but I don't read it." He grinned. Then he checked on Ella once more.

"I'm talking about the Senator's son, the Senator's son. William Randall Hearst. *Randolph Hearst*. Owns the San Francisco *Examiner*."

"So what about him?"

Clarky gave four bits to the Irish kid, nothing to the Armenian, and they left. "I hear he's coming to New York. Gonna buy a paper here."

"Which one?"

"Don't matter. He could pick up a frankfurter daily and make it sell a million copies in three months. That's what I heard."

"He's good?"

"He's rich."

"Democrat or Republican?"

“He’ll decide that when he gets here and sees the voter rolls, won’t he? But I hear he wants to talk on Blind Joe, head to head.”

“He prepared to lose a lot of dough?”

“He is, is what I heard. Big spender. So maybe you can get a job when he arrives. Late summer maybe the fall.”

“I already got a job.” Georgie stretched out his legs and looked at his boots. Christ, they gleamed. “What else you hear?”

“You want fights? There’s a free-and-easy at the Blade tonight.”

“More like it. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. And tomorrow night, it’s the Filch Hall banquet.”

Georgie brought his legs back, turned on the bench to face Clarky. “At the hall?”

“Not this year. This year it’s at Mother Polk’s.”

“On New Dream Street?”

Clarky pushed out his lips, then put his tongue through them. “Can tell you don’t dip your wick too often. She moved. She’s in Penalty Street now.”

“Can I get in?”

“Were you invited?”

“Come on, Clarky. How can I get in?”

“You can’t. Not tomorrow night. And don’t even try, Georgie, all right? Last year, a bird from the *Sun* tried it, and somebody found him crucified on a stepladder two days later.”

“You going to be there?”

“Why would I be there? Am I a crook?”

“Any of your boys work Mother’s house?”

“Sure.” Clarky squinted and looked Georgie over. Then he wagged his head.

“Come on, Clarky. I’d love to see this.”

“I won’t let you put on one of my suits and walk in there, no. You don’t know the Method. You’ll screw up. And then what happens to my reputation?”

“So teach me.”

“Why you want to go to the stupid banquet anyhow?”

“Something might happen.”

“It’s just a banquet.” But Clarky was tapping his mouth with his fingertips, scrutinizing Georgie again, sizing him. “Let me see your hands.”

Palms up, palms down.

“Wiggle your fingers.”

Georgie wiggled them.

“Now, walk like a duck. Show me.”

“What?”

“You have to walk like a duck if you want to polish shoes.” Clarky was enjoying this, so much

“Now, walk like a duck.”

Georgie bellied his cheeks, then let out his breath—*whoosh!* He set aside his sketchbook and stood. Looked around. Canary Ella was pressing a heel of stale bread between her hands, filling a dish with bread crumbs.

“If you can’t walk like a duck, I can’t teach you the Method.”

“All right, all right,” said Georgie. He tugged at his trouser knees and hunkered, then up and down in front of Clarky he waddled, his face red and his fingers clenched. And he was still waddling when the police wagon arrived, from the Bowery. He heard it behind him and pivoted around to see, but lost his balance and sprawled, left palm slapping the pavement where a gob of chaw spit was. “Damn!”

“My fellas don’t get distracted, no matter what,” Clarky said, “and they never swear on duty.”

Several officers of the law, all of them men of good height and expansive chests, were approaching Canary Ella with their daysticks wagging. Public nuisance. Code violation. Suddenly, *crash!* Over went Ella’s signboard, over went the table. The cradle fell, a rocker snapped, and fortunes scattered every which way.

Ella had covered an eye with a hand—her left with her right—and, cyclopic now, she glared at the coppers till one by one their noses started to bleed. But it was feeble hoodoo and those galoots weren’t afraid of a little blood; they grabbed her. Dragged her into the street. The canaries followed, whizzing in orbits around Ella’s head, trying to dive into her piled hair. Standing in the back of the wagon was a young roundsman with a cowcatcher mustache and a mottled, winey complexion—his hair stuck out from under his helmet—and just as Ella was propelled through the doors, he drew a billy and clubbed her in the teeth.

There. *That.* Georgie had his picture, and before the wagon had even rattled away, he’d licked his pencil point and was making the first cursive lines. He’d rough it now, finish it later. He became so absorbed so quickly in his sketching that he never saw the little humpback who trotted out from the Cooper Union to grab Ella’s table, or the newsboy with acne rosacea who ran away with her stool and her cradle. Or Clarky leave, wandering off in a crouch, picking up fortunes as he went, DRINK MORE MILK. TUESDAY WEAR GREEN. Finally, as the angelus was ringing somewhere, Georgie put the pencil in his pocket and closed his pad, then he jumped up and ran to catch a surface car.

He never saw or even thought about the canary lady again, but Clarky eventually heard that she moved to Jersey City, married a Stein named Jack, and opened a candy store. This is America, ain’t it? Ain’t this America? And perhaps their candy store lasted in business for years and years, through wars and world wars, a place where bookies used the telephone and truants read the magazines. A candy and newspaper store, a place to buy school stationery and cheap toys. Baseball cards. Jack’s Confectionary. Or Jack and Ella’s. Whatever. A place their grandchildren probably sold last year, or the year before, to a Pakistani family.

“Myself, I can’t draw a pretty girl or a red Indian,” said A.K.; then he filled his mouth with navy beans, lifted a shooter to his lips, and fired at the slowly revolving tin ceiling fan—*dink, dink-dink*. “I’m just lucky neither species owns a utility. Or can run for President.” A.K. was strictly an editorial page man—drew donkeys and elephants and tigers, and rascals with bankrolls sticking out of their coat pockets. Everything labeled. Beef Trust. Sugar Trust. Benjamin Harrison. His great gift—and that’s exactly what he called it, his great gift—was knowing how to make monkeys out of men, and he’d become rich thanks to it. Twice a year he sailed to England to watch the steeplechase. He owned a commercial building on Fourteenth Street and a farm in Pennsylvania. His tie pins had all been fashioned from twenty-dollar gold pieces. And practically everybody in the art department wished he’d hurry up and get arthritis. “But our *Georgie*,” he said now, with a big wink at Dieffer and Stolley, “a couple of sketchmen playing a hand of gin—Dieffer was the one with the broken nose. “But you talk about our Georgie, here. He can draw anybody, anybody at all. Tinker, tailor, sweet potato. So long as they’re stabbed, bashed, burnt, shot, crushed, or drowned, eh?”

Georgie, who was at the supply closet putting some white cardboard back on a shelf, just smiled and said, “You bet. And I could even draw an ugly bastard like you, A.K. Providing you let me take that frigging peashooter and shove it up your nose.” Arthritis? Georgie wished he’d hurry up and get run over by the Elevated. Blab-blab-blab. The man had nothing to do, that was his problem. Every morning an editorial writer would come down from the fifteenth floor and tell him what to draw—the gas franchise as buccaneers, the Republican chairman as Cinderella’s stepmother—and it would take A.K. all of twenty minutes to render. Then what? Then nothing, except blab-blab-blab. He could insult everybody on staff, he could loaf around during pandemoniums reading Wild West tales, he could even invite up a lady friend with a hamper of cold chicken, then picnic in the city room—and nothing would happen to him. You might want like crazy to biff him in the face, but unless you also wanted to see the cashier to collect any wages due, you didn’t take that swing; you couldn’t. Because A.K. was “valuable,” see. It’s what they said upstairs. His cartoons sold papers, and that made him a valuable man, it protected him. But someone like Georgie—a dime a dozen. They said upstairs.

A.K. laid down his beanshooter, then picked up today’s *Evening World*, damp yet, from a stack on the windowsill. Went paging through it. “‘Fortune Teller Removed’—Georgie Wreckage,” he said. “‘Fire Wagon Crack-Up’—Georgie Wreckage. ‘Crowd of Kilians Clubbing a Rapist in Broad Daylight’—*also* by Georgie Wreckage. How’s it feel to have your signature on every sorrow in New York, George?”

Again, he glanced around to wink, but nobody was looking now. Dieffer was blowing his nose. Stolley was caressing the cyst on his neck with the four of diamonds. Georgie had rolled down his shirt sleeves and was attaching the cuffs. Almost quitting time. Dinner with Bram.

“Sleep well, do you, George?”

“Like a stone, thanks.” Georgie looked across the art department at A.K.’s smiling mug. He tried to smile, too, but couldn’t manage it. Cartoonist Plummetts 11 Floors—pictures by Georgie Wreckage.

sleep like a stone.” In fact, several times a week he had nightmares, though he wasn’t about to admit that, especially to A.K. Nightmares of running, chasing, suddenly bleeding, suffocating. You told people, immediately they’d figure something was the matter with you, you should see a doctor—confess to the crime. Otherwise you’d end up drinking carbolic acid. Georgie’d been having his nightmares for years. He was used to them. And besides, you always woke up, didn’t you? Woke up safe. And then didn’t it feel ever so sweet to be alive?

Dieffer said, “Gin.”

Stolley said, “Yer mother!”

Then A.K. put on his hunter’s cap and his plaid cape, he toddle-ooed and said, “Good night gentlemen.” Left without his bean-shooter and half-filled sack of beans—which Georgie right away threw into a wastepaper basket.

Just then, in burst Sid McKeon—Handsome Sid, the Art Chief— and waving high a batch of flimsies, he shouted, “Who wants the exploding horse? Who wants an airshaft suicide? Who wants to draw a machine that cures consumption, asthma, bronchitis, and catarrh?”

Dieffer jumped up and bid for the suicide, and Stolley took the horse. That stuck Georgie with the goddamn machine. Jesus H. Christ. Consumption, asthma, bronchitis, and *what?* Swap you, Stolley. Swap you, Dief. But no dice. “Hey, Sid, how am I supposed to know what this thing looks like? Should I go see it?”

“See it?” McKeon hooted. “Where you going to see it? It hasn’t been invented yet. Use your imagination.” He pulled open his bottom drawer, took out an unlabeled bottle of rye whiskey. Had a slug, a second. Then he crossed his arms on his desk, rested his chin on a wrist, and stared moonily at a file photograph of Consuelo Van-derbilt, his ideal, that was pinned to the wall. It was Sid’s goal in life to become acquainted with a girl like her, an eligible daughter of the new wealth. Now, he was choosy but not pernickety—her father didn’t have to own *railroads*; a pig-iron furnace or a spinning wire factory would do. As long as he had several millions. Sid’s One Rule for Success was: Marry Money. Forget for poon tang or for love, marry for money. Sunday afternoons, he rented a gentleman’s Norfolk suit and a visored cap and went pedaling up and down Riverside Drive, up and down on a borrowed Imperial, the so-called “make for modern young Lochinvars,” praying that he would find his fair Helen (or May, or Anna) stranded with a punctured tire. The hell with newspaper work. The hell with work of any kind. Sid truly believed he was destined to summer at Newport in a six-room marble “cottage”—because his profile was good. In all other respects, he was a rational fella. He picked up his head now and called to Georgie, “Just stick on some vacuum tubes, it’ll be fine.”

Georgie nodded and began reading the news story as he walked back to his table. According to the paper, not only had the machine been invented—by a man named Elmer Dreezle—it had been widely tested and found to be 99 percent effective. It seemed to Georgie that he’d heard of this Elmer Dreezle before—from Clarky? Maybe, but more likely from Professor Thorn. The Professor, who also lived at Mrs. Bennett’s house, knew every nutty inventor there was, and downtown was full of them that year. Inventors inventing automatic shoe-lacing gizmos, better cherry stoners, philharmonic gas ranges, and concocting blacker explosives and baroque weapons of war. On a weekend, if you had nothing to do

you could ride the nickel ferry to Richmond and see a few dozen of them test their latest devices on open land. The Professor had taken Georgie and Joette Davey with him one time, and they'd also watched a friend of his who'd produced yet another death ray turn a Civil War plaque at Fort Hill into copper jelly. Could that've been Dreezle? Short old man with cueball eyes and a biblical white beard down to his privates? Maybe. Georgie worked on the drawing for half an hour, letting it take shape randomly, like a doodle, sticking on knobs and levers.

"Whoa, what's this? A Marvelous Engine That Will Convert the Heathen to Christianity?"

Georgie glanced up, grinning, at Bram Hoopes, the Sunday-supplement cartoonist. "Or vice versa, Bram."

Handsome Sid had heard Bram's remark, and over he trotted now to look at Georgie's machine. Hmm. He scratched his head and, sucking hard on his front teeth, made a frizzling sound. "You're right, Bram," he said finally. "This is too good to cure consumption. The hell with consumption! The hell with disease! What'd you call it? An engine to convert the Jews?"

"The heathen to Christianity."

"At least!" Sid snatched up the drawing and rushed out with it. "Feature writer! I need a feature writer!"

Georgie had just run a match across a striker to light a cigarette when he remembered that he hadn't signed the picture. He nearly went chasing after Sid, but then Bram said, "Leave it off, will you don't you? You'll probably be glad someday you did." Meaning what? Meaning what, exactly? Georgie wondered. The picture's no good? It stinks? Then say that, Ohio. Sick and tired of these goddamn "valuable" sons of bitches cracking wise. Bram caught Georgie's sour, questioning look and started to laugh. "You won't want people to know that you drew some daffy invention, will you—five years from now when you're famous?" Oh. Well. Since Bram meant it like *that*: Georgie nodded. Leave off the signature. Makes sense. Let's go eat.

On the way down in the elevator, though, Georgie had second thoughts, elbowed Bram suddenly between ribs, and said, "What do you mean, *five* years?"

Bram had asked, Hitchcock's or Meehan's? and Georgie had replied, Either place—you're paying for it. Ohio, you pick. So they'd walked down the Row to Meehan's Restaurant, where portly Meehan himself stood in the front window carving up a corned beef. The place was crowded, busy: reporters leaning at the long bar with schooners of beer, politicians arguing by the rubber plants, a celebrated jewel thief supping at a table with his mother and three glamorous wives. In a booth, a pair of robust stage actresses laughed hectically while their gentlemen companions smugly puffed on tiny cigarettes. Bram ordered wine. It came and he proposed a toast: to Georgie. "My pal! And the fella to whom I owe all my good fortune. I thank you. And the hag thanks you." The hag? The Yellow Hag of Fan-Tan Street. Appearing Sundays, exclusively in the *New York World*. Very popular feature. "We both thank you from the bottom of our paper hearts."

Georgie gulped his wine, then reached for the bottle.

True, he *was* responsible for Bram's very recent success, kind of. And he felt—well, he didn't know for certain just *how* he felt about it. Amused? That, a little. Surprised? That too. Pleased? Well, . . . maybe. Jealous? Jealous. You bet. Not that he wanted to spend all his time cartooning a bad-tempered old squint with a pigtail, but still. Still, Bram was now making four times the money that Georgie was, and doing one-zillionth the amount of work. Every day he had on a different suit of clothes, a new topcoat. He'd grown a mustache and kept it *waxed*. God almighty. Last week, they came out with Yellow Hag licorice; this week it was hatchets. That's what Bram was celebrating tonight, the Yellow Hag Hatchet o' Fun. He'd get a nickel for each one sold. Small wonder Georgie was jealous.

Bram groomed himself these days like a second Richard Harding Davis, but only three months ago he couldn't even comb his hair so it'd stay in place. Food on his shirt. Midwest twang. He drew maps at the *World*, some of them beauts. Tokyo in Korea, the Sudan as an island. And whenever such blunders were pointed out to him, Bram would laugh uproariously. *Not* an island? *That's* funny. A real kid. A country Jake. A fozzle from Ohio. And then one day, out of the blue, Bram the fozzle informed Sid McKeon that he'd decided to give up maps—too boring—and become a cartoonist. I'm a happy fella. Got a sense of humor. Bet I can make you laugh. Sure, Bram, sure. Go right ahead. But before you do, you think you might draw us the French Congo? And stick it in Africa, please. Poor Sid—why, oh, why couldn't he find a poor little rich girl who'd take him away from all these nuts? *Bram? cartoonist?*

Already there were more than two dozen *real* cartoonists on staff, and twice as many more contributed as free lances—all of them, since Pulitzer's acquisition last year of a color press competing like mad for space in the *Comic Weekly*. This was the paper's latest kicker, an eight-page Sunday wrapper full of text jokes, puns, and limericks swiped from local music halls, plus large crowded line drawings that burlesqued city life in wishy-washy pastels. The funny papers. Something new, something different and easy to swallow, like minute tapioca and the Hershey bar. A young man could make a name for himself in the funny papers. Say, maybe Bram wasn't such a fozzle after all.



- [E-Therapy for Substance Abuse and Co-Morbidity \(SpringerBriefs in Social Work\) here](#)
- [The Golden Elephant \(Rogue Angel, Book 14\) pdf](#)
- **[download online Re-search: Pranks 2 pdf](#)**
- [click Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica book](#)
- [read online Devil In The Details I \(Devil In The Details - The Art of Mastery - A Mentoring Trilogy, Book 1\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
  
- <http://fortune-touko.com/library/E-Therapy-for-Substance-Abuse-and-Co-Morbidity--SpringerBriefs-in-Social-Work-.pdf>
- <http://aseasonedman.com/ebooks/Knaves--Wager.pdf>
- <http://musor.ruspb.info/?library/Re-search--Pranks-2.pdf>
- <http://aseasonedman.com/ebooks/The-Science-of-Human-Perfection--How-Genes-Became-the-Heart-of-American-Medicine.pdf>
- <http://korplast.gr/lib/Devil-In-The-Details-I--Devil-In-The-Details---The-Art-of-Mastery---A-Mentoring-Trilogy--Book-1-.pdf>