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He didn't like the idea at all. Here was this girl, coming closer and closer to him . . .

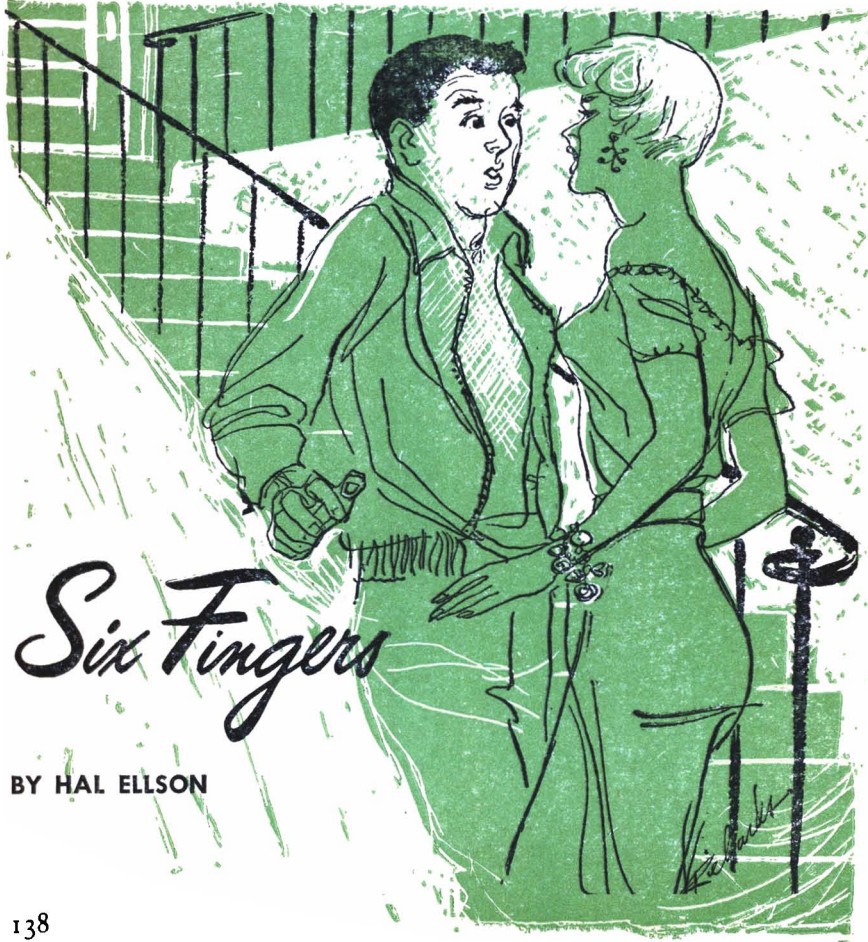
WHICH ONE?"
"That one on the right, the blonde."

Six Fingers had just lit a cigarette. He threw it away and stared, eyes thoughtful, mouth slightly open.

"Like her?" said Joey, nudging with his elbow.

"She's pretty," Six Fingers admitted. "But there's lots of pretty ones."

"Yeah, but . . ." Joey leaned



Six Fingers

BY HAL ELLSON

toward his friend and his voice dropped as he told what he knew. It was a legend that had traveled the length and breath of the neighborhood.

"That's true?" Six Fingers asked. There was doubt in his voice.

"Like to meet her?" Joey asked. "I know her good."

"What for?" said Six Fingers.

"What for? Are you dumb, or what?"

"Well, I don't know if I like her."

"What's that got to do with it?"

Joey looked at Six Fingers as if he thought him mad.

"I got to like a girl, that's all."

"You're sad, that's all I got to say. You don't know which way the wind is blowing," said Joey, then suddenly he saw through his friend; at least he thought he did. "Know what I think?" he said. "You don't know what it's all about."

"Well, I got to like them," Six Fingers explained awkwardly.

"That don't make sense," Joey answered, and for him it didn't.

"Well, I don't like girls."

Joey squinted at Six Fingers. He was small for his age, thin, with sharp eyes and a weasel face, smart in the ways of his own world, quicker-thinking than Six Fingers.

"Aw, you're nuts. You better go home to your mother."

Six Fingers ignored these remarks and lit another cigarette.

Later, he lay in his room. Night had fallen; the dark blue of the sum-

mer sky seemed to shimmer in the room. Six Fingers' mother called him and he heard but refused to answer. Finally she opened the door and said, "Are you going to eat, or do I have to throw your supper in the garbage pail?"

"Throw it in the garbage pail," he answered, and the door slammed. He was glad to be alone again with his thoughts, wanting to lie there, but the street sounds stabbed like pins and a restlessness had entered his body, a kind he'd never known before.

Finally he got up. It was darker now, the house quiet. His mother sat in the living room. Avoiding her, he made his way out of the house and went down the stairs. Cissie was on his mind. All afternoon he'd retained the image of her, a new and provocative one made so by Joey's tale. All afternoon his mind had woven fantasies of a new kind. And yet he didn't like Cissie herself, which was something he couldn't understand.

No one on the street; his friends had gone off somewhere but he didn't mind now. He was even glad that they weren't about. His mind was blank as he moved down the block, he didn't know where he was going. But he had to walk, the unease that afflicted him more acute.

He paused at the corner and looked toward the ice-cream parlor. About to pass it, he stopped and looked in. Someone had laughed.

It was Cissie and he saw her smiling at him; he had no doubt of that.

Smiling in a way that made him shiver. He thought of Joey's words and the way he had laughed at him. Well, he'd show Joey, he thought, and he wanted to go to Cissie but didn't have the nerve.

Cissie herself made the move. She came out of the store moving languidly, pretending sophistication, a pretty girl with a keen face and eyes. Immediately, she sensed Six Fingers' shyness and smiled to herself.

"You're Six Fingers, aren't you?" she said, close to him now.

He nodded, regarding her with a puzzled frown. Close up, she was prettier, exciting, yet he didn't like her.

"How'd you know my name?" he finally asked.

"Joey told me. You're new around."

"That's right."

"How'd you get the funny nickname?"

As soon as he'd moved into the neighborhood his new companions, in the direct and unthinking cruelty of youth, had given him this name upon noticing his right hand with the extra finger. That hadn't bothered him at all. In fact, it was expected, for the name had followed him from the old neighborhood and he'd grown used to it. Besides, there was a certain distinction in possessing an extra finger.

But Cissie's question he resented. Nevertheless he showed her his hand. He expected her to be shocked but, instead, she appeared delighted.

"Oh, then it is true," she exclaimed. "I didn't believe Joey when he told me. He's such a liar, you know."

The last made Six Fingers wonder. Had Joey lied about her too?

"You doing anything?" Cissie asked.

He shook his head, studying her.

"Then do you want to go for a walk?"

"I don't care," he answered, wondering how he'd gotten the words out. For sometimes they wouldn't come, and with girls in particular.

They began to walk, no destination in mind. A cool wind lifted off the river. The noises of the city pulsed louder, the lights began to blind Six Fingers. Cissie's closeness made pins and needles go through him. She was talking, babbling nothings. Once her hand touched his and he felt flame shoot up his arm. Anger almost overwhelmed him and he wanted to strike her, wanted to flee. Both sensations coming instantaneously only served to hold him there.

They walked to the park, came back to the candy store and drank a coke.

"I'm going home," Cissie said, dropping her straw in her glass and looking at him oddly.

Six Fingers nodded, thinking of Joey's taunts. He had to go along with Cissie but didn't want to. He had to like a girl, and Cissie made him angry.

They left the candy store and conversation died. Cissie's chatter had

been better than this silence; he felt uneasier now, frightened, yet didn't realize the source of his fear.

They turned into a dark block. Subdued voices came through the silence, the clink of a glass, but Six Fingers saw no one. Cissie had moved close. Her hand brushed his again and lightning seemed to flash across his brain. She took his hand then and he wanted to pull away but couldn't, wanted to run yet his legs refused to obey.

At last they stood at her doorway; close now, she faced him and he could feel the warmth of her body, a strange delicate odor drifted toward him. Her face was blurred by the shadows but her eyes shone. He thought she was smiling but wasn't sure.

"Well?" she said.

"Well, what?"

"I do have to go up, you know."

He nodded his head yet he realized that her words held another meaning. She was not merely telling him she was leaving. The phrase meant much more but he didn't know how to answer.

Cissie moved closer then and, with their bodies almost touching, looked into his eyes, waiting as she had done with all the others. But Six Fingers didn't respond, though he wanted to kiss her. He was filled with a wild desire to grab her, but swiftly countering this came the other feeling, a mixture of fear and anger. Without meaning to, he took a backward step.

"Come here," Cissie said, reaching for him, and back another step he went.

Cissie appeared puzzled now.

"You're not afraid of me?" she asked.

"No."

"Then come here," she said and, this time as she reached for him, he suddenly turned and ran.

It was early when he came home, an unusual hour for him to return. More unusual for him to go to his room and remain there.

This puzzled his mother and she finally went to his room. The light was out and he lay on his bed, still dressed.

"Are you sick?" she asked.

No answer. When she asked again, he snapped at her and, thinking he was in one of his moods, she left him to himself.

Not till midnight, when the house was totally quiet, did he come from his room. Straight to the refrigerator he went and whatever he could lay hands on he piled on the table. Then he ate ravenously.

Next morning he appeared to be his ordinary self at breakfast, neither talkative or moody. Yesterday was like a bad dream laid aside. First thing after leaving the house, he went for a ride on his bike. When he returned, he chained the bike to the iron fence outside the house, walked to the corner and there was Joey and some other friends. As he greeted them he saw that they appeared

amused. They exchanged glances and didn't answer him.

"What's wrong with you guys?" he asked.

"Hah!" said Joey. "So you were with Cissie last night."

"So what?"

"Yeah, what happened?"

"You couldn't guess," Six Fingers answered with a knowing air.

"We don't have to. We know," said Joey.

"Know what?"

"Cissie told us all about it. You were scared of her. You ran."

Six Fingers wanted to answer but words wouldn't come. His ears were filled with the taunts of his friends and the sound of their laughter. Worse yet was what Cissie had done to him, made of him a fool. More than anything he was angry with her and finally he managed to say, "She's a liar. I didn't run, she did."

"That wasn't how we heard it," Joey answered.

Six Fingers had lied of course, but immediately the lie had become the truth to him, why, he didn't know, but he believed it now. She had run from him and he insisted that this was so, raising his voice in a way that almost convinced his tormentors.

Nevertheless, Joey refused to accept this and kept taunting him. Then the others joined in again.

"Yeah, I'm going to show her," Six Fingers said. "I made her run."

"Just how are you going to show her?" Joey wanted to know.

The threat uttered in anger was

no more than that but soon as Six Fingers uttered it, he realized he'd said too much. He didn't know what to do to regain his status. But no more were the words out of his mouth when he realized that he'd meant what he'd said.

"Well, how?" Joey asked again.

"You'll see," said Six Fingers and, unable to explain, he turned on his heel and walked away.

He remained in his room all that day. Most of the time his mind was utterly blank, but there were moments of anger when he thought of what Cissie had done. He had to get back at her, yet the only real way to do this frightened him. Even to approach her now would take more courage than he possessed.

By evening he had no plan in mind. He didn't eat but went out of the house and wandered through the hot streets. At last, as if he had planned it, he found himself at Cissie's door. She was nowhere in sight but he waited. An hour later he saw her turn the corner, hesitate, then come on.

Frightened now, he almost took to his heels. It was like last evening again, and he felt as if he were beginning once more.

Meantime Cissie approached, uncertain of his reason for waiting here. But she couldn't retreat now. She came on, brazenly. When close, she smiled and, as if in surprise, said, "Imagine you here."

Six Fingers stared. That unnerved her but he didn't know it.

"Waiting for me?" she asked.

"That's right."

"But you ran away last night."

He nodded this time. The same feeling possessed him. He wanted to run, the feeling was almost overwhelming, but he held his ground and at last heard himself say, "You thought I was afraid last night."

"Not exactly."

"Well, I'm not, I'm not afraid of any girl."

"That's good to hear. I suppose that means you like me?"

He nodded but this wasn't the truth. He didn't like her. More, he was still afraid and his whole body was trembling.

Cissie was at ease now, for he didn't appear angry and he hadn't been waiting to strike her. She smiled; it was obvious to her why he'd returned and she moved closer, as she had the previous evening, then closer still.

Frightened, Six Fingers stood his guard, though he wanted to run. Yet he had to prove himself. Even in this moment he could see Joey's face and hear his taunts. Well, he'd show him and all the others. It wouldn't be long now, either.

Cissie meanwhile had moved as close as possible without touching him and her eyes held his. This time it would happen, he knew, and he waited. Then Cissie spoke, the invitation innocent enough, but he knew what it meant. "It's cooler on the roof," she said, and paused, perhaps expecting a reply from him, but he

couldn't answer, much as he wanted to.

"Want to go up?" she asked him casually, and he nodded. That was enough.

As they stepped onto the roof, Six Fingers was breathing hard. The darkness was striking, the sky vast. A cooling wind swept round them.

"Want to look down at the street?" Cissie asked and before he could answer, she moved away from him.

Moments later he followed. It was exactly as Joey had said, first the invitation to the roof, then to see the street — so he was prepared for her next move and not surprised. A step from her and she suddenly turned and faced him.

"Are you still afraid of me?" Cissie asked. "Are you?" And she moved closer, as if to throw herself around him, then touched his arms. He would have run but she seized him now and fear petrified him. What her intentions were he didn't know, for he felt enveloped by an implacable enemy, a satanic creature in the shape of a girl who seemed bent on devouring him. A final terrifying image and he shoved her away, backward with violence.

Moments later he looked down at the street. Voices came up from below. People were scurrying toward what appeared like a shadow on the sidewalk. Far in the distance a siren sounded, but Six Fingers didn't run, nor was he afraid any longer — only puzzled by what he had done.

MUGGED AND PRINTED

MICKEY SPILLANE isn't satisfied with being the creator of Mike Hammer and the top-selling writer in the world today. He's been



branching out, as moviegoers throughout the world know. Not only have two pictures based on his famous novels *I, The Jury* and *The Long Wait* been released nationally, but he's also made his acting debut in the new *Ring Of Fear*. His

latest story for *Manhunt*, *The Pickpocket*, is something of a departure, too. Instead of featuring Mike Hammer, this story stars a new character Spillane has developed: Willie, the reformed pickpocket. We think you'll like him as much as any other Spillane character.

HENRY KANE, whose new complete novel, *Precise Moment*, is featured in this issue, is the famous creator of Peter Chambers. As an ex-



lawyer, Kane's had to do a lot of work with the police and with private eyes, and it's rumored that Chambers may be a composite portrait of several private detectives now operating. In addition to his many appearances in *Manhunt*, Chambers has been fea-

tured in the widely popular novels including *Armchair In Hell*, *Report For A Corpse*, *Halo For Nobody* and others.

HAL ELLSON, author of the best-selling *Duke*, returns this month with the tough and surprising *Six Fingers*. ♦ EVAN HUNTER's novel, *The Blackboard Jungle*, which is being made into an M-G-M movie, will soon be on sale in bookstores. While waiting for the book, take a look at Hunter's *The Scarlet King*. ♦ RICHARD S. PRATHER's newest Shell Scott novel is called *Always Leave 'Em Dying*. His newest Shell Scott short story is called *Crime Of Passion*, in this issue. ♦ RICHARD DEMING's Manville Moon appears in the new Rinehart book, *Whistle Past The Graveyard*. You can also meet Moon in *Death Sentence*, a startling new short story in this issue. ♦ JONATHAN CRAIG is back with another fine and authentic documentary this month. Craig's latest is called *The Purple Collar*. ♦ HAROLD Q. MASUR returns to *Manhunt* with a surprising new story, *Dead Issue*.

CRAIG RICE, the only woman to appear in this all-star issue of *Manhunt*, is also the only detective-story writer ever to appear on the cover of *Time Magazine*,



an honor usually reserved for Presidents, world-famous scientists, and the like. She's the creator of John J. Malone, the lawyer-detective who's appeared in *Having Wonderful Crime*, *Eight Faces At Three*, *The Wrong Murder* (followed, logically enough, by *The Right Murder*), *The Fourth Postman* and other books. Malone's also been featured on radio, TV and the movies and, of course, in many issues of *Manhunt* — though possibly never to such good effect as in the current *Flowers To The Fair*.

FRANK KANE, a familiar figure to *Manhunt* readers, is the author of many novels featuring his tough and knowledgeable private eye, Johnny Liddell. The books in which Liddell's appeared include *Green Light For Death*, *Slay Ride*, *Poisons Unknown* and his latest, *Grave Danger*. Kane's authentic local color, his grasp of police technique and all the important details of homicide investigation, have combined with his writing ability to make such stories as *Big Steal* favorites with readers and critics.

