

MANHUNT

DETECTIVE STORY MONTHLY

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Spillane**

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ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

DECEMBER 25th

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The Pickpocket

BY MICKEY SPILLANE



WILLIE came into the bar smiling. He couldn't understand why he did it, but he did it anyway. Ever since the day he had married Sally and had stopped in for a bottle of beer to bring home for his wedding supper, he had come in smiling. Sally, he thought, three years with Sally, and now there was little Bill and a brother or maybe a sister on the way.

The bartender waved, and Willie said, "Hello, Barney." A beer came up and he pushed a quarter out, looking at himself in the big mirror behind the wall. He wasn't very big, and he was far from good-looking. Just an ordinary guy, a little on the small side. He was respectable now. A real law-abiding

Willie didn't like the cops coming to visit him. But he didn't get sore until he opened his door to a man with a gun . . .

citizen. Meeting Sally had done that.

He remembered the day three winters ago when he'd tried to lift a wallet from a guy's pocket. Hunger and cold had made his hand shake and the guy had collared him. He was almost glad to be run into the station house where it was warm. But the guy must have known that, too, and refused to press any charges. So he got kicked out in the cold again. That was where Sally had found him.

He remembered the taxi, and Sally and the driver half-carrying him into her tiny apartment. The smell of the hot soup did more to revive him than anything else. She didn't ask any questions, but he told her nevertheless. He was a pickpocket. A skinny little mug who had lived by his hands ever since he was a kid. She'd told him, right away, that it didn't matter.

He had eaten her food and slept on her couch for a week before he got smart. Then he did something he had never done before in his life. He got a job. It wasn't much at first, just sweeping up in a loft where they made radio parts. Slowly he found out he had hands that could do better things than push a broom. The boss found it out, too, when he discovered Willie assembling sections in half the time that it took a skilled mechanic to do it. They gave the broom to someone else.

Only then did he ask Sally to

marry him. She gave up her job at the department store and they settled down to a regular married life. The funny part was that he liked it.

The cops never gave up, though. As regularly as clockwork they came around. A real friendly visit, understand? But they came around. The first of the month Detective Coggins would walk in right after supper, talk a while, looking at him with those cynical, cold blue eyes, then leave. That part worried Willie — not for himself, but for little Bill. It wouldn't be long now before he'd be in school, and the other kids . . . they'd take it out on him. Your old man was a crook . . . a pickpocket . . . yeah, then why do the coppers come around all the time? Willie drained his beer quickly. Sally was waiting supper for him.

He had almost reached the door when he heard the shots. The black sedan shot past as he stepped outside and for one awful instant he saw a face. Black eyebrows . . . the sneer . . . the scar on the cheek. The face of a guy he had known three years ago. And the guy had seen him, too. In his mind, Willie ran. He ran faster than he had ever run in his life — but his legs didn't run. They carried him homeward as the self-respecting should walk: but his mind ran.

Three years wasn't so long after all.

As soon as he came in Sally knew something was wrong. She said,

"What happened?" Willie couldn't answer. "Your job . . ." she said hesitantly. Willie shook his head.

It was the hurt look that made his lips move. "Somebody got shot up the street," he told her. "I don't know who it was, but I know who did it."

"Did anyone else . . ."

"No, just me. I think I was the only one."

He could tell Sally was almost afraid to ask the next question. Finally, she said: "Did they see you?"

"Yes. He knows me."

"Oh, Willie!" Her voice was muffled with despair. They stood in silence, not knowing what to say, not daring to say anything. But both had the same thoughts. Run. Get out of town. Somebody was dead and it wouldn't hurt to kill a couple more to cover the first.

Sally said: ". . . The cops. Should we . . ."

"I don't dare. They wouldn't believe me. My word wouldn't be any good anyway."

It came then, the sharp rap on the door. Willie leaped to his feet and ran, reaching for the key in the lock. He was a second too late. The door was tried and pushed open. The guy that came in was big. He filled the door from jamb to jamb with the bulk of his body. He grabbed Willie by the shirt and held him tight in his huge hands.

"Hello, shrimp," he said.

Willie punched him. It was as

hard as he could hit, but it didn't do a bit of good. The guy snarled: "Cut it out before I break your skinny neck!" Behind him he closed the door softly. Sally stood with the back of her hand to her mouth, tense, motionless.

With a rough shove the big guy sent Willie staggering into the table, his thick lips curling into a tight sneer. "Didn't expect somebody so soon, did you, Willie? Too bad you're not smart. Marty doesn't waste any time. Not with dopes that see too much. You know, Marty's a lucky guy. The only one that spots the shooting turns out to be a punk he can put the finger on right away. Anybody else would be down at headquarters picking out his picture right now."

His hand went inside his coat and came out with a .45 automatic. "I always said Marty was lucky."

The big guy didn't level the gun. He just swung it until it covered Willie's stomach. Sally drew in her breath to scream quickly, just once, before she died.

But before the scream came Willie gave a little laugh and said: "You won't shoot me with that gun, Buster."

Time stood still. Willie laughed again. "I slipped out the magazine when you grabbed me." The big guy cursed. His finger curled under the butt and felt the empty space there. Willie was very calm now. "And I don't think you've got a shell in the chamber, either."

The big guy took one step, reaching for Willie, a vicious curse on his lips; then the sugar bowl left Sally's hand and took him on the forehead. He went down.

Willie didn't hesitate this time. He picked up the phone and called the station house. He asked for Detective Coggins. In three minutes the cop with the cold blue eyes was there, listening to Willie's story. The big guy went out with cuffs on. Willie said: "Coggins . . ."

"Yes?"

"When the trial comes up . . . you can count on me to testify. They won't scare me off."

The detective smiled, and for the first time the ice left those cold blue eyes. "I know you will, Willie." He paused. "And Willie . . . about

those visits of mine . . . I'd like to come up and see you. I think we could be good friends. But I'd like to have you ask me first."

A grin covered Willie's face. "Sure! Come up . . . anytime at all! Let's say next Saturday night. Bring the missus!"

The detective waved and left. As he closed the door Willie could imagine the chant of young voices. They were saying:

"Yeah . . . and you better not get funny with Bill because his pop is friends with that cop. Sure, they're all the time playing cards and . . ."

Willie laughed. "Sometimes," he said, "I'm almost glad that I had some experience. Finally came in handy!"



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.

