



"Hate to do it, sister," he told her, "but I ain't giving you no chance to let out a yell"

Slow Music

By
Hugh MacNair Kahler

THERE were quicker ways of getting inside the building, and Lupo was in a hurry, but he believed in playing safe. He and Chink waited, therefore, in the little vestibule, pretending to be looking over the name cards above the mailboxes.

They had to wait for five minutes, maybe, but it seemed longer than that to Lupo. The old brownstone house, made over into cheap walk-up flats, held a lot of people, and all of them seemed bent on making as much noise as possible. Lupo had a sensitive ear and the noise bothered him. Loud voices, clashing crockery, radios that brayed and bleated, babies yelping spitefully, a tin-pan piano on which somebody was doggedly trying, over and over, to play Hearts and Flowers.

Just in time to save Lupo's nerves from cracking somebody opened the inner door and went on out. Chink and Lupo didn't turn their heads, but Lupo's heel moved backward and stopped the door just as its air-checked spring was shutting it.

He didn't mind the piano, now, although it was

louder than ever as he climbed the steep stairs. He even grinned as he passed the third-floor flat where it was loudest. It might help a lot to have plenty of noise right there for the next few minutes.

There was only one flat on the fourth floor. Lupo guessed that the heat was the reason why the door stood wide open.

He slid past it quickly. Chink, a step behind him, shut it. A girl in a thin print dress was busy in a cupboard kitchenette, her back to the door. The thump of the piano downstairs covered any sound that Lupo's feet might have made. He was close behind the girl when she turned.

"Quiet, sister."

Lupo spoke just loudly enough to make himself audible above the racket.

"Don't worry. You ain't gonna get hurt."

He gave her time to begin hoping that maybe he meant that.

"Not if you play ball," he said. "All you got to do is tell us where we can find Joe Mahan."

She shook her head. "I don't know. And if I did I wouldn't tell you."

Lupo laughed. He fumbled in his pocket and brought out a little pearl-handled penknife. It looked innocent enough until he touched a spring and a long, slim blade slid out at one end of it.

"It's no use trying to scare me." The girl's voice shook a little. "Even if I knew where to find Joe I'd be killed before I'd tell you."

"Oh, we wouldn't do nothing like that, sister." Lupo gave her time, again, to begin hoping. He kept on playing with the knife, though. "Why, it wouldn't come close to killing you if we took off every finger you got, and I bet you'll be talking before we even start working on the second one."

HE COULD see that she knew he meant it, but she shook her head again.

"I don't know, I tell you."

"Okay. Slap the plaster on her mouth, Chink."

Chink took a wide strip of adhesive from his pocket. He flattened it on the table to rip off its protecting sheet of gauze. Lupo saw him bend forward suddenly and snatch up a pad that lay beside the telephone. He straightened, grinning.

"No use wasting no more time on the dame, Lupo." He crossed the room, holding out the pad for Lupo to see. "Richland 4900. That's the Rockland Apartments, where Rosie Quinn used to live. And 22-B is where we'll find Mahan. Le's go."

"He isn't there! He—" the girl's voice stopped suddenly. Chink laughed.

"What'd I tell you, Lupo. If Mahan wasn't there she'd be trying to tell us he was. All we got to do is ring the number and—"

"And if Mahan's there we tip him off. It's a cinch there ain't many people know where to call him. The dame might be the only one. And we can't take no chances. Come over here and watch her a minute."

He gave Chink the little knife and went to the telephone, spun the dial.

"Tony? Listen. Take the boys and beat it over to the Rockland. I got a hunch Mahan's there. If he is he'll be coming out on the run in about five minutes, so make it snappy. If he shows up, take care of him and call me back, River 5656, as quick as you can. If he don't show up in five minutes after you get there, leave the boys on the job and gimme a ring."

HE HUNG up. The girl's face, drawn and desperate, told him that he'd guessed right. He took up the strip of adhesive from the table and plastered it tightly over her set mouth.

"Hate to do it, sister, but I ain't giving you no chance to let out a yell while I'm talking to your boy friend. And anyhow"—he chuckled—"you only got to stand it a little while."

He sprawled comfortably on the box couch, keeping an eye on his watch. He always got a kick out of being clever. He was so pleased with himself that he hardly minded the sticky, stifling heat or the smells or the steady, pounding racket downstairs. The five minutes didn't seem long. He went back to the telephone, spun the dial.

"Rockland? Gimme 22-B. Hello." He twisted his head to nod at Chink as Mahan's voice answered him. He disguised his own as much as he could: "Mr. Mahan? Listen. A lady just got hit by a taxi out front of my store, down here at Sixth and Market. Only stayed conscious long enough to gimme your number and ast me to let you know. They took her to the Mercy Hospital."

He hung up and grinned at the girl. "Cheer up, sister. It won't be long now."

He watched the time. Three minutes. Four. The piano was making a lot of noise. So much noise that Lupo hadn't heard a footstep in the hall when the door swung open. He stared, open-mouthed, at red, grinning faces, blue uniforms, the wide, round, open mouths of guns.

"Hold it." The big voice was genial but convincing. Lupo held it. Steel shut on his wrists. The voice went on, cheerfully sympathetic.

"Pretty tough, Lupo. But you ast for it. What's the matter with your brains, Lupo, and your ears? Don't you hear that lad murdering the piano downstairs? Or didn't it strike you that Joe Mahan might've been up here and had to listen to him? So many times that when you called him up, with that racket so close to the phone that he couldn't help hearing it, you might just as well've come right out and told him your mob was outside the Rockland, waiting f'r him, and you was right here, waiting f'r"—the big voice chuckled affably—"waiting f'r us."

A SHORT SHORT STORY COMPLETE ON THIS PAGE • ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE

Kid Glover

By Quentin Reynolds



IPOR THOMAS

"Will I beat him? . . . I'll knock him out!" Bob Pastor speaking, and of course he's speaking about Joe Louis. And if you listen to young Bob long enough you may find yourself agreeing with him

YOU could look up through the pale white lights that bathed the ring and you could see the dark blue canopy of the sky. It looked as though someone had carelessly thrown a handful of golden dust up there and specks of it had stuck to the blue. It looked calm and cool up there but you had to bring your eyes back to what was happening in the ring.

"Box him, Jim, box him," the kid sitting next to me was saying to himself, thinking out loud.

Louis shuffled in, his rather bovine eyes without expression, his heavy leather-encased hands darting almost mechanically against Braddock's face. Braddock's head was lowered a bit and a shock of black hair dropped over his right eye every time one of Louis' blows landed. It couldn't hide the ugly open cut over the eye, though. Braddock's face by now looked like a stretch of bad road. A tooth had come through his upper lip but Braddock probably felt no pain. Braddock is a man without fear, with a heart so big that it refuses to acknowledge the existence of pain. Jim's big heart kept telling him mistakenly, "Go after this bum, you can beat him." He kept on after Louis, throwing wild, creaky right hands that left him wide open for Joe's sharp, short, cruelly effective punches.

"Don't mix with him, Jim," the kid next to me pleaded. "Box him; stay away and watch his left."

The Wrong Way to Fight Joe Louis

But Braddock knew only one way to fight that night. No fancy stuff for Braddock. He smiled lopsidedly and kept boring in and methodically Louis destroyed him. Bit by bit, as a woodsman cuts down and destroys a huge tree, Louis destroyed Braddock. Each punch shook Braddock and dulled another nerve or paralyzed another muscle. You can't knock out the Braddocks of this world with one punch, any more than you can chop down a tree with one blow of an ax. Finally, in the eighth round, Braddock began to quiver. One terrific stroke of the ax—it was that devilish left hook—and Braddock swayed desperately trying to keep his feet. He started to topple. Then with casual cruelty Lewis smashed him with a right hand and Braddock fell.

Louis walked to a neutral corner, but we were all looking at Braddock lying there shapelessly on the

canvas. He looked like a tent that had blown down in a heavy wind. There was no movement and apparently no life in him as he lay there, his head twisted grotesquely to one side and one leg half doubled under him. They picked him up and where his head had been there was a dark, widening stain.

"Why did he fight like that? I tried to tell him how to beat Louis." The kid was puzzled. There was no sympathy for Braddock in his face or in his voice because, like Braddock, the kid was a fighter and broken lopsided faces and dark splotches on white canvas are merely incidents in the trade of fighting, to fighting men; not things that sicken you a little and make you feel a little disgusted with yourself because you have been watching the spectacle.

"Braddock should have boxed him, circled him and kept him from getting set with that left," the kid said. The kid was Bob Pastor and he knows quite a lot about Louis. He went ten rounds with him without getting his hair mussed.

A Prophecy from Mr. Pastor

So we all walked out of Comiskey Park, some 65,000 of us, and nobody was talking much because we were all thinking of Jim and we were thinking of the brave fight he had put up, brave despite the fact that it was a stupid fight. It was stupid because Braddock didn't have much in the way of natural offensive weapons nor did he have much in the way of defensive armor. What he had of each he didn't use intelligently. He has a nice left hand and he has a knack of holding his right hand high, which makes it hard for anyone to find his chin. But against Louis he just waded in throwing wild right-hand punches and though your heart warmed to him your judgment told you that it was a foolish thing to do. We were thinking of these things as we filed out of the ball park where the fight was held.

On the train going back to New York that night nobody talked about anything much except the fight. We were playing poker in the club car and Pastor kibitzed. He sat there eating pastrami sandwiches with onions and he talked about Louis.

"I'll beat that guy the next time we meet," he said calmly. "I'll beat him sure."

Mark Hellinger, the writing man, laid down three aces and said, "With what?"

Pastor held up his right hand. He clenched his fist and said, "I'll beat him with that. I would have beat him last time but I had a bad leg."

Ham Fisher, who draws the cartoon strip Joe Palooka, said dryly, "For a guy with a bum leg you did a lot of good running in that fight with Louis."

"I had to run," Pastor said. "Pop made me run. After the fifth round I knew I could beat Louis. I pleaded with Pop: 'Let me go after that bum.' Pop said, 'If you do, I'll kill you. I told you how to fight him. Do what I told you.'" (Continued on page 58)

Bob Pastor, whose main aim in life is another chance at Champion Joe Louis