



The guy's eyes bug out-like a frog's, and he stares at the bill and turns pale. "You — you wait right here, lady!" he cries. "I'll find a cop!"

away money. Once a woman said she didn't need it, and he said, 'Why, that's wonderful! Then *you* can have the fun of giving it to someone else. That's the general idea, you see, at Christmastime.' And I thought then," sighs the old dame, "that I'd like to do that sometime before I die."

She pauses, a little out of breath, but her eyes glowing. "And now I *can* do it!" she cries out softly. "I can stop people and say, 'Merry Christmas, young man or young lady. Here's a thousand-dollar bill —'"

"Now wait a minute!" yells the Inspector. "— and God bless you!" goes on the little old dame. "I never thought I could do it, and now, just in time — Oh, maybe just in the nick of time! — the dream's come true, and —"

She's so overcome with her idea that she starts to cry, and pretty soon she's so happy she is sobbing and shaking all over. Dan has

to put his arm around her to steady her. He leads her out and helps her into a cab, and when he comes back the Inspector and Lieutenant Hudson are looking at each other glumly.

"A grand at a time she's going to hand it out!" sighs Hudson. "She'll be mobbed. There'll be a hell of a night's work for the Riot Squad!"

"We'll have to keep it quiet," says the Inspector. "There's no law against her giving away money, provided she realizes fully what she's doing." He turns to Dan. "McGarry, check-up with this Dr. McFinney. Find out what you can about her."

Dan tracks Dr. McFinney down in his office. He's fat and redfaced, and he sits behind his desk bobbing his head all the time Dan tells him how Mrs. Dusenberry wants to be a pint-sized Mrs. Santa and shower thousand-dollar bills around and disturb the peace generally on Christmas Eve.

"A great old girl if ever there was one!" the Doc says when Dan finishes. "What a kick she'll get out of it!" And suddenly he frowns. "If she can only make it," he adds.

"Is it — is it that bad?" Dan asks.

THE Doc spreads his hands. "There's nothing much I can do," he says. "She won't even try. She threw in the towel last July."

"The Inspector sort of wants to be sure," explains Dan, "that the old lady's got all her buttons."

Dr. McFinney jumps in his chair. "She's as mentally competent as the Inspector!" he barks. "And a lot more so, if he's crazy enough to try to keep her from this final satisfaction!"

Then he starts in telling Dan about the old dame. It seems he knows her for years and is very fond of her. Ten years back she takes over her grandson Tommy, when he's left an orphan at the age of two. She brings

him up, and skimps and saves to put enough aside so Tommy can go to college when he's older. But the kid is counted out when he reaches the eighth grade, and the Doc tells Dan how it happens. After this, the Doc says, Mrs. Dusenberry cracks and goes all to pieces. This coming Christmas will be her first Christmas without Tommy, and if she can get a thrill out of spreading twenty grand around to various characters, maybe Christmas will still mean something to her. . .

Dan tells all this to his mouse Kitty as they sit in Wurtzenburger's restaurant. "So I go back and give the Inspector the lowdown," he says, pushing away his second plate of pie, "and he agrees with the Doc that the old girl should have her fun on Christmas Eve if she wants it. Personally, I do not mind either, except that she may slip a grand to some of the more obnoxious guys I know around town. But the Inspector orders me

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