

November 6, 1925

Dear Sister,

I hope all is well with you in the city and that your dear husband is still doing well in his "blind pig" operations. Oh, how I wish we were back in New York, but Sonny loves running the Slater Club and controlling distribution to all the others in New England. But I must tell you of last night's fiasco, for it was upsetting and draws too much attention to us. Unfortunately, Sonny is happy sitting in the library with his cigars. He lives for cigars and I wish he was distributing them instead of liquor! It leaves me to keep an eye on everything - and what do I know about fast boats, cheap hooch, managing women, paying people to look the other way - and cute Coast Guard officers? Oops, that all sounds really familiar!

Anyway - to get back to last night, Sonny had another of his constant "business meetings" - the Big Seven, or the Speakeasy Owners Cartel, his Captains, or something. He always tries to hold them and have the club open at the same time - says if the club has people going in and out, nobody will notice when his people come. Anyway, while he had some of his club owners here arguing for cheaper prices for hooch coming to them, we had a **MURDER** right under everybody's noses!

On top of all that, one of the club guests either got completely snookered or fell over her own dog, for down the third floor stairs she came in a heap! I don't know whether she had been up in the billiards room playing or watching the game, but she had a disaster on the stairs. I keep telling Sonny we need more light on the stairs!

Then some other lady either drank too much or somehow ate something that didn't sit well. (We did have fresh shellfish on the half-shell that we were serving to get people to drink more - and who knows where

Sonny's guys get the stuff from!) Anyway, she starts hollering that she's been poisoned, so we had to lug her upstairs and throw her in a bed and get her a doctor. Of course, the only doctor we could find was the new Indian guy in town. I don't know if anybody has been to him yet or if he is any good. We've never had a foreign doctor here in the country - for all I know, he may end up doing her in, as he doesn't want her moved - so they are **BOTH** still here!

Of course, in the middle of that commotion, a man at one of our poker tables got the hand of a lifetime - and keeled right over onto the table. His friends said he was "on the skids" and that would have saved him if his heart had been strong enough to withstand the shock of getting an unbeatable hand - with a **LOT** of money on the table. What a shame! I always say, don't bet if you **HAVE** to win!

With all that commotion going on, I was trying to find out more about one of the visiting speakeasy owners - a woman from Vermont. Her "blind pig" is right on the border with Canada - they call them "line houses". This one - The Bucket of Blood - is so far up in Vermont that it doesn't get bothered much, although there is a steady stream of visitors from the train. The owner's name is Lillian Shipley, and I must admit she is a good-looking woman. A little peculiar, maybe, as she carries a big parrot around with her; but she looks like a real manager! I think something is going on between her and Sonny, for why would you get your "hooch" all the way from Rhode Island when it could come right over the Canadian border - she claims to want to set up a deal with Sonny. I know what kind of a deal **SHE** wants. It might be all for the best, as things are getting a little **HOT** around here - too much attention from the wrong people to the Slater Club - and Sonny is not quite as clever as he thinks he is.

Anyway, I was giving "Queen Lil" as she is known a quiet spot of "ted" up in the big second floor bedroom. If there is something between her and Sonny, I want to scope it out. Well, we're sitting there in a nice little tete-a-tete, when the maid comes in with the "ted" tray, doesn't notice the parrot, sets the tray down and the parrot lets out a terrific squawk. The maid shrieks and leaps away, falls over her own feet, and cracks her head on the desk, knocking herself out. I left her to come around on her own, but I finally had to get the Indian doctor to come and shove some smelling salts under her nose.

You know Sonny uses the bedroom at the head of the stairs on the left as his "signal room" when the boats are coming in, as you can see almost to Newport from that room and you can shut the door so club guests don't see you. Anyway, the "Black Duck" was due in with a load, so poor Henry was up there watching so he could give the "all clear" signal and the Duck would come in at Chippie to meet the cars. Well, our new maid sneaked up there and stuck a knife into Henry, shoved him behind the sofa, and took over on the lantern. She even knew the signals and was sending the one for the Duck to go in over at Rettick's on Warwick Neck instead of here at Chepiwanoxet. We found out later that there was a Coast Guard boat in Warwick Cove waiting to make a run on the Duck when she tied up to Rettick's dock. They are getting really good when they get women to help - must be some "Coastie's" girl-friend! Anyway, one of Sonny's men was walking up the hill and saw that the wrong light was shining out the window; so, we were able to stop her before the Duck saw the signal. He ran upstairs, grabbed her and tied her up and took over the lantern. But - we had a body to get rid of. (I think they sent it out on the Duck)

Meanwhile, down in the Library, Sonny was holding court with some of the Speakeasy Owners Cartel rep. They had finished their meeting

and were doing a "product quality analysis" with some new bottles sent up by Bill McCoy for them to try. You must know him, as he has that gorgeous boat, the "Arthusd", and the big friendly Newfoundland dog named Old Faithful, who goes everywhere with him. He works down on the Sound, and they say he's really picky at what he gets from Canada - they call his stuff "the real McCoy". Sonny wants to get some loads from him for his high-end clients, and the Duck can easily make the run. I'd like to meet him as he is a smart man - devised a new way of packing his bottles called a "Burlock" - it is 6 bottles packed in straw, sewn into burlap in a triangle so it packs tighter and wastes less space in the hold of the boat. Sonny has gotten one from him and they were all trying the bottles. When I walked by on one of my rounds (I walk through the club several times a night just to keep an eye on the staff - and guests), the wife of one of his club owners had sampled too many bottles and was passed out on the sofa. I always say, Don't get into the business if you can't hold your liquor!

Across the hall in the dining room, Captain Wayne and the captain of "Idle Hour" were trying to work out some new routes that the Coasties wouldn't think we would use to get the product in from Rum Row. With the Duck, the "Idle Hour", and "Je t'Aime", we can go pretty far up or down the Row as an easy run. Coming from Nock's and Bent's Boatyards here in East Greenwich, we know what they are capable of, as these Scalloptown builders know how to build boats! How he could get any planning done with the club open and all the commotion, I don't know - and then, on top of it all - one of the men waiting for the Duck down on the shore ran all the way up to warn us that the Lieutenant (who is a real thorn in our sides!) and some other "Staties" were down at Chippie questioning them as to what their business was down on the shore so late. He said: "We told them we were going frost fishing and that's why we had big lights, but they won't

go away, so I came up to have Henry signal to the Duck to go to Rettick's." After telling Captain Wayne, the poor man passed out from his exertion running up the hill.

You know how they say that things always happen in threes - well make it three times three at least, last night. We always hire a piano player to liven things up a bit; she plays and sings in the music room while guests are in the club - I think they call them torch singers. I was making my round and I didn't hear any music, so I went into the music room and there she was half in and half out of the piano. I guess some of the sheet music fell inside the piano and she was trying to get it back; so she was trying to reach it and hit the piano lid prop reaching into the piano - so, of course, the lid fell on her, cracked her a good one, and knocked her out. I don't know why nobody had found her before I went in, but I guess that room only attracts guests when she is playing. I had to get a couple of Sonny's bodyguards to come and carry her into the kitchen so they could ice the gigantic lump on her head.

Of all nights to snoop around, that nosy reporter from the Pendulum that I told you about showed up last night! Fortunately, the "butler" caught him and got him out of the club before he saw anything.

I don't know what will happen next here at the Slater Club - or if Sonny may be heading to Vermont - but I will let you know. Please write and tell me what is going on in New York - what is this "Cotton Club" that everyone is talking about? My love to you and your family, dearest sister from

Your Rhode Island Exile!