

Red Maguire, a love-starved Irish newspaper reporter who belongs on the cover of pulp fiction magazines, is famous on the winding streets of Montana's notorious mining city for his newspaper scoops. Now he uncovers a fresh story for the Butte Bugle.

Masks, Mayhem and Murder:

Another tale of Red Maguire, crime-solving ace reporter - BOOK 2

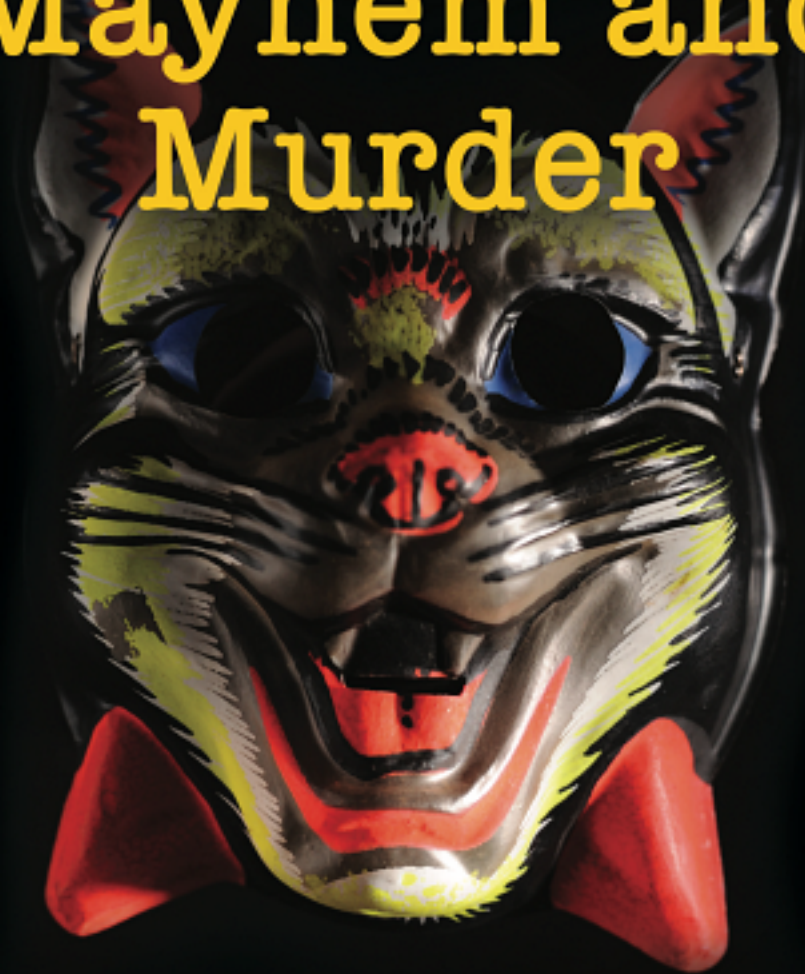
By Kevin S. Giles

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Masks, Mayhem and Murder



Another tale of Red Maguire, crime-solving ace reporter

BOOK 2

Kevin S. Giles

"Been writing crime too long in this town to think otherwise, Babe. Sometimes I get lousy ideas about big trouble. Sure, I bet next month's rent that all these two-bit jokers in masks take orders from Dregovich. What for? Only lonely men and fools lean into stiff wind."

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Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-582-3

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-64719-583-0

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Giles, Kevin S.

MASKS, MAYHEM AND MURDER by Kevin S. Giles

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021907871

Printed on acid-free paper.

kevinsgiles.com 2021

First Edition

~ 1 ~

'Pay up or ...'

Pink morning light fell over the dark city as Kieran "Red" Maguire walked into the *Bugle* city room. He found the newspaper's obituary writer, Calvin Claggett, hammering the keys on his ancient Remington typewriter. Maguire brushed snow off his brown overcoat and fedora and hung them on a hook near the door. He squared his broad shoulders and ran his fingers through thick red hair.

"How's she go, Cal? Legendary Butte stiff writer snag another cold one?"

"That's staff writer to you, Maguire, you damn Irish mick. Show some respect in this family's time of need, will you?"

"So what's got you burning the Remington, Cal?"

"Bodies stacking up faster than I can put them to bed, Maguire. You know how it goes in Butte during the holidays. Half the city gets caught up in the Christmas rush. The funeral homes get the rest."

Maguire pointed to the paper in Claggett's typewriter. "Who's the poor soul crushed under the weight of your prose this morning?"

Claggett lit a butt from an overfilled ashtray. "Another wop from Meaderville. I knew her husband back when the Forever More paid him to haul bodies to the basement embalming room. He told me stories. His old lady was cold as ice and that's before she was dead."

“Now she gets the distinction of her charmed life being commemorated at the hand of the *Bugle's* finest obituary reporter?”

“Something like that, Maguire. I’m busy. Go write your own damn story.”

Claggett bent over his typewriter to resume his writing. Maguire went to his cluttered desk near the window. The *Bugle* city room filled the third floor of the Hirbour Block in uptown Butte. He looked down on lighted Christmas wreaths draped on light poles. Decorations twinkled in the snow. Soon 1955 would arrive. He would be happy to see 1954 go.

Except for Claggett’s typing, the city room at that early hour was mostly quiet. The only other person present was Clyde Stoffleman, the *Bugle* editor, who seemingly never went home. He had seen the underbelly of life and survived it. Stoffleman never talked about war except to acknowledge he had helped kill Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge. The nasty scar across his face told the rest of the story. Maguire figured Stoffleman had good reason to harbor secrets and left him alone.

Stoffleman shouted across the room. “Maguire! You got a murder or two to report for tomorrow’s paper? Not coasting on your laurels, are you, boy?” Then, for good measure, “Do I need to start looking for a new crime reporter?”

Maguire smiled. “Wait a day or so, boss. I’ll see what Ferndale has turned up.”

Stoffleman straightened his green eye shade. Maguire rarely saw him without it. A black strap encircled Stoffleman’s balding head to hold it in place. He kept a pencil or two tucked under the strap.

The old editor waved Maguire away and turned his attention to Claggett. “You planning to put that obituary to rest any time this century, Calvin?” He laughed at his joke, a familiar and overused one, before turning back to a

competitor newspaper he was reading. The *Bugle* was an independent paper unlike the Company mouthpieces. Stoffleman made sure the *Bugle* ate the others for breakfast.

Maguire allowed himself a quick glance at the desk where Nancy Addleston had worked. He had known her as Mary Miller, society reporter. For Maguire, the holiday joy on Butte's uptown streets failed to disguise a terrible summer and fall. He sat down and reached into the breast pocket inside his suit jacket for the familiar bundle of envelopes that a rubber band held together. Mary's note was there, among them, her red lipstick kiss still bright on the page.

With the note before him, Maguire dialed a number at the Butte Police Department. A growly voice came on the line. "Ferndale."

"How's she go, Duke? It's Maguire, looking for news."

"Hell, I know it's you. Don't sweet-talk me, newsboy. I ain't had my coffee yet. Chief started chewing on me the minute I walked in. Wants me prying into every damn crime in Butte, which you know ain't no short list. You'd think being a shot-up cop would earn a guy a little respect in this town."

"Give him time, Duke. You came back on the job what, a month ago? The chief's worried nothing got done while you were recuperating on the couch watching Jack Benny and George Burns."

"Recuperating, hell," Ferndale growled. "He's got thirty other cops to look into our bad business. Now here's what I've got to say about that"

Maguire held the phone away from his ear and reached for Mary's note as Ferndale ranted. "Thanks for being there for me last night," it read. He held it in front of him.

"Maguire, you there?"

"I'm listening, detective. You deserve better."

"Damn right. Now, about that news, not that I feel any affection for keeping the *Bugle* afloat with sensational crime stories. Remember that robbery I investigated a while back on the Continental Divide? At the bar in Elk Park?"

"Sure do. Strange one as I recall. The perp tore the owner's dress into strips to tie her up. Lots of drama for fifty bucks and change."

"I've got a feeling there's more to it, Maguire. Meet me over at the Silver Star coffee shop in an hour. Bring your notebook. Don't get too jacked about it. This ain't your sensational yellow journalism about a series of murders like we saw last summer. It's just, well, suspicious."

"No sensational murders, Duke? Claggett waded hip-deep in bodies this morning."

"Probably feeling warm all over about it too. Long as I've known Claggett, which has been my entire police career, he gets his jollies writing about dead people. Today I don't have the kind he writes about. Sorry about that, Maguire. See you at the Silver Star."

Ferndale hung up. Maguire put the black receiver back in its cradle. Whatever news Ferndale had to offer better be good. Stoffleman's demand for a story for the morning paper was no idle request. The editor gave Maguire three weeks of vacation after his stories about the summer Purple Rose murders. Maguire, like Ferndale, had never taken much time away from the job. Thoughts about Mary had consumed every mile of the lonely drive to California. How unbearable to see the ocean without her. Worse yet to know the woman he loved, if only for a short time, wasn't Mary but a stranger named Nancy. The ocean was new to him. Unceasing waves calmed a man who wrote about murder for a living. He thought about going with Mary to a sandy beach. Mary, in a yellow bathing suit, her shapely legs stretched and tanning under a tropical sun. Mary, before she was Nancy.

As Maguire pulled his overcoat back on, preparing to head to the Silver Star, Ted Ketchul strolled into the city room. Unlike his co-workers at the *Bugle* who dressed in business suits, Ketchul wore black trousers, plaid shirts, and work boots. As the *Bugle's* labor reporter, he covered miners on the Hill.

"Morning, Maguire," Ketchul said in his irking manner of looking past people when he spoke.

"Got any crime news for me, Ted?"

"Only crimes being committed today are coming from Company offices, as usual. Read about it in my story tomorrow, Maguire."

Maguire donned his fedora, overcoat and a pair of gloves and headed down the stairs to the street. Shoppers carrying packages crowded the sidewalk. An old man in a Santa cap stood outside a department store ringing a bell. A few men holding beer bottles loitered outside the M & M bar down the street. They shouted insults at passing motorists.

An aroma of fresh donuts and hot coffee hit Maguire when he entered the Silver Star. Ferndale waited in a back booth. The old detective reached out to shake Maguire's hand. He flinched from the gunshot wound in his left shoulder.

"Still hurting, Duke? You come back to work too soon?"

Ferndale grunted. "Nurses practically threw me out of the hospital after twisting my arm this way and that until I couldn't take it anymore and threw some cuss words their way. Never get shot, Maguire. First comes the bullet, then the damn sadistic therapy, then sitting around feeling sorry for yourself. One's as bad as the other. I ain't felt this bad since I got decked in that light heavyweight bout back in '22. Mind you, I never lost a fight after that. At least that I admit."

"Until Nancy Addleston shot you."

"Ain't that the sum of it, Maguire?"

A waitress wearing a robin's-egg blue uniform dress came to the booth. Maguire ordered black coffee and a donut with strawberry frosting. She wrote a ticket and left. Ferndale waited until she walked out of hearing distance.

"About the robbery in Elk Park. You already know Henry Fenton was in on it. Too bad Nancy Addleston silenced him for good. I think he might have made a useful informant until she put a bullet in him. Anyway, you wrote about Fenton and another man holding up the bar that night. Now we suspect the identity of the other robber. He's a miner at the Anselmo."

Just then the smiling waitress returned with Maguire's breakfast. Ferndale rolled his eyes as she flirted with Maguire. "Name's Simone, honey. New to Butte. Do you come to the Silver Star often? If you'd like to keep track, I work mornings, Monday through Saturday."

Maguire looked her over. "Where did you come from, Simone? I should drop in for coffee more often."

"Moved over from Deer Lodge a while back, honey. Been waitressing all my life." Simone touched Maguire's head. "I just love red hair. My mama gave me some Irish blood. Her name was Colleen Callaghan. Tip me more than a nickel, now, handsome, and you might see me tomorrow."

With that, Simone was gone.

Ferndale smirked. "What is this, a junior high dance? How about we talk about robbery, lover boy? You want a story or not?"

"Sorry. You have a suspect?"

Ferndale leaned over the table. "Name is Mack Gibbons. Hard case is what I hear. Likes to tie people up, call them names, make threats, that kind of thing. I plan to arrest him when he comes off shift at the Anselmo. Come along if you want."

"Sure, but what's the rest of the story? You told me on the phone that something doesn't add up."

Ferndale massaged his injured left shoulder with scarred fingers. Suddenly he looked older than his sixty-four years.

"Muscles stiffen in cold weather. Anyhow, this Gibbons character likes to mouth off when he drinks beer over at Babe McGraw's bar. He ain't no clear thinker, as you will see, but he said enough that Babe and a few others think Gibbons got himself in more trouble than this here one robbery. His name ring a bell?"

"Nope. Should it?"

"Beats the hell out of me. What I'm telling you is that while Gibbons gets drunk and crows about his crimes, maybe a few of them true, some of our business owners are finding hand-written threats in their mail."

"What kind of threats?"

Ferndale reached in his pocket. "Got one here. Take a look."

Maguire took the folded scrap of dirty paper. The crude handwriting read, "Pay up or we rob your joint. No dicks or else."

"I don't understand, Duke. How does somebody who receives this note know what it means? Pay how much to what people for what? This reads like a dime novel."

"That's the mystery, ain't it? Babe McGraw found this note on the floor behind the bar after she closed the other night. She had a hundred men and half a dozen women bellied up to that bar. Any one of them might have left the note." Ferndale took a deep drink from his coffee cup and signaled Simone for more. "You're curious, ain't ya? Hold on."

Simone swung by with a steaming carafe. When she finished pouring, she blew Maguire a kiss and sauntered away, smiling.

Ferndale smirked. "Evidently she don't know anything about your miserable history as a lover, Maguire. Sure as hell wish I didn't."

"How about if we keep that news out of the *Bugle*," Maguire cracked.

"So as I was saying, when Babe found this note she figured on more to come. I told her it looks like a classic case of extortion. Oldest trick for milking business owners I know. Threaten 'em, scare 'em, rough 'em up, force them into paying a so-called protection fee to back off. Seen some of this in Butte over the years but it's more like how the mob runs rackets in the big cities. Now I got to wonder if Babe's note, combined with similar verbal threats to business owners and that Elk Park robbery, adds up to a mile-high pile of trouble. You know, the Butte kind."

"Babe worried?"

"You kidding? She runs a bar full of miners fresh off shift wanting to wash the dust out of their throats. You've seen these men. She gets some of the worst. Tells me Mack Gibbons shows up every night. Babe takes matters into her own hands. Nothing scares that doll."

"You still romancing Babe?"

"Hell, that was over years ago. Except now and then."

"Tell me again when she hung the 'Duke' nickname on you?"

"Never tire of hearing it, huh? I was in her bar one night when a punk tried to rattle me over some grievance he had with cops. Came in swinging. I knocked him to the floor with a punch square to the face. Joker laid moaning. Babe poured beer on his head. When he tried to stand, she hit him so hard he slept for a week. Then she started riding me as Duke Ferndale. Of course, she made sure a couple dozen people in the bar heard."

"I can't think of a better title for a Butte light heavyweight boxing champ. How many fights did you win, anyway?"

"Fifty-two in the ring if you're keeping count. Off the books, a couple dozen. You know how she goes, helping the bar boys uptown understand who's boss. In this town, a couple punches to the face sometimes makes a better impression than a trip to jail."

"Your boxing credentials must warm Babe all over."

"Long time ago, Maguire. Titles make no difference to Babe but she does enjoy fighting. Anyhow, print what you want from what I said about the robbery. I ran it up the flagpole to the chief. He agreed it's a good idea to get the word out."

"So let me get this straight. You think this Gibbons character has something to do with scaring business owners? That he writes these notes?"

Ferndale shrugged. "Cops work on hunches. That is, unless real evidence stares us in the face."

"All you have on Gibbons is suspicion?"

"So far, Maguire, but he's a talker. He can't resist spilling the beans. If he's connected to these threats, he'll brag about it to anybody who cares to listen. Thing is, if he committed the Elk Park robbery with a gun and gets away with it, he's in the frame of mind that an old dick like me will never catch on to what he does next."

"Isn't robbery different from extortion?"

"Think about it, Maguire. The motive in both crimes is the same. The criminal wants to steal jingle. We call it jingle, most people call it money. You wonder why I think Gibbons is involved? Forget the method of the crime for a minute. Look at the result. Give me a little help in the *Bugle* if you can."

"Seems sketchy but I see what you're driving at, Duke. Think Babe will talk with me about it?"

"Ever hear of Babe holding back an opinion?"

Ferndale looked at his watch. "Time to head to the Anselmo to round up Gibbons. Word is, he comes topside at the noon whistle. You coming along?"

Maguire followed Ferndale out of the coffee shop. Simone waved goodbye. Hardly glamor girl material, thin with streaks of premature gray in her brown hair, but Maguire felt his heart leap. He walked back to the booth to leave a dollar tip.

Ferndale took no chances at the Anselmo. Two prowler cars with two cops each followed his battered sedan to the mine gate. They stood near the chippy hoist, waiting for the whistle, and when the cage opened Ferndale seized a wiry little man with sleeves rolled above his elbows and cuffed him. Falling snow gathered on his bare arms.

Other miners stopped and watched. Some shouted threats at Ferndale. He and one of the other cops wrestled Gibbons, his face grimy from smoke and dust, over to a black and white.

"Ain't nobody messes with Cracker!" he shouted, invoking his Butte nickname. "I'm union, hear me? Mess with one of us, you mess with all of us."

Several blackened miners edged toward the cops. Ferndale stuffed Gibbons in the back seat and slammed the door.

"Time to get the hell out of here, Maguire. Got a feeling what comes won't be no picnic."

Gibbons, an ornery little cuss, argued and fought all the way to the jail. Handcuffed, he head-butted Ferndale's injured left shoulder as the cops wrestled him into a cell. Ferndale groaned at the pain before he knocked Gibbons cold with a smashing right hook.

"Let him sleep that one off!" Ferndale yelled. His angry voice echoed off the concrete walls.

Maguire stood back from Ferndale's explosion of violence. "Easy there, Duke. Judge will wonder how the defendant got a shiner and broken nose."

"Who the hell cares?" Ferndale retorted. He slammed the cell door and locked it. Maguire smiled. Seeing Duke at his best would make good copy in the *Bugle*.

That night, a union lawyer sprung Gibbons from jail. They came to court the next morning to plead not guilty. The judge fined Gibbons for disorderly conduct. He also dismissed the robbery charges for insufficient evidence. When the lawyer alleged police violence, pointing at his client's smashed and swollen nose, the judge laughed and ordered them out of the courtroom.

By noon, Gibbons was back at work, bragging to his buddies half a mile underground that when he caught Ferndale alone, he would work him over until he cried for his mama.

~ 2 ~

'Tragic story, Arnie'

Back at the *Bugle*, Clyde Stoffleman greeted the news of a robbery ring in Butte with predictable cynicism. "About time you found a crime story fit to print, Maguire. I figured I needed to retire you to the society pages to write stories about party favors and engagements. We have an opening, you know."

The editor cut deep. Maguire still endured nightmares over ending the Purple Rose Murders. His eyewitness story about lovely Mary Miller, society reporter, who became Nancy Addleston, killer, hit the big time. *Associated Press* and *United Press International* and all the big national papers ran the story under his full byline, Kieran "Red" Maguire, just as he asked. Stoffleman negotiated agreements that other news agencies run the story in its entirety or not at all. Not that any of them needed persuading. Stoffleman wrote an editor's note explaining how Maguire wrote the full story looking at Nancy's body, still warm after she plugged herself square in the chest. It was a sensational tale, too sad and salacious for even buttoned-up conservative news agencies to ignore.

The story ran first in the *Bugle*. Stoffleman read Maguire's typed copy with trembling fingers. The gruff editor put down the story and cried. He ran upstairs to show it to the Old Man, the publisher who owned the *Bugle*, who ordered an *Extra* to hit the streets. By mid-afternoon, newsboys barked

from every street corner in uptown Butte with the startling headlines held aloft:

Purple Rose Killer Revealed

Butte's Greatest Murder Mystery Solved

Every bar patron in uptown Butte read the *Extra* that day. Maggie O'Keefe reported from Mercury Street that after a newsboy brought papers to the Windsor, customers lost their interest in her girls. Everyone convened in the parlor to talk about the story.

The press, two floors beneath the city room, kicked out *Bugles* until, as the ink-stained foreman described, it became "blistering hot" and blew a circuit.

City room telephones rang into the night. Other than Maguire's, the busiest was the phone belonging to the society reporter everyone in the city room had known as Mary Miller.

"Macabre curiosity," is what Stuffleman made of it. "They're probably expecting her to answer. You know, a voice from the grave, that kind of thing. Never underestimate the public's desire to know every last grimy detail, which of course we aspire to print for them in exchange for their hard-earned dimes."

Maguire loved the woman he knew as Mary. It was a short romance, one that teased him with its promise but left him abruptly, much as his mother had done when he was a young boy. After Mary shot herself, Maguire refused to let his emotion creep into the task before him. He sat at the typewriter and wrote the story of Nancy Addleston. He wrote furiously to suppress an irrational fear that she would awaken and confront him again. She lay slumped against the

wall in the dreary abandoned warehouse. His urgent tapping on the keys echoed in the rafters of the empty building. He wrote everything he ever knew, and suspected, about Mary. An hour later he finished.

A flurry of activity followed. Maguire raced outside. He drove his Pontiac up Butte Hill to the *Bugle* where he handed his story to Clyde Stoffleman. The editor read the opening lines aloud, his hands shaking, his voice cracking, his emotion showing. He slumped into his chair and reached for the telephone to summon Police Chief Donald Morse. "Maguire blew the Purple Roses case wide open," Stoffleman barked. "He's got gunshots, a dead perp, even motive. I kid you not, chief. My boy has it all!" Minutes later, Maguire caught a ride with the chief and a parade of cops back to the dark abandoned warehouse. He led them up the stairs to Nancy's lifeless body. The gun she used to kill all those people, and herself, reposed against her right thigh, barrel up. Blood leaked from a small hole above her heart. Her hands, turning blue, lay palms up as if appealing for forgiveness. One eye remained partly open. The room felt heavy with death and the odor of gunpowder. Five other cops crowded around the chief, who removed his hat and bowed his head. "She's the one?" he said quietly to Maguire.

"All along it turns out," Maguire said. He struck a match on the wall to light a cigarette. Then he leaned against it, shoulder first, feet crossed at the ankles, hands thrust into the pockets of his dark suit. He pushed his fedora back. A hush fell over the room. The chief watched the crime reporter study the scene before him. He saw a tear glisten on Maguire's cheek. "I loved her," Maguire admitted. His face hardened. "Read about it in the *Bugle* and weep."

The chief touched Maguire's shoulder with manicured fingers. "I know loss, Red. You saw it firsthand. My daughter ...," he offered, and then, "You saw her shoot herself?"

Maguire blew a ring of smoke and nodded. "Right in front of me, chief. She looked me in the eye first."

"Why didn't you call us right away instead of writing a story, Red?"

Maguire shrugged. "The *Bugle* butters my bread."

Arnie Petrovich came with a hearse. At the Forever More Funeral Home, Maguire carried Nancy's pale body to a basement table where Arnie would decorate her for burial. The stooping undertaker, reeking of formaldehyde, probed at her wound with cracked fingers. "Suicide, Maguire? Shame, all this. She knew where to place the bullet to end it. When I had her father in here all those many years ago, he was in far worse shape, all beaten to hell. In any case, dead is dead, no doubt about it."

"Tragic story from start to sudden conclusion, Arnie." Maguire lingered. At that moment he felt no sadness for the scene before him and wondered why. He felt nothing at all at witnessing death by gun. He leaned a broad shoulder against the wall, crossed one leg over the other, and took a deep breath audible enough that Arnie turned to see his blank stare.

"Maybe you want to stay for this, Red? I got another cold one in the other room that comes first because his funeral is tomorrow. Family wants open casket. They will hate what they see. I work miracles with face paint. Trouble is, a falling beam clobbered him in a tunnel at the Lexington mine. Want to see what that does to a man?"

"No, Arnie. I won't stay for her, either." Maguire bent to look at Nancy in her eternal sleep. Her blond hair framed her face. Unlike when he had known her as Mary, she wore no makeup. He touched her cold hand. He kissed her forehead. Pretty even in death.

"Suit yourself, Red. She was a beauty, all right. You knew her."

"Yes, that too," Maguire said.

"Does she have a family? If not, she's headed for a pauper's grave over at the city cemetery."

"No, Arnie, not that. I will pay. Bury her next to her father. Nobody knows. Nothing to gain by wrenching further public outrage over her sad life. Put her away quietly. I'll cover your costs."

"People will want to know, Maguire. You, more than anyone, know that."

Maguire felt for the letters in his pocket. He squeezed his eyes shut.

"We won't tell them, Arnie."

Two days later Maguire visited the fresh grave. He thought of Nancy's victims, dwelling in similar circumstances underground. "Mary, I loved you, but what Nancy did was so terribly wrong," he whispered over the broken soil.

He walked to his Pontiac and headed west to California. That was in September. Back on the job in October, Maguire struggled with his newfound fame. People came to the *Bugle* city room asking for his autograph. He sent them away. He spent evenings alone in his room at the Logan Hotel drinking beer and struggling with something called "vertical hold" on the television. He fell into fitful slumbers where Nancy's stricken face appeared. Always, she held the revolver to her chest an instant before she pulled the trigger.

Some afternoons Maguire went to visit Ferndale. Infection from his gunshot wound slowed the old detective's return to the police force. His doctor kept him in bed at Silver Bow Hospital for three weeks until Ferndale put on his clothes one morning and walked out. A cop on patrol found Ferndale walking along the road, coatless in a sleet storm, his left arm in a sling. He spent another three weeks convalescing at home. He asked Maguire to bring him whiskey. When Ferndale drank, he told stories about romancing Babe on the

seat of her pickup truck. "Caught her reaching for my stick shift," he grinned, embellishing the story a bit more each time he told it.

One day Chief Morse arrived at the house, catching Ferndale in a rare sober moment. "Get your coat on, detective. You have work to do." That was that. Ferndale climbed off the couch, strapped on his gun, and resumed his twelve-hour days like he had never left.

Maguire wrote a *Bugle* story about Ferndale's return to the police department. It began: "The battered hero detective finds serious crime wherever he looks. Punched in the jaw, thrown to the pavement, shot in the shoulder, and ignored more death threats than any cop in Butte. Harold Ferndale, known as 'Duke' among Mining City denizens for his boxing skills, is back on the job."

Ferndale appreciated the story but confided to Maguire he had tired of chasing thugs and killers. "Getting shot hurts like hell," he said.

A few days before Christmas in 1954, Maguire reported in the *Bugle* that Ferndale again arrested Cracker Gibbons on suspicion of robbery. The detective admitted privately to Maguire that the arrest was another shot in the dark. "Make him worry that we know something he don't," Ferndale said. For publication, Ferndale spoke of Gibbons as "an uptown drunk who does bidding for union influences and none of it good." The quote appeared two paragraphs below Maguire's byline.

He sat at his typewriter in the city room when he noticed Ted Ketchul pacing in front of him. Ketchul held the morning paper in front of him like it was poison.

"Something bothering you, Ted?"

"It's your latest story, Red. You imply somebody on the Hill is running a racket with the business types. Are you accusing miners and unions? I'm not hearing any of that."

"Not implying, Ted. My information comes from Duke Ferndale over at the cop shop. I'm reporting the story as you well know."

"Don't talk down to me, Maguire. It's the general tone, isn't it? Accusation without verification. Why didn't you talk to me about it first? Did you forget labor is my beat?"

Maguire squinted at Ketchul, who twitched like a prowling cat.

"Did you forget crime is mine, Ted? What makes you think miners don't commit crimes? With ten thousand miners on the Hill there's a good chance of it."

"There's nothing to it," Ketchul said, looking somewhat subdued. Maguire knew little about Ketchul. They had worked together for nine years. Ketchul, like Stoffleman, was a war combat veteran. He had survived the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Ketchul said little about his experience aboard the USS Nevada. Maguire knew him as a daring but secretive reporter who wrote stories about mine safety and labor negotiations. Ketchul rarely reported news about trouble between miners. Stoffleman, having experienced combat himself, said Ketchul had seen enough heartbreak at Pearl Harbor to last a lifetime.

Ketchul crumpled up the paper, tossed it at Maguire, and stormed out of the city room. A few desks away, Claggett watched the exchange. He pulled himself into a standing position, which for Claggett meant stooped. Forty years of writing obituaries shaped him that way, as did his second job helping Arnie Petrovich embalm bodies at the Forever More.

Claggett shuffled over to Maguire. He offered a pack of Old Golds. "Care for a smoke, Red?" he asked in his raspy voice.

“Appreciated,” Maguire said, reaching for a cigarette.

“Don’t let him get to you. Ketchul, he had a hard life. People think I’m blind to struggles with the living, preoccupied with the dead as I am. Nobody dies without baggage. Ketchul fights demons like everyone else. He hides it but it eats at him. We hope whatever worry burns him inside might extinguish someday. Give him time.”

Maguire blew a cloud of blue smoke. “I never figured you for a philosopher, stiff writer.”

Claggett cracked a rare smile. “Staff writer, which you well know. You and me, Maguire, we have something in common. We both know where the bodies are buried in this town.”

He knows, Maguire thought. He knows about Nancy.

Claggett returned to his typewriter. What irony that he will pen obituaries until he dies, Maguire thought to himself.

Maguire began writing the news about Gibbons’ latest quick exit from jail when his phone rang. It was Ferndale.

“Meet me at the Valley View service station,” he said. “We have another robbery and this one’s worse.”

Masks, Mayhem and Murder is my second Red Maguire mystery novel. The first is *Mystery of the Purple Roses*. Both stories take place in the legendary mining city of Butte, Montana, in 1954 and 1955. Maguire reports crime for the *Bugle* newspaper.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "kevinsgiles" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Website: kevinsgiles.com

Email: kevin@kevinsgiles.com

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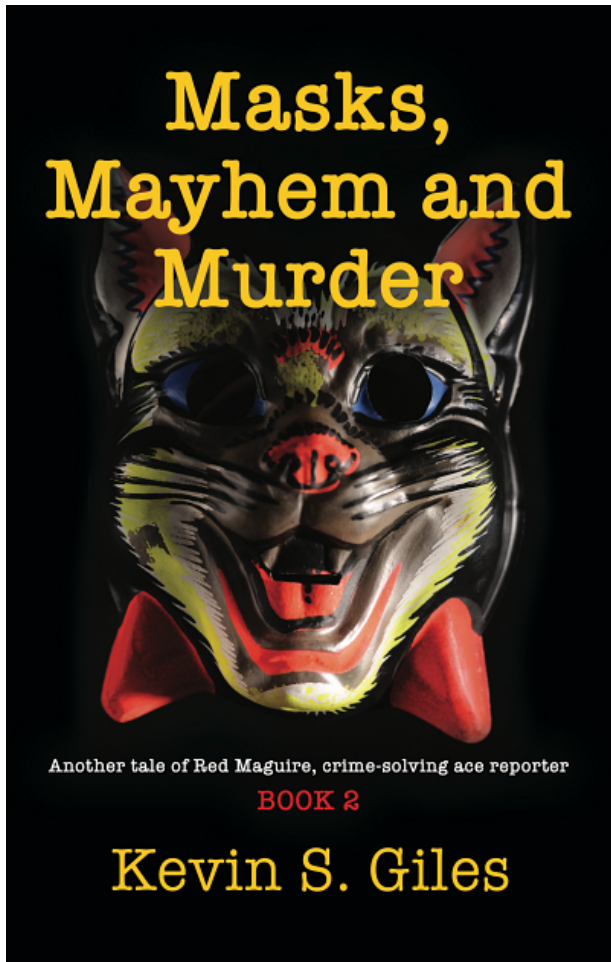
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Red Maguire, a love-starved Irish newspaper reporter who belongs on the cover of pulp fiction magazines, is famous on the winding streets of Montana's notorious mining city for his newspaper scoops. Now he uncovers a fresh story for the Butte Bugle.

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