

By William Crombie

Nothing but the Truth

I didn't do it, Your Honor. Swear to God and all His angels, I didn't. Wouldn't never touch a hair on her head. I was just left, out to get us some coffee for breakfast, you see, when it must have happened. I swear on my mama's grave I didn't do nothing. I didn't do nothing to that poor girl. You want the whole truth? Well, here. I'll tell it. See, I was with some buddies at the tavern— you know the one, right? The one on the corner of Washington and Central. Mike's. Anyways, we was drinking and having a good time. Celebrating that new Amendment. Goddamn, it's nice to finally be allowed to drink booze. Pardon my language. Never had nothing to do with those dirty bootleggers. Not me. Anyways, we was drinking and talking and this broad catches my eye from across the bar, and I thinks to myself, I thinks, hey, I should buy that lady a drink. So I walks over to her and I sits down next to her and I says, "Hey Mike, get this fine lady a drink." And he brings one over, and we get to talking, and I'm a little tipsy but I'm still plenty charming, and she's plenty charmed. She was a nice girl, that's for sure. Damn shame what happened to her. Damn tragedy. Pardon my language, Your Honor. So we talk and find out we have a little bit in common— we like the same pictures, especially the ones with Bing in them, and we like his music, and we like Louis Armstrong and Gershwin and Fats Waller, too. We're still drinking— I buy another couple rounds— and one thing leads to another, and she says, "My place, or yours?" then took another shot. Damn, that girl could drink. Pardon my language. See, Your Honor, I'm a good man; a God-fearing man and an upstanding citizen and all, but when a pretty girl just up and asks you like that, ain't nobody on God's green earth could resist. So I says, "Mine," and she smiles at me in that sweet way pretty girls do, and I says goodbye to all

my buddies and we go outside to her jalopy— I'd walked there with my buddies after work. It wasn't all shiny and such, but I like that in a car. It's got character, is what it means. Shows it's been places. Not like all these shiny new cars that have been coming around these days and—

Yes, Your Honor. Sorry, Your Honor. I'll get back to that night. Anyways, it was probably sometime around ten o'clock, and we get in the jalopy and drive to my place. We get out, drink a little bit more in the kitchen, and go to the bedroom, and we're downright drunk at this point but I still manage to undo off my belt and she takes off her dress and she gets down and— Yes, Your Honor. Sorry, Your Honor. That ain't appropriate for a courtroom setting like this one. Damn right, Your Honor. Pardon my language. Anyways, we. You know. And we're even drunker than before, but we drink some more and then. You know. Again. It was harder this time, because I was having trouble getting— Yes, Your Honor. Sorry, Your Honor. Anyways, we eventually get to sleeping around midnight, I think, and I wakes up in the morning with the damndest hangover there ever was. Pardon my language. That's why I was out getting coffee, see? I thinks to myself, I should go and be getting some coffee, because that helps like the dickens when it comes to hangovers. Or so I hear. Not that I would know, being a law-abiding man, and what with Prohibition just now ending. Anyways. So I goes to the Piggly Wiggly's down the street a few blocks and I go in and get a bag of coffee— I've got a grinder at home and all— and I'm still hung over as all get out, but I'm a friendly kind of guy, you know? So I starts to strike up a conversation with the cashier. He can tell you. Just ask him. "Nice weather," I said. See, it was then the police cars went by the store with their lights flashing and their tires screeching and their sirens going off like Hell's own choir— no offense meant to all you fine officers of the law, mind. Just part of doing your job. And you do a damn fine job, too, if you don't mind me saying so. Pardon my language. And I don't think much of it, being a law-abiding citizen that ain't

never done nothing wrong. But I thinks to myself, I'd best be getting home. The lovely lady might be waking up anytime now, and she'll be wanting some coffee, too, because she drank just as much as I did, and she being smaller and a lady of delicate constitution she'll have the hangover even harder than I do. Because I'm just that kind of guy, you know? Considerate. So I walks back down to my house, and outside, there's all of you fine policemen out there, going all serious around the lawn and looking through the windows and such, and I thinks to myself, that's rather odd, that a bunch of officers of the law should be inspecting an upstanding citizen such as myself. I wasn't running away, see. I'd just realized I'd forgotten my wallet back at the Piggly Wiggly's. But I guess you was all thinking I was running away, because before I knowed it, I'm getting tackled from behind and these here handcuffs are being put on me and I'm being put in a police car and brought to jail. It must've happened while I was out. I was at the Piggly Wiggly's, see? And that there law man says she weren't even cold yet. Couldn't have been me. I don't have the slightest idea how it happened. Somebody must have broken in while I was up the street, the sick bastard. Pardon my language. Ain't right what he did, cutting her all up like that. It definitely weren't me put her head in the icebox. Lord above, no. And I ain't got no idea where her legs are. Swear on my mama's grave.