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Holidays from Danger

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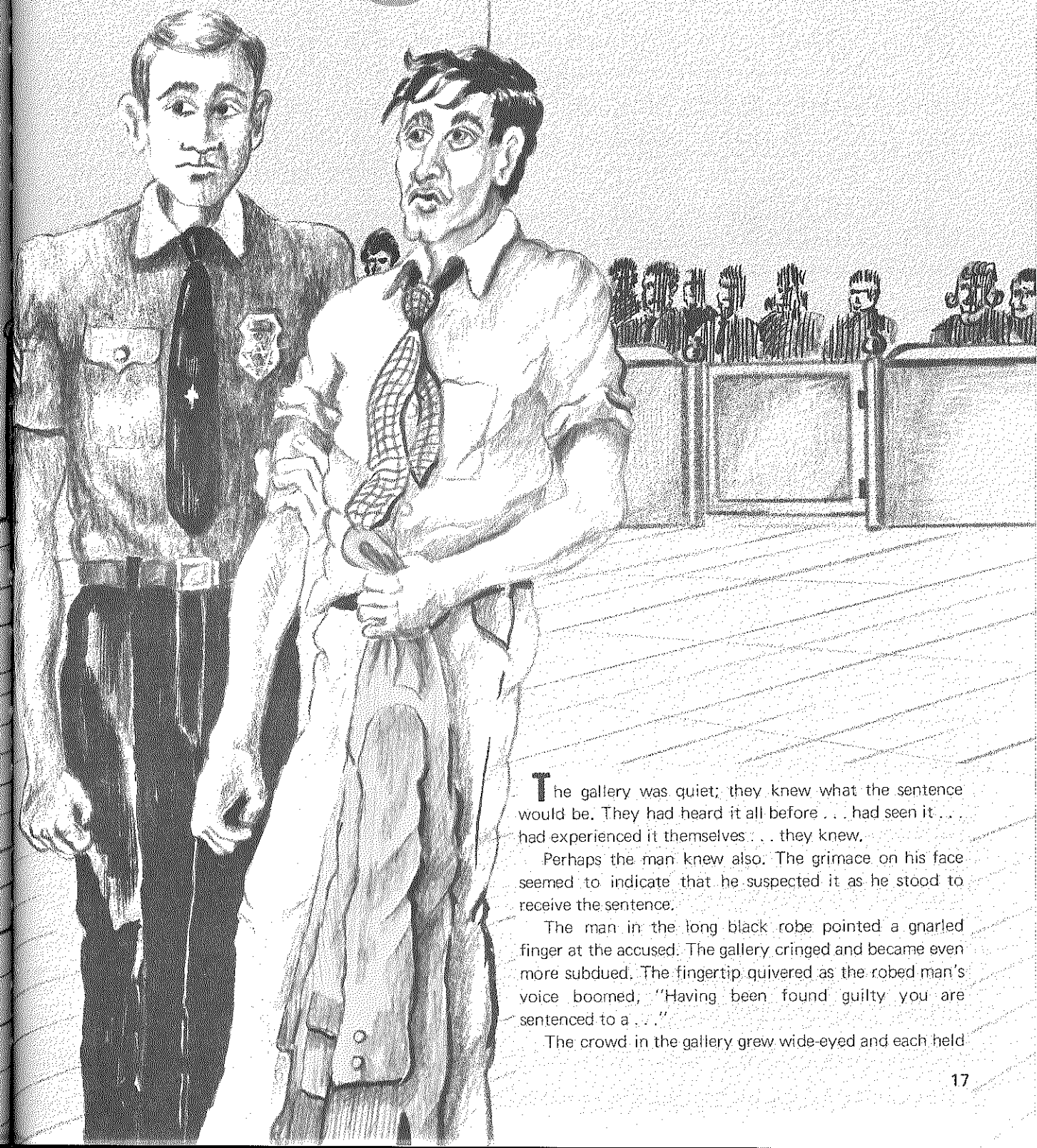
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Holidays from



Danger



The gallery was quiet; they knew what the sentence would be. They had heard it all before . . . had seen it . . . had experienced it themselves . . . they knew.

Perhaps the man knew also. The grimace on his face seemed to indicate that he suspected it as he stood to receive the sentence.

The man in the long black robe pointed a gnarled finger at the accused. The gallery cringed and became even more subdued. The fingertip quivered as the robed man's voice boomed, "Having been found guilty you are sentenced to a . . ."

The crowd in the gallery grew wide-eyed and each held

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his breath for what he knew was coming next . . . The robed man swallowed, paused for a brief moment, then continued, “. . . sentenced to a (choke) Ground Safety lecture.”

The guilty man screamed.

Some in the crowd began crying, others were moaning in a kind of rhythmic chant, while some leaped up and began clawing their way to the door.

The guilty man fell on the floor and began sobbing pitifully, “Why me? Why me?”

The sounds of the hysterical crowd and the sobbing man were smashed to silence under the pounding gavel of the man in the robe.

Once again the voice blasted, “Why you?” and again more loudly, “Why you? Listen again to the evidence and answer your own question.”

Officers scooped the quivering man from the floor and ground him into the chair as the man in the robe leaned forward grasping the edges of the high bench.

“Remember last Thanksgiving?”

The man stopped quivering and began to rub his hand.

“Ah . . . yes, I see you do,” said the robed one.

“You were really quite impressive waving that carving knife around like a latter-day Genghis Kahn . . . and I’m sure the turkey cheered at your masterful carving technique as you sliced your hand neatly between the thumb and forefinger.”

A gasp came from the gallery. The man in the robe continued, “Your family thought it was really a stroke of bad luck to have such a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner ruined by an accident. In your own mind you were convinced the knife had deliberately and wantonly attacked you.”

“Knives are evil,” chanted the crowd in the gallery.

“And how about Christmas?” the robed one continued. “You do remember Christmas, don’t you?”

The man’s face went blank then he scratched his head knocking his hair-piece to the floor which exposed his totally bald head. He scrambled to retrieve it as the voice behind the bench continued.

“Yes . . . I see it’s coming back to you. It was a nice Christmas tree . . . so green . . . so pretty . . . so . . . so

Christmas. And those sparkling lights that were handed down by your Grandmother were incredibly beautiful, especially the first time you plugged them in and the two bare wires touched. What a brilliant, though momentary, light. But thanks to your foresight you had a couple of spare fuses around the house and a few strands of scotch tape mended those wires perfectly. The decorated tree, with all its lighted splendor, was a sight to behold . . . right out of a storybook . . . that is until Christmas Eve . . . the night of the fire.”

“Oh, the poor man,” someone in the gallery moaned.

The robed one cast a stern look into the gallery and continued, “At least it didn’t burn down your house and you did manage to salvage a few of the gifts under the blazing tree, at the expense of your hair and several layers of skin. Your family wasn’t too unhappy spending Christmas day by your bedside in the hospital.”

“Ho — Ho — Ho,” said some sadist in the crowd and was immediately mobbed by those around him.

The sound of the gavel stirred the mob to submission as the man in the robe continued.

“I’m sure you remember New Year’s Eve.”

The man grinned sheepishly.

“Very well, I see that you remember at least a part of it. You were a great host at the combination New Year’s-Welcome Home From the Hospital Party. The booze flowed freely and you were pouring with a flourish. Your powers of persuasion were fantastic. Take that good friend of yours who wanted to take a taxi home . . . you convinced him that he was perfectly capable of driving home . . . even in the snow. I’m sure he’ll thank you properly himself . . . if he ever comes out of the coma. Yes, you were the perfect host. Your family certainly appreciates the fact that you drove another friend home yourself because he was too drunk to drive. It’s a shame the police spotted you. Unfortunately, those balloon tests are fair and, yes, the fine for DWI is pretty stiff.”

“Down with the fuzz,” the crowd shouted.

The police officers in the court rose slowly from their chairs and started to move toward the crowd.

“Long live the protectors of law and order,” said the crowd changing chants quickly.

The man in the long black robe leaned back in his chair and surveyed the convicted man. “Your holidays were certainly filled with excitement last year but what about this year; are you going to take a holiday from danger?”

The convicted man bounded from his chair spurring a series of “Yes Sirs.” Then he paused for a moment and asked, “Your Honor, when must I receive the sentence . . . the (shudder) Ground Safety lecture?”

“Mister,” the judge said rising from the bench, “You’ve Had It!” ➤