

## Six extracts from the Johnny Hiscock files

By Jacques Groen

### *1, The Case of the Disappearing Doors*

The door has left the building. I'm in hot pursuit. The name's Hiscock, Johnny Hiscock, private dick, on the tail of something large.

Doors have been reported missing for some time. I've established links between disappearance and doordullness. This door's so dull, it had to be the next target. It's leaving town under cover of dark, down Route 66, into the desert, along a rough track. We're going deep into the hinterland.

The suspect door's now joined by other doors, kicking up dust clouds. My motor coughs, stalls. It gets going again but dies after some hundred yards. Trail lost. Next day I wake up to parched landscape. Ahead of me a forest of a thousand doors, all closed. Like this case.

I'm back in the office. My secretary, high heels, blouse, miniskirt, sits cross-legged on my desk, adoring. The check drops through the letterbox, self-shreds. My door smiles vengeance.

### *2. The Case of the Missing Bubbly*

Blind Louie has come to see me. He owns a speakeasy on Sunset Alley. Booze is being siphoned off, wholesale. We're both tap water men ourselves but this has to stop. The name's Hiscock. Johnny Hiscock. Private dick. "You loose't, I find't."

I'm casing the joint. My secretary pours coffee. She's wearing something red, low cut. She's hot, winds down the window.

Next morning Louie opens up. I secure the building. Six bottles of bubbly gone. I go around the hood, ears to the ground, run into Talking Head Tony, who has it from Sammy the Snitch who heard absolutely nothing from Bronco the Blabber. I stake the stockroom out, overnight, single-handed, dangerous.

At two EST an arm reaches through a hole in the wall. I cuff it. Bronco the Blabber lives with Prosecco the Kit next door. He kept way too schtum.

And Johnny Hiscock cannot be fooled.

Case closed.

### *3. The Case of the Bootlegger*

My Cadillac Goldstream-Coupe floats along the highway. Jane, my pillion-rider cross-legged secretary in clean pinstripe pink, six inch heels, trains her sunglass visor onto the suspect.

The name's Hiscock, Johnny Hiscock, private dick. I crack cases, wrap them up like pigs in blankets. I make a living.

We just passed Midge the Bruiser, member of the infamous Popcorn family, a crime novel type of villain, bootlegger, pimp, pusher, punk. The list goes on. Dangerous and armed. Jane checks the warrants list. The Bruiser is wanted for crimes against the people, an unpaid double parking ticket he ran up on 25th Street, opposite Coffee Jo's deli.

I've got the top down, so Jane holds the flashing blue light up. Midge accelerates but runs into congested traffic. A shootout follows. But Johnny always gets his man and Jane blows the smoke from the tip of my gun.

It's another wrap.

### *4. The Case of the Rag Trade Troubles*

Carlos the Redmist Knuckles gives me the hostile lowdown from his highchair. Calls those dress-designing Williams sisters racket rousers in black tutus. Creating turf war in the garment industry. Crossing baselines with their wrong outfits. Wants them out.

The name's Hiscock, Johnny Hiscock, private dick. Jane, my secretary cringes. Carlos' eyes follow her V-neck way past break point. Not surprising he likes height advantage over deuce. I look around. Business ain't good. Suggest he should get some coaching from the side lines. Propose the ballsier Williams sisters. He lunges out. Tries to slice me. But Jane, dressed to rumble in the jungle, grand slams him an overhead handbag lob. Delivers an ace. Served at 135mph.

I go to get him some water. Pass the stockroom. Empty but for tutus and sportswear. All labelled 'Williams', matching my investigation. Thief caught. The sisters should be happy. Game over. Hiscock delivers again.

### *5. The Case of the Mucked-out Stable*

Reaper fiddles the padlock on the lock-up, slides in. Muck the Stable, leader of the Pop-up-Bungle gang, left seconds ago with a huge suitcase. My guess? Contains yesterday's Community Chest heist. Big dollars for info. Giant Rake now rounds the corner. Pulls his piece, goes in too. There's a shootout. Only Reaper stumbles out, blacktop for lunch.

The name's Hiscock, Johnny Hiscock, private dick, flat-bellied on the facing roof, training my binos. My secretary Jane, designer sneakers, feline outfit, nail extensions, hair coiffed to a gem, lays besides me, films the lot. I've been shadowing this gang. Rumors, nous, hood knowledge. Bingo. Time to phone the law. Give them plate numbers of Muck's treads. Call-back ten minutes later. Caught more red-handed than a Valspar paint bucket. In the correct color.

Big bonus for Jane. Cleaner streets to cruise for everyone. Just another day for Johnny Hiscock.

### *6, The Case under the Red Rose*

Al the Eel is found swimming with the fishes, breaststroke. Handy work from the Caring Butcher gang. Longstanding turf war. Don't ask. Earlier Tattoo Tony marked the spot where Dim the Dodo is sleeping in concrete footings. Things are out of hand. Al's widow hired my services, wants it finished. The name's Hiscock, Johnny Hiscock, private dick.

I'm an invisible shadow, tailing Sunny Sam, dark character in this 'hood. Gang leader. He turns. I dive into a doorway. Next I feel cold steel entering me from behind. Mac the Knife! I slump to the ground. Make a last call to Jane my secretary, beehive, miniskirt, low cut tight top, six inch heels. Lovely lipstick.

Three days later I get gently lowered into what is my last case. Jane, in pretty black veil, black everything bar redrimmed eyes, throws me a final rose, tenderly.

A tear drops down. Another tear.

Curtains.