

# LOVE MARCHES ON

*For the kids on the train.*

# LOVE MARCHES ON

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Book design by the author

Second Edition

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**Petey Stonehenge, Lanny Big Ben, and Frank Parthenon** celebrating, 1922. Cha-Cha Compton noted that Ricky “Three-Face” Drake was also in this photo, but had been “shot out of it.”

**LANNY BIG BEN:** When I am sixteen I am running with the Clock Spitters, so named on account of we stand by the pedestal clock on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and spit. We are clock spitting one day when we tangle with another gang what is called the Post Flossies, so named on account of they stand outside the post office and floss. Tough guys, sure. The Flossies take out six of the Spitters, and the Spitters what remain is absorbed into the Flossies. By this way I am getting to know Frank Parthenon, on account of one day he kills all of the Flossies except for me, on account of I am not there that day.

So I am now running with Parthenon. Most of his boys then is from the Vin Versailles gang. Vin is giving his boys the names of famous landmarks of the world, and this is how Frank Parthenon is getting his name, and I am getting mine, Lanny Big Ben, on account of the clock, which is natural for an old Clock Spitter. This is fate, sure. Other guys in those days is Jimmy Leaning Tower of Pisa, Petey Stonehenge, and Baby Jay Staten Island Ferry Falana.

I am telling you a Frank Parthenon story. For some years, Frank is mad for maroon. It is a color. Everything has to be maroon with him. His tie, his socks, everything. He is lighting his cigarettes with a maroon lighter. You never see a guy so nuts for maroon. Well, Frank and Petey Stonehenge and I are going in together on a racehorse, and naturally Frank is naming the horse Maroon June and dressing jockeys in maroon and making anything what can be maroon, maroon. Petey and me, we are going to the stables on Sunday morning on account of Frank is telling us to, and even the *hay* is maroon. Parthenon is having it dyed. Petey Stonehenge is a wiseguy, and he is saying, “Yeah, Frank, this is a good horse, but I do not particularly care for the color maroon.” Frank is smooth and casual. He shoots Petey. But the bullet is going through his hat. But the gunshot is scaring Maroon June, who is going berserk and trampling Petey to death. We are burying Petey and the horse is dropping dead from eating maroon hay.



**Chowderhead Harry and Texas Guinan**, circa 1924.

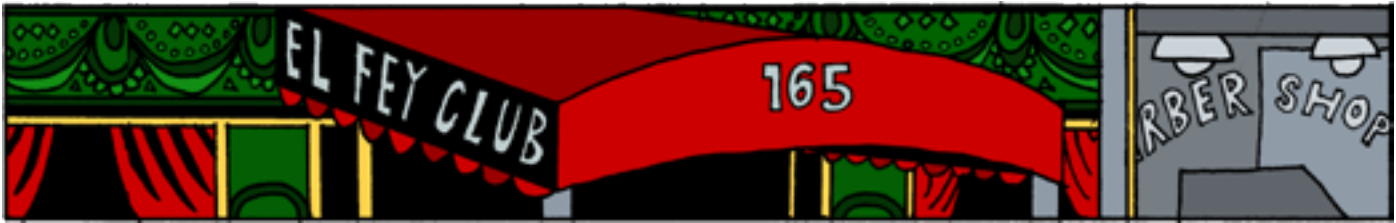
**CHOWDERHEAD HARRY:** Then in the twenties Parthenon became a bootlegger, like everybody else. In those days all the small-timers was trying to figure ways of getting hooch across the Canadian border into the States, and Parthenon, he had this cockamamie idea of putting it in snow globes. So we go up to Ottawa. Parthenon knows a snow globe guy there, and we buy maybe three hundred of these little snow globes, take them apart, and fill them up with hooch and put them back together. Well, we get across the border, no problems. But then we are passing through Buffalo in bad weather, late at night, and we are in a head-on collision with another truck. By a coincidence, this truck happens to be hauling a big huge shipment of snow globes. Well, it is a mess. There is snow globes all over the road, some is broken, some is not, but there is no telling what is what. Parthenon, he starts gathering up all the unbroken merchandise he can find, and

opening them up and taking a sip, so that he can tell which ones is water and which ones is hooch. He musta drunk two hundred snow globes.

I felt bad the night we bumped off Parthenon. That was a bitter errand. But Mr. Larry Fay, he was going to make sure that we, Tommy the Turtle and me, did what he, Mr. Fay, wanted, to Parthenon, or somebody else, I do not know who, would do what he, Mr. Fay, wanted, to us, Tommy and Harry. The life was simple like that. You was always making decisions who to kill so you do not get killed. This was a cold one, because we was working for Parthenon, Tommy and me, and Mr. Fay, he had us rub out Parthenon in Parthenon's own style, which was you put a sheet over a guy and shoot him through the sheet. It was easy clean-up, he said. So when I threw a sheet over him he knew. The life was like that. One day you are watching a guy drink snow globes off the road in Buffalo, the next day you are putting a sheet over him. Goodbye.

Tommy the Turtle, he never had second thoughts about these things. He said, "I have a heart of gold—money is all I love." He loved the life, never minded the danger. Me, I could not stomach it after a time. This is why I now live in Miami Beach, and Tommy the Turtle is at the bottom of the East River with no head.

**LANNY BIG BEN:** My opinions about Frank is, there is some guys that is never having *enough*, and this is Frank. He cannot survive because he is wanting everything, and when you are wanting this you are running against guys what is doing anything to beat you, on account of they rather die than be second monkey. If Frank is happy small-time, he is making it, but he is wanting more and more, and never satisfied. When I am eating steaks in Chicago with Frank in 1913 I am so hungry enough I am eating



three steaks. Frank is threatened. He is eating four steaks. I am not any more hungry; however, I am disliking his one-upmanship. I am eating five steaks. Frank, five. I am eating six, seven, eight. Frank is eating ten. I am on the floor and Frank is squeezing my neck. I am declaring him the winner. We are both throwing up our guts in a hotel for two days.

**CHA-CHA COMPTON:** I was a showgirl in the *Foibles*, and Frank took a fancy to me, oh, it musta been '22 or '23. He used to come backstage to see me, always flowers, always first. He was very sweet, very commanding, very possessive—*very* possessive. He used to take me around to all the clubs, and



**Frank Parthenon and Cha-Cha Compton, 1923**

introduce me to people, and he'd say, "This is my girl," and if anyone looked at me he'd beat them to death with a chair.

Frank was always promising to make me a big star, and he had this real sleazy pal that was a talent agent, named Lee Pants [sic]. I think Pants needed somebody outta the way, and Frank did him a favor. Anyhow, Frank got Lee Pants to represent me, but then before too long, Frank lost interest in me; he was hot for a dame called Ginger Picket. But Ginger had a policy about moustaches, and she wouldn't give Frank the time of day. He came crawling back to me, and now *I* wouldn't give him the time of day. Well, it was weeks before Frank could find out what time of day it was. By then, I terminated my contract with Lee Pants, and I was being represented by Sidney Hawkamaw, and when Frank found out about this he beat Hawkamaw to death with a chair.

I romanced them all—Frank Parthenon, Larry Fay, Owney Madden, Tommy the Turtle, Mugs Mason. I don't know what it is with gangsters. They're cruel, heartless, petty, vain, stupid, shallow, abusive, dangerous, delusional, homicidal monsters, but what can I say, at least they ain't in showbiz.