

STOLEN DRINKS

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The mechanical calculator responded to the rhythm of "Smiling" Mike's forceful entries. It moved in response to the entries as if it were alive. With a flourish, he keyed the last entry and waited as the calculator continued to labor and run trying to catch up to the final tally command. As the white roller with the long tabulation of numbers spewed out of the frantic machine, Mike picked up his cup of coffee and watched the numbers march along the long strip of paper. The sound changed as the machine entered the final calculation and then, as if finishing a marathon, it mercifully stopped. Mike tore the tape off the machine and picked up another tape, which had been marked up in red. He compared the circled number at the bottom to the tally just taken off the machine.

"Damn," he shouted as he pounded the table with his right hand spilling the remains of the coffee. Avoiding the spreading coffee, Mike jumped up out of the chair with a crash and stumbled into the filing cabinet making a loud noise while bruising his shoulder. "Ouch," he cried.

"You all right Mike?" shouted Rose. There was concern in her voice.

"Yeah, I'm OK," he yelled. "But I'm being robbed blind, and it's frustrating as all hell. I know where it's happening and how much they're getting but I don't know who's doing it or how they are pulling it off." He pounded the table again.

"Watch your blood pressure," cautioned Rose as she entered the study with a tray filled with cookies and fruit. "Have a little snack and calm down. What's the problem? Is it still the bar in Manhattan?"

"Yeah they got me for another five hundred this week. It's the tenth week in a row and I still can't figure how they are robbing me or who's doing it."

Irish bars seem to flourish in New York; it may be the ambiance or it just may be that they expect to succeed. The bar which was being robbed on a regular basis was well-known in Manhattan as it was "the longest bar in New York City" Seven "Irish Harp" bars attested

to the success of the chain that 'Smiling' Mike had started twenty years before. They were in every Borough and they were universally popular; each had been a moneymaker and Mike could tell you, to the dollar, what income he could expect from any one of them. He even accurately adjusted his estimate depending on the week in question and whether or not there was a holiday that week. Until three months ago, that was a truism. Suddenly the income at the Manhattan establishment, one of the biggest in the chain, started to fall off. Gradual at first it slowly accelerated until the bar that should have made the most money was barely breaking even. However, expenses stayed at the same level, and the customers consumed the same amount of beer and whiskey. That was easy enough to check. Mike had taken to checking inventory in the bar in question every month and the consumption was right on target. However, the registers did not deliver the expected cash. An expert was robbing him and he was worried. If he did not figure out the fraud, it could spread to the other bars in the chain and before the year was out he would be back tending bar for one of his competitors.

The aspect that really annoyed him was every time he spent a day at the bar the income went up 20% to its expected level. The other six days the thieves were in charge. Because he owned seven bars, Mike had to spend time at each one of them to show who was in charge and who ran the place. Mike discussed his dilemma with a close friend who was a police officer. His friend recommended that Mike hire a private detective to observe the bar. Tim Hanley, a retired police officer, had set up a private investigator office and he met with Mike. They agreed that Tim would go to the bar and become a regular by spending three days a week in the facility. He explained he had a job on the other side of town but liked to frequent a friendly Irish bar.

At the end of two weeks, Tim reported to Mike that the bar accepted Tim as a regular. He observed the bartenders and the bar in operation. In New York, the bartender's uniform and the apron have no pockets so there was no place to put money. Tim indicated that the bartenders entered every drink into a register and the tips all made it to the tip jar. To the best of his observations, there was nothing-illegal going on in the bar. Mike did not take this well. "I know I'm being robbed, the day I show up there the income goes up and every day I'm out of the bar my income goes down. You have to look at this much more carefully and in much more detail than you have done to date. You are the investigator. Use your detective skills to figure out how they're doing this."

The following week Tim and Mike met again at a diner a couple of blocks away. Mike asked, "Have you figured out how they are doing it yet?"

"Every penny that comes into that bar is put into the registers. I have taken to listing the amount of money put in each register every time. I have a little book here that I keep and I surreptitiously enter the amounts for each register." With that, Tim took out a small wire bound notebook and started flipping the pages.

"The income for register A was \$320."

"The income for register B was \$375."

"The income for register C was \$352."

"The income for register D was \$330."

"The income for register E was \$335."

"Wait a minute; we don't have five registers we only have four," shouted Mike as he slammed his hand on the table. "That's how the bastards are stealing from me they have an extra register someplace and they put it out on the bar when I'm not there. Now I know what to look for. Come with me we're going to search the basement."

Under a dirty, dusty beer keg, they discovered the fifth register. That day Mike fired every bartender in this facility and brought one bartender from each of his other six bars to cover the action.

"Rose, I can't get over those guys. Every one of them had to be in on the theft and split the income. Now that I know how they ripped me off' that will never happen again. However, every bar owner in New York knows that some of his employees are trying to rip him off. The honest ones are a blessing and the thieves are a curse."

THE END