

"St. Agnes' Eve"

by Kenneth Fearing

The dramatis personae include a fly-specked Monday evening,
A cigar store with stagnant windows,
Two crooked streets,
Six policemen and Louie Glatz.

Bass drums mumble and mutter an ominous portent
As Louie Glatz holds up the cigar store and backs out with
\$14.92.

Officer Dolan noticed something suspicious, it is supposed,
And ordered him to halt,
But dangerous, handsome, cross-eye'd Louie the rat
Spoke with his gat,
Rat-a-tat-tat—
Rat-a-tat-tat
And Dolan was buried as quickly as possible.

But Louie didn't give a good god damn,
He ran like a crazy shadow on a shadowy street
With five policemen off that beat
Hot on his trail, going Blam! Blam!-blam!

While rat-a-tat-tat
Rat-a-tat-tat
Said Louie's gat,
So loud that Peter Wendotti rolled away from his wife,
Got out of bed to scratch his stomach and shiver on the cold floor
Listening to the stammering syllables of instant death
Met on secret floors in the big vacant galleries of night.

Then Louie sagged and fell and ran.
With seven bullets through his caved-in skull and those feeble brains
Spilling out like soup.
He crawled behind a water-hydrant and stood them off another half minute.

"I'm not shot," he yelled, "I'm not shot," he screamed, "it isn't me they've shot in the head," he
laughed, "Oh

I don't give a damn!"
And rat-a-tat-tat
Rat-a-tat-tat
Muttered the gat
Of Louie the rat,
While the officers of the law went Blam! Blam!-blam!

Soft music. Violins moan like weeds swaying far under water.
The vibrant throats of steam-ships hoot a sad defiance at distance and nothing.
Space curls its arm across the flat roofs and dreary streets.
Bricks bulge and sag.

Louie's soul arose through his mouth in the form of a derby hat
That danced with cigarette butts and burned matches and specks of dust
Where Louie sprawled.
Close-up of Dolan's widow. Of Louie's mother.

Picture of the fly-specked Monday evening and fade out slow.