

BEFORE THE BLITZKRIEG

by RUPERT GRAYSON

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

"After we blow up the arsenal?" asked Coral.

"Well, I'm afraid it's got to be a bit vague—so much depends on chance—on how things work out, you know. But two things are of importance—somehow or other I must get hold of the key of the arsenal. That's really the key position on the island. If the worst comes to the worst, and we have to fall back on the arsenal—well, we shall have 'em beat for the time being, at any rate. The second important thing—or, rather, I suppose it's of the first importance, really—is to get hold of the key of this gate, and smuggle us out of here, I don't quite see how it's going to be done, but if you could lay your hand on a duplicate key—somehow—Trent has one, you know—and then draw the guard off for a moment while we slip out—"

Gun sensed from the tensi of her figure that she was holding herself in, and that something had happened.

When she saw them she made a hasty gesture to them to get back onto the lawn and then, being now out of sight of the guard, she hurried up to them.

"Something very awkward has happened. I don't exactly know what it is, but they've received a message of some sort—by radio, I suppose. Anyway, it's upset everything—because it means they've got to speed up their plans and now Otto says that unless I can make Tommy talk tonight he's going to try physical torture—he's got some fiendish plan he wants to try out on you, I believe, Tommy—and if that doesn't work he's going to shoot you both out of hand."

Tommy whistled softly.

"That's torn it," he commented, in a low voice.

"Hell!" said Gun, briefly. He thought for a moment, and then went on: "Well, there's only one thing for it—we must act tonight, instead of tomorrow."

"I'm ready!" cried Tommy.

"No doubt!" retorted Gun, dryly. "But the trouble is that Coral isn't. It's she who needs the time."

"That's so," Coral agreed. "How on earth am I going to get hold of that arsenal key—tonight?"

"Trent keeps it—on him?" Gun inquired, sharply.

"Yes, it's on his key-ring."

"Then listen: This may not work, of course, but it's just a chance. Here's what we've got to do—or, really, what Coral has to do, since the majority of the onus is on her. We'll go back to the bungalow, and have a general talk. Then I'll tactfully suggest going up to bed, and leaving you two to it. Then you'll have to do your stuff—stage your show. And the outcome will be, Tommy, that you will give in, and tell Coral to inform Otto and Trent that if they bring the money over with them in the morning, you're prepared."

Coral interrupted with a smile: "I think I can manage that. I've got Trent's dope tablets—pretended I had insomnia; the idea struck me all of a sudden. They work in about half an hour. I'll prepare a flask of wine for the sentries, and give it to them before I come in. Then, when it works . . ."

"Fine!" Gun put in. "But if you're inside when the guard goes off to sleep, we've still got to break our way out."

"All right—then I'll go out a little before that, and wait till they are asleep."

"But Otto and Co'll be listening in, no doubt, and they'll get suspicious if they don't hear your voice—or if they hear you go, and you don't get back. We won't want THEM interfering."

Coral thought for a moment, then said:

"The truth of the matter is," Gun said, "that it's quite impossible to make any cut-and-dried plan. It's all a matter of chance. Anything may happen—and at any minute."

And just about that space of time after he had spoken, the truth of his words was proved in a very dramatic and unpleasant way.

There were sounds from the gate, and Gun exclaimed sharply: "Hullo! What's in the wind now? That's Coral's voice!"

They turned back to the bungalow to meet her. She walked toward the door with her usual graceful, rather languid walk, but

"Very well. Then you'll have to prepare a long monologue, in which I shan't have to speak. Or I'll ask if I can go upstairs. Or you can insist that I come out in the garden for a little while. Oh, we'll find a way, somehow."

She was excited, her eyes glistening and her lips slightly parted. Gun surprised the expression in Tommy's eyes as he looked at her.

"All right," he agreed. "I suppose it's useless crossing bridges until we come to 'em—but I'd like to have a map of the route, all the same. Now, you'll have to make them think that you're progressing well with Tommy here, and that by tomorrow you'll have him just where you want him. And they must believe that tomorrow night is the climax—that by the time you come back Tommy will be ready to do all that you—and they—want him to do."

Coral laughed.

"They won't love ME, will they?" Gun suddenly became grave.

"That's what I don't like about it—the danger to you."

"Don't be ridiculous. Should I be working for X if I was worried about danger?"

"I didn't say YOU were worried—I said I was."

"Just don't worry, then. Now, Tommy, I want you to drift into the bungalow with me, so that they can hear an affecting farewell between us. I could wish you were a better actor. So long, Gun!"

"So long, Coral! And—good hunting."

"Amen!"

Gun's lazy eyes followed the pair across the lawn to the bungalow. He had heard men say that women were no good in offices, and that they were not capable of holding down executive jobs, or doing men's work. Coral might not be any good in an office, but she certainly could hold down a man's job, when it came to it.

The time passed quickly in discussing various plans for dealing with the situation.

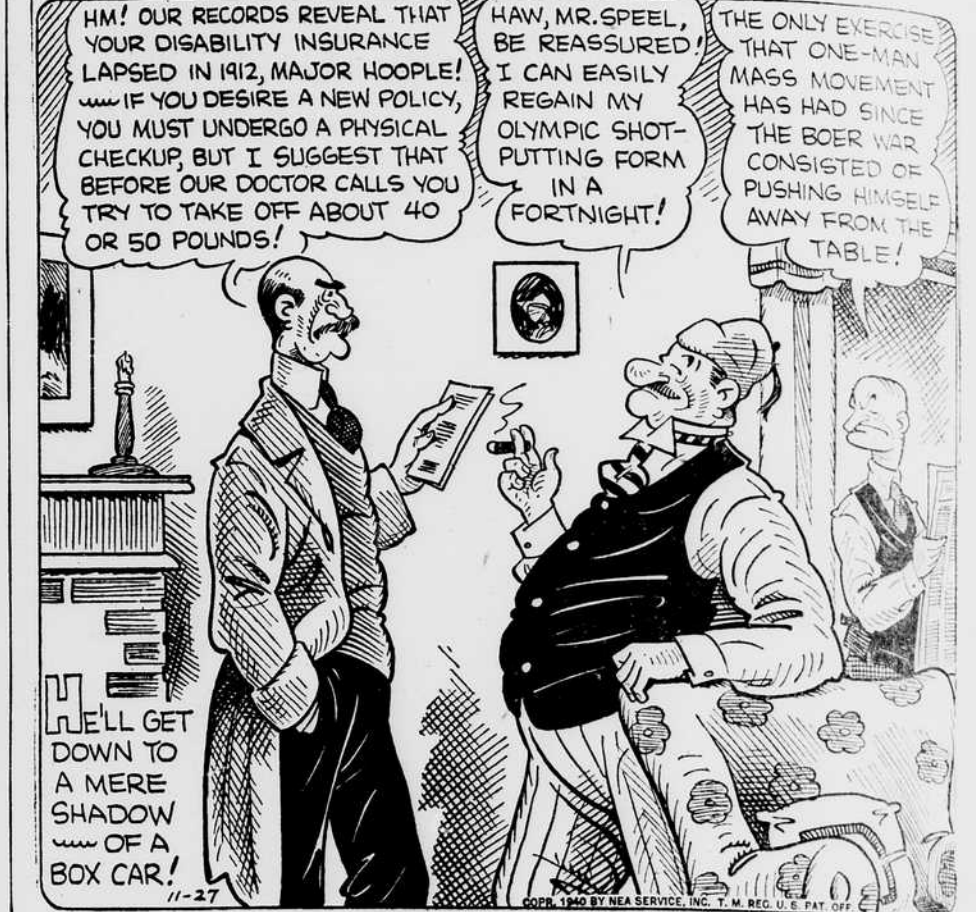
"The job," Gun remarked, "is plain enough. One, we've got to get out of here. Two, we've got to deal with Otto and Trent. Three, we've got to destroy all the planes but one—that we shall need to get

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



OUR BOARDING HOUSE . . . with . . . Major Hoople



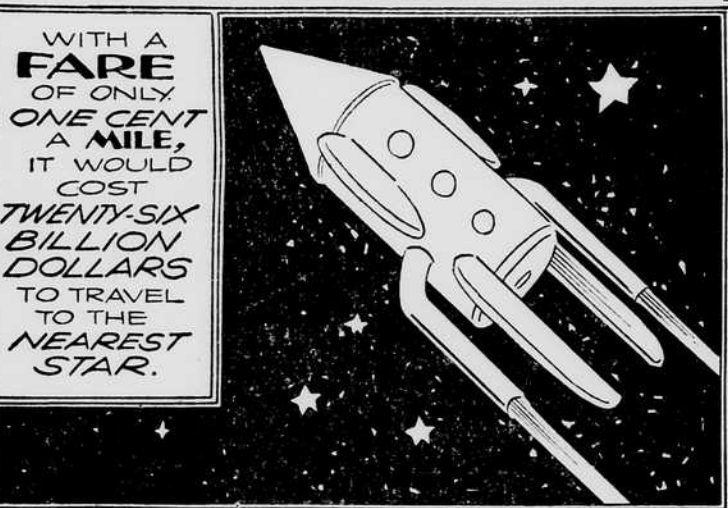
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



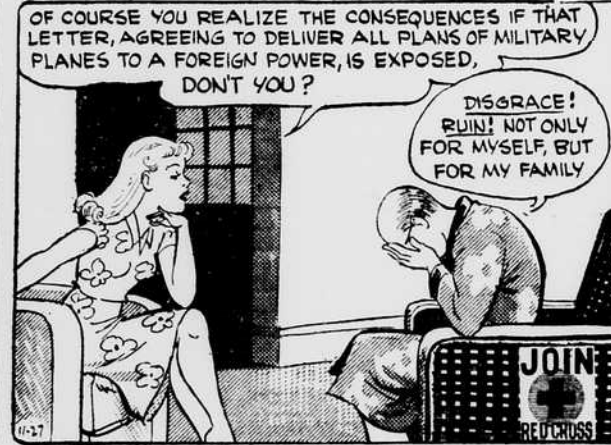
Through No Fault Of Their Own

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

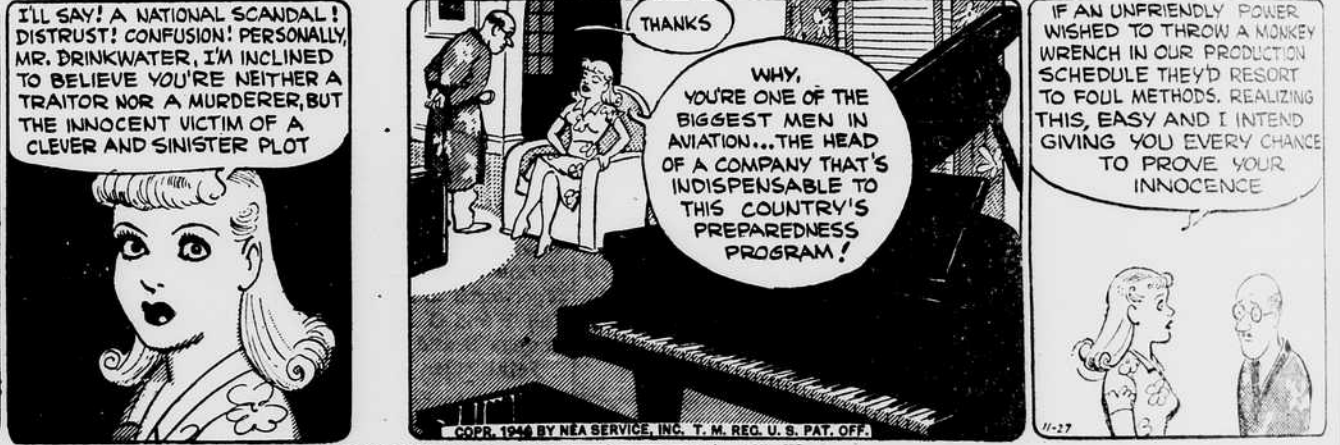
By William Ferguson



WASH TUBBS



Vicki Trusts Him



GASOLINE ALLEY



Skeexix In Wonderland

THE GUMPS



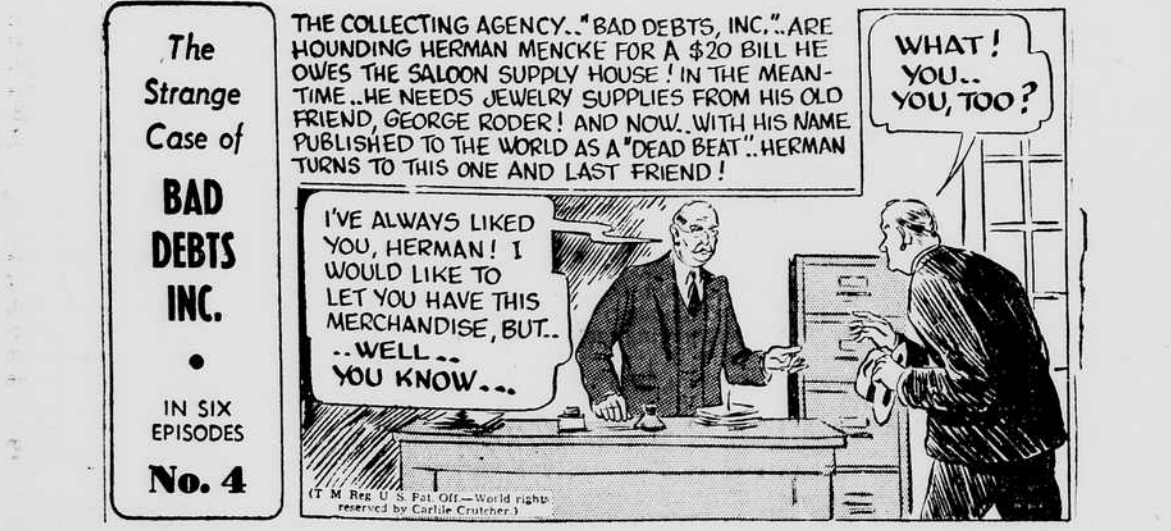
Never A Dull Moment

BRICK BRADFORD--Seeks the Diamond Doll



BELA LANAN--COURT REPORTER

By L. Allen Heine



By William Ritt and Clarence Gray