

FIRE IN THE DARK by MARY SCHUMANN

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Later, Theron and Doris found Chief of Detectives Plant questioning Mamie as to every word Eleonore had uttered before setting out. Doris broke in with, "I think we ought to tell you, officer, that she was unlike herself last week after Gran died."

"You think she's taken her life?" asked Plant. "She hasn't; she was too brave for that."

Plant went on with his questioning until Theron suggested impatiently, "Don't you think we ought to go, Chief?"

But Plant continued going over the ground, quizzing Mamie until he finally looked at his watch, and said, "I'm ready to go now."

The two men went out and sat in the chief's car talking for a time. Finally they drove, not up, but down the mountain road.

Doris phoned Major Tyrell. His wife answered that he had had a call about Eleonore, and had gone out an hour ago. He would take part in the search.

Sukey, in long dressing gown and padded slippers, joined Doris. She couldn't sleep, she whimpered; she had seen a man on a bear going through the orchard, crawling on all fours, then get up and walk straight into the shadows!

"Dreaming, baby," Doris soothed her.

Mamie was reading her Bible and praying in the kitchen.

The two sisters stood at the porch railing, arms around each other. Presently, Sukey said, just above a whisper: "Something moved there—over there," she pointed to the upland where the trees thickened. "Looked like an Indian."

Doris saw it too and whirled. "Let's go inside—quick!"

The hours seemed endless until Theron called. His voice had a forced calm. "Get some rest, dear. They're doing all they can, but the real search will start tomorrow."

"Sleep," Doris said, "you ask me to sleep when it's my sister! I'm—I'm afraid! We've seen things—Sukey and I saw something—moving."

"You're surrounded by guards—perfectly safe! Please do as you're asked." Her husband hung up.

The local telephone exchange had never been so busy. Through all the county the news flew. A man would be called from bed by the ringing phone: "Eph," a taut voice spoke, "this is Ralph. Time to get in and pitch. You know—Minute Man—Concord stuff. Get your gun and thirty-thirties. We're moving on that Nazi nest tonight."

"You mean we're gonna wipe 'em out?"—Good!

"Yep, meet me at the bridge—'em call Baynes 'n Colby."

A ron at the knocker would bring

another householder to the door. "Step outside, Jim," his neighbor would say. Then in the darkness he would blurt: "Short wavin', phony planes, skullbuggery, ever since those Joneses settled on November Road. And now—maybe murder or worse. One of our finest girls! We'll nail those Nazis tonight!"

"You bet!" Jim, his eyes steady beneath his shock of hair, clenched his gnarled fists.

"Buddy," said Dr. Blake, the dentist, to a boy he met on the street, "aren't you Bob Seymore's kid? Wasn't your father one of the 'Fightin' Devils' in the last war?"

The boy stiffened with pride. "Yes, mister, that was him."

"If I tell you that the Nazis were just a few miles away, what would you do?"

"Do?" Bob Seymore's liquid eyes gleamed. "I'd do plenty! I'm Pop's boy!"

The dentist smiled grimly. "You're what we want. Come along, son."

It was after two when Ted Keating wakened his pretty wife, Beulah, and told her of his errand. He was coming from the gun closet, tiptoeing so that he would not rouse the children, when he saw the small figure of his wife coming down the stairs. She wore a dark handkerchief over her shining hair, had on slacks and an old sweater, and was stuffing bandages into a bag. She announced, "I'm going with you, Ted."

"Hardly!" he answered. "No one's in the house, the kids might wake!"

"I can do something. I've taken first aid."

Ted grinned. "Sorry, dear. It's men's work; won't be any women along."

She tossed her pretty head. "Don't you fool yourself, Ted Keating, there will be!" She slung her khaki first aid kit over her shoulder.

They drove for a few miles, then left their car in the ditch behind a long row of others, and joined a straggling line climbing the twisting road. A group of tough, stringy, weatherbeaten men who looked like farmers, passed them, carrying double-barreled twelve gauges; they caught up with two or three figures who bore old army rifles.

Beulah dropped behind Ted for a moment. Then she ran up and caught his arm excitedly. "Ted, did you hear that? What those men were saying? 'Ellie Lawrence is missing!'"

Ted gave a grunt and did not slow his pace. Beulah went on swiftly: "Her grandmother was killed last week. Ellie lives practically alone... right near those b-beetles. She must have learned some things. So they think she's—"

"I know," said Ted tersely. "They told me on the phone."

This was not a mesh. It was an aroused group of vigilantes, outraged by treason and treachery in their midst. The stern, intent faces, the marching feet of men, women and boys, created a rhythm of union, and Beulah lost herself in a feeling of oneness with them all.

At a certain point in the road they were deployed through the fields and woods to surround the Jones house, keeping at a distance until the first rim of the sun showed. Then they were all to move in at one time. The password was "Datanan!"

Beulah and Ted moved through a gray unreal world, found a fence corner, where they waited. The ground was too soggy to sit down; the mosquitoes, voracious and vicious. They could see pine trees now that were not visible a moment before, and a mist, thicker in some places than others. The silvery light became paler. Then rosy shafts tipped November's cliffs; the dew-laden grass glittered with rainbow colors.

"Now!" murmured Ted.

They crept forward as all around them were other tense figures moving in toward the grim mansion whose roof they could now see. Beulah sprang over the stone fence of the grounds with as much agility as Ted.

Carlotta had risen early to work on some correspondence. Now she could hear the servants padding down the stairs. Waiting for her early cup of coffee, ordered for 5 a. m., she fingered the scrap of scribbled paper which "Doc" had filched from Bill Steuben's desk last night. One more reading of the magic phrases to help her through the heavy tasks of the day! She read:

"Because you said you love me, I seem standing in sunlight... What color are your eyes? A search through grass and flowers provides a simile for that heart-stealing blue! Nor are there words to describe your courage. Melancholy moods when I think of your danger, dreams of a happy reunion—these are the emotions that fill me. It is a bond that we work in the same cause."

He had broken off there.

Carlotta pressed the paper to her lips. This was what Bill felt inwardly toward her! The beauty of it was that he had never expected her to see these self-revealing lines. "Doc," in his snooping, had found them under a pile of drawings. Smiling, she slipped the letter into her bosom.

(To be continued)

THIMBLE THEATRE—Starring Popeye

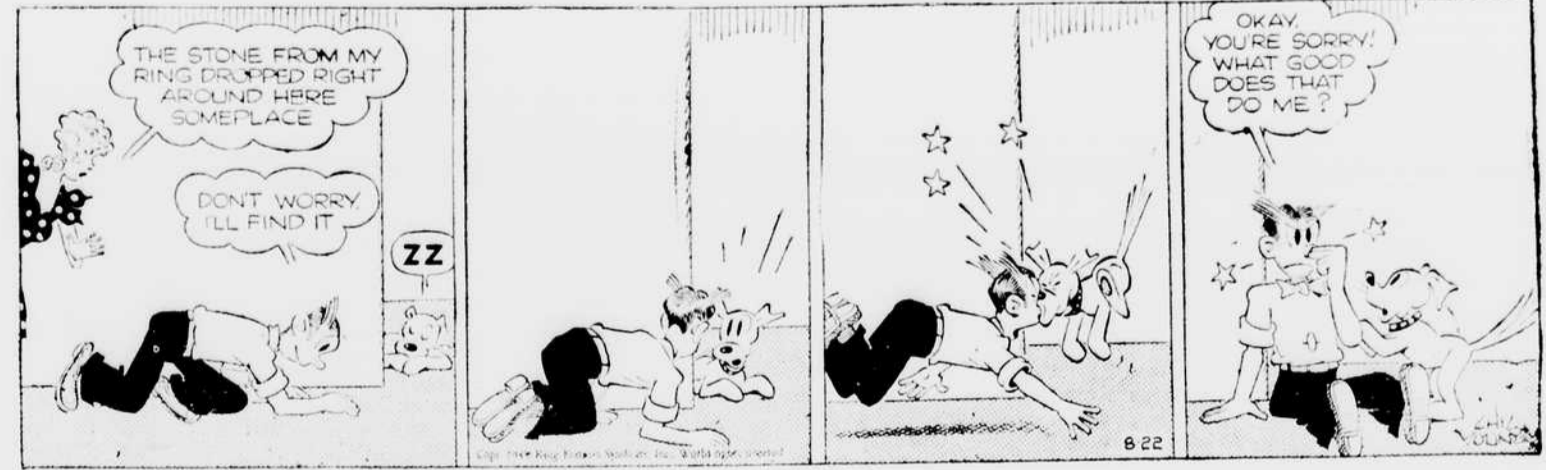


Wimpy Legs It Aloft!

BLONDIE (Registered U. S. Patent 0.1.100)

Just Too Busy!

By Chic Young



EITA KETT



By PAUL ROBINSON

THE GUMPS—A WOMAN'S TONCH



Saw Five Wars



CELEBRATING her 103rd birthday is Mrs. Ellen Ingham of San Francisco, Calif. During her lifetime she has seen five wars begin and end—the Civil War, Mexican War, Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II. (International)

Fall Fashion Note



HERE'S one of Lilly Dache's creations for Fall. It's a profile-flattering hat of smoke grey felt, has a wide brim with rippled lines, and a full crown to emphasize the upward sweep. Grosgrain bows are well-placed for accent. (International)

"Anything men can live without is a luxury," says one Washington bureaucrat. Well, we could get along with a lot fewer of you fellows—Grit.

The swarm of bees held up a British flight mission when they settled inside a bombing plane.

NEGOTIATE FAR EAST SURRENDER



A REPORT from the Russian radio at Khabarovsk, Siberia, states that the surrender of the Jap Kwangtung Army in Manchuria is under way. Marshal Alexander M. Vasilovsky (left), Russian commander of Far Eastern Armies, is reported to have sent an airplane to Harbin to pick up the Jap surrender envoy, The Nipponese commander, Gen. Otozo Yamada (right) was ordered by the Khabarovsk broadcaster to send his chief of staff to Harbin to board the Soviet plane. (International)

READY TO FIGHT POLIO WITH DDT



EXAMINING THE NOZZLE below a B-25 bomber which will spray DDT on Rockford, Ill., are Capt. L. N. Nelson (left) and Major L. A. Otterson. The powerful new insecticide is being used in an attempt to halt the spread of an epidemic of infantile paralysis that has struck the city. Flies, which are known to harbor the polio virus, are killed quickly by DDT. It has been used extensively by the Army. (International)

THE OLD HOME TOWN By STANLEY



SCOTT'S SCRAP BOOK By R. J. SCOTT



THE OLD SUPERSTITION THAT SPILLED SALT IS AN ILL OMEN CREPT INTO DA VINCI'S FAMOUS PAINTING OF THE LAST SUPPER—

JUDAS HAS JUST SPILLED THE SALT SHAKER WITH HIS WRIST

CHARLES DICKENS NEVER TAUGHT SCHOOL A DAY BUT HE IS SAID TO HAVE INFLUENCED EDUCATION IN ENGLAND MORE THAN ANY OTHER MAN— HIS FIGHT ON SCHOOL WHIPPINGS DECREASED THE EVIL 65-99 OUT OF EVERY 1,000!

THE CRUCIAL PERIOD

AS THE play of a hand gets down near the close and the few cards you have left are in a tenuous position, you had better get on your toes and watch closely. Otherwise you may find the opponent putting over a lead-throwing end-play on you. Correct solution of your problem then may be the very simple matter of merely deciding which trick you want to take the current trick or the next one. The situation may be so crucial that the entire fate of the contract depends on your answer to that question.

♠ K 7 4
♥ A J 7
♦ 8 6 5 3
♣ J 10 4

West North East South
1 ♣ Pass Pass 1 ♥
1 ♠ Pass Pass 2 ♣
Pass 3 ♥ Pass 4 ♠

♠ 10 9 6
♥ 5 4 3
♦ K J 7 2
♣ 7 6 5

♠ J 5 3
♥ K Q 9 8 2
♦ A Q 10
♣ 8 3

(Dealer: West. Both sides vulnerable.)

Even with the good fortune of having the double finesse in diamonds lie just right, plus the spade A being fortuitously under the K, South still was in such an overbid contract that off-hand he seems destined to lose two tricks each in the black suits. If everything had lain wrong for him, he could have lost three tricks in spades, two in diamonds and two in clubs, going down four. But, in addition to the luck of honor lo-

cation, he was helped by a bad defensive play which enabled him to make his contract.

West ripped off two clubs and South ruffed the third. He led to the heart A, finessed the diamond 10, led to the heart J and finessed the diamond Q, cleared trumps with the heart K, and played the diamond A. He noticed that on the heart K West discarded the club 2, and on the diamond A discarded the club 9, his last of the suit. Four spades were thus retained by West.

South thereupon led the spade 3, hoping West had the A and would play it. He did. Then he regretted it. He had to lead from his guarded Q into South's combination tenace of the K in dummy and the J in the closed hand, so West could not possibly get another trick. If he had played low on the spade 3 and let the K win, the next lead of the suit would have been to him, and not from him. It would have given him two spade tricks, the second of which would have beaten the contract.

Tomorrow's Problem

♠ J 9 2
♥ None
♦ Q J 9 6 5 3
♣ 9 7 3 2

♠ Q 5 4
♥ A Q J 6
♦ A 7
♣ A Q J 5

♠ 8 6
♥ K 10 9 5
♦ 4 2
♣ K 2

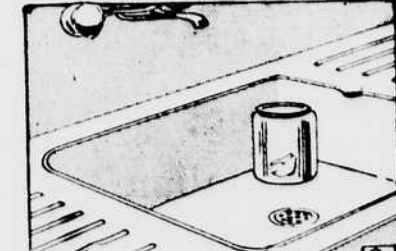
♠ A K 10 7 3
♥ 8 7 3
♦ 10 8 4
♣ K 10

(Dealer: North. East-West vulnerable.)

Who do you think stands to profit most by opening the bidding on this deal? What should be bid?

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Wife Preservers



Keep a jar at the sink in which to put all scraps and shivers of soap that have become too small to handle. Add warm water so the pieces will dissolve into jelly, which can be used for dishes.

Wife Preservers



When you are peaching eggs, add one-half teaspoonful of salt or vinegar to the water. Break the eggs in a saucer, and slip—don't drop—the eggs into the water, then reduce the heat—don't boil.