

THE BIG SHOT

by FRANK L. PACKARD

Chapter 17
ENID GOES CALLING
 Face as the taxi bore Enid toward her destination she wished it would go faster. Phil was in danger—she was going to him. She tried to lull herself into a feeling of security and belief that there was no real cause for great haste but failed utterly. Her thoughts swung into another channel, but one that was even more tortuous and less conducive to peace of mind. If it were not that the man she loved was in very real danger of perhaps even his life, what she was doing now would have seemed foolhardy—but it was the only way out that she saw for both Phil and Roy.

street. There was no one near at hand, and she stepped down to the basement door beneath the stoop. It was quite dark here and she could scarcely see at all. She began to feel with her hand around the jamb of the door. Her hand closed on the bell knob and pulled it—and, listening, she heard a faint, responsive jangle from within. Her automatic was snuggling in her right hand now. She did not expect the door bell in an empty and unattended house to be answered—at least in the usual way. Batty Rose was not fool enough for that; but if she persisted in ringing it would lure him to the other side of the door and that was all she wanted. She had an "open sesame" then that would do the rest. She rang again—and still again, and now she kept her ear pressed against the door panel. Yes, she was sure of it—there was a stealthy movement from within—from quite close to the other side of the door. "Batty!" she called in an undertone. "Batty! Open the door!"

There was no answer—and now no sound. "Batty, you fool, there's someone coming, and I'll be seen!" Her voice was sharp, imperative, raised a little. "Open the door—quick! I've got a message from Izzy Myers." And then the door opened silently upon a black interior—and she entered.

The door closed softly behind her. Batty Rose could not be more than arm's length away. From where she stood and by feeling out around her to locate his position, she knew she was near enough to touch the man—but she could not see him. His voice reached her now in a snarling whisper: "Say, it's damned funny, Izzy sending a skirt around here! Who are you, anyway? A wet d'youse want?"

Her eyes were suddenly blurred and wet as she stared out of the window. She had no reason to believe that he cared for her—or that he ever would care—and she hoped now that it was that way. It would be much easier for them both. She would love him always, because that love had come into her life for always—but he would never know. It was her love that was taking her to him tonight—but he would not know that either. And Roy? It was not Roy's fault, but—but—oh, what would be the end of it all?

"I told you what I wanted," Enid answered tartly. "You took a long time to open that door!" "Yes! Wet d'youse think we're doing here—holding public receptions?" "I don't know about that," she complained; "but that's no reason for taking the risk of letting somebody see me out there. People aren't in the habit of ringing the door bells of vacant houses at night for nothing. You ought to have known! Haven't you got a light around here somewhere?"

Her mind worked on and on relentlessly, and it was almost in a startled way that she realized the taxi had drawn up to the curb and had come to a halt. She got out and paid her fare, adding a tip. The taxi rattled away. She walked rapidly along the block that separated her from Eighty-third street, and on reaching the corner took the natural turn into the cross street.

"You've got a flip tongue, ain't you?" he snapped. "Vacant houses ain't in de habit of answering door bells, an' vacant houses don't have any lights showing neither. You're out de gab an' come across! Where's dat message from Izzy Myers?" "Sure, I'll come across!" she answered sharply. "You're the one that's wasting time! You can't read in the dark, can you? I guess you've got lights in here somewhere where they won't be seen from outside."

She began her circuit again, and came suddenly upon the object of her search. Yes, there it was—a house "to let." It was a little farther from the avenue in this direction than she had been before, that was all. She had been right in her surmise. Swiftly, critically, she surveyed the house. The dark curtainless windows were like blind eyes staring out into the night. Behind equal! How did she know? It was quite possible that she was being watched at this moment from within. The house wasn't empty in spite of its "to let" sign and its desolate appearance!

"Yes, sure, I've got one"—there was a sudden menace in his voice— "an' I guess I'll use it to take a look at youse before I do anything else! It's damned funny Izzy sending a skirt around here like dis!" "That's what you said before!" She was jeering at him now, prodding him to action. "Well, what are you going to do about it? Stand there all night? Izzy'll be pleased! If you give me the answer to his message tomorrow morning some time, it will be alright—that's why I came down here in a hurry when there wasn't time for him to find anybody else!"

Her pulse began to quicken. There was something suddenly foreboding about the house; but too, she noted with some relief that it had a basement entrance beneath the stoop which would shield her from observation from the house across the street and to a very large extent from any passers-by as well. She glanced now up and down the

"Close your face, an' feel yer way along de wall," growled Batty Rose. "I wouldn't even strike a match down here, cause there's a window o' the hall an' it might be spotted. We'll get a light upstairs where it's safe. Get a move on!" "All right," she said slyly and began to grope her way down the hall. (To be Continued)

ACROSS

1. Outcry
 2. Shouted exultantly
 3. Large gully
 4. Beach a destination
 5. Paradise
 6. Valley
 7. Kind of bird
 8. Existed
 9. Misdemeanor
 10. Flies
 11. Heers
 12. Hebrew word for God
 13. River between Brazil and Paraguay
 14. Shakespeare's jurisdiction
 15. Name of combat
 16. Moved on wheels
 17. Inevitable burner
 18. Feminine name
 19. Black liquid
 20. Series of games
 21. Allied material force
 22. Trust
 23. Wall fund
 24. Fresh air cure
 25. Meeting room
 26. Metal-bearing rock
 27. Alternative
 28. Indefatigable
 29. Hazy
 30. Convey real estate
 31. Opposite ad-weather
 32. On the ocean
 33. Sea coast
 34. Part of a curve
 35. American writer
 36. Kind of physician
 37. Liberal post.
 38. Bore
 39. Dexterity
 40. Vicious
 41. Afternoon exercise
 42. Hales
 43. South American country
 44. Word of sorcery
 45. Change of course
 46. Nonsense
 47. Miss approach
 48. "The Glimory Deed"
 49. Snow road
 50. Pronoun
 51. Engineering degree

DOWN

1. You will handle a train
 2. Take on cargo
 3. Assert
 4. Die from the neck
 5. Along
 6. Reapproached passively
 7. Yowl
 8. Scale of justice's scale
 9. Comfort
 10. Feminine name
 11. Preferably
 12. Reverend
 13. Theater attention
 14. Low seat

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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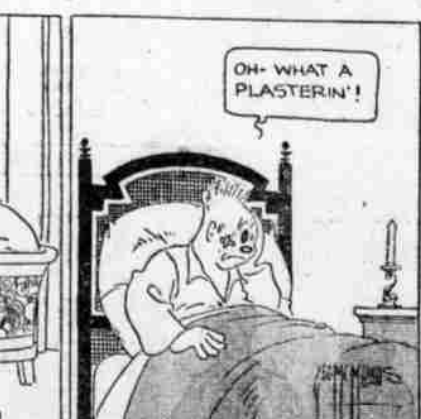
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