

THE BIG SHOT

by FRANK L. PACKARD -

Chapter 30 - THE WOMAN BURGLAR

The woman burglar, separated the Murkman mansion from a towering apartment house. It was very narrow—so narrow that the only justification she could think of for its existence was that it might perhaps furnish light and air to the rooms of the larger building. Thanks to the telephone directory, she had found Murkman's house easily. It was, as she had thought, just a little west of Park avenue, and she was quite sure no one had seen her when, a moment ago, she had stepped into the arway from the street.

Now she moved silently along it searching for the basement window. It was very dark. She was glad of that. Certainly no one passing by on the street could see her now. Here and there above her were lighted windows in the apartment house, but they did not dispel the lower shadows—and the Murkman house naturally was in blackness.

Those lighted windows! She halted suddenly and looked up at them. Suppose someone were watching from one of those windows! Her lips tightened. Yes, she was afraid—afraid of everything tonight!

She had been afraid when she had left Martha Debbins's house, and more afraid the moment she had entered this arway.

She stood for a full minute scanning the windows. There was no one at any of them.

She went on again, hugging close up against the wall of the Murkman mansion, but so far as she could make out in the gloom, it was not until she was near the extreme end of the arway that she came upon the basement window she was looking for—and then only to find herself peering down at it in sudden dismay. It was quite accessible because its sill was practically on a level with the arway—but it was protected by an iron grill!

Perhaps this wasn't the only basement window—perhaps there was another. She went on down the full length of the house. There was no other window. She came back and stood staring helplessly at the iron grill. There wasn't any mistake—at least, she had not made any. That was what the code message said: "Basement window arway." And this was the only one there was—one with an iron grill!

Under the flopped brim of her hat she passed her hand nervously across her forehead. What was she to do?

Mechanically she bent down to examine the grill more closely—and as she touched it, she drew her breath in sharply. It was loose; and not only loose, but now, as she put a little pressure upon it, it came away readily in her hand.

She smiled at herself. Of course! She was stupid! This had all been "fixed" long ago.

She lifted the grill just enough to one side to free the window, and tried the window itself. It opened inward—easily. Nor did it make any sound. Well-oiled hinges, of course! Whoever had prepared the way had left nothing undone!

A vague wonder came to her. Knowing the location and combination of the wall safe, and with the means of entry into the house already provided for, it seemed strange that the safe itself should still have been left untouched merely because the house had not been entirely unoccupied until now. Surely it could have been looted without a sleeping household, say, being any the wiser for it!

Such things had been done often enough. Why not here? There must be a very good reason for it, of course, but she did not know what it was. She probably never would know. She could not ask Roy!

She was down on her hands and knees now, working herself in feet first through the window, but her eyes were constantly scanning the lighted windows of the apartment house. It was not quite so easy as it had appeared to be.

The basement window was oblong in shape, and, though amply long enough, was hardly two feet in height. She could scarcely squeeze through—as it was, Martha's hat, with its posteroser brim caught on the casement and was nearly pulled from her head.

Her feet, just as she was about to let go and drop, touched the basement floor below. She stood up. The window sill was just a little above her shoulders. She reached out and, as well as she could, pulled the grill back on the sill. It did not fit perfectly by any means, but certainly no one changing in the arway would notice that it was out of place. Then she closed the window.

It was inky black inside—almost as black as it had been in the "bird cage" last night. But tonight she had come provided against that; and now the flash light which she had purchased on her way across town sent its round white ray inquisitively about her. She was in a cellar of course—concrete-floored. And, what alone concerned her, directly in front of her were the stairs leading to the floor above.

She mounted these rapidly, and emerged into what the flash light enabled her to see was a sort of pantry. Here there were several doors. She opened the one that obviously gave on the front portion of the house, and, stepping forward, found herself in the rear of what was obviously the main hallway.

And now she stood still for an instant, listening. There was no sound. There was such an utter absence of sound that the silence was oppressive and heavy. She bit suddenly at her lips. Of course there was no sound!

She went on again, the white ray lancing the darkness, pointing the way. It was a big hall, a big house. There were beautiful rugs on the floor. The doors of the room opening into the hall were closed. Such details she absorbed unconsciously—but she was not concerned with her immediate surroundings. The library was on the second floor, the floor above.

Her first steps, as she began to mount the main stairway, startled her for the silence in the house was suddenly broken. There was no carpet on the stairs. Her footsteps clattered. Instinctively she began to tiptoe.

But that was stupid—absurd! She bit at her lips again in vexation. Were her own footsteps going to send her into a panic? People out on the street couldn't hear the occupants of the house every time the latter went up and down the stair, could they? Well, then? She ascended the remaining stairs in a natural manner—but the beam of light that played ahead of her wavered a little, and was not quite so steady as before.

Disquiet had come upon her more strongly than ever. She tried to tell herself reassuringly that there wasn't anything to fear; that the worst of it was over now that she had got safely into the house; and that it wouldn't take much longer—just a few minutes, needed to open the wall safe—and then she would be out of the house again. A tremulous little smile came. Yes, she knew all that, but it did not alter the fact that she was des-

(Continued on Page 8)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE To Go Or Not To Go

By Harold Gray



IF I WAS ONLY SURE THAT ANNIE IS ALL RIGHT - BUT I'VE BEEN OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE WORLD FOR MONTHS - ANYTHING MAY HAVE HAPPENED -



AND I'M SICK OF THIS LIFE - NEVER SAFE TO MOVE A FOOT UNARMED - I DON'T MIND DANGER - BEEN USED TO IT FOR YEARS -



BUT THE LONELINESS - THE MONOTONY - I THOUGHT THIS JOB WAS DONE - THAT I HAD CLEANED UP OUT HERE AND COULD GO HOME -



AND NOW THIS MESSAGE - QUIT NOW AND THE WHOLE ENTERPRISE WILL COLLAPSE - BUT I CAN'T GO ON UNTIL I KNOW THAT ANNIE IS O. K.

REG'LAR FELLERS

Bedtime Story

By Gene Byrnes



BETCHA DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MOON IN THE DAY TIME!

I GIVE UP!



IT GOES TO SLEEP!

WELL WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SUN IN THE NIGHT TIME?



IT GOES TO SLEEP TOO!



DO THEY SLEEP IN TWIN BEDS OR DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY USE THE SAME ONE?

TAILSPIN TOMMY

Built For Speed

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



THIS IS PHOENIX, WE'LL CIRCLE AROUND AND HAVE A LOOK AT THE TOWN, BETTY. NEXT STOP-LOS ANGELES!



ISN'T THAT A GOOD-LOOKING PLANE, TOMMY! I WONDER WHAT IT IS?

IT'S ONE OF THOSE TRI-MOTORED DROFF JOBS OPERATING BETWEEN HERE AND LOS ANGELES. NICE--BUT NOT AS SPEEDY AS THIS BABY!



HERE WE ARE, BETTY! LOS ANGELES--CITY OF THE ANGELS, SUNSHINE, MOVIE'S AND SUB-DIVISIONS!

Hal Forrest - CONTINUED -

DUMB DORA

They Sound Like Ready Money

By Chick Young



I JUST HEARD THE GIRLS TALKING ABOUT GIVING A TEA IN HONOR OF BOB WHEN HE COMES UP TO VISIT YOU FRIDAY--

THEY'LL DO NOTHING OF THE KIND--I'LL PUT THE BEE ON THAT RIGHT AWAY--I WANT BOB TO MYSELF



BRINGING YOUR FELLOW AROUND THIS SORORITY HOUSE IS LIKE THROWING RAW MEAT TO THE LIONS-- I WON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES



YES, WE'RE GIVING A TEA FOR HIM-- LUCILLE IS GOING TO DO HER SPECIALTY DANCE AND I'M GOING TO SING LOVE SONGS TO HIM--

I THINK YOU GIRLS ARE VERY INCONSIDERATE OF ME-- REMEMBER HE'S MY FIANCE-- YOU SEEM TO FORGET ALL ABOUT ME



WE DIDN'T FORGET ABOUT YOU AT ALL, DORA--

IN FACT WE BOUGHT A TICKET FOR YOU FOR THE MATINEE THAT AFTERNOON

ACROSS

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzle

1. Eucalyptus
2. Ethereal salt
3. Star
4. Roman tyrant
5. Sharp
6. Closing measure of a composition
7. Honor feat.
8. Mathematical function
9. Feast
10. Fine
11. Hubbers
12. Babylonian deity
13. Exposed to the sun's rays
14. Other
15. Unearthly poet.
16. Hours of peace
17. Schomberg
18. Communist
19. Oriental ship
20. French article
21. Throat
22. Deceit
23. Arousal
24. Viscera in a cluster
25. Very colloq.
26. Tiny
27. Mohammedan deity
28. Degrade
29. Symbol for intercom
30. Grouping of an initial vowel
31. Prudent ornaments

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MUTT AND JEFF

Miss Informed Exists On Her Dignity

By Bud Fisher



GOVERNOR, CHAMPION MUTT IS GOING TO FIGHT KID SNEEZE! I WANT YOU TO STOP THE FIGHT FOR IT WILL BE BRUTAL, HORRIBLE AND VICIOUS!