THE BIG SHOT
by FRANK L. PACKARD

CHAPTER 38
PRISONERS

That gangland phrase—taken for a ride—that she had seen so often in newspapers—now came home to Enid in all its bald, stark meaning. Was death waiting at the end of the road?

It was like the last ride of the condemned—on the way to execution—and the horror of it had seized upon her.

There had been moments when she had so very nearly lost her self-control; moments when she had so very nearly broken down. To bring shame upon Phil and herself for her cowardice! To invite the sneers and taunts and ribald laughter of such scum as these! That was all that had saved her. Her pride. The pride that she prayed would still keep her head high at the last.

She knew no illusions. She knew there would be no mercy. She knew what gangland "justice" was. She knew that murder was the way these men earned their daily bread. There was no chance—none—unless they, Phil and herself, could in some way make their escape.

Her thoughts became chaotic. The Big Shot wasn't Roy . . . That would have been horrible now . . . Would Martha ever know? What would Martha do when she returned and found that there was no one there any more? It didn't seem even now that this was real. It couldn't be real. .. She had been so happy at Martha's ... It had been so quiet and homelike ... And she had thought that perhaps by working very hard she might some day make a little name for herself with her pen.... That was what she had come for—to study, to gather material, and work ... and, instead, this was the result—a ride! That dread phrase again! ... If she—

The car swerved suddenly, turned into what seemed to be a sort of driveway, or lane, bordered with trees, and almost immediately the headlights picked up the outline of a house— a long, rambling house, like a farmhouse it looked as the car swinging now, the headlights described an arc and swept their rays along the length of the building. The car stopped.

Izzy Myers was prodding at her viciously with the muzzle of his revolver. "Get out!" he ordered harshly.

She felt her way to the ground. It was very dark. The lights of the car had been switched off, and there were no lights showing in any of the windows of the house. She looked around her, striving to accommodate her eyes to the darkness.

The two gangsters were taking Phil from the car—and, from the scuffling sounds and the snarled oaths which accompanied their commands, were obviously performing their office none too gently. She stood still, obedient to Izzy Myers' restraining grip upon her arm. She could see a little more clearly now. They were standing close to the front porch, and now the door of the house was being opened.

"Who's there?" a man's voice demanded sharply from the dark interior.

"I guess you know, don't you?" Izzy Myers grunted in reply.

"Oh—you Izzy!" exclaimed the voice in a tone of relief. "Well, I had to be sure. You're early, ain't you? The trucks won't be along for another hour."

Izzy Myers laughed gratingly. "Well we've brought you the first load," he said. "We've got a couple of visitors for you here; and the Big Shot will be along in a little while with Ma Kane—and maybe Pa Kane, too. I dunno. I guess you'll have a houseful—but this pair ain't fussy about their accommodations. The Big Shot said to tie them up in the barn until he got here."

"Oh, so that's the lay, is it?" There seemed to be something eager and malicious injected into the voice from the doorway. "Sure! All right! We'll try to make 'em nice and comfortable! I get you!"

"Then get a move on," Izzy Myers jerked out. "Bring some rope and a lantern."

"Sure," said the man. "I won't be a minute."

And then it seemed to Enid that for a little while she became curiously detached from her surroundings, as though she had become mentally weary to the point of exhaustion, and that her mind stumbled and refused to function save only a strange, numbed, apathetic way.

She was conscious that her hands were tied behind her back, and that she was being made to follow a light that danced ahead of her. She was conscious that a big door made a creaking, grating noise as it was unbarred and opened, and conscious that she was being fastened to something so that, though she was still standing on her feet, she could not walk any more. But all this did not seem to convey any concrete meaning to her.

Then, suddenly, at the sound of Izzy Myers voice almost in her ear, her mind snapped back to normal again.

"If it will amuse you any while you're waiting," he chuckled evilly, "you can shout your heads off; but it won't otherwise do you any good, 'cause there's no one within miles of here. I'd advise you, though, to save your breath until the Big Shot and Ma Kane get here, as I've a hunch you'll have to use your lungs then some!"

The barn seemed to be empty of everything, the floor quite bare, as though—yes, her mind was functioning again, and perhaps only too clearly now for her own composure and her own good—as though the place had been cleared out and put in readiness for—what? What the trucks were bringing? Probably! Did it matter? The gangsters, Izzy Myers, and the man with the lantern were going away now. The barn door closed. She heard it being barred—and then the men's receding footsteps gradually died away.

"Enid, keep working at your wrists," Phil's voice came quietly, inspiringly out of the darkness. "There's always the chance of getting them loose, you know."

"Yes," she said, and began to struggle with her bonds. But they were very tight—she could scarcely move her wrists at all.

"Just keep at it!" he said encouragingly. "We can talk at the same time. And there's something I want to say—something I want to ask you. Will you forgive me for what I thought and what I said to you in your room tonight? I—"

"Phil—don't!" Her voice broke a little in spite of herself. "You'll make me cry—and I don't want to cry. There is nothing to forgive. Nothing! Nothing! How could there be! How could you have thought anything other than you did? Oh, please don't ever speak of forgiveness again!"

"All right—I won't," he said. "But there's something else. Last night in the taxicab. You remember, Enid? I told you what you meant to me. I told you that I loved you. And you said there could never be anything between us. Do you remember?"

"Yes," she said faintly.

"Was it for my sake? Because you thought that man was your brother—because you thought your brother was a criminal?"

"Yes!" she said again.

"Then you did care!" His voice was trembling, eager. "You care now—Enid, you care now!"

"You know I care," she whispered.

"God keep you, Enid!" he said hoarsely.

(To Be Continued)

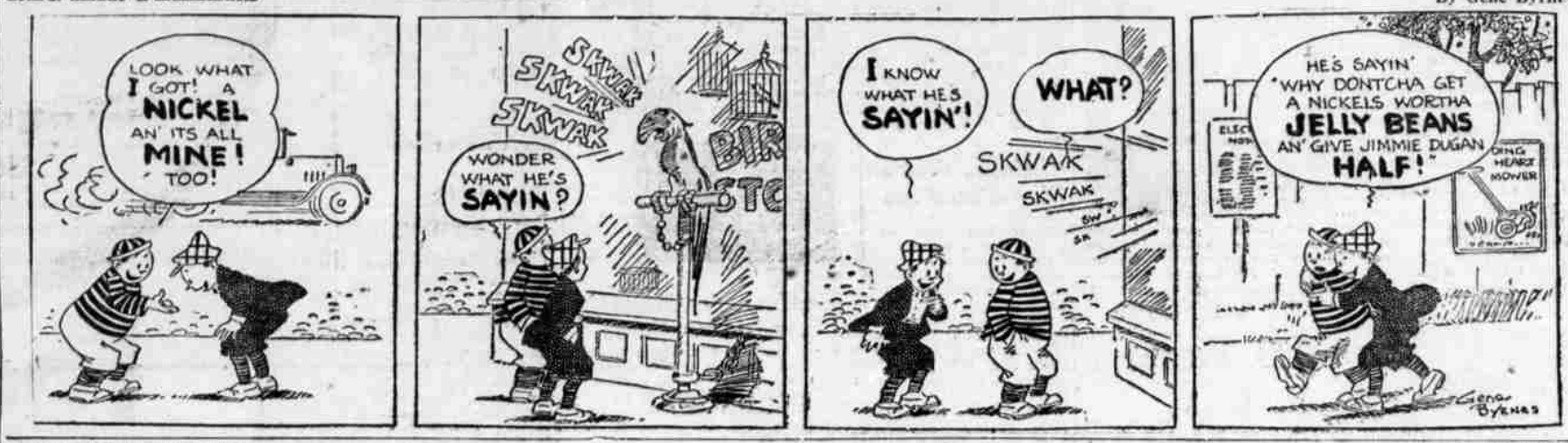
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

By Harold Gray

REG'LAR FELLERS

Sounds Like Skwak

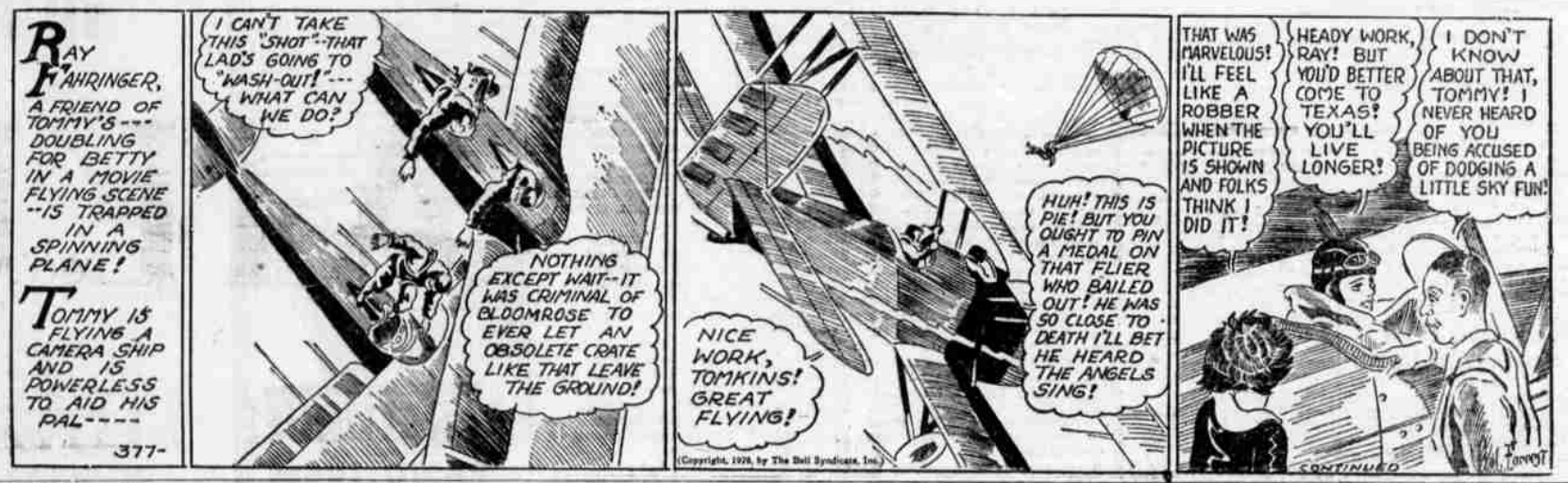
By Gene Byrnes



TAILSPIN TOMMY

Sky Fun

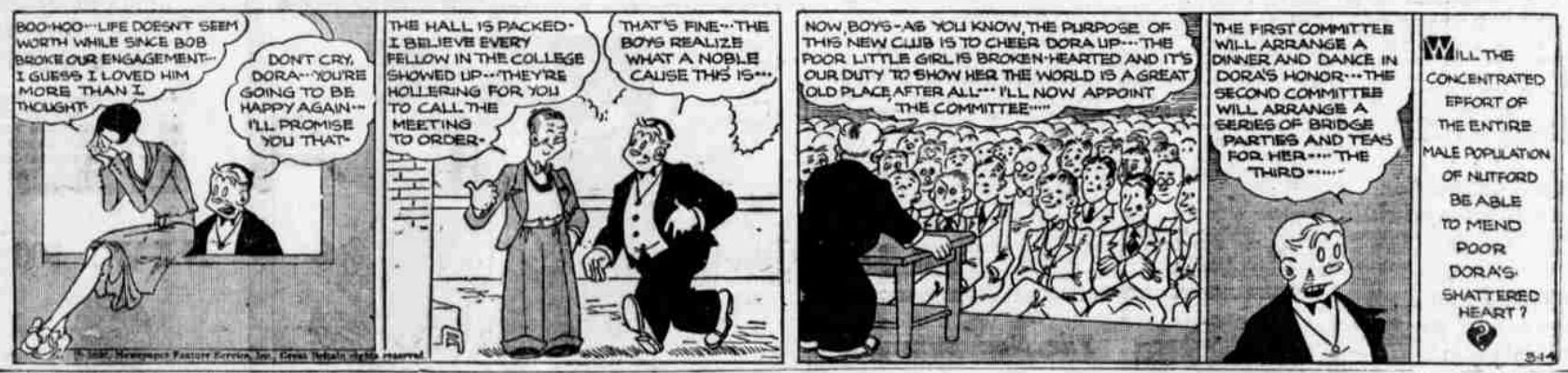
By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



DUMB DORA

A Call To Arms

By Chick Young



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

MUTT AND JEFF

The Tide Has Turned

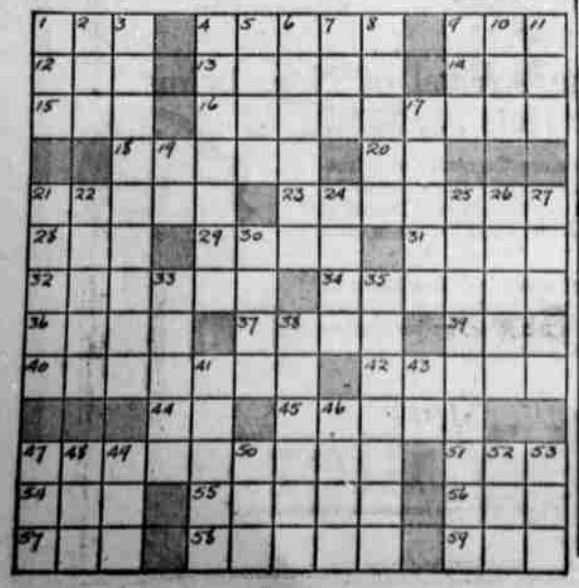
By Bud Fisher

ACROSS

1. Steal
4. Supreme Being of the Mohammedans
8. Black cuckoo
12. Liquor
13. Polished portion
14. Small, round mark
15. Knitted
16. Those who hurry
18. Fleshy fruits
20. Perform
21. Lachrymose drops
23. Ancient Jewish scarfes
25. Worthless fragment
28. Hunt comb. form
31. Masculine name
32. Form of worship
34. Grated
36. One who freezes
37. Diminishes
38. Compass point
40. Cautious
42. Breathes quickly
44. Doubles prefix
45. Concerning
47. One who speculates
51. Sandwich filling
54. Groove
55. Long, narrow openings
56. Age
57. Affirmative
58. Stretched tight
59. Fix in position

DOWN

1. Uncooked
2. Palm leaf mat.
3. Sprinkle with mud
4. Loss of speech
5. Teller of untruths
6. Holder of a lease
7. Deed
8. Pays attention to
9. American writer
10. And not
11. Pronoun
17. Christmas carols
19. Resident ofs suffix
21. Type of lens
22. Weather
24. The rowan tree
25. Pitcher plants
26. Important occurrence
27. Lateral boundaries
30. Cymric sun god
33. Nettle rash
35. Slander
38. Publish far and wide
41. Primary
43. Article
46. Yields a profit
47. Attempt
48. Color
49. Greek letter
50. Pertaining to suffix
52. Metric land measure
53. Small rug

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzle

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