

DAGGER

by Mary Dahlberg

Chapter 36
RISEN FROM THE DEAD
Dagger huddled down in her chair, crushed, unbelieving, at Chang's startling words. Two swift steps, and Chang was beside her. "Dink! This," he commanded, and she obeyed him.

A moment and her faintness had passed. "Do you mean that, General?" she pleaded.

"Yes. He was with me until a few weeks ago. He escaped out of Russia through Siberia. One of my patrols on the Mongolian border found him, delirious, starving. Fortunately, the officer in command knew him. After he had recovered sufficiently he was brought to my camp, and told me his story. He had been unhappy, and when he was taken prisoner by the Germans he decided to 'die.' He exchanged identification papers with a dead man and became that man. After the German revolution he escaped into Russia. But that is a long story, which he will tell you himself, perhaps."

"If I ever find him," cried Dagger. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

Chang's eyes chilled. "A man must fight for his own hand," he returned implacably. "You had believed him dead. For all I know he may have ceased to love you—if he ever did."

"He never spoke of me?" she inquired pitiously.

"He spoke of a wife who did not love him, and of his unhappiness. He read in a newspaper that his wife had married another man, and said that at last fate was on his side. He was dead, and he would remain dead."

Dagger shivered. To have come so close! And then have missed. But instantly her thoughts returned to the practical.

"Where is he?" she demanded.

"Where has he gone?"

The Tu-chun shrugged his shoulders.

"To his own country. A man is happier with his own people, even if he has to fight them."

"If you had told me that first day," she rebuked Chang. "By now I might be close to him."

"You have searched for him long," the Tu-chun remarked philosophically. "What are a few weeks more? If it is fated that you will find him, you will find him. If it is fated that he will love you, he will love you. If fate will neither—the narrow eyes flashed—"remember Chang has a destiny for you. No mean one."

Dagger could only look at him reproachfully, and he shrugged again.

"A man takes what he can, my dear lady," he said. "Do not be so disturbed. And by the way, treasure that lucky-piece I first sent you. It enjoys a notable luck. I picked it up in the Sung-fu market when I was a green boy of sixteen. A month later I committed my first successful robbery. In a year I had my own band. It has been with me ever since. I give it to you in hope that it will work as well in your favor."

"But yourself?" protested Dagger. "You should keep it. And you have given me so much."

"So little compared with my desire," Chang replied. "No, please favor me by keeping it—at least, as an earnest that I wish you well in your quest."

He clasped his hands, and the young officer who had received her stride out upon the terrace.

"Your car is waiting, Mrs. Vanneering," the Tu-chun went on courteously, "and I do not like to keep you out too late. Should you see Mr. Howard, remember me to him cordially. I shall be delighted to see either or both of you again—particularly, yourself."

He bowed.

"I—I must thank you," exclaimed Dagger. "After all, you have been kind. You meant well."

"Oh, quite well, I assure you," he rejoined. "In a selfish sense, of

course. But one must think of himself. Goodnight, Mrs. Vanneering. I am afraid my wives will be very curious about you."

When she left, Sung-fu Dagger had no definite plan for her future, save that she must reach America as quickly as possible; but on the journey she developed a nostalgia for the Texas plains and the Figure 2.

Practically, she told herself, she required a jumping-off place for the next stage of her search for blame. He would scarcely go to New York, if he wished to be considered dead. No, the probability was that he'd lurk himself in some out-of-the-way hole, where he could lose his identity and build his life anew.

She was first on the car platform when El Paso at last loomed in the distance behind a welter of tanks and signal towers.

"There was Uncle Jim, squinting anxiously from beside a new car. And McCarty—bless his heart!—McCarty at the wheel, eyeing the descending passengers no less interestedly. Dagger walked straight up to them.

"Don't you know me, Uncle Jim?" she demanded. "Mac, you chump! Don't you know me?"

Jim Marley let out something between a yelp and a curse.

"What's the matter?" protested Dagger, almost in tears. "Am I changed so?"

"Changed?" gasped her uncle. "You've done grown up!"

McCarty, grinning foolishly, had snatched off his hat, and scrambled to the ground.

"What have you done with yourself, Dagger?" he asked. "You look like one of these here ladies in the Sunday papers. I never see such clothes—outside of a film picture."

"But clothes haven't anything to do with me," she answered. "I'm just the same."

Jim Marley put his two hands on her shoulders and held her off, so that he could peer down into her eyes.

"No, yew ain't just the same, Dagger," he denied. "Yew've done grown a heap. Grown-up, like I said. 'Twas bad, but I reckon once yew got to be a woman yew couldn't help it."

"How's the ranch?" she inquired idly.

"Pretty good. Might have more water, but the steers are holdin' up—if we can get a decent beef price. But that ain't so much money into cattle these days. Seems like people were eatin' greens 'stead of meat." He paused. "Got a new foreman?"

"How's that?" asked Dagger. "Do I know him?"

"Ain't had a dependable foreman since Dick went," her uncle responded. "All of 'em too young or careless."

"How's the new man?"

"Fair. Got a heap to learn, but his heart's in his work." And when Dagger started to ask for more information: "Come on, Mac, let's get goin'."

"But what's the hurry? I want to see everything."

"I reckon yew'll have time aplenty for seein' things," returned her uncle. "Right now, I want to make Casa Blanca afore sundown. Yew see, Dagger—" he hesitated—"these roads are hell. Much as yore life is worth to tackle some of 'em in the dark."

Dagger was puzzled, but amenable, as an earnest that she wished you well in your quest.

"You never used to drive like this, Uncle Jim," she observed.

Jim Marley removed his hat, and wiped a moist forehead.

"Wa-all, we got to git that," he offered mildly. "See them steers, Dagger? Not so bad for a dry summer, huh?"

"That foreman must know his business," she remarked.

"Him?" snorted Jim Marley. "Wa'll, I ain't claimin' he's a fool, but yew might give me credit for knowin' my own ranch."

"They sped past the water-tank."

(Continued on Page 4)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

Manana



REG'LAR FELLERS

Slight Oversight

By Gene Byrnes



TAILSPIN TOMMY

Yessuh! We Has A Boat! Yessuh!

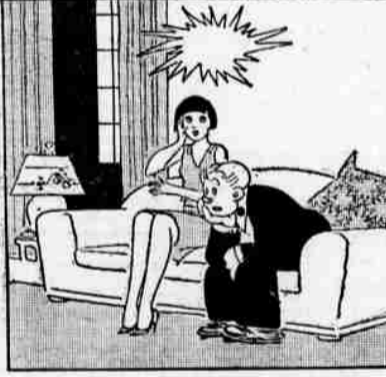
By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



DUMB DORA

A Whale Of An Idea

By Paul Fung



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



MUTT AND JEFF

It's Team Work That Wrecks Wagons

By Bud Fisher



ACROSS

1. Sour

6. Eccentric

8. Weapons

12. Upon work

13. Fabric

14. Aromatic wine

15. Vessel

16. Ring

17. Made ready

18. Nails disease

19. Closed ear

20. West direction

21. Outer covering

22. River bottom

23. Low gutter

24. Brother of Jacob

25. Electrified particle

26. One who gives a lease

27. Postage

28. Affirmative

29. He broken

30. Mixed oath

31. Long fish

32. Kind of a wild beast

33. Italian poet

34. Salt comb

35. form

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzles

SMALT SALT ODES
LINER ERIE PERT
ANNOUNCERS ESNE
TEE MO SATE EEL
DRESSED STENT
ROME DINNER IVA
ASIA TIE DOOM
BEG SLOPED ANTE
RATER REFUSES
PRATES SNOB
RAT TIPS IR SEE
EMIT ORNAMENTAL
SION NOUN SEATS
SENT SAGE TERSE

DOWN

1. European mountain

2. He solicitous

3. Frozen

4. Leaves

5. Vehicle

6. Improves

7. Fashioned

8. Lesson

9. Upright back

10. Furnishes a crew

11. Let it stand

12. Black cuckoo

13. Border on

14. Roman tyrant

15. Hoopish

16. Bill of an anchor

17. Stated

18. On the ocean

19. Edible tuber

20. Mescaline

21. Nickname

22. Spanish wide-mouthed puma

23. Charred with gas

24. Drawn

25. Urethra

26. Mountains in Crete

27. Metal fastener

28. Invisibly emanation

29. Former emperor

30. New star

31. Allowance for waste

32. Saxon slave

33. Horn

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