

KITTY FREW

by JANE ABBOTT

Chapter 36
A MASK STRIPPED OFF
DAVID put his arm around her shoulder. "Gar's all right, Kitty," he said quickly. "He's conscious this morning. He struck on his head but the X-ray showed there was no fracture of the skull. His shoulder's smashed up and his ankle's broken but—"

"David, I want to go to him at once!"
"Of course," David answered quietly. He directed a redcap to carry her baggage. He kept his arm through hers, steadying her as he led her through the station to the taxi stand. He put her into a taxi and sat down beside her, taking her hand and holding it tight in his. The fingers of her hand in his tightened convulsively.

"David, we were angry with one another when I went away! I said horrible things, David. I'll never forget them. I told him I wasn't coming back from Bridgewater, that it was all a mistake, a bad business, just as you'd said. You didn't have any right to say that to me, David, for me to remember, to say it to Gar!" She dragged her hand from his hold, she leaned away from him, tears streaming down her face. "If he dies before I have a chance to tell him that I didn't mean that—"

"You can tell him. He isn't going to die," David retorted grimly. "I felled him," Kitty added, miserably, "just when he needed me most."

David offered no comment. They rode in silence until the car turned into the drive of the hospital grounds. He touched Kitty's arm as she hurried ahead.

"There are some regulations, you know."
To Kitty it seemed an endless interval of stupid questioning and answering before she was admitted to the room where Gar lay. Why, she was his wife!

David left her at the door of the room. She did not know it; she had forgotten his existence. She saw only Gar's dark head against the flat pillow of the high hospital bed.

"Gar!"
And then a tall figure came between her and Gar. She faced Mrs. Frew.

"You cannot disturb him now," Mrs. Frew said in a low cold tone. "Who let you in? You must go away."

Kitty stood, balked. For a moment she saw the older woman's face stripped of its mask; hatred, consuming jealousy, triumph was on it. She faltered before it, drew back a little uncertainly, frightened. And seeing that Mrs. Frew smiled, "Kitty!" it was Gar, calling in a half-voiced, Kitty pushed Mrs. Frew roughly out of her way. She dropped at the side of the bed, put her cheek against Gar's hand where it lay on the white sheet.

"Gar, darling, it's Kitty. I'm here."
"I thought you wouldn't come!" He drew a breath. His fingers moved, caught in her hair, feebly stroked it.

"I came as far as I could, darling."
"You won't go, sweet? You won't go now?"
"No, Gar."

She heard a rustling of skirts, whispering, a door closing and gave no heed.

"You mustn't let him talk, Mrs. Frew," a competent, friendly voice said over her shoulder and she nodded her head. As if she didn't know that Gar must be kept very quiet!

When a doctor came in the room she rose to her feet and moved to the window but she did not take her eyes from Gar.

"Doing very nicely," was the doctor's verdict. He looked at Kitty and smiled.

"He'll get along fast, now that you're here."
It seemed to establish her right in the room. The nurse condescended to her with a sympathetic look.

"We were pretty worried this time yesterday," she whispered to Kitty. "We didn't know, you see—you were out of town? He called for you, first minute he knew anything."

Kitty had gone to the bed again, knelt there, her hand holding Gar's. The nurse pushed a chair up to the bedside.

"You might as well be comfortable, Mrs. Frew. You can ring if you need me. That's the bell."

She tiptoed out of the room, leaving Kitty alone with Gar. The room was very quiet except for the drip of the rain outside. Kitty relaxed in her chair. It seemed an eternity since that moment her father had turned from the telephone, calling her. "Winton wants you, Kitty," Sally had been there with her, and her mother. They'd been looking at the bridesmaid's dress, laughing, talking. And then: "Gar has been hurt in an automobile accident. Can you catch a train to-night?" David, talking. The hurry, the concerned faces of her father and mother, Phil saying he'd drive her over to Albany, and then the endless hours of the night, the torture of uncertainty.

"Oh, Gar!" She put her hands out to him in an expressive little gesture of longing.

Every word of that night's quarrel came back to her, to flay her. She'd goaded him to say things he didn't mean; she said things she didn't mean. They'd insulted one another, hurt one another. He'd flung himself out of the house and she'd locked the door of the bedroom. And the next day she'd gone to Bridgewater without seeing him.

"The room next is empty, Mrs. Frew. Why don't you take a nap? I'll call you when he awakens." The nurse had come in.

"I know how you feel," she went on, in her half-whisper. "But he's all right and you don't want to be sick yourself. When he's better he's going to be awful fussy—his shoulder and ankle, you see."

Reluctantly Kitty yielded and let the nurse take her to the adjoining room. It was cool and white and quiet; though she thought she could not sleep, in a few minutes she was sleeping on the narrow bed.

She awakened, bewildered for a moment by her surroundings. She'd been dreaming of Sally. Why, tomorrow was Sally's wedding day! She must go to Bridgewater, talk to Sally about taking things so seriously—

Then, fully aroused, she sprang out of bed, alarmed. That nurse should have called her! Perhaps Gar needed her. She rushed out into the corridor and there stopped short, facing Carol.

"Gar?" she asked, frightened.

Carol shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, I guess he's all right, I don't know—"

"She was moving toward a door across from Gar's. Her manner said plainly that her presence here had nothing to do with Gar. She was carrying a long box of flowers in her arms.

"I suppose you know Marge Crosby's gone?"
And with that she opened the door she sought and closed it softly behind her.

Paul Somerset—she'd gone in to him, of course. The brief lines she had read in the paper, crushed in her fingers, came back to Kitty. The exultation that had edged Carol's voice struck her with sickening meaning. Carol expected that she, too, must rejoice at Marge's going! The old fear assailed her as she opened Gar's door.

The nurse was carefully putting a pillow under Gar's head and he was muttering crossly under her ministrations. But when he saw Kitty his face cleared.

"I told him it was a shame to wake you up, Mrs. Frew, you were sleeping so soundly. I peeked in. And he almost took my head off—"

"Can he talk now?"
"A little. But you mustn't let him get excited or move around. You see they haven't got his shoulder in a cast yet. To-morrow, maybe. I tell him he's a lot luckier than that other poor fellow they brought in with him—"

But Kitty's arms had slipped around Gar; her face was against his. Neither of them heard what the nurse said, or cared. She went out.

"Kitty, you haven't—told me—"
"I love you, Gar, and more to-morrow and more the next day—"

"Kitty, I didn't mean—the other night."
"I know, Gar. I know you didn't. I didn't, either. I hate myself for what I said."

"I don't suppose it would make me any worse if you kissed me, the way—"

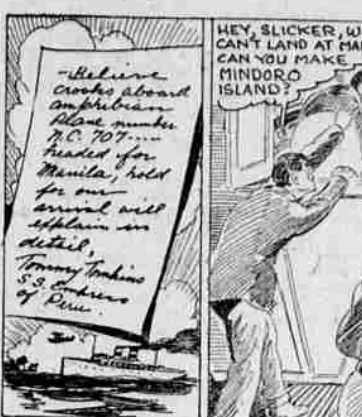
She put her lips on his. Her closed eyes were against his, their breathing was one.

"Gee, Kit, what if it had knocked me out!"
"But it didn't, Gar. Just your shoulder and your ankle—"

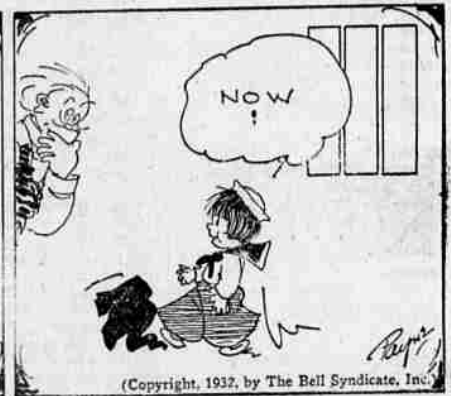
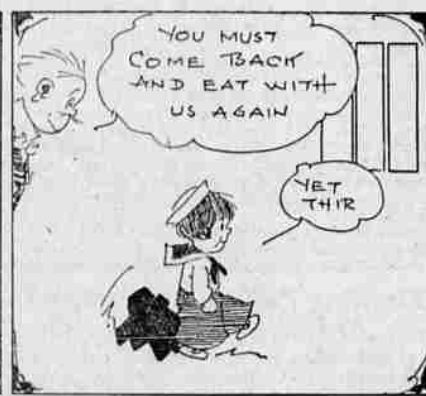
"What if I had never seen you again? Kit, you've got to believe me, all the time I never cared a hang for anyone but you—"

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Radio Tip-Off!



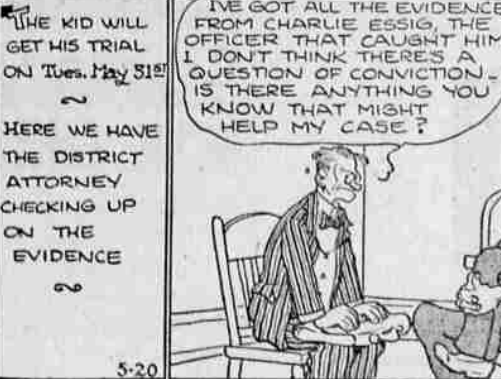
S'MATTER POP—It Was Your Suggestion, Pop



BOUND TO WIN—A Disagreement



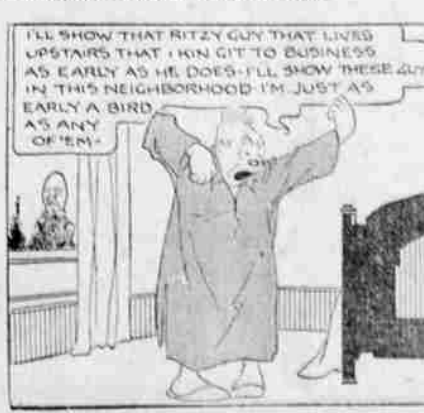
THE NEBBS—The District Attorney



MUTT AND JEFF—Jeff Thought It Was A Success utt



BRINGING UP FATHER



PORTLAND PAPERS FACING PROBE ON ALLEGED ATTACKS

SALEM, May 20. —(AP)—Grand jury investigation of alleged attacks on state officials through the medium of the "Saturday Night" and "Kewa-Examiner," Portland publications, will get under way in Multnomah county within the next few weeks. District Attorney, special attorney-general, advised James W. Mott, state corporation commissioner, today. Mott demanded the investigation

In a letter sent to Goldstein last Sunday. He alleged that the attacks were being made for the apparent purpose of thwarting the activities of officials charged with the enforcement of various laws. Mott made special reference to the laws pertaining to the operation of savings and loan associations and libel. "I have caused an examination to be made on the files of these publications with particular reference to matters contained in your letter," Goldstein wrote to Mott. "I am of the opinion that they appear to indicate a deliberate attempt, thru the medium of these publications, to attack certain officials charged with law enforcement."

Goldstein made special mention in his letter of J. A. Charlesworth, publisher of the "Saturday Night," and C. A. Degraze and Carl Johnston, alleged owners of the "Kewa-Examiner." Degraze and Johnston are now under indictment in Multnomah county.

By George McManus

By BUD FISHER

By SOL HESS

By EDWIN ALGER

By C. M. PAYNE