

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

Colin Hewitt, the writer, is going about New York as a minor criminal. He has been threatened with death by the Mask. New York underworld boss; he had gone to Canada in an effort to find his father, and get his help against the Mask. But there he stumbled into a trap, upon the Mask's huge counterfeiting plant by M-Jackers under a run runner, Captain Dollaire, and missed Lazzara. He met Germaine Tremblay, however, and now they are engaged. "Clarkie" just has been tipped off that Dollaire is at a night club with a "rum hox."

Chapter 30
CONTACT

SPINELLI'S enjoyed a reputation. There was no night club in New York that afforded better entertainment or a wider opportunity to spend money. It was expensive, but droppily cosmopolitan. Dinner jackets and "tails" mingled in utmost freedom with tweeds and what-nots; the ladies were equally without restriction in the choice of their ensembles, and a street costume was as welcome as an evening gown. Salvatore Spinelli demanded only two requisites from his patrons: an "introduction" by way of entrée—and the price.

Colin, as Clarkie Lunn, possessed both. It had been a matter of only six or seven blocks from his room, and encountering no taxi, he had walked; and now, still in one of the lower Fifties, he rang the bell of the three-story brownstone front with its shaded windows that harbored Spinelli's admittedly colorful contribution to the night life of New York.

He had been there many times before. The doorman therefore admitted him without question. He crossed the wide reception hall to the desk just inside the iron grille that barred further progress, but which was so disarmingly artistic and ornamental that its existence was robbed of any suggestion of premeditated offense. Here he laid down his five-dollar "subscription"—and the door of the iron grille opened for him. A page took his hat.

Colin thrust his hands in his pockets and for a moment stared around him. It was already after midnight. Spinelli's was in full swing. "Guests" were swarming in—he had not been the only one admitted at the same time.

Straight ahead of him was the dance floor, the entrance blocked by a bevy of men and women gathered around the doorway. From within, a saxophone was playing; and someone, a boy with glistering teeth and slicked hair undoubtedly, was crooning a song. Colin shrugged his shoulders. Oh, well, some people liked that sort of thing—and Spinelli's catered to all tastes!

On his right was a richly carpeted, spacious stairway. He turned in that direction. The bar was on the second floor. His feet sank noiselessly into the deep pile as he mounted the stairs. Dollaire! A month of futility, and now, least expected of all—Dollaire!

An uplift was upon him that he had not known for weeks. Whether merely contemptuous or not, or whether he knew it or not, Dollaire was playing against stacked cards. If Butch Connal and his mob had discovered that Dollaire was here, it was as good as a certainty that the Mask had discovered it too—and the Mask had a very large account to settle with Dollaire!

Contact at last! If luck broke for him tonight, he would be able to identify—not the Mask, he could hardly hope for that—but one, or more perhaps, of the Mask's tools. That would be enough! He would not ask for more than that—just to pick up the trail.

HE GAINED the landing and entered the barroom. It was a huge room—its appointments lavish. The mahogany bar that ran its entire length glistened even in the soft, rose-shaded lighting. People were coming and going, pairs and groups were standing about here and there, glass in hand; and yet the room was not crowded; for the bar, though it kept four or five white-coated attendants busy, was not the sole Mecca of the thrifty, as Spinelli's—no one came here mostly for the hard stuff.

Colin glanced up and down the room. Butch Connal's "drunk at the bar" was not hard to identify—or, at least, there was but one man present who was outstanding in that particular. Colin watched the man for a moment—a middle-aged man in a dinner jacket, his tie sadly awry, his gait none too steady as he moved here and there, chattering at attempting to insinuate himself into everybody else's conversation. The typical inebriated pest of the garulous variety!

Who was the man—if it was the man? He had never seen the other before. The man had certainly not

been one of those from Butch Connal's gang who had visited Colin when he was in the hospital. Of course not! Butch didn't work that way. None better than Butch knew what was at stake and the danger that would be invited if Clarkie Lunn were in any way linked up with Reddy Turner's old mob—but Butch, when it came to details, made few mistakes.

"The man, carrying his glass rather uncertainly, and having been summarily ejected from a group near by, was moving slightly in Colin's direction. Colin, starting toward the bar, purposely allowed their paths to cross. They bumped into each other, and the contents of the other's glass was spilled on the floor.

"Shay," said the man thickly, "sorry! Most awfully damn sorry! I—hic—apologize. Buy you another."

"I'm afraid it was your glass, not mine, that was spilled," smiled Colin.

Someone in the immediate vicinity laughed.

"S no matter!" declared the inebriated one. "Buy you another all the same. Come on."

"All right," agreed Colin good-naturedly. "Just as you say."

There was an empty space at the far end of the bar. The "drunk" lurched in that direction. Colin followed.

"Make it—hic—two highballs," commanded Colin's new-found companion.

They were served with the drinks.

"Four dollars," said the barkeep amiably—Spinelli's was not cheap.

The "drunk" was apparently hard of hearing; and, besides, he was clinging a little precariously to the bar.

COLIN pushed a bill across the bar.

The barkeep grinned.

"And besides that," he said in a friendly undertone as he returned the change, "he'll talk the leg off you if you give him a chance—and he ain't got any bottom to his tank."

"Thanks," said Colin. "I'm on! But don't worry, I'm no Santa Claus."

The "drunk" had still apparently heard nothing; but, as the barkeep moved away to serve another customer, he turned and leaned heavily with his back against the bar. He spoke then over the rim of his glass as he lifted it shakily to his lips: "Clarkie Lunn?"

"Yes."

"Ever hear of anyone by the name of Connal?"

"Butch sent me."

"Okay. Sorry to sting you for those four bucks—but it lets us both out. Got to keep up appearances, you know, or I wouldn't be worth a nickel to Butch. I don't travel around with the gang—not known as one of them. You're all right 'thera. I'm undercover—see? There's a lot of things—worth cash—to get next to in these joints and 'round town."

"Anyone who's in with Butch is right with me," Colin answered.

The man swayed, a goodly portion of his highball, and then with a valiant effort carried the glass again to his lips.

"That goes both ways," he said. "I know what you want. Dollaire's brought his schooner up from St. Pierre with a full load of high-priced goods. It's somewhere out there just beyond the twelve-mile limit. Dollaire's been ashore all day angling for the best offer. It looks like Helmie Schwarm, the big booze baron, was coming across with the biggest wad. Anyway, the two of them are making love to each other now in the dance hall downstairs."

"I don't know either of them," said Colin.

"Well, you can't miss Helmie. He's a straw-haired Dutchy in a red tie and light suit like he always wears. He's sitting in one of those little stalls near the door, and the fellow that is with him is Dollaire. Anyway, they're both of them there a few minutes before you came in, and I guess they're there still, for they were just starting on a fresh bottle of fizz."

"Right!" said Colin. "I'll push on, then."

"Wait a second. Leave the break-away to me. I'll screen better—and there's no telling who's looking. And—listen! I don't know what your game is, but watch your step! There's something queer going on around here tonight. I don't know yet what it is, but—the drunk was suddenly patting Colin's arm. His voice rose: "Scuse me for a minute. Just saw an old friend of mine—hic—very intimate friend over there. I'll get him—hic—and we'll have another."

HINT WALKERS EXPECT STORK

NEW YORK, Aug. 31.—(AP)—The possibility that the James J. Walker...

ers are going to have a baby was suggested guardedly today by A. C. Blumenthal, the former New York mayor's close friend who visited the Walkers recently in their villa at Cannes on the Riviera. He returned to America yesterday.

"They both talk about the baby all the time," said Blumenthal in an interview at his hotel. "If they have one it will be the greatest happiness of their lives. I suspect that there is some reason for believing that there will be a blessed event in their family before long."

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30-HOUR-WEEK IS FIR REGION MILLS

TACOMA, Wash., Aug. 31.—(AP)—Lumber mills in the Pacific north-

west Douglas fir district will work a maximum of 30 hours a week for the month beginning September 4, the first period of NRA production allocation, it was announced by the West Coast Lumbermen's association this morning.

This will mean a "substantial reduction" in lumber production in this district for September.

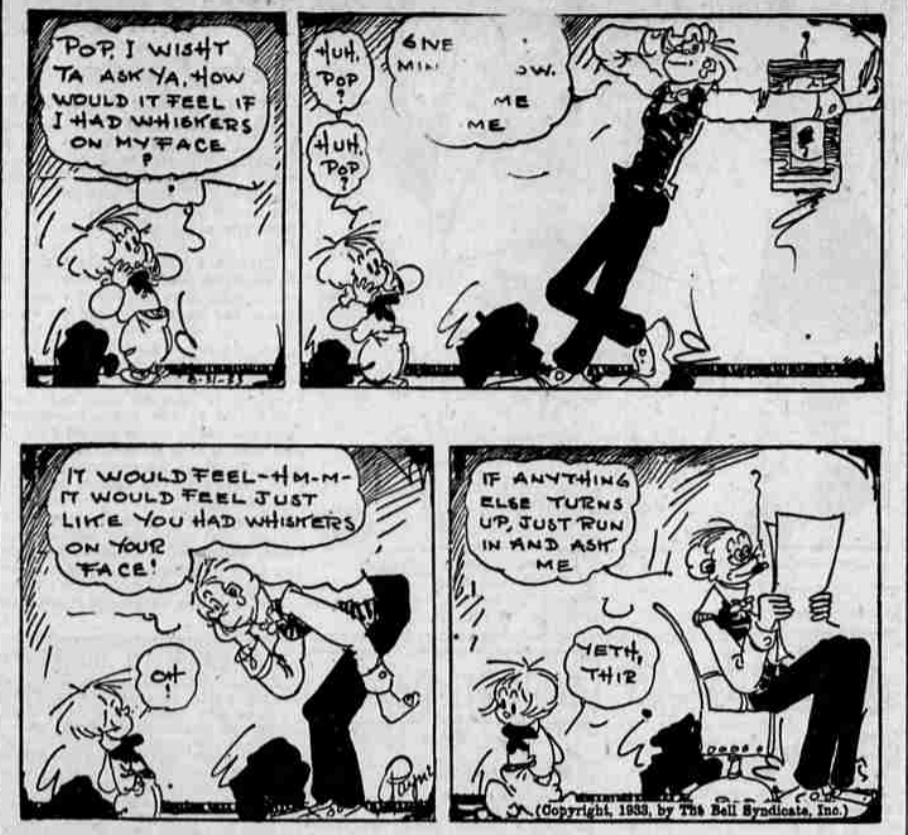
The announcement came from

Colonel W. B. Greeley, secretary-manager of the West Coast association, the trustees of which are meeting with trustees of the Pacific Northwest Loggers' association to study the NRA lumber code and devise machinery for putting the code provisions in effect.

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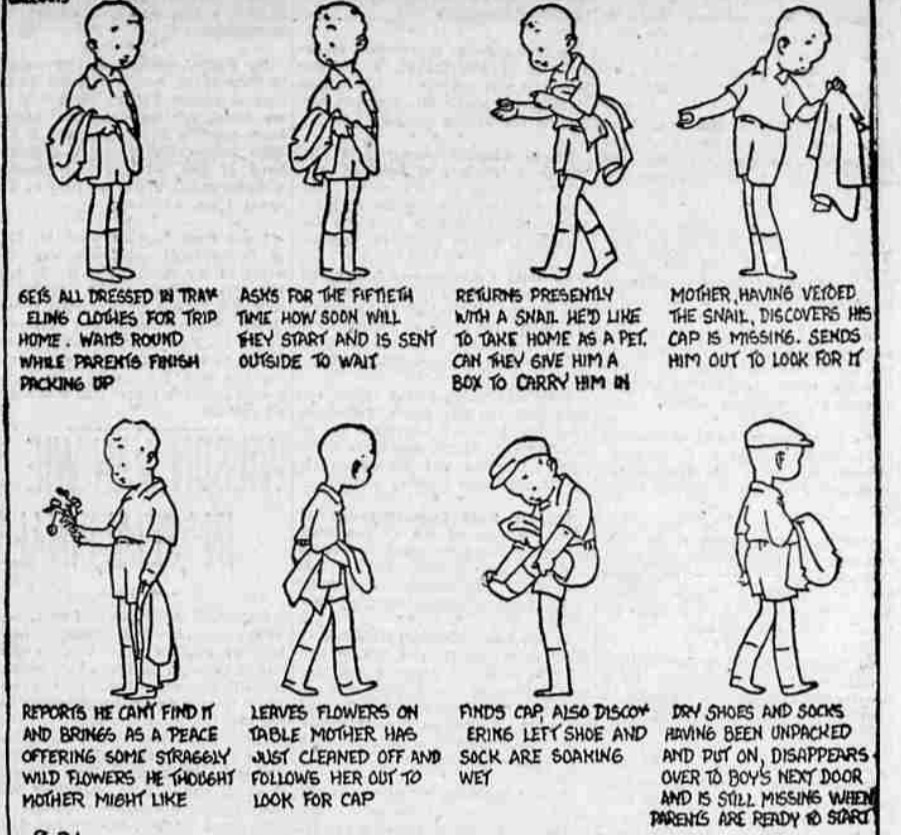
S'MATTER POP—

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WAITING TO START

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Jose's Plan Of Attack

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—And That's That!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Same Old Story

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



MOFFETT HEADS OIL CO-ORDINATION BODY
HYDE PARK, N. Y., Aug. 31.—(AP)—President Roosevelt today appointed the oil planning and coordination committee with James A. Moffett, former vice-president of the Standard Oil company of New Jersey, as the government's chief representative.

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