

FORBIDDEN VALLEY

by William Byron Mowery

SYNOPSIS: Curt Tennyson and Paul St. Clair, in Northwestern Canada on the trail of Igor Karakhan, international crook, join forces with Hank and Sonya, Nichols. They are attacked by the dangerous Klondike Indians, rescue an Indian left behind by his retreating band, and learn that there will not be a return attack for some days. Curt suddenly decides to fly to Vancouver to see what he can learn about Sonya's mysterious mission. Exhausted, he sleeps while Smash Desplines, who pilots the plane south.

Chapter 26

TANGLED THREADS

In the pier office Curt called the Marlin home, talked briefly with A-K, promised him a report later that evening, and sent Smash out there.

At Mounted headquarters he found Holden and Inspector Baldwin in the latter's private office, polishing their plans for a narcotic raid that night. When he knocked and went in, Baldwin looked around and saw Curt.

"Hello, Curt, old man!" He got up, shook hands warmly. "Holden and I have been wondering how you were making out. But I say, where's our friend Karakhan? We fancied that when you showed up you'd have him in tow." He made Curt take his swivel chair and shoved him the cigarettes.

Curt was surprised at his friendliness, so different from his resentment two weeks ago. Something had brought about a complete change of heart.

He took a cigarette and lit it from Baldwin's match. "Oh, I'm letting Karakhan run loose a little longer while I follow up a side lead. Arn, if you're not too busy I'd appreciate some help."

"Which you'll get. Holden, take over this hop sid."

Holden nodded and went out to the squad room. Across the desk Curt attacked his work at Tallacet, at Russian Lake, and his trip up the Lillnar.

"Why I came down here to Vancouver, Arn," he explained. "I've got to get complete data on Ralph Nichols and Sonya, and I'd like for you to help me. We won't have much trouble with Nichols. He's from Vancouver; I saw the labels on his clothes and outfit. Here's a roll of film; you'll find two snaps of him on it—the man with the cap. When we place Nichols, we'll go after his acquaintances and get everything we can."

Baldwin scratched notes on a pad. Curt went on:

"We may have more trouble with Sonya. I don't know her last name or where she's from; but I've got four snaps of her in that roll, and I think that when we place Nichols it'll be easy to get a lead on her. They're close friends and should have mutual acquaintances."

"Right!" Baldwin agreed. He pressed a button and a Mounted constable came in. "Otis, take this roll of film and have prints in half an hour. Don't fuzzle this." He turned to Curt. "While I'm working on Nichols, you can be reporting to A-K. My car's outside. Take it."

"Thanks, Arn. I'll go now." Baldwin walked out to the curb with him. "Old man," as he gave Curt the keys, "I read that letter you wrote A-K from Tallacet."

"He showed it to you?"

"Yes, I say, it was damned generous of you to tell him that I helped pick up Karakhan's trail. I didn't have a blighted thing to do with it, except to sit back and feel cocksure you'd fall. I acted small then, and I've been wanting to say so."

Curt was glad he had put that sentence into his report. A few generous words, costing nothing, had wiped out hard feelings and made Baldwin his old friend again.

"By the way," Baldwin remarked offhand, "Helen Mathieson has mentioned you several times. If you get a chance, call her up and say hello, won't you? You never told me—uh, what you thought of her."

"She took me a real surprise, Arn. I thought she was as likable and sweet a girl as I'd met in a long time."

"I'm glad to hear you say that. Just because she—uh, associated with Karakhan, most people think she's of a sort with him. I don't understand what the women like in the fellow but he's certainly got a way with them. She's pulling out of it."

"I'm glad she's forgetting. You've seen her since I was here?"

"We—uh, take an evening drive now and then. Yes, she's forgetting; but what I'd like, Curt, is for her to have the whole truth about him. She knows about his swindle game here in Vancouver; and excuse it, in a way; but she's never heard a whisper about Buenos Aires and those other incidents. She wouldn't excuse those chapters."

"You know as much as I do; why don't you tell her?"

"Well, you see, it'd be deuced awkward for me to do it. She knows I'm a professional bloodhound, and besides she might think that—uh, personal element was coloring what I said."

Curt suddenly realized that Baldwin's interest in Helen Mathieson cut a lot deeper than a professional interest. Strange—the officer whom the Cossack Karakhan had thrown aside. Luck dealt queer cards sometimes.

"I'll do what I can, Arn," he promised.

"Will you? Old man, I'll depend on you for that! I know she'd listen to you. On this other matter, I'll be phoning you before midnight."

Curt left. On his drive out to the Marlin home he prayed that Rosalie would be gone for the week-end, as she usually was. He had no definite thought of ever marrying Sonya Nichols; the whole situation between Sonya and himself was so uncertain and unpredictable that he could not look ahead with any assurance whatever.

But his intimacy with Sonya had revealed to him a new strange vista, unguessed at in all his previous life. He had known Rosalie for eight years without their association quickening into life or deepening beyond a casual comradeship; he had known Sonya less than two weeks, but it seemed to him that destiny itself had led him to take up the Karakhan hunt merely that he might meet and know her.

At the Marlin home A-K answered his ring. Smash had gone to bed, A-K informed, as he took Curt out on the porch. Rosalie too was gone—on a week's routine trip to Seattle.

"Sorry," Curt mumbled, when he heard that.

A-K brought a pitcher of iced drink, drew two chairs beside the magazine stand, and listened closely to the detailed report. The account left him uneasy. The big part of the hunt, and the worst part, still lay ahead, and several features of it looked ominous. Two men against three dozen—for Curt to go back into those mountains and continue the hunt was like a tryst with death.

And this girl Sonya—who was she, and what was she doing in there, and why under heaven had Curt bandied names with her in that situation where he needed above everything else to be absolutely free? Curt must be interested in her, to put it mildly.

"Curt, if you suppose this girl can be an agent of European police? Enough of them want Karakhan badly. Maybe they sent a woman to take him."

Curt shook his head emphatically. "It can't be, A-K. I know that positively; she couldn't have fooled me there."

"What do you believe she is then?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. Except," he added, "she's a most extraordinary person. I wish you knew her, A-K."

Marlin glanced at him. "Why?" he asked, his suspicion almost a certainty.

As he listened to Curt's halting attempt to describe her, Marlin felt that instead of liking this Russian girl he would dislike her intensely. He disliked her even then, without eye; having seen her, for he saw that she had crowded Rosalie entirely out of Curt's thoughts. He looked away, to keep Curt from seeing his shock and pain.

It seemed incredible that Curt, who had always been so rational in such matters, should fall in love with a girl of whom he knew nothing and whom he had met less than a fortnight ago.

Her alien origin, her secrecy, her going off on a long trip with a man who was no relation at all, strongly suggested that she was some sort of adventuress. No doubt she was a brilliant girl—she appeared to be a match for Curt at A-K's own game; and no doubt she had charming qualities or she could not have swept him off his feet as she had done.

But nevertheless she was an adventuress, and Curt had an awakening ahead.

He kept his conviction to himself. It was not a matter in which one man could counsel another. Curt had to choose and travel his own path. Perhaps, God willing, that path would bring him back to Rosalie yet.

At eleven the phone rang. Baldwin was calling from a downtown hotel.

"Curt? Arn speaking. Some news for you."

"A-K gives Curt a surprise, tomorrow."

CHRISTMAS PARTY PLANNED FOR KIDS

Preparations are being made for the second annual kiddies' commu-

ity Christmas tree, to be held at the Army Thursday evening, December 21st at 7:30 o'clock. The tree is being sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American War Veterans and is for every child of ten years and under residing in Jackson county.

Preceding the arrival of Santa Claus and the distribution of presents, a Christmas program will be

given, full details of which will be published later.

All children intending to come to the Christmas tree party, and all children of ten years and under are invited, are asked to fill in the coupon appearing elsewhere in the Mail Tribune today, and take or mail it to the Chamber of Commerce in order that the veterans will know how many children will be present

when Santa Claus comes the evening of December 21.

Christmas cards, all kinds and prices, printed or blank. Order now time is short. Mail Tribune Job Department.

Be correctly corrected in an Artist Model by Ethelwyn B. Hoffmann

A. Patton Here To Buy Turkeys

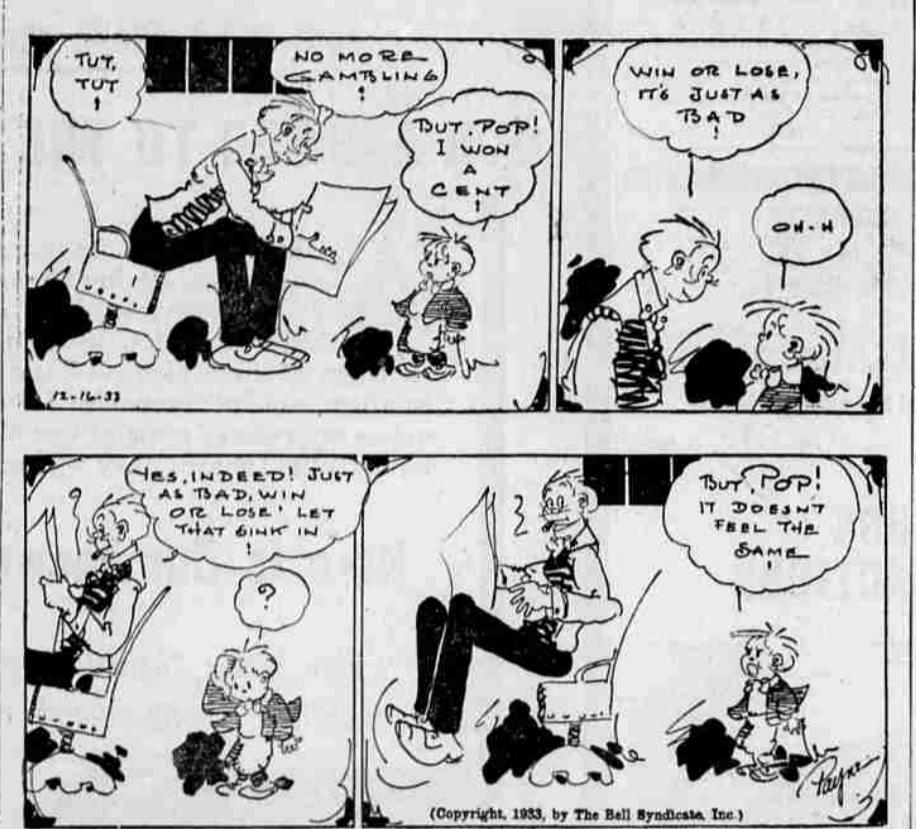
A. Patton, representative of the J. Garbini & Co. of San Francisco, who is well known to Southern Oregon turkey raisers, is in Medford again to buy turkeys for the Christmas market. Mr. Patton says his company will receive birds four days starting tomorrow at the Medford Warehouse, located on South Fir street.

The J. Garbini & Co. has purchased turkeys in this locality for the past several years and their average returns have been very high, according to Mr. Patton.

Ethelwyn B. Hoffmann's Semi-Annual Clearance Sale Now in progress

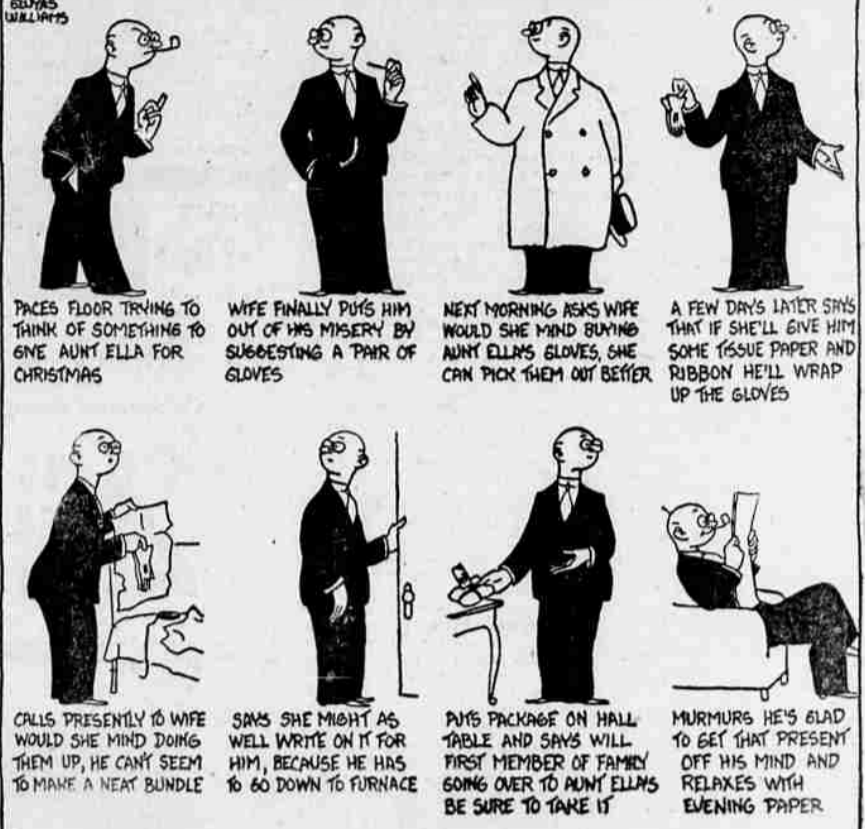
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



CHRISTMAS GIVING

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BOUND TO WIN—The New Guests

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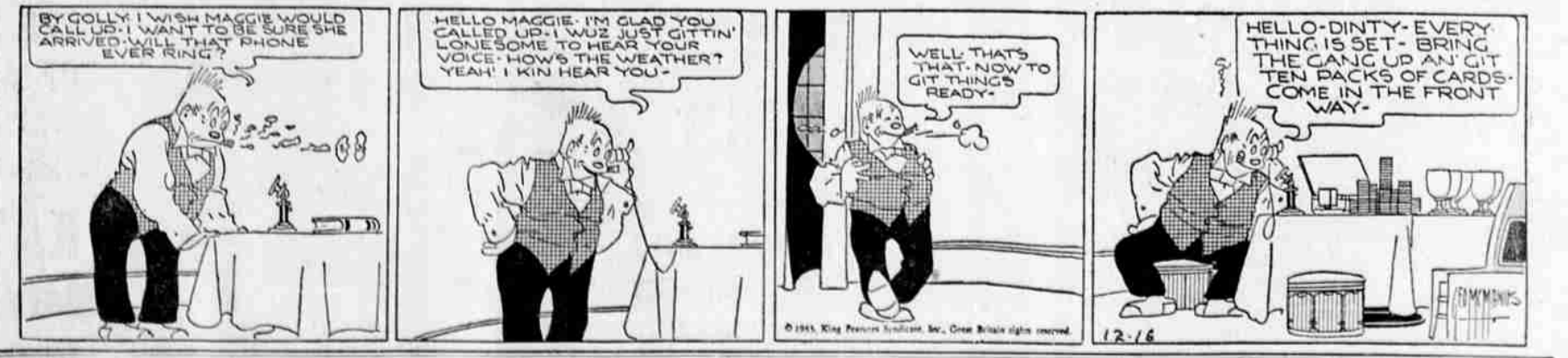
THE NEBBS—Just A Minute

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



KMED Broadcast Schedule

Sunday
 10:00—Judge Rutherford, Lecturer.
 10:15—News Digest, Mail Tribune.
 10:30—Holly-Time.
 10:45 to 11:00—Morning Melody.

Monday
 8:00—Breakfast News, Mail Tribune.
 8:05—Musical Clock.
 8:15—Peerless Parade.
 8:30—Shopping Guide.
 9:00—Friendship Circle Hour.
 9:30—Morning Melody.
 10:00—Weather Forecast.
 10:00—Ep and Zeb.
 10:15—Radio Christmas Show.
 10:45—Musical Notes.
 11:00—Grants Press Hour.
 11:15—Popular Vocalists.
 11:30—Mirror of Family Life.
 11:45—Tone Pictures.
 12:00—Mermaid Toiletion.

Tuesday
 12:15—Radio Rendezvous.
 12:30—News Flash, Mail Tribune.
 12:50—Moderne.
 1:00—Varieties.
 1:30—Mrs. Mabel Mack, Home Demonstration Agent.
 2:00—Classified Edition of the Air.
 3:00—Radio Christmas Review.
 3:35—Musical Echoes.
 4:00—Musical Cocktail.
 4:30—Masterworks Program.
 5:00—Ocell and Sally.
 5:15—Hilo Serenaders.
 5:30—Et and Elmer.
 5:45—News Digest, Mail Tribune.
 6:00—Medford Theatre Guide.
 6:15—Al Piche's Sports and Play.
 6:45—Holly-Time.
 7:00—The Black Ghost.
 7:15—Helen Believe.
 7:30 to 8:00—Eventide.

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