

FORBIDDEN VALLEY

By William Byron Mowery

SYNOPSIS: Igor Karakhan, usually erect and in the wild Canadian northwest, is overjoyed to receive a letter from Sonya Volkov, who is joining him. But Curt Tennison, who is trailing Karakhan, has seen a copy of the letter and he has killed his love for Sonya, whom he has protected in the wilderness. Curt, smitten, plans to follow Sonya to Karakhan. And Karakhan congratulates himself on his luck.

Chapter 33

THE DEPARTURE

AFTER LeNoir had gone to sleep, Karakhan left the cabin and walked down the lake shore, unconsciously seeking the open where walls did not limit his mood.

He could hardly yet believe his good fortune. He had never dreamed Sonya was searching for him or even that she liked him well enough to join him. He could easily imagine her of Helen Mathieson or others like her, but not of Sonya Volkov.

In the course of his dealings with her father and brother at Victoria, he had met her and immediately thrown over the Mathieson girl for her; but she had proved the most elusive creature of his wide experience. At times he had even been a little afraid of her—and now she was actually coming to him.

He believed he understood those six weeks. Her letter, especially one sentence of it, explained her aloofness there in Victoria. She'd been playing a girl's shy game with him, leading him on, perhaps, as feeling herself hampered by the presence of her father and brother; but after he had dropped from sight . . . "Your disappearance was an awakening for me, an unbearable realization of what I had lost." . . . No coyness there, but a cry of sheer longing for him!

A mile down the lake shore he came to a small cove, screened by sweeping pines—a beautiful little retreat with its tinkle of water and scent of cloudberry blossoms. Lending against a lichened rock, he watched a pair of Harlequin ducks tinkle and feed in the shallows. In the back of his mind he was imagining Sonya Volkov there with him in that seclusion; but his thoughts were gradually sobering, for those two suspicious strangers kept intruding, a jarring discord in his fancies.

He knew now that they were not prospectors, whatever else they might be. Gold hunters would hardly have disregarded that warning at the pass; and after that night attack they would certainly have got out of the country as fast as a canoe could take them.

To judge by LeNoir's account they were a pair of competent devils. A small voice whispered that this Ralston was one of those damnably mounted, who had struck his trail somehow and was sticking to it like a human bloodhound.

It put him in a dilemma. He was in danger and ought to escape. Though LeNoir had thirty-some men now and stood every chance in the world of wiping that party out, still something might slip up and those two might burst on through to his refuge. By all the rules of caution he ought to go.

But to leave just when Sonya Volkov was on the way to him and he had the prospects of having her there during the soft summer moons . . . For once he could not make a clean-cut decision.

Suppose, he reasoned, that he let LeNoir go south with the main band of Klosoehes and spring his attack. LeNoir could send back runners and keep him constantly informed of what was happening. If Ralston was killed and all danger from him was ended with the bang of snafu, well and good; he would stay there and wait for Sonya.

But if Ralston was not killed, he would escape. There would still be time. That plane in the hangar was an ace up the sleeve. It gave one an almost magical power of vanishing.

It bothered him more than a little to think that he might have to leave Sonya in the lurch, so helpless, so far back in those appalling mountains. But he had long since passed the point of allowing any scruples to stop him, or any dalliance, however pleasant, to endanger him. His own safety came first.

On his return he stopped at the hangar and looked over the plane carefully. It needed a bit of work—frayed control leads to replace, fouled plugs to scrape, a few trifling adjustments to be made; but in general it came through the winter in fly-away shape. He checked the gas again to reassure himself.

The wing tanks showed fifty-four gallons, with six more in the emer-

gency, and ten extra gallons still in one of the drums which LeNoir had brought. Seventy gallons altogether, it would take him to some coast town far south of Novonovsky.

"No other hop would put him in Seattle. Thirty hours after leaving his hiding in the Lilluars, he would step out on Mexican soil, safe from extradition and with no tracks left in the pathless sky.

At noon, when the Klosoehes began waking up, he went in and roused LeNoir. "You go back south with Slam-Kiale," he directed, "and hook up with those eight others. Your first move will be to get Miss Volkov away from that party, so she won't be exposed to any danger. Then choose your time and place, and finish this business off. Don't try to ambush or outwit those two. When you've got an advantage of eighteen-to-one odds you ought to use it by making a head-on attack. It may cost eight or ten men, but we'll let the Klosoehes do the worrying about that."

LeNoir nodded. He was not foolishly confident, he knew what a terrific fight Ralston and his partner would put up; but they were only two men, against three dozen. The others did not count. Nichols was a raw tenderfoot, and those two guides would not be worth anything in a show-down fight.

"Don't run any risk yourself," the Russian cautioned him—needlessly. "You won't have to. Let the Klosoehes do it. Now, just one other point. If anything at all goes wrong, I mean if you don't kill those two at your first smash, fire a runner to me at once. I want to know about it. I'll come down there and help you out. You'll do that, now?"

LeNoir thought it odd that his chief, who always before had kept strictly away from danger, should want to get into this fight personally. But he promised to send the word. They walked outside to the Klosoeh camp where the men were getting ready to shove away. A silent tight-lipped band, they were going about their little war with no ceremony or fol-de-rol. Even T. Karakhan, who was heartily tired of them, they were an admirable body of men.

Slam-Kiale, trudging along the water and giving orders, was the only repulsive one of the lot. Half a head taller than any of the others, he had the massive build of a grizzly, the close set eyes of a carcajou, and an indomitable physical courage which overawed even the mountain men that he ruled. He could be depended upon to put some fire into the attack.

The little flotilla pushed off and started east along the shore. When they had disappeared around a headland, Karakhan pulled the plane out of its shelter and set to work on it. The overhauling job took him six hours, but he did it thoroughly.

CURT looked up from cleaning his rifle. "You saw some caribou, you say?" he asked of Jocku, who stood in front of him with gun and canoe paddle. "Where?"

Jocku pointed down lake at a birch island, barely visible in the twilight. "On dat'n. Francois and me, 'bout ten minit ago, we saw 'em edge out to drink and den tromp back into de bush."

The trip seemed safe enough to Curt. His party did need meat, as Jocku said. A yearling caribou would come in handy.

"All right, go ahead, you and Francois," he consented. "But don't stay down there and let dark catch you, or these Klosoehes might shoot out canoes and cut you off."

The two guides promised him and hurried away. Curt was glad to see them go. Ever since his party had broken camp at the Iskitimwah mouth and come on north, they had lived in a nervous funk. A bit of hunting would do them good.

When he had finished with his rifle, he began loading extra magazine clips, to be ready if something unexpected burst on him and Paul before morning. From signs they had noticed that day he believed that Slam-Kiale's main band had arrived and was camping over on the northwest shore. LeNoir had probably got back too. If so, the stage was all set for trouble, a whole barrel of it. The camp was entirely safe at present; as long as Sonya was with the party LeNoir would hold off, for a fight would expose her to danger. But as soon as he got her away, LeNoir was going to touch off the avalanche.

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Fleed At Large
GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Dec. 26.—(P)—An attractive young woman whose battered body was found today in a meadow outside the city limits with three bullet wounds in the head was identified as Miss Margaret Peavry, 22. The girl, a deaf mute, had been missing two days.

LUMBER BUSINESS TOPS LAST WEEK

PORTLAND, Dec. 26.—(AP)—New business totaling 23,965,000 feet, 21 per cent greater than for the previous week, was reported by the Western Pine Association today for the week ending December 16. The week's business, however, was 32 per cent under the three-year weekly average for December. Of the 196 reporting mills, 83 were operating. Shipments were 33,785,000 feet and production 30,875,000 feet, putting production at 19 per cent of capacity compared with 21 per cent for the previous week and 23 per cent for the year to date. Current orders were 15 per cent of sawmill capacity.

'SMATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Brownie Loses His Temper



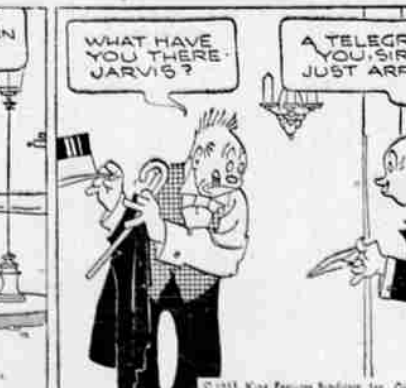
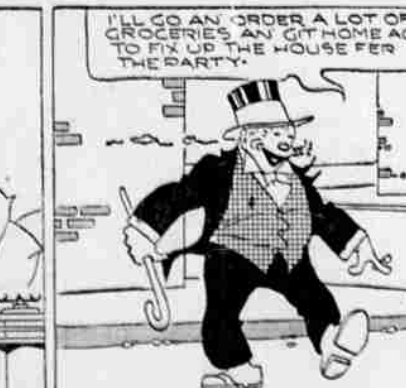
BOUND TO WIN—The Night Watch



THE NEBBS—The Arrest



BRINGING UP FATHER



LA GRANDE RADIO STATION REFUSED

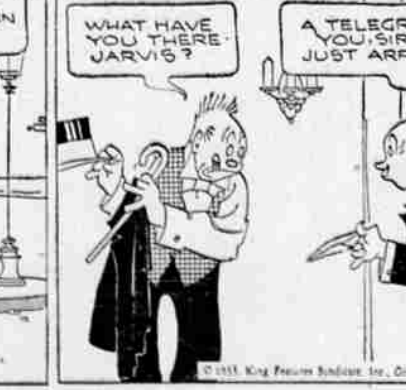
WASHINGTON, Dec. 26.—(AP)—The radio commission today granted a renewal of license to the Oregon State agricultural college station, KOAC, at Corvallis, Ore. It also denied the application of the Eastern Oregon Broadcasting Co., Inc., which asked it be assigned KOAC's facilities and be permitted to construct a new station at La Grande, Ore. The commission said the eastern Oregon company "has not shown sufficient financial resources or ability to assure the establishment of the proposed new station upon sound financial basis."

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



BRINGING UP FATHER



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