

NEVER MIND THE LADY

by David Garth

SYNOPSIS: Terry Willett has had to stop work on his Palau river project in the tropics because of the death of his father. Before he left for the States he met a girl who got into a scrape because of him. He tried to look her up in Washington, but she couldn't be reached, and left in a boat. Now he has arranged to combine forces with Husky Corrie on the Palau job, and is killing time in New York before leaving. He is also thinking a little against his will about the girl who broke him out in Washington. She is a little bit of a nut.

Chapter 25 PUFF AGAIN

WILLETT went up to his room, opened the door, and stepped on the threshold in astonishment. A girl was sitting in the chair. It was Puff Harrington. Willett was speechless for a moment, then he remembered she had asked him where he was staying in New York. "Hello, Louise," she greeted. "Louise?" "Uh huh. You're Louise Marra-way whom I'm visiting in New York. Dear Louise."

Terry shut the door behind him and looked at her thoughtfully. She lounged nonchalantly in the chair, attractive in her soft cadet blue wool sports suit, light fox collar and smart little felt hat with nose veil. "How," he inquired, "did you get here?"

"Alas, what a welcome," she sighed. "Puff, my child, you picked a darn to chase, Terry, it was very simple. Examine my sleeves at your leisure and look no more for mirrors."

"I waited a long time for you last night and when you didn't come I called the West house to inquire your whereabouts and was told that a Mr. Willett had called and left long ago since. So I took a chance, departed thither, and by judicious use of several pictures of Abraham Lincoln against a background of green, contrived to be let into your room."

She smiled at him. "It was so much pleasanter waiting here than in the lobby."

She gestured toward a tray of White Rock, glasses, cracked ice and a large square bottle. "I've even arranged it so that the party starts off right."

"Oh, we're going to have a party?" "So I hope, and so I've planned. I told you I knew this town like the palm of my hand. We're going lots of places and see lots of things. Just take my hand, Lancelot."

Well, why not? Better than sitting around alone. Looked as though that coin had spun both ways. Step on the gas and catch the lights as you go along.

They had a drink together. Puff was already a couple up on him. "It's so much nicer being here with you. My statesman father is giving a speech today. I nearly got hooked into attending, but Louise came to my rescue. Dear Louise."

"I'd like to hear the speech your father would give if he knew where you were."

"Couldn't be worse than the one he's putting a few assorted senators to sleep with. It's about sugar beets. "Sugar beets?"

"Or sweet potatoes, or something. Who cares?"

She yanked off her hat, flung herself on the divan, and gave a deep sigh of relief.

"Who cares?" she repeated. "You had a lousy time last night, didn't you?"

Willett frowned at his glass. "I'm forgetting last night." "What were you looking for particularly?"

"Puff, I don't think you'd understand if I told you."

"No? What makes you think so?" She clasped her hands behind her dark head and stretched herself comfortably. "Come on over and sit down, darling."

SHE liked to play games and her idea of life was one long good time, but Willett, as he looked at her just then, felt that this nonchalant girl filled a queer need in his life. He'd lost the only person in the world he'd cared anything about. Puff was very pretty and very intriguing and there was no reason why he shouldn't flow along with the stream.

She gave him a slow mocking glance from those heavily lashed violet eyes. "Afraid of finding something you were looking for?"

He didn't say anything, but went over and sat down beside her. She stretched out her arms and clasped her hands behind his neck. A bracelet slid down one tanned young arm. Her mouth was very red and there was an air of cocktails, delicate perfume and cigars about her; but there was also the intriguing slow caress of her words and a

trick of invitation in those eyes of hers.

"Well, Terry Willett!" she said. "This isn't heading right, Puff."

"Don't be silly," she requested. "Darling, you're such a little boy—"

"Oh, hell—" He made an impatient move, but her hands tightened.

"Little boy," she repeated provocatively. "Little boy toot in a department store and yelling for his mother. Tall, and strong, and straight, but you feel lost. I can tell, darling. Why worry?—the world wasn't made to worry about. Do you know—that you haven't kissed me yet?"

"I know that," said Terry. "Don't you think—you'd care to try it?"

Willett tried it. She didn't want to let him go, but he gently disengaged her hands. What was the matter with him, he wondered.

Was he about to turn his collar around, or something, or did he seem to feel the ironic mockery of two dark eyes as he landed with Puff on the rebound? He got up and walked back to the table, poured out two shots and handed one to the girl.

"You're a swell kid. Put it down to dumbness and let's head in another direction."

"Lancelot," she sighed, "I dub thee Galahad—for the nonce." She raised her glass. "For the nonce."

The rest of that evening was a confused blur. Puff took a room nearby to which she repaired to dress in an evening gown, and she called up some male friend of hers in town whose measurements she computed to be close to Terry's to send over some dress clothes for Willett.

When he appeared in evening dress she won a mental bet with herself. He looked grand in them, the bronze of his face contrasting with the gleaming whiteness of his starched shirt bosom, and the easy natural way his rangy form carried them.

Willett didn't care—he just flowed along with the stream of her enthusiasm. Time enough for struggle in the days to come.

THEY landed in some night club a far uptown where night's grin ning jungle ecstasy was rampant in the spectacular savage blare of a colored jazz band.

Lights flashed in darkness, a master of ceremonies introduced lots of people, a chorus of garishly decked girls pounded the floor with the sharp staccato of dancing heels and raised their voices in tinny song.

A dusky prima donna sang a throaty haunting refrain about winds and her men, or something. A blonde girl at a table near them giggled over the antics of her escort.

They left that place and went to another. Puff had an argument with somebody about a cocktail called the Earl of Westminster. A roller-skating entertainer asked for a volunteer to be swirled around; Puff volunteered and was left so dizzy she couldn't stand up. Everybody laughed.

Terry wondered if all these people were having fun. He had a couple more drinks and tried to join the parade.

They met complications at a club filled with dress clothes and high prices. There were four men if everyday clothes leaning against a bar. They were all members of a nationally famous football team and they said so.

They also said they had been in the place since four o'clock that afternoon. The manager warned them he didn't want any high jinks. When Puff came in with Terry they tried some high jinks.

"Hey, Christy," said one of them "know that girl?"

Christy, lounging against the bar with his cheek on one hand, opened his eyes boredly.

"Gretchen Tillingshat," he returned, and closed his eyes again. "I'll bet Christy doesn't know her name at all."

"Do so," refuted Christy with dignity, his eyes still shut. "If you don't like the name, Ned, pick 'nother. All the same."

"It's all right," said Ned "Let's huddle."

"I figure the escort for a five-yard loss," advised one.

"We'll ask the babe in," decided the man they called Ned.

"I'll flip you," offered Ned. They flipped. Joe lost. Ned ambled over to Terry's table and addressed himself to Puff.

"Babe," he said, "do you know that there have been times when seventy thousand people would give their shirts to know what went on in that huddle?"

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So Everybody, Thursday, Goes to Court.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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When the old Bowery theatre was built in New York in 1826 it was the largest theatre in America. When the grand opening took place the first show at the new theatre was "The Road to Ruin"—a play in which a young spendthrift brings about near ruin to his father's bank, and almost has to give up the girl he loves and marry a rich old widow.

The title of this opening attraction at the Bowery theatre was prophetic of the theatre's destiny. The theatre became known as the unluckiest one in the world, and for 35 years mishaps dogged it.

Two years after the theatre was opened it was destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt by the manager who soon took to drink because of the falling venture—this led to his death and the killing of Charles Young, an actor. In 1936 the building was again destroyed by fire, bringing financial ruin to the new manager who had let his insurance lapse a few days before the fire.

The Bowery was reopened the following year by another manager. Thirteen months later it was again destroyed by fire, insurance this time only partly covering the loss. In 1899 it was opened again, but six years later burned again. For the

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Tries to Cheer Up Skeeter!



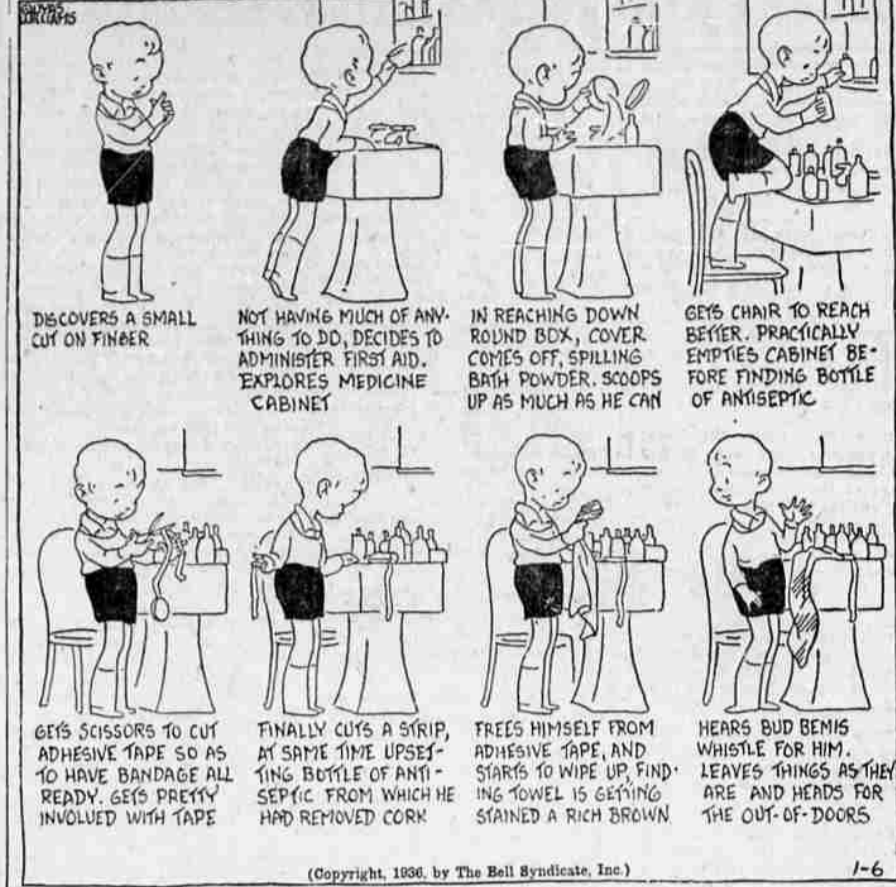
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Ben's Decision



THE NEBBS—Option, Option—Who's Got the Option?



THE MEDICINE CABINET



S'MATTER POP—



DRIVER CREMATED IN BURNING TRUCK

OLYMPIA, Jan. 12.—(AP)—Curtis Meeker of Eugene, Ore., burned to death near here last night when his truck and trailer crashed off the Pacific highway and was destroyed by fire. Chief William Cole of the Washington State patrol said today. The truck was loaded with ore concentrate. Cole said, bound for Tacoma smelter. The freight carrier was owned by J. H. Beck of Eugene. State patrolmen reported to headquarters that evidently the driver had dropped off to sleep or that a front tire blew out causing the truck to swerve from the highway and crash into a telephone pole. The driver was pinned inside.

PRODUCER 'ROXY' PASSES SUDDENLY

NEW YORK, Jan. 12.—(AP)—Samuel L. Rothafel, motion picture producer known to thousands of theater-goers as "Roxy" died today of a heart attack in his room in the Hotel Gotham. "Roxy" was celebrated as a pioneer of the elaborate stage production, adding pre-liminary shows to the picture program. He also was one of the first of the well-known showmen to present his stage show on the radio. "Roxy and his gang" was one of the first nationally-known radio acts. At the height of his career he organized a building company which erected the huge Roxy theater in New York, a structure with a seating capacity of 6,221.

By HAL FORREST

By EDWIN ALGER

By SOL HESS