

SHOW BOAT GIRL

By ROBERTA COURTLAND

Chapter 20 Tense Scene

RANDY had told Melissa that she was not to come into the gambling rooms, and she had obeyed him implicitly. Then one night after she had finished her second group of numbers and she and Randy were on deck, watching the rising moon, one of the men from the gambling rooms came with a sort of quiet haste to Randy and spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"Harper's tryin' to get tough, boss. How about giving him the brush-off?" Melissa heard the man, whose name she knew only as Al, say.

"Harper? I thought I told you to keep him off the boat," said Randy sternly.

"We tried, boss, but it was either let him on or throw him in the drink, and—well, he's behaved up until now," answered Al grimly.

Randy said, "Excuse me, Melissa."

Melissa watched as Randy and Al went swiftly up the stairs to the gambling rooms; then, on a sudden impulse she did not stop to question or analyze, she followed them.

She slipped through the door behind them and looked, wide-eyed, at the big room that had once been the main passenger saloon of the River Queen before she had become a show boat.

The room was furnished with old elegance of white-painted walls, dark red hangings, thick carpet on the floor. There were gambling devices of every kind: roulette tables, bird-cage, chemin-de-fer, ordinary card tables where silent groups sat with their attention warily on their cards; there was a dice table where a group of flushed, bright-eyed young people were, judging by their noise and laughter having a lot of fun.

But the crowd was gathered about one of the roulette tables, where a flushed, awing, thick-set man in rumpled evening clothes was facing the croupier, one of the wise-eyed, old young men whom Melissa knew only as Spike. Before Spike there was a great heap of chips; before the other man there was a small pile of blue and white chips.

"There's ten thousand bucks in that pile in front of the croupier," a man close to Melissa said to his companion. "And Harper's dropped the whole amount in the last hour. He's a fool!"

Everybody was tense, intent on the next spin of the wheel. His hands fumbling a little, Harper placed the last of his chips on two numbers, twenty and the red. The croupier, expressionless, patient, even a little bored, spun the wheel briskly.

There was a breathless moment in which the rattle of the little white ball was the only sound, for the youngsters at the dice table had drawn near. Melissa took her fascinating eyes for a moment from the clicking white ball and looked at Randy, who stood just behind the croupier, his own eyes on the ball.

The wheel slowed. The little ball rolled indecisively, hanging for a moment above a number as though about to fall in the tiny pocket, then apparently changed its mind and whirled on, until it fell at last into a pocket that was black and marked sixteen.

There was a little breath of sympathy, a sort of amused groaning from those gathered around the table.

"The poor sap's been playing black and the sixteen all evening—and the first time he plays another number, that one comes up. Rotten luck, old man," said someone.

Harper swung his heavy body about and glared at the man who had spoken.

"Luck?" he snarled savagely, his face twisted into a convulsion of fury and despair. "What's luck got to do with it? The wheel's crooked—the whole place is crooked. It's a clip-joint!"

Money Back
THERE was an instant and rather deadly silence. The crowd looked swiftly at Randy and then as swiftly away. Randy's face was paper-white, and his jaw was set so sternly that a little ridge of muscle leaped along it and was gone.

He was suddenly a stranger to Melissa and a rather terrifying stranger—someone she had never seen before. She saw his fists clenched, the sudden strain of his body, and knew that he ached to leap upon Harper and smash the words against his thick-lipped, loose-looking mouth.

though you and your cutthroats didn't know it!" Randy's jaw was like stone save for that tiny betraying ripple of muscle, and his hands were still clenched into hard, powerful-looking fists. But his voice was as quiet as ever as he said politely, "Spike, hand the—er—gentleman twelve thousand dollars—and his hat and coat. And in future, please see that Mr. Harper does not return to the River Queen. Is that quite clear, Mr. Harper?"

Harper growled something and took the money that Spike, as expressionless as a carved statue, counted out to him. He accepted the coat and hat and a white-clothed negro waiter handed to him and he lurched through the doorway, as Melissa stepped quickly backward to avoid him.

It was then that Randy saw Melissa, and a curious look came swiftly over his face. He said something in a sharp aside to Spike and made his way to her, a hand beneath her elbow steering her toward the doorway as he said sternly, half under his breath, "Haven't I told you not to come to the game rooms, Melissa? This is no place for you. You won't have any hanging around here."

"I followed you and Al. I'm sorry if you're angry," said Melissa as he hurried her down the stairs to the deck, flooded now with soft, butter-yellow moonlight. "But, Randy, why should you give that man back his money? After all, you won it honestly—because the wheel isn't crooked. I know it isn't—you wouldn't play that way—"

Randy looked down at her, startled, caught off-guard for a moment. His face was touched now with a sudden tenderness, a warmth that made his voice soft as he said, "You really feel that I'm honest, Melissa—that the money was honestly won?"

"Of course. You're not a crook, Randy—you just couldn't be. Nobody could make me believe that!" answered Melissa sturdily, and that the words came straight from her heart her eyes that met his so straightly told him.

Love at Midnight
RANDY was still for a moment, almost rigid. And then he said huskily, "I think that's probably the nicest thing anybody ever said to me, Melissa—and coming from you it's extra special. But I'm afraid you'd have a lot of trouble convincing some people that I ever had a decent impulse or an honest thought."

"That's because they don't know you as I do," said Melissa simply.

Randy looked down at her, and the moonlight showed her his face, startled, deeply touched with wonder and with a look that made her heart suddenly stand on tip-toe, breathless and waiting for what it knew was inevitable.

And then, just as he was about to say something, his handsome head jerked erect and he turned to look out over the broad yellow river, its light gray, far away, that was the opposite shore almost lost tonight in the faint river mist.

And then he looked at her, startled, disturbed and said impulsively the things that were in his mind. "See here, Melissa, you mustn't go getting any crazy ideas about me, or about how you feel toward me. I'm—well, I'm so fit companion for a youngster like you—"

"I'm not a baby," said Melissa swiftly, her voice shaking a little. "And I wish you'd stop treating me like one. You—you needn't worry about my loving you. I do, of course, but it needn't trouble you. I won't be a nuisance, I promise—"

"Oh, darling—don't!" said Randy huskily, his voice rough with tenderness, his arms gathered her close, holding her tightly. "I've tried my darndest not to love you, darling, because I knew from the first you weren't for me. I know I had no right to bring you here—this is no sort of place for a kid like you. I promised your grandmother I wouldn't let you be hurt—and I've tried like the dickens to keep that promise—"

Melissa's voice, warm, eager, breathless, cut across his speech. "Does that mean—oh, Randy, does that mean—you like me, too?"

"Like you?" Randy's voice scorned the word. "You precious little idiot! I've been two-thirds in love with you from the very first moment when your flashlight picked me out of the stormy darkness that night on the beach. And it's been growing and growing until now—well, now I'm just about stark, staring mad over you—and I don't know what the blazes I'm going to do about it."

Melissa's laugh was soft, unutterably sweet. "That's easy enough. You just marry me!" she pointed out blissfully, and added hurriedly, "That is, if you don't mind."

He gave a little sound that was half a chuckle, half a groan as his arms tightened about her until she could scarcely breathe. "Mind?" he repeated helplessly. "Oh, my good Lord!"

He kissed her then. And it was more wonderful than even her most secret dreams had made it. To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:
Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:
KALE (NBS) 1330, Portland
KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland
KGA (NBC-Blue & NBS) 1510
Spokane: KGO (NBC-Blue) 810
San Francisco: KGO (NBC-Red) 620, Portland: KJR (NBC-Blue)
1000, Seattle: KNA (CBS) 1670
Los Angeles: KOA (NBC-Red) 850
Denver: KOIN (CBS) 870, Portland: KMO (NBC-Red) 950
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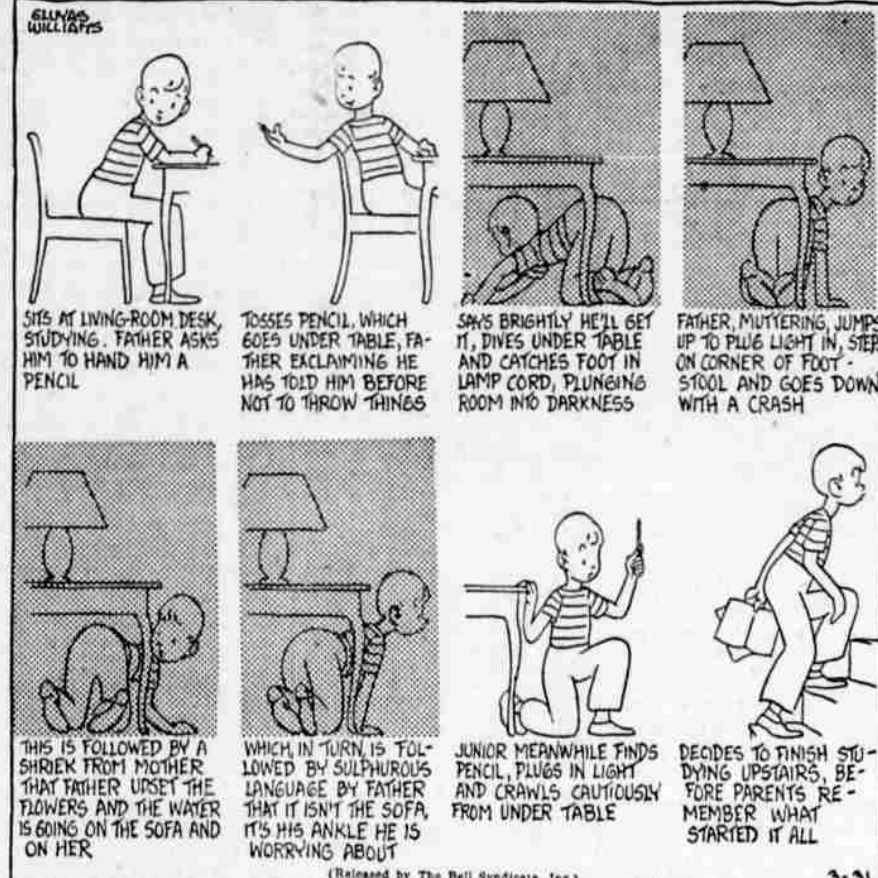
Time Shown is PST
Tuesday
5:00 p. m.—Are You a Missing Heir, KSL, News, KOIN; Musical Portraits, KMO; Flying Patrol, KGO, KJR; Stars of Today, KGO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.
5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KEX, KGO, KJR; Harry W. Flannery, KEX; Bob Burns, KSL; Horace Heidt's Treasure Chest, KPO, KMO, KGW; Bill Henry, KOIN.
6:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KPO, KGW, KMO; Second Husband, KSL, KEX; Secret City, KEX; Voice of Victory, KGO; Dance Time, KJR; What's the Answer, KOIN.
6:30 p. m.—Phibber McGoey and Molly, KPO, KMO, KGW; Symphony Concert, KGO, KEX, KJR; Report to the Nation, KXK, KOIN.
7:00 p. m.—Bob Hope Variety Show, KSL, KOIN.

Wednesday
5:00 p. m.—Ken Stevens, KOIN; Brewster Boy, KSL; Seattle Parent-Teacher Ass'n, KMO; Flying Patrol, KGO, KJR; Stars of Today, KGO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.
5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KEX, KGO, KJR; Harry W. Flannery, KEX; Dr. Christian, KSL; It Happened in the Service, KPO, KMO; KGW; Eyes of the World, KOIN.
6:00 p. m.—Eddie Cantor Show, KPO, KGO, KMO; American Melody Hour, KGO, KEX, KJR; Shirley Temple in Junior Miss, KXK, KOIN; Sports, KSL.
6:30 p. m.—Dr. Cab Calloway's Quizside, KGO, KEX; Mr. District Attorney, KPO, KMO, KGW; Ransom Sherman Show, KXK, KOIN; News, KJR.
7:00 p. m.—Basin Street Chamber Music, KGO, KEX; Glenn Miller's Orch., KXK, KSL, KOIN; Kay Kyser's Musical Quiz, KPO, KGO, KMO; Time to Relax, KJR.
7:30 p. m.—Morgan Beatty, KGO, KJR; Faithful Stradiavari, KEX.
8:15 p. m.—Lanny Ross, KXK, KSL, KOIN.
8:30 p. m.—Dr. Christian, KXK, KOIN; Uncle Walter's Dog House, KPO, KGO, KMO; Manhattan at Midnight, KGO, KJR, KEX; News, KSL.
9:00 p. m.—Paul Martin's Orch., KPO, KGO; That Brewster Boy, KXK, KOIN; Highlight Hour, KMO; Hymn Service, KSL.

Thursday
5:00 p. m.—Red Skelton, KPO, KGW, KMO; Red Ryder, KGO, KJR, KEX; Vox Pop, KOIN; Green Davies, KSL.
5:30 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KXK, KSL, KOIN; Three Ring Time, KGO, KJR; Fred Waring, KPO, KGO, KMO; Rhythm Time, KEX.
6:15 p. m.—Lum and Abner, KPO, KGO, KMO; Lanny Ross, KXK, KSL, KOIN.
6:30 p. m.—Information Please, KGO, KEX, KJR; Are You a Missing Heir, KXK, KOIN; Johnny Presents, KPO, KEX, KMO, News, KSL.
6:50 p. m.—Duffy's Tavern, KXK, KOIN, KSL; Adventures of the Thin Man, KPO, KGW, KMO.
7:30 p. m.—Don Bestor's Orch., KGO, KJR; Battle of the Bases, KPO, KMO, KGW; Bob Burns Show, KXK, KOIN; News, KSL, KEX.
8:00 p. m.—Cugat Rumba Revue, KGO, KEX, KJR; Reporter News, KPO, KMO, KGW; Masterworks of Music, KSL, News, KXK; Five Star Pinal, KOIN.
8:30 p. m.—Stan Kenton's Orch., KSL; Al Donahue's Orch., KMO, Claude Thornhill's Orch., KGO, KJR; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Moonlight Sonata, KGW; War Time Women, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.
9:00 p. m.—Swing Your Partner, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; Anita Carol and Erwin Yeo, KOIN; News, KXK, KGO; Revue, KMO.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

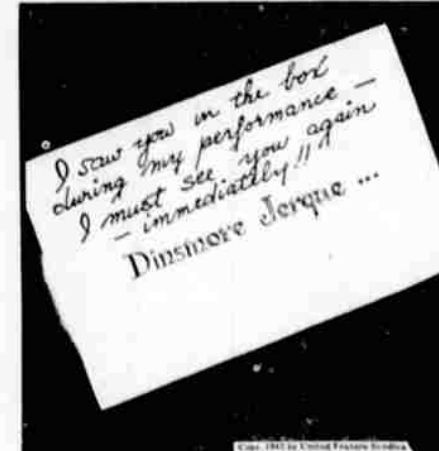


HAP HOPPER, Washington Correspondent

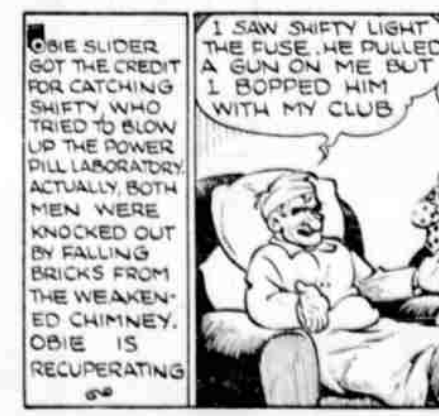
Just In Time



LIL ABNER—A Jerque At Work



THE NEBBES—Visitors' Day



Yankees in Ireland Get Note From F. R.

With the United States Army in Northern Ireland, March 31—(AP)—A message from President Roosevelt to every member of

SHOP AT NIGHT

Barker's are open until 8 o'clock EVERY night.

Barker.
Store for Men

The United States army expeditionary force arrived at headquarters today for distribution to the soldiers.

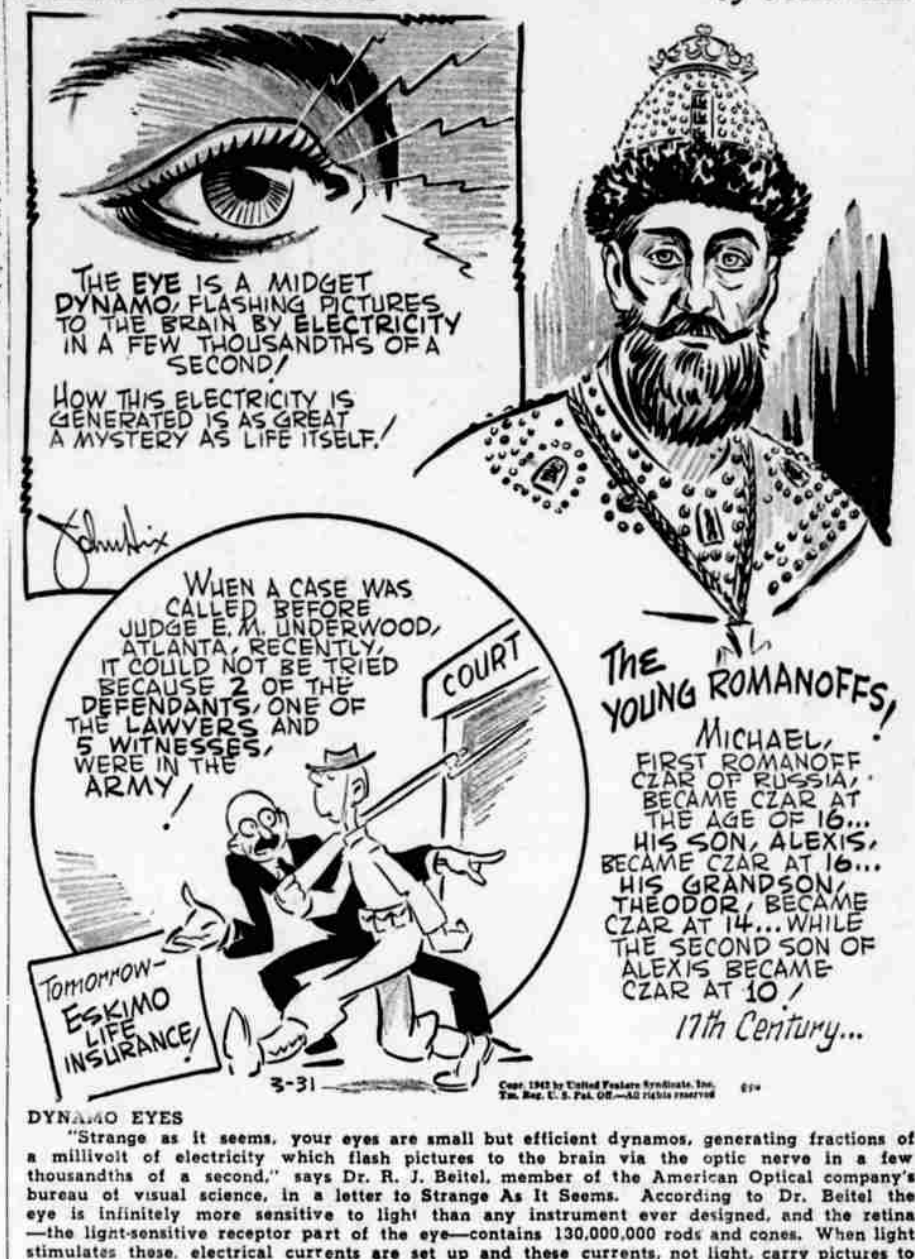
"You will be supported by the whole force and power of this nation," said the president's message on White House stationery. "The victory you win will be the victory of all the people—common to them all."

TENTH TRAFFIC DEATH
Portland March 31—(AP)—Portland's 1942 traffic toll was increased to 10 today with the death of Mrs. Agnes I. Crowthers, 68, a pedestrian struck by an automobile last night at a street intersection.

Choking Time in Classified Ads 2 a m.—Two late to Classify 12.30 p. m.

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AIR TEACHER KILLED
Boise, Ida., March 31—(AP)—William M. Skinner, 24-year-old civilian pilot instructor, was killed and Jack E. Wilson, 19-year-old student flier, was critically injured when a single-engine training plane crashed near the Boise airfield today. The two were practicing landings.