

LIL ABNER

Widow on Main Street — by **AL CAPP**



Our Story: SOLDIERS GATHER BELOW THE CITY'S WALLS, TO PRINCE VALIANT'S PRACTICED EYE THE TROOP IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH FOR AN ASSAULT, SO THE DUKE MUST BE PLANNING FOR A RAID OR AMBUSH.



HE IS NOT LONG IN FINDING OUT. "WE RIDE AT DAWN," SAYS THE DUKE WITH A CRUEL SMILE, "AND YOU MAY FULFILL YOUR TASK WITHOUT STAIN TO YOUR HONOR. MEANWHILE, YOUR SON WILL BE CHAINED BESIDE THE RACK TO INSURE YOUR OBEDIENCE."



AT DAWN DUKE SADONICK LEADS FORTH HIS PICKED TROOP, AND VAL, IN HOPELESS RAGE, RIDES WITH HIM. A QUICK SWORD STROKE WOULD FINISH THE DUKE, BUT IT WOULD ALSO BRING ABOUT HIS SON'S DEATH BY TORTURE.



AND AT THE SAME HOUR STEPHAN AND HIS MOTHER ARE RIDING TO THEIR HUNTING LODGE. "YOU ARE JUST LIKE YOUR LATE FATHER," SHE SCOLDS, "ALWAYS THINKING OF SPORT. WHY DID YOU NOT STAY IN THE MONASTERY WHERE YOU WERE SAFE FROM YOUR UNCLE?"



"UNCLE SADONICK IS A VERY TREACHEROUS MAN, BUT," HE ADDS PIOUSLY, "I DO HOPE NOTHING BAD HAPPENS TO HIM." THEN HE CHUCKLES.



THE HUNTING PARTY IS SETTLED COMFORTABLY FOR THE NIGHT AND, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR HIS MOTHER'S STEADY PRATTLE, HE MIGHT HAVE HEARD.....



....THE BUSHES RUSTLING AS A HUNDRED ARMED MEN SURROUND THE QUIET HUNTING LODGE.

NEXT WEEK: **The Reluctant Sword**