

SERIAL STORY

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

BY WILLIAM WOODS

CHAPTER I

The man left Stokund, more than halfway up the west coast of Norway, at nightfall, and long past midnight, after the lonely roads, came staggering up to his cousin's farm near the little fishing village of Trollness.

Knut Osterholm, the farmer, woke out of uneasy sleep, threw up the blind with a clatter, and saw the man in the bright moonlight, standing down in the cobble yard, his hands burned black and his shoulder bloody under a torn shirt.

Quickly the farmer slipped on his clothes and went out to hide him in the hayloft of the barn. Then he limped off in a great hurry toward Trollness to rouse the only doctor in town.

It was after 3 when he and the plump doctor (who wore a fur-lined jacket and a bearskin cap, and kept rubbing his hands together against the cold) climbed back up into the dry loft where the visitor was lying in the straw.

After a long while the east began to glow behind the ragged mountains. The farmer limped to the north window. Shivering a little, he pulled his red woolen jacket closer about him, and gazed eagerly at his long, rich fields that stretched all moist and quiet toward the village—narrow and black, with the bedrock of the mountains at arm's length under the sod.

"You had better go," he said at last, turning. "If the commandant comes out this far with his squad..."

"I know," the doctor stood up wearily. "We have to be more careful than ever. I'll talk to Gunnar Brogge in town."

"Brogge, yes, he's the man." "We fight, Knut," he said. "It will be very dangerous, but at last we fight. The bugle call died away. The sun hit the window and spilled in over the granary floor."

The doctor was a dapper, middle-aged man who always gave the impression of having just been shaved and powdered. He stepped out so heartily on his short legs, and peppered the little stones in the road so briskly with his stick that anyone who met him would have thought him a young David roaring out to kill a dozen Philistines before breakfast.

Despite the early hour, he was, as usual, immaculate in Oxford shoes, and very important, for he, Martin Stensgard, was a doctor of medicine from Oslo, and mayor of Trollness as well. He had a son whom he never mentioned, and a daughter he thought the most wonderful in Norway, for she was his daughter. His quiet, wispy of a wife knew him better than anyone else in the world, and she was afraid of him.

As he got farther into town he saw the women out sweeping their walks. Rough, hip-booted fishermen in corduroys and dark shirts were finishing their early morning work at the flowerbeds, or striding hurriedly down toward the dock. They were big men, tanned, and sea-salted, with blunt garbled hands, knife-scarred a dozen times over. Fish and salt sea hung in the air between the house fronts and the signboards of the little shops in the center of the village, crept over the old wharf where the boats were riding alongside the dark, wet, wooden piling, and lay reeking on the blood- and scale-stained dock in front of the warehouse, where every night the day's catch was salted and barrel-packed for shipment.

Dr. Stensgard stopped in front of his own white fence, and impatiently watched the men going past him on the road.

SOME ten minutes passed while he waited. Then a burly, sullen-looking fellow in a black lumberjacket came striding out of the nearest side street and turned down toward the square. The doctor went over quickly and tapped him on the shoulder with his stick. "Good morning, Gunnar."

The fisherman turned slowly and gazed down at the plump, pink face and the bearskin cap. "Good morning!"

Looking from side to side, the doctor muttered in a lower voice, "I want to talk to you." Without waiting for an answer, he turned, poked his gate open with his stick, and strode into the house.

Once in the surgery, he tossed the fur cap into a chair, smoothed down his damp, blond hair, and pulled the shades. "We fight," he burst out. "We are to get guns from England. The whole coast is to be armed."

Gunnar lifted his head. His whole body grew tense, but his expression did not change. Perhaps it was this calm, this utter steadfastness, that had made him the leader of all the fishermen in town.

"Yesterday there was a battle down the coast," Stensgard put down his stick, took off his jacket, hung it up neatly, and began walking up and down very fast. Gunnar Brogge followed him silently with fervid eyes.

"Last night," the fierce little man said, "Knut Osterholm came down here at 3 in the morning. No, a little before. It's 10 minutes to the hour it was. His cousin Hammer had got through from Stokund with a bullet in his shoulder and half the skin off his arms

from a fire."

"Past the guard on the road? They were searching houses last night."

"They were?" asked the doctor. "Must have had news of the fighting. Anyway, Hammer made it. God knows how. And not only here in town, but 15 miles on foot, past a dozen patrols. As I said, there was a battle in Stokund. They fought for five hours before they were beaten. Casualties on both sides."

"Were they insane?" asked Gunnar slowly. "They didn't stand a chance." But his heart pounded and pounded. How many nights he had dreamed that a thing like this would happen.

The doctor saw his face. "Hal! Too much for you, eh? You can't believe it." Suddenly he drew very close, eyes tense like a conspirator's. "But now, with half the occupying forces sent out of Norway to the Russian front, now is the time to strike. We know it. The English know it, and down in Stokund they had been getting guns, picking them up at night in small boats from English ships off shore. But they were betrayed."

He backed away and glared at the fisherman fiercely. "Some fool of a woman. She told the Germans the guns were buried in the gardens. They came with searching parties, and then it started. House to house, the men defending themselves. What else could they do? Imagine! Or have I told you? Fifty or sixty were killed on both sides."

For several moments Gunnar Brogge stood motionless, looking at the doctor. A great, confident joy welled up in him that made him hardly able to talk. He said, "We have to be careful... how we go about it... when the guns come."

(To Be Continued)

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



DOESN'T LOOK SO BIG!
The SUN IS EQUAL TO A MILLION BODIES THE SIZE OF OUR EARTH!

Advertisement for B.F. Goodrich tires, featuring an illustration of a crocodile and a sign that says 'RIGHTERONG? CROCODILES ARE FOUND IN FLORIDA.'

ANSWER: Right. Both crocodiles and alligators are found there.

ACTOR-DIRECTOR

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for 'ACTOR-DIRECTOR' and other words.

Portrait of a man and a crossword puzzle grid with clues.

HOLD EVERYTHING!



"It's patriotic to save something, so we came south to save fuel!"

Contrary to Recent Rumors Fluorescent Lamps

Are Still Available and Will Continue to Be. Available in Daylight and White UHLIG'S

1028 Main Dial 5512

Comic strip 'Out Our Way' by J.R. Williams. Characters discuss dieting and conservation programs.

Comic strip 'Why Mothers Get Gray' by Fred Harman. A boy explains to his mother why she has gray hair.

Comic strip 'Red Ryder' by Fred Harman. Red Ryder and a cowboy have a conversation about a note pinned to a saddle blanket.

Comic strip 'Little Orphan Annie' by Harold Gray. Annie and her dog, Sweep, are talking.

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Comic strip 'Freckles and His Friends' by Blosser. Freckles and his friends are talking.

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Comic strip 'Boots and Her Buddies' by Crano. Boots and her buddies are talking.

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Comic strip 'Alley Oop' by V.T. Hamlin. Alley Oop and his friends are talking.

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