

SERIAL STORY

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

BY WILLIAM WOODS

NEA SERVICE, INC.

PLAN OF ACTION

CHAPTER IV

LIKE a warm, muscular animal, Solweig was watching him. "Come," she said. "This beating about the bush. Out with it."

"Lars, do you have outboard motors?"

"Yes," the old man cried excitedly. "Of course. Three of them."

"I want you to put them in a safe place. If anyone... mind you, anyone... comes in asking about them, tell him they're sold. Understand?"

"Of course. What else? I can take care of more than motors." For the first time Gunnar smiled. "There's time for that," he said.

All three heard the little bell tinkle at the front door of the shop. The old man hesitated, then went out past the curtain.

"What do you want?" Solweig asked her husband tensely.

"He put a hand on her arm. They listened. It was Kasper Torgersen outside, asking the old man for cotton thread. They heard his gruff voice. While Malken was evidently looking through the drawers, they heard him inquiring how the fishermen took the confiscation. "After all," Torgersen was saying, "I own a third of these boats. If I don't complain, surely they have no right."

Gunnar beckoned to Solweig and they went out. "Good morning, Herr Torgersen."

"You are a leader of the men," Torgersen said now slowly. "They will not forget your work last winter with the fleet." He made a pause and then added, "We will hold you responsible for keeping order."

"You mean...?"

"I mean that first and foremost I am a Norwegian. You know that well enough. The interests of the men are my interests. But I feel... that is, I am sure... we can accomplish a great deal more if we do not act rashly. That lamentable business in Stoksumd yesterday..."

"Where did you hear about that, Herr Torgersen?"

The smile left his face. "Why... it's all over town. I want to assure you, of course, that any action you may feel obliged to take will have my support... as a Norwegian, you understand... my full support, even if I disagree. But..."

"Suppose...?" Gunnar drew close, peering toward the door first as if he wanted to make sure they could not be overheard. "Suppose I were to tell you that there is a plan on foot to overpower the guard, cut loose the boats, and set sail for England."

TORGENSEN flushed, looked at the storekeeper whose mouth dropped open in horror, and then back at Gunnar. "Are you mad?" he snapped. "That would be theft. Besides, you wouldn't get 50 miles. But... but of course, you are joking."

"Yes," said Solweig. "We are joking."

She and Gunnar went out. "Our men have been fighting in Stoksumd," Gunnar said slowly. "The dogs," she burst out, and a delighted smile spread over her broad face.

"I saw Dr. Stensgard less than an hour ago. He spent the night with Knut Osterholm's cousin, who escaped."

"What does it mean? What about the boats?"

"He brought news that guns are to be landed all along the coast." They stopped talking for several minutes because the old schoolmaster, Sixtus Andresen, was coming toward them. He stepped along slowly with a cane, keeping his wrinkled white head up to get the sun in his face.

"Good morning, Master Andresen."

"Good morning, Fru Brogge." The aged gentleman bowed slowly in his invariably courteous way, and went on.

Gunnar said in a lower voice, "It would be good to include him if he were not so old. He hates them more than most." They both remembered how the doctor had said that old Andresen was the only one among them who really knew how to fight the Germans without guns.

Solveig looked after him. She heard her husband say, "Ja, we don't have to wait any longer. The fight is coming here too, and we can begin to make ready for it."

She started rolling down her sleeves. "Are you crazy?" she asked, grown more serious. Her voice was no more than a whisper. "We have no guns yet, and already you talk of fighting. Maybe you can say that to Malken or to those down on the dock, but not to me." She was buttoning her cuffs. "Not to me." She repeated a little more loudly.

Gunnar's face grew dark. "Every man who works in this town," he said fiercely, "will be with us. I don't count the Torgersens and the old women. But if we wait until the whole country is ready it will be too late. They made no plans in Stoksumd, and so they were slaughtered before they had a chance."

"Good enough," she said impatiently, "good enough, but you have only the doctor's word."

"I've thought of that. We meet tonight at Osterholm's to talk to the man Hammer, and outline a plan of action."

"What do we do?"

"First," he said slowly, "we must collect gasoline from every man in town and hide it in a safe place." He was walking with head bowed, hands clenched in the pockets of his trousers. "I think I have worked out a plan."

It's been going through my head for months, and now that this has come about, it begins to grow clear. We wait till about it tonight. I think it is a way by which... by which we could even win."

Solveig, seeing the strange, intent look to his eyes, realized why in this unsure, disjointed world, men looked up to him. She was proud. "Tonight, then," she said, "don't talk nonsense. And make very sure before you start. You know the men will follow you."

They passed a shop window where dusty little dolls in peasant costumes, green and red, with Norwegian flags in the hems of their dresses, had been lying since the summer of the year before. The shoemaker's wife had used to sew them for the tourists.

"I am sure," he said suddenly. A dozen pictures raced through his brain, but his dark, expressionless face gave no sign. Men, tresses, barricades. "Before the fighting ever starts," he said thoughtfully, "each man will have his special task. If we wait for the snow, we can use skis."

The sun rose higher and higher. The sea lay calm. The stern ridged hills, like giants, gazed down at the little shelf of land where the town lay, in terrible peace, between them and the sea. The boats, with slender masts, sat empty in the placid water of the harbor. The pigeons wheeled higher over the tense and silent square.

"Give me the names."

He looked carefully about. Then, taking her arm, he started to list them off to her. She peeped after him to get them sure in her mind. They pressed close to each other, walking side by side.

(To Be Continued)

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

INDIANS, FROM AMERICA'S FIRST FAMILIES, FINDING THEMSELVES WITHOUT BIRTH CERTIFICATES, ARE HAVING TROUBLE GETTING CERTAIN WAR JOBS BECAUSE OF INABILITY TO PROVE THEY ARE NATIVES!



BLAZING OXY
GENERAL SOANSO PRIVATE

POTATOES PEEL THEMSELVES IF PASSED QUICKLY THROUGH A GAS FLAME AT A TEMPERATURE OF 1750 DEGREES! THE MOISTURE BENEATH THE SKIN TURNS TO STEAM AND EXPLODES!

IN THE ARMY, A GENERAL HAS PRIVATE QUARTERS!
Says DE WITT MATTHEWS, Fulton, Kentucky.

NEXT: African wireless.

URUGUAYAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for words like 'South American foreign minister', 'Small dog', 'Wing', etc.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for words like 'Fatty substances', 'Dative (abbr.)', 'Dwarf bulldog', etc.

MASQUERADE BALL advertisement for OREGON WOOLEN STORE.

CREDIT advertisement for KLAMATH'S CREDIT Clothiers.

HEROES ARE MADE NOT BORN comic strip by J.R. Williams.

OUR WAY comic strip by Red Ryder.

Little Orphan Annie comic strip.

LET'S HAVE THOSE REPORTS comic strip.

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS comic strip.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? comic strip.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip.

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OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip.

IT'S LANDING! AMERICAN PLANES HAVE COME TO TAKE US TO ENGLAND! comic strip.

HERE WE GO! comic strip.

THIS IS THE SAFE! NOW FOR THE BUFFINGTON BOMB-RACK BLUEPRINT comic strip.

THE WATCH-MAN! comic strip.

GET RID OF THE BLUE-PRINT! IF THEY CATCH US IT WILL HANG US comic strip.

I'LL HIDE IT IN THIS BIG BAG! comic strip.

AWRIGHT, RANGERS! TONIGHT WE CROSS TH' BORDER TO RAID ENEMY TERRITORY... comic strip.

HELLO MOOVIES! THIS IS MOOZY CALLING! Lissen! comic strip.

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