

SERIAL STORY
THE EDGE OF DARKNESS
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CHAPTER XVIII

In the cold gray darkness Karen came down the hill, and was met by an anxious Margit at the farmyard gate. They stowed the skis and the knapsack safely away, and went upstairs into the chilly bedroom.

Margit had hardly slept. The two girls lay in their cold bed, wrapped the heavy quilt tightly around them (there was no heat upstairs), and talked hurriedly in low whispers. But only a few minutes passed before they heard Osterholm come driving at a furious rate up the road and into the farmyard. Margit looked out the window, and saw him unbuttoning the sweating harness.

"Oluf, Oluf," he kept calling in a muffled voice. A young lad ran out of the house beating his mitted hands together, and helped him get the horses into the barn. Then both of them, blowing clouds of steam out from under their fur hoods, got to work lifting several large metal barrels out of the sleigh and rolling them one by one down into the cellar.

The girls crept back into bed. Margit was shivering with a strange presentiment. Karen's news that Karl might have to leave Trollness, her father's inexplicable movements down in the court, and her own sleepless hours combined to make her more frightened than she had ever been.

A furious pounding on the door woke them. Margit sat up quickly, blinking in the bright morning light. The wind kicking up outside had blown a fine sifting of snow in at the open window. "Ja," she called, shivering, and pulled the quilt up.

The housekeeper, a big woman in a gray skirt, apron and blouse, came in with a frown on her round, good-natured face. "Up with you," she called. "Up with you," she called. "Up with you," she called. "In my day girls didn't lie in bed until half past nine in the morning."

Karen sat up guiltily, pulling the sheets around her shoulders against the cold. "Is it really so late, Fru Eriksen?" she cried.

A few minutes later when they started down into the kitchen, they heard Fru Eriksen's voice from as far away as the upstairs landing. Large and hearty, it was crying, "Look sharp in the oven, small Fru Eriksen's blouse. You'll never get fat on your arms if you stand still." And then she must have heard them, for she called, "Ha, ha, here they come, the lazy sleepers. Gossiping all night long, and can't get up in the morning."

And down the stairs came Karen and Margit with their faces washed, but looking very sheepish, both in brown dresses and heavy stockings coming to their knees, and each one with three woolen petticoats billowing beneath her skirt.

"Get back up and put on your shoes," Fru Eriksen cried at them. "Oh, please don't make us," said Karen, trying very hard to keep her eyes open.

And Margit, peering over her friend's shoulder, said, "Is there any breakfast left?"

Fru Eriksen leaned back and laughed, hands on her broad hips. "Oh, what silly geese," she cried. "Of course there's breakfast!"

"Where is everybody?" Margit asked.

"Whoever isn't here is in the barn," called Fru Eriksen, "and who isn't in the barn, and that's your father, has gone down to see the doctor."

"To my father?" Karen asked.

"Of course," said Fru Eriksen. "And the girls looked at each other in some surprise, for since Johann had come home, no one went to the doctor's house if he could avoid it.

Far in the background they kept on hearing the clatter of plates in the sink and Fru Eriksen's booming voice, and the little maid's answers. They swung their brown-stockinged legs under the table, and ate and drank, and felt the drowsiness steal back over them.

A sharp rap at the door made them sit bolt upright. And then the door blew open, and a breathless 10-year-old boy tumbled in.

"The Herr Doktor," he panted, "the Herr Doktor..."

Fru Eriksen slammed the door and took him by an ear.

"Ow," he wailed, and pointed at the girls. "The Herr Doktor says he wants to see them."

"Us?" said Karen, and felt a cold chill run over her. "Us? What for?"

Franz twisted free. "How should I know?"

The girls looked at each other. Karen with a startled hand at her mouth, and the same thought was in both their minds. All the while they had been sitting so calmly and eating breakfast. . . . They turned and ran upstairs in a swift pattering of stocking feet to get their boots. "My father is down in the village too," Margit whispered. "Karen, do you think..."

seated, half in shadow, at his desk. The blinds to the street window were down, and the room was very still.

Suddenly the doctor said in a strained voice, "Karen."

The tightness grew. Both girls breathed a little faster. "Yes?"

"Where are your skis?"

Karen was standing as straight as she was able, hardly breathing. She thought at any moment she would faint. Of course they knew something, but how much? And what was Mortensen doing there, looking so satisfied and solemn? She tried to look at Margit out of the corner of her eye, and felt her hand squeeze harder and harder.

The doctor went slowly back to his desk. "Answer my question."

"My skis are . . . in the courtyard at the farm."

The doctor smashed his fist down on the desk. "You're lying. Herr Mortensen saw your skis in front of the cottage up at the saeter."

The girl turned toward Margit. Then very slowly she went to a chair and slid down into it as if she no longer had the strength to stand. Her brown skirt billowed out in front of her, and unconsciously she pressed it down to cover her knees.

"Karen," her father said pleadingly.

Suddenly she felt small and weak. The faces, questioning and dark, bent toward her, swam and grew larger and larger. The room began turning so that she had to clutch at the arm of the chair to steady herself. She was herself, and no one else. "Oh, Karl, Karl," she thought.

It surprised her to hear how clear her own voice sounded. "I won't deny it. It's true, and I am going to have a child."

(To Be Continued)

THE two pale and silent girls walked quickly down toward the village. At the doctor's white gate, half covered by snow, they stopped and whispered a few words to each other before they turned in. Three men followed them almost to the door. Once Karen (dark under her hood) turned to look at them; then both of them ran into the house.

In the empty hallway they took off their coats, hoods and boots. Karen kept wetting her lips with her tongue. Then, side by side, on thickly stockinged feet and in identical brown dresses with flaring skirts, they opened the door and walked into the doctor's office.

The first man they saw was Mortensen crouched like a monkey with his thin arms wrapped about his knees. Margit's father was sitting with his back to the door, rough hands on the arms of his chair. Dr. Stensgard, looking puffier about the face than usual, was

HOLD EVERYTHING!



10 SHOTS FOR 5¢

11-24

Stand back, everybody—I'll get it with this grenade!

Your "junk" is worth money. Sell it through classified ads. Put the cash in War Savings!

Authorized Repair Service

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



MOST OF THE HEAT IN THE AIR ABOUT US COMES NOT DIRECTLY FROM THE SUN, BUT FROM THE EARTH, WHICH HAS BEEN WARMED BY THE SUN.

11-24-42

ROYAL REFUGEE

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured royal refugee, Crown Princess —

6 Her country is —

11 Tap.

12 Possesses.

13 Beverage.

14 Long fish.

15 Any.

17 Excavate.

18 Edge.

20 Toward.

21 Not (prefix).

22 Foot digit.

23 Demand of payment.

26 Calm.

28 Perhaps.

30 Whether.

31 Level.

32 Interdict.

35 Indian Army (abbr.).

36 Therefore.

37 Type measure.

39 Game.

41 Through.

42 Was carried.

44 Warble.

46 Unit.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

WYOMING WINTERS

RELEARN OCEANIC

ELLEN AR TITILE

SLAT TWINE LEAN

TO R P WE

SWINE WAD ACTA

RATA SERAL

CERINTO OBEY AN

RIDOMASS EIT

ATONERISNAE

MELANIN REMENDER

SALLET REPEATS

VERTICAL

48 Lad.

49 Crucible.

51 Exists.

53 Make an edging.

55 Age.

56 Music note.

58 Also.

60 Crimson.

62 Mineral rock.

63 Aged.

64 President.

65 Remembrance.

22 Negative.

23 Light brown.

24 Recede.

26 Apple juice.

27 From.

28 Signified.

29 Artist's frame.

32 Contend.

34 Neither.

38 "Ozark State" (abbr.).

39 She is a cousin of the late Duke of

40 Globe.

41 Bend.

43 Perform.

45 Electrified particle.

47 Auricles.

49 Verse.

50 Upon.

51 That one.

52 Jurisdiction.

54 Gold peg.

55 Before.

56 Insect.

57 Paid notice.

58 Exclamation.

61 Doctor (abbr.).

62 Mystic syllable.

63 Either.

BORN THIRTY YEARS TOO SOON

Out Our Way

By J. R. Williams



OUR HOSS IS AS WELL TRAINED AS LITTLE BEANER. HE KID HASN'T BUDGED FROM WHERE YOU LEFT HIM!

Red Ryder



POOLE GONE! MARTIN MUSTA TIED THUNDER TO DECK ME BACK ACROSS THE RIVER!

YOUR HOSS IS AS WELL TRAINED AS LITTLE BEANER. HE KID HASN'T BUDGED FROM WHERE YOU LEFT HIM!

Little Orphan Annie



OH! YOU! YOU'RE DOCTOR ZEE! I'VE SEEN YOUR PICTURE! AND I—

SHUT UP AND DO YOUR JOB! YOU'RE GOING GREAT! BUT HURRY!

BUT THIS IS THE ZEE OPERATION—YOUR OPERATION! IT'S THE ONLY CHANCE TO SAVE THE CHILD—BUT I CAN'T GO ON—

HERE! YOU'VE GOT TWO HANDS! GRAB THIS LIGHT WITH ONE! QUICK! THAT SCALPEL!

Frackles and His Friends



GOSH, CHRISTMAS COMING AND NO DOUGH IN THE BANK! WHY DID I HAVE TO GO AND GET MY ROMANCE OUT OF THE DOGHOUSE AT THIS TIME OF YEAR?

BY FIXING THINGS FOR MR. GRUBBLE, I FIXED MYSELF. PLANTY NOW I JUST KNOW HILDA WILL EXPECT A CHRISTMAS GIFT!

Wash Tubbs



BOTH MY KNEES ARE SKINNED! IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, TOO!

I'M SORRY, I AM

OH, YOU NEEDN'T WASTE YOUR SYMPATHY. IN DUE TIME, I DARE SAY I SHALL RECOVER

Boots and Her Buddies



COME DOWN AT ONCE! DO YOU HEAR?

THERE

SUCH A WEAK DISPLAY WOULD NEVER OCCUR IN THE NEW ORDER

Alley Oop



BUT, GENERAL OOP, WITH A SWELL MASS TARGET LIKE THAT, A SHRAPNEL SCATTER-LOAD WOULD BE TH' STUFF

FOLLOWING THE FREE-MOOVIAN WARSHIP LAUNCHING CATASTROPHE, GENERAL OOP IRKED BY THE ENEMY'S JIBES, DECIDES TO PLAY HIS ACE

DO LIKE I TOLD YOU, JUG-HEAD, I SAID LOAD WITH SOLID SHOT!

D'YA SEE THAT BIG COCONUT TREE? OKAY—HIT IT!

YEZZIR!

Our Boarding House

With Major Hoops



AH, MAYOR FATTLETON! FORTUNATE MEETING YOU HERE! I WONDER IF YOU'D PUT YOUR CIVIC WEIGHT BEHIND MY APPLICATION FOR A PEDAGOGIC POST IN OUR FAIR CITY?—UM-KUMF!—I'M VOLUNTEERING TO ASSUME THE CHAIR OF SOME TUTOR REMOVED BY THE NECESSITIES OF WAR!

OH, SURE! YOU KNOW ME, MAYOR!—I'VE ALWAYS BEEN READY TO HELP A CITIZEN, HIGH AND LOW ALIKE!—JUST WRITE ME A LETTER ABOUT YOUR TROUBLE!—GLAD I SAW YOU, OLD BOY!—VERY BUSY TODAY!

WONDER WHAT THIS MUSH- MOUTH IS TRYING TO SAY?

TOO MANY WORDS FOR HIZZONER—

Red Ryder



STILL LOAFIN'? I SWEAR, YOU MUST BE FACT SETTIN' HEN!

SETTIN' HEN GETTIN' LO'DONE! JUST SETTIN'! SO DOES LITTLE BEANER!

IF YOU'RE HATCHIN' OUT SOMETHIN', LET ME IN ON IT!

YOU BETCHUM, RED RYDER! MAYBE YOU'LL LITTLE BEANER WHERE MISSY DENNER GO WHEN SHE CLIMB OUT WINDOW LAST NIGHT!

Little Orphan Annie



HA! NICE WORK, DOCTOR CLOVER! YOUR QUICK ACTION UNDOUBTEDLY HAS SAVED THIS CHILD'S LIFE—

B-B-BUT DOCTOR ZEE! I TO HAVE FAILED BUT FOR YOU—

DOCTOR! DOCTOR ZEE! WAIT!—OH— WHY DID HE RUN AWAY?

Boots and Her Buddies



YOU'RE A FINE BOY, LARD! NICE TO SEE YOU AROUND HERE AGAIN! LETS FORGET ALL ABOUT THE PAST!

OOF!

YES, LARD—LET'S JUST THINK ABOUT THE PRESENT!

Wash Tubbs



THEN STOP SQUAWKING! THEY'RE BETTER KNEES THAN MOST GIRLS HAVE, EVEN IF THEY ARE SKINNED!

YOU'LL PLEASE CONFINE YOUR REMARKS, CAPTAIN, TO STRICTLY MILITARY AFFAIRS

OKAY, SOLDIER! CAN'T LEAVE A CRIPPLED ALLY LYING IN THE GUTTER. SO I'M TAKING YOU TO A FIRST AID STATION

INDEED YOU'RE NOT! PUT ME DOWN THIS INSTANT!

Boots and Her Buddies

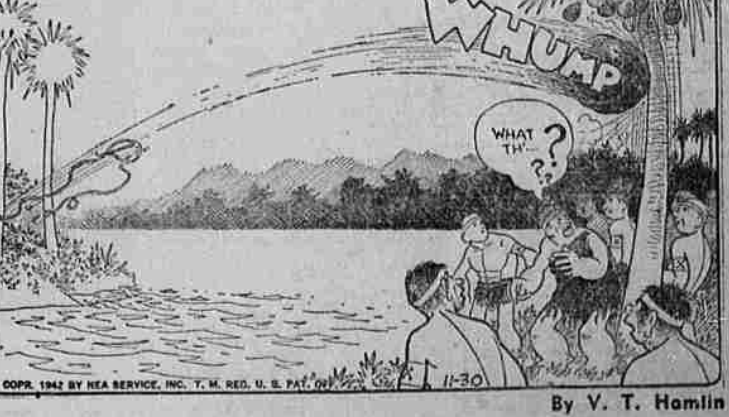


BOOTS, YOU TRY TO MAKE A BREAK, HONEY

OH, FERD— BE CAREFUL

OKAY, YOU RATS, YOU ASKED FOR IT...

Alley Oop



WHUAP

WHAT TH?