

**SERIAL STORY**  
**THE EDGE OF DARKNESS**

BY WILLIAM WOODS  
NEA SERVICE, INC.

**THUNDER OF WAR**  
**CHAPTER XIX**

**DURING** the night, the old man, Sixtus Andersen died. No one was with him at the time.

When Pastor Aalesen found his body in the gray light of dawn, half in bed, half on the floor, as if with his dry and withered limbs at the last moment he had tried to rise, a surge of pity swept up in him that after so long a life the old man had had to do his dying all alone. "How terrible it must have been for him in the dark when he called out and nobody came."

"The schoolmaster is dead," people told each other on the street. "So old Sixtus is really gone. I don't believe it."

His lean old figure was as familiar as the village fountain, or the white fences in front of their houses. They began telling things they remembered about him.

"How he was laughing when I saw him yesterday," the butcher said, and fell to musing, with his knife in mid-air. "I can't believe it. They say he would have been 80 in a couple of days. He told me a long story about a spider and a wasp."

Aalesen went to the commandant for permission to hold a funeral in the church. König was in his office, examining the morning post, his face as black and angry as the pastor had ever seen it.

"What do you want?" the captain roared at Aalesen. The pastor was staring at his violent, untamable face.

"I came to request the funeral. It is for the old schoolmaster, Herr Kapitän. He has been in my house, and died last night. If I might suggest, he was very popular in the village, and..."

"So? What's that to me?" And suddenly the captain stormed out from behind his desk, shaking his fist at the pastor. "What business have you with funerals?" he cried. "What do you know about dying? Have you read the Fuehrer's speech? Have you heard what German troops are doing? Dying against those hounds in the Russian mud... for you... for all Europe."

"Herr Kapitän," the pastor interrupted. "You talk," the captain shouted. "You make plans and speeches. You speak about the those Russian murderers and the degenerate English." His voice screamed out, louder and louder. "But we are pouring out German blood so that you can live. And we are invincible." He pounded his fist on the desk, smashing it down on every word. "Let them spend their billions. We have machines. Every hour of the day, we have eighty million hours of our labor. Do you know what you can do in eighty million hours?"

"Herr Kapitän."

"No." With an effort, König controlled himself and went back to his seat. "I forbid it. Orderly," he cried. "I'll have any man shot who goes into that church today." Louder, "Orderly. As far as your school teacher is concerned, I threw him out of here once before. . . . Orderly, damn it," he cried at the top of his lungs. "For all of me you can throw him into the sea."

**OUTDOORS** the spruce boughs clashed against the window. It must be bitter cold. No coats or blankets for those down in the village. Soon, when these troops stripped the town bare and went to join those who had gone before... across Sweden and Finland to fight the Soviets... there would be nothing left, not even food.

The soldiers grew louder, listening to news bulletins in the restaurant, tramping down from the upper hall. Determinedly Gerd got a ledger out of her desk drawer and began to work.

The first bell for supper sounded. Outside, the radio was turned off, and she heard the babble of dozens of men's voices. More boots came down the stairs; the front door opened and then slammed shut again.

She heard the second bell. It buzzed through all the rooms and corridors. There was a scraping of chairs, and the voices hushed. The captain's door opened, and scores of hobnailed boots clicked as the men saluted. An order snapped out. The chairs scraped again, and the murmur of voices picked up, but in a lower key. Gerd went to the kitchen door on the far side of her office and ordered them to bring supper in to her on a tray.

She ate alone, listening to the chatter of knives and forks in the next room. When she was done, the cook came and cleared her plate away. The radio played dance music in the next room, and it seemed to her that all her life had been like this night, lonely and cut off. She got out her books and went seriously to work. Page after page... red and black lines and close-knit figures... The wind blew harder at the house and started the doors and windows rattling.

It must have been about 10 o'clock when the noise in the next room lapsed suddenly into silence, and lifting her head to listen, all at once she heard from out of doors a faint, distant rumbling like thunder. A moment more it was still; then in the restaurant there was a quick commotion. A soldier cried out; chairs scraped back to a shuffling of boots.

"No, to the left," somebody shouted. "Right between those two trees."

"Lights out, for God's sake." A man pounded at the captain's door.

"Quiet!" Others took up the cry. "Quiet!"

Gerd went around to the front of her desk and waited breath-

lessly. In the next room it was utterly still, but she thought she could hear, like some monstrous animal's breathing, the quick breathing of 50 men, and now and then a hushed whisper. "Wait. Listen."

"Ja, Ja," somebody cried. "That's ours."

Gerd flung open the door. At first she could not see in the darkness, but then she had made out the black figures of the troops crowded over at the window. She went to her alcove and stood with one hand on a wooden post.

"At least 12 miles," a voice cried out.

"Look!"

"What is it?" she asked aloud. From somewhere the captain barked out, "Lieutenant. Lieutenant. A squad down to the north battery."

"Zu Befehl!" Gerd asked again. The corporal was next to her. "Fraulein." Joy and astonishment and relief all in that one word. "Sea battle off shore," he whispered. "We can see the guns flashing."

"Radio to Namsos for aircraft," the captain called again.

"Zu Befehl!"

"Report also to the district commandant in Namsos."

"Zu Befehl!"

Gerd rushed back to her office, got a coat, and ran out onto the porch. Someone was beside her, but she did not know who. At first, looking over the snow-covered hillside and the town, out to the black sea, she could not make out a thing.

"Just to the left of that tree," a voice said.

Almost half a minute passed, and then she saw the quick little spurt of light that flared for an

**HOLD EVERYTHING!**



11-12  
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"Go right in, men—just in time for a complete performance."

Six New York state furniture manufacturers have signed contracts to work on plywood planes and gliders instead of their customary products.

Planes hunting submarines must come down very low to spot the periscope and the dark shadow of the boat under water.

John Adams, who was 90 when he died in 1826, lived to be the oldest former president of the United States.

Not all plums are prunes, but all prunes are plums.

instant and was gone. They began counting together. "One... two... three... four..." Up to 12, and then they heard again, faintly in the wind, that low, somber muttering as of thunder.

(To Be Continued)

**THIS CURIOUS WORLD**

By William Ferguson



11-30-42  
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**BIRDS** ARE DYING BY THE THOUSANDS AS A RESULT OF THEIR FEATHERS BEING FOULED BY OIL SET AFLOAT FROM TORPEDO SHIPS AND SUBMARINES.



12-1  
ANSWER: Hawaii.

**LATE SHOWMAN**

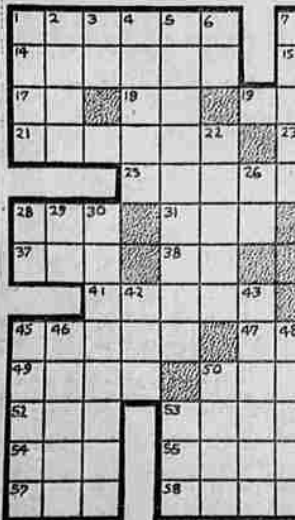
**HORIZONTAL**  
17 Pictured late showman.  
18 Area measure.  
19 Hove.  
20 Soak fax.  
21 Recorded.  
23 Negative word.  
24 Fish.  
25 Deputies.  
27 Moccasin.  
28 Genus of grasses.  
31 Girl's name.  
32 Weight of India.  
34 Card game.  
37 Dry.  
38 Lieutenant (abbr.).  
39 One (Scott.).

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**  
MARTHA NORWAY  
PAT HAS TEA  
AND DIG C RIM TO  
NON TOE DUN  
COOL MAY BE  
IF EVEN BAN  
DITIA SO MARTHA  
EMIKENO PER  
RODE TRILL  
ONE BOY POT  
IS TAT N EON FA  
TOO RED ORE OLD  
CHASER

40 Finale.  
41 Embrace.  
44 Bear.  
45 Scoff.  
47 Abundant.  
49 Voice infection.  
50 He died at the of 61.  
51 Symbol for stannum.  
52 Danish weight.  
53 Thwart.  
54 Unit.  
55 Helps.  
56 Him.

57 Boy.  
58 He produced a Passion.  
59 Paid notice.  
**VERTICAL**  
1 Confusion.  
2 Leave out.  
3 Music note.  
4 Lariat.  
5 Uneven.  
6 Steamship (abbr.).  
7 Mythical being.  
8 Embellish.  
9 Whirl.  
10 Important.

11 The — was his costliest production.  
12 Units.  
13 Deeds.  
22 Dints.  
24 Soul (Egypt).  
26 Symbol for sodium.  
27 He — many spectacles during his career.  
28 Postscript (abbr.).  
29 Whirlwind.  
30 Emphasized.  
33 Nobleman.  
35 Upon.  
36 Alleged force.  
42 Sheltered side.  
43 Summerhouse.  
44 Upward.  
45 Backless chair.  
46 Mythical demigoddess.  
48 Disordered.  
50 Seed covering.  
53 Head cover.  
56 Lighthouse.



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**THE INTERNATIONAL ALIBI**



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**Little Orphan Annie**



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**Freckles and His Friends**



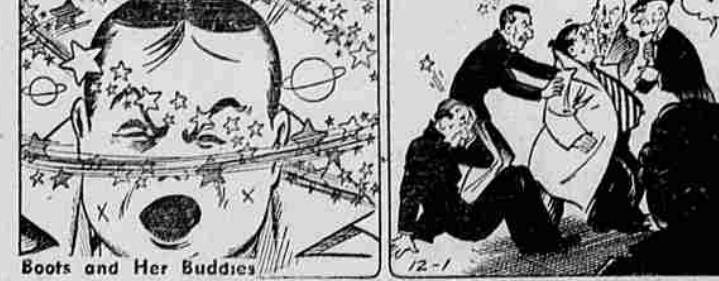
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**Wash Tubbs**



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**Boots and Her Buddies**



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**Alley Oop**



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**Our Boarding House With Major Hoople**



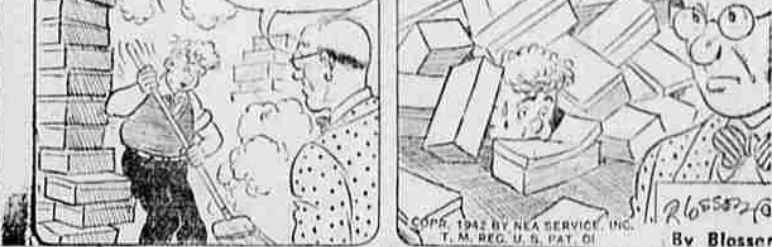
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