

SERIAL STORY THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

BY WILLIAM WOODS

NEA SERVICE, INC.

FIGHT!

CHAPTER XXV

THAT night, after a long and dangerous Odyssey, Trygve Mortensen came home to his father's house. He had fled up the coast from Oslo, hiding by day in the forests and little inlets, and night after night pounding across the wind in a small boat just off shore.

The old man was asleep, and woke in a fright to see the dark figure standing in the door.

"It's I," said Trygve. "It's I, father."

Mortensen, still half dazed, stumbled across the hall to take his son by the arm. "Trygve," he said. "Trygve, is it really you?"

His wife sat up and struck a match to the lamp. "Who?" she cried. "Who?"

"It's Trygve."

Mortensen kept feeling his son's arms and shoulders, looking up at the lean face, the hard and bitter mouth. "How you have changed," he said. "What a man you are. Did they set you free?"

"No," Trygve said, and turned away with his hands in his pockets.

Trygve sat down, cap on his knees. "I came home to fight."

The old man, trembling with eagerness, asked him question after question, but the strange boy, who had grown into a man since his father had last seen him, did not even try to answer them, all his mother gave him, munching at black bread with slow, regular movements of his bony jaws, and gazing around in silent contemplation at the beams and walls and windows he had known since he was a child.

"In the morning," he said, "I want to talk with Gunnar Broge."

"But you don't know the news," his father cried. "They've taken him prisoner. He's a hostage."

"I see," the boy said, and ate a while longer. "Is my bed still here?"

"Of course. Of course. Wife, get the coat and blanket for Trygve. He wants to go to sleep."

Trygve stood up. "So Gunnar is a hostage. Are there others?"

"Two. Jensen and Brategaard."

"Where are they held?"

"In the hotel."

"I see." The boy stretched. "It's late," he said. "Can you wake me at seven?"

"Of course. But you have to be careful. I don't know if it would be safe for you to appear on the streets. What do you want to do?"

"Get them out."

ON Friday night, three days after the hostages had been arrested, Katja stole a pistol from a soldier's room.

At about 11 that night she walked down the hall, into the captain's cubicle, and fired at him twice, sending one bullet into the wall, the other into his right elbow. The corridor was thrown into a turmoil by the shots. Men came tumbling out of their beds and down the hall, half dressed. When the guard broke in and seized her, she was standing quietly, looking down at the captain, with the pistol at her side.

They locked her in the cellar and went to fetch the doctor. He extracted the bullet, bound up the wound, and prescribed a quarter of a grain of morphine out of the army stores. Konig lay propped on the bed, obviously in great pain. He had remained utterly motionless while the doctor was probing. When Stensgaard was done, though, he sent for Lieutenant Beck.

"Firing squad in the morning," he said, "as soon as it is light enough to see."

Katja sat all night on the damp earth of the cellar, at last empty of any feeling except tiredness. She was not sorry. As a matter of fact, everything that had happened seemed as inevitable as all the past. She even took it for predestined that the captain should have lived.

The hostages were in the next room to her, talking in low voices, no more than 20 feet away in what had used to be a wine cellar.

She smelled the early morning cold at the windows while it was still dark, and suddenly she was afraid. Next door in the wine cellar she heard the men moving about. . . like bees in their stalls. She started shivering as though her body had become chilled during the night, and all at once felt such self-pity the tears started to her eyes. How brave of her it would be not to seem afraid.

But when the soldiers came down the stairs and she stood up to meet them her very heart grew numb. Her knees shook and she thought for a moment she would be unable to stand.

Though it was very early, the whole village had heard why Stensgaard had been sent for to the inn, and that Konig intended to make an example of the girl by having her executed in the public square. So when the troops lined up in front of the church railing and at 10 o'clock their prisoner came down the hill in the middle of a squad of soldiers, not one townsman was to be seen on the square or in any of the side streets.

They bound her to the railing to keep her from falling. The lieutenant tied a handkerchief across her eyes, but the corners slipped down and covered her mouth and chin as well. Her dress fluttered about her knees in a light wind. Then the low orders rang out. The squad raised their rifles, steadied, fired, and she hung limp, propped on crooked legs against the railing.

She hung on the railing all that day, dress fluttering in the wind, snow drifting over her ankles. At nightfall, Konig sent down a detail to bury her. The body was frozen, shoulders hunched up where the rope had held them.

knees stiff and unable to be straightened. The lips were parted and hard as wood. One trooper, prying open the mouth, found a gold tooth at the back of the jaw, and hacked it out with a chisel before they dropped her into the coffin.

WHEN Trygve came into the pastor's house where they were meeting, no one but Gerd recognized him. It was when he saw her that he smiled for the first time.

"But you're not the same boy," she said. "How you've grown and . . . and changed." She thought she could see in his face all he had lived through.

Mortensen was everywhere at once, grinning and cracking his knuckles and showing off what a fine new son he had. Trygve stood in the corner, dark and angular, listening to them all and saying not a word.

Stensgaard kept asking him what people said in Oslo, why he had been in prison, how he had managed to get a boat, but Trygve paid no attention. He was listening to Osterholm's report on the villages down the coast.

Kjerfot said, "Has anyone heard what the commandant intends to do?"

"No announcement yet," said Gerd, and kept looking at Trygve.

"Because I thought," Kjerfot was saying, "if we could smuggle some means for escape up to them at the hotel, they might get out and over the Swedish line. That way we wouldn't have to fight until the whole country is ready."

"No," Trygve said abruptly, and came forward into the room. "If you free three men they will arrest six. If you let three die, they will arrest ten, because by killing off the strong they can keep the

village quiet. There is only one solution. That is to take matters into our own hands before they destroy us all."

"Then what do you propose?" the doctor interrupted.

"Fight."

CLOSE TO HOME

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., (AP)—Inspectors of the fire prevention bureau, making an inspection tour, found that the doors of city hall open toward the inside, constituting a fire hazard.

Change the doors, "or city hall will be closed," they ordered.

CREDIT WITH THE CONVENIENCE OF CASH



PURCHASE COUPONS

Are Really Buying Power

Purchase Coupons are another convenient type of credit available to you at Sears. You make one call at our Credit Office, get a booklet of Coupons, then spend them like cash when you want to. Thousands of smart women keep a book handy! Small down payment, small monthly payments, usual carrying charge.

GET YOURS TODAY AT
SEARS CREDIT OFFICE

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ALL INSECT MUSIC IS INSTRUMENTAL. FOR NO INSECT POSSESSES A TRUE VOICE.

THREE CENTURIES AGO, THERE WERE ONLY EIGHT PERSONS FOR EACH SQUARE MILE OF DRY LAND ON THE EARTH. TODAY THERE ARE FORTY!

WHERE'S ELMER?

ANSWER: In Bermuda.

U. S. CENSORSHIP CHAIRMAN

HORIZONTAL

1,6 Pictured director of U. S. Office of Censorship.

11 Kitchen.

13 Of the side.

16 Inflow.

17 Genus of grasses.

19 Follow.

20 Row.

21 Laymen.

23 Weight deduction.

24 Et cetera (abbr.).

25 Vendors.

27 Oriental lute.

28 Adjust.

30 Labyrinth.

32 Sinbad's bird.

33 Symbol for aluminum.

34 Cherub.

37 Sloping ways.

41 Bustle.

42 Compass point.

43 100 square meters.

44 Covers.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

FRANCIS BIDDLE

VERTICAL

1 Divide into two equal parts.

2 French river.

3 Pierce (dial).

4 Upon.

5 Asiatic kingdom.

6 Dish.

7 Son of Nut (Egypt).

8 Bolivian.

9 Indian (var.).

10 Coin.

11 Quotes.

12 Join.

14 Subtle emanations.

15 Looks askance.

18 Lubricate.

21 Bloodsucking annelid worms.

22 Year (abbr.).

25 Spills.

26 Lively.

29 Malayan coin.

31 Wing.

34 Acts of selling.

35 Roman magistrates.

36 Rat.

38 Ground hog.

39 Monastic superior.

40 Soothsayers.

45 Pintail duck.

46 Gaelic.

48 Ignition (abbr.).

49 Island (Fr.).

50 Work.

51 Girl's name.

53 Like.

55 Early English (abbr.).



Out Our Way
By J. R. Williams

THE BETWEENER

12-8



Red Ryder



Little Orphan Annie



Freckles and His Friends



Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Hot News is Cooling Off

Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



12-8



12-8



By Blosser



12-8



12-8



12-8

By V. T. Hamlin