Scoop

By THAYER WALDO

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THE phone bell clattered with raucous insistence. Collins hunched up on an elbow, swearing vaguely, and squinted toward the clock. Its luminous face showed 2:10. Another jangle. He stumbled across the room, and picked up the instrument.

The voice in his ear was crisply energetic: "Hello, Collins. This is Barnes, night city editor. Say, we just tuned in on a police call sending a patrol car to investigate a woman screaming, and it's right in your neighborhood. 590 Franklin. How about hopping over there, quick? Might be a real story in it."

"All right—all right," Collins replied, wearily.

Three minutes of fast moving had him dressed and headed out. The fourth building from the corner had 590 in gilt letters across its glass door, with: "Berkeley Arms," underneath.

Collins went up the short walk and tried the knob. It didn't turn. He moved across the grass past the building's front corner. From the unlighted side, a fire escape's zigzag skeleton loomed. Suddenly, from somewhere above, come a woman's brief, low cry.

Swiftly he went forward, stopping beneath the fire escape's lowest platform. A swing, a jerk and he was standing on the iron slats.

With swift quiet, he moved on, up the steps to the third floor platform. Here only curtains screened the window. Beyond it, the gloom was unbroken and no sound reached Collins. He started for the stairs ahead—and then pulled sharply back. From just within the room, a little spot of orange had glowed and gone again. A man spoke, low and intense:

"Mary, listen to me! I'm sorry I frightened you, dear. I didn't dream you'd be asleep, or I'd have knocked instead of using my key."

A woman's voice, soft and a little breathless, said: "Oh, it's—it's all right now. But this isn't fair of you, Tom. You shouldn't be here. I told you the other night—"

Passionately, the man broke in: "Oh, I know what you told me—that's why I had to come, as soon as I knew that your—that he'd gone to the sanitarium. Mary, you can't do this thing—do you hear me? God, it's not as if I were pleading for something that was mine alone! It's been all that mattered in life for both of us, and everything that can ever count is gone if we don't carry it through as we planned. You know that!"

An instant's silence, in which the cigarette lived again. Then the woman answered: "Tom, it's hard—so terribly hard! I wanted to tell you all I felt and thought about—about us, and why we couldn't go on. Somehow, though, I knew it wouldn't do any good; that I might as well just say it and not try to explain. But now—oh, darling!"—her voice was cloudy with tears—"I do love you so!"

A pause. Then she went on, more calmly. "I just know now that I must try to make you understand. Tom, I can't leave Martyn, because it would kill him. Oh, it would be different if he were—were normal. But don't you see, he'd believe I did it because of that. I loved him, Tom—I think I did—when we married. How could he ever understand that his accident has nothing to do with the change in my heart? Every minute of his life, every word he's written, in these last five years has been for me. When he's away, for these treatments, all he seems to think of is my happiness. Each time he returns with some plan or surprise to please me. Tom, do you see now why I can't go away from him?"

"Yes, I see. Everything you and I visioned for each other is to be scrapped, so that Martyn French may go on living tranquilly—go on giving his novels to the world."

Collins whistled soundlessly as the name was spoken. The woman said: "No, Tom! It's not his career; it's his life!"

"Well, I guess there's nothing for me to say, except—good-by. I—I think I'd better go at once."

Abrupt movements and the sound of a doorknob turning. A shaft of light fell suddenly across the bed, and Collins saw her.

Then the latch clicked shut and beyond the window was black again. Collins straightened and turned toward the iron stairs.

Home, he lit a cigarette and dropped in a chair by the phone table. Staring ahead at nothing in particular, his face was speculative. At last he tore a sheet from the memo pad beside him, took out a pencil, and scribbled across it:

"Lover Visits Prominent Woman
As Writer-Husband Absent.

An instant's thought; then, underneath:

"Wife of Martyn French, Well-Known Invalid Novelist, Surprised In Secret Rendezvous."

For a moment he looked critically down at the words, amusement tinging his lips. Then he picked up the phone and spun its dial. When contact came, he said, "Hello—Barnes. . . . Collins speaking. Say, what the h—l is this—a gag? I've been snooping around that joint for half an hour. There's not a thing stirring."

The answer came with swift contrition.

"Collins, old man, I'm terribly sorry; I handed you a raw deal. Just plain stupid of me not to notice. That address was 590 South Franklin!"

CRADLE SNATCHING

First Kangaroo: "Annabelle, where's the baby?"

Second Kangaroo: "My goodness, I've had my pocket picked."

SOUVENIR COLLECTOR

"Bragson claims to have been born with a gold spoon in his mouth."

"If he was, I'll bet it had somebody else's initials on it."

Subscription to the Transcript $1.50 per annum.

Hints for the Household

FOR SEPTEMBER
BY BETTY WEBSTER

"Rain, rain, go away,
Little children want to play."

The children nowadays don't sing this song for, since the sudden rise to popularity of the once despised "slicker," boys and girls and grownups, as well, can enjoy the rainy days. I think the yellow oil skin is probably the most universally worn although the coats do come in a variety of colors.

I guess there are not many schools in which the morning tooth-brush drill is omitted from the curriculum. Usually children dislike anything that they know is beneficial. But, the various jingles which have been set to music have given a new aspect to the lessons and the boys and girls enjoy them hugely.

I was genuinely surprised and horrified, though, when I learned how few people actually own tooth-brushes. I don't think the percentage of non-owners is so great here, perhaps, as it is in very large cities where there are many uneducated people. Indeed, I don't think it ought to be.

RECEIPTS

Lamb Shanks

Lamb shanks are inexpensive and delicious. When prepared properly the meat is tender and tastes like chicken. Put the shanks in boiling salted water and allow to simmer for four hours. Then put potatoes, which have been peeled and halved, and string beans into the kettle with the meat and boil for one hour.

Peach Mangoes

Peel large freestone peaches; cut in halves and remove stones. Fill the cavities with maraschino cherries or with the following mixture:

1 cup of preserved ginger, sliced thin
1 teaspoonful of grated horseradish
1 mustard seed
1 teaspoonful of celery seed
1-2 teaspoonful of black pepper seed.

Tie the peach halves together and drop into a syrup made as follows:

1 quart of vinegar
3 pints of sugar
2 ounces of cinnamon bark

(Put spices in a muslin bag and drop into the vinegar and sugar mixture.)

Cook the fruit very gently in the syrup until tender; then lift from the syrup and place in jars. Cook the syrup until slightly thick; pour it over the peaches and seal the jars.

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"I don't doubt that. I asked about her golf."

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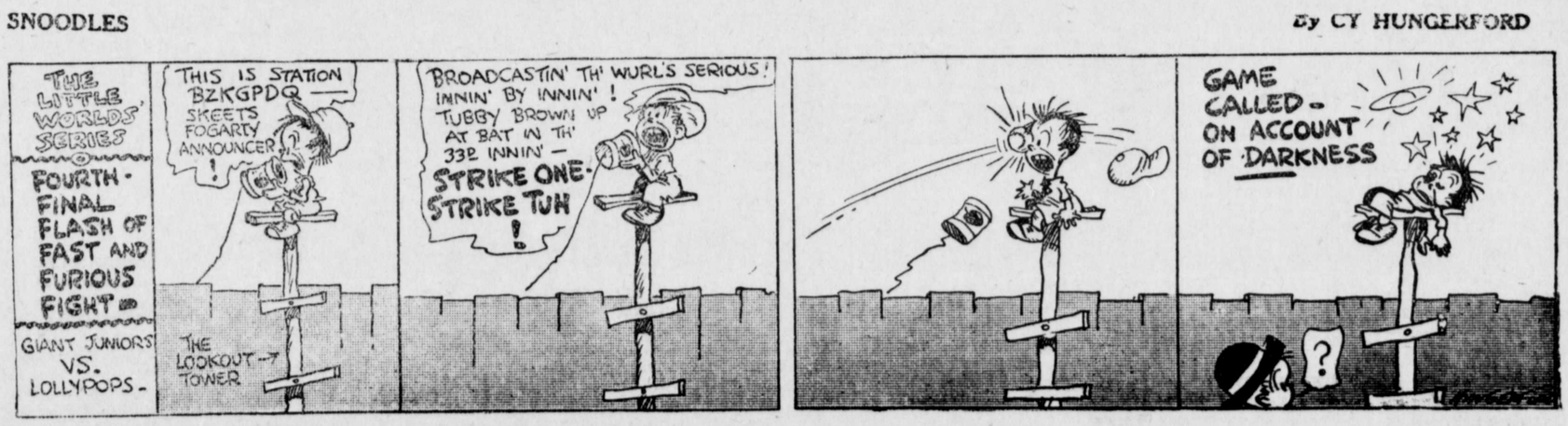
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