



## Boobs in the Trap ~ By Thomas Thursday ~

**H**OP out of bed, 'Doc,' it's almost eight o'clock. I bet a bird like you could sleep on a tack mattress! Even the goldfish are wide awake and enjoying a swim in the sunlight. Besides, I've just figured out a bright idea for today's adventure. In other words, my dear Doc, we start the day by giving some chap a lift in life.

"Of course, I realize that the idea will be a positive novelty to you because you have always worked on the theory that the world was created just for you alone, which theory is the best of bunk. Each time that you give another fellow a helping hand you automatically help yourself. That's so plain that even a stonehead like you should understand it. Now, will you please fall out of that bed?"

"Lemme sleep!" I mumbled from under the silkilene sheets. "I came to this here hamlet de New York to rest, not to stay awake twenty-five hours a day. Lemme sleep!"

No use! To argue with a flipjay like my pal and hotel roommate, "Everready" McCoy, was like trying to catch eels with butter for bait. We had wandered away from the Move-a-Long Circus and Side Show to interview New York and to see what made it go, come, and the like. McCoy is known on the show lots as a "fixer," while I am noted as the infamous manager of the kid show.

When we landed at the station we boarded a taxi and told the gasoline-destroyer to whirl us to a nice, reasonable hotel. The bandit whizzed us around ten different blocks eleven times each, helped the meter along now and then with his thumb, then pulled up in front of the Hotel Gypdorf. He said the same was a grade-A camp, noted for its reasonable rates, then slanted his sucker-clock and announced

our bill of fare.

We gave 'im one quarter of our bankroll—we could have gone to Africa for less!—and then breezed into the main entrance. The clerk tossed us a hall room for forty a week and we elevatored up to the boob-trap. And if that needle's eye was cheap, then you couldst buy a diamond for a nickel! The camp was so small that when you wrote a letter there wasn't room for the punctuation.

Likewise, all the bellhops claimed that dimes was foreign money and that U.S. currency, to them, started off with the quarter. How the so ever, we'd been getting along fairly well for a few weeks, and McCoy was enjoying himself immensely. But not me! I am being toted around on fool adventures and missed being tossed into the Tombs by less than an inch. Everready claimed that New York was only a big town made out of a bunch of little ones, and that it suited his taste.

In the meantime, I am enjoying myself like a champion ice skater in the Gobi Desert. Personally talking, I wouldst like to snore as much as possible, not having much chance when home with the missus. But not McCoy. That flipper had no more use for beds than I have for restaurants when I'm hungry. Well, let's start the show.

"I repeat, my dear angleworm," went on McCoy, while I toyed with the washbasin, "that the greatest thing in life is to help some other bird along who is down on his luck. We depend more or less on one another in this world, and the yams that doubt that are kidding themselves all over! More, I intend to take you out with me this morning, stroll around until we find some chap who needs a little encouragement, and give him a lift. There's a lot of good stuff in many so-called failures, but the poor flapjacks lack the nerve to wallop their way into

success.”

“You talk like assorted noise,” I said. “I suppose that you believe there’s such a thing as luck, hey?”

“Certainly!” he snapped. “Many a great man in history owes his success to a touch of luck. Of course, there may be some who gained success by plain hard work. I can’t explain luck, but I know that there’s such a thing as fate. Absolutely!”

“What’s fate?” I swooped.

“Another name for luck,” he replied. “It just happens like accidents. Many a success is just an accident. Talk about luck!”

“There’s only one kind of luck,” I fired back, “and that’s bad luck. And I control the world’s supply of the same!”

“Take baseball, for example,” said Everready calmly. “Do the players believe in what they call the ‘breaks’? Boy, you tell ‘em! Then take the cases of birds like Messrs. Napoleon Bonaparte, Christopher Columbus, Julius Caesar, Benjamin—”

“Aw, ring off!” I snorted. “Talk about flippers that I heard of, like Jack Dempsey, Babe Ruth, and the ditto.”

At that point in the debate the thin slice of soap slipped out of my hand and skidded into the hall. A second later, a little bird came prancing down the corridor, admiring the ceiling. Well, soap is soap. The small flipper made arrangements to plant a foot on the innocent piece of dirt-chaser, and turned a semi-backflip in the air; after which, he stretched out on the floor as if he was home. I dashed to his assistance at once and promptly.

“What happened?” I asked, reaching his side in a jump.

He looked at me with his face twisted in assorted knots, rubbed three places with his left hand and two with his right—all at one and the same time. “Oh, nothing happened!” he grunted. “I just rented this part of the hotel for a skating rink. In other words, I wish you’d keep your blame soap in the sink!”

“There you are, Doc!” exploded McCoy. “How’s that for a sample of luck, eh?”

“What do you mean—luck?” demanded the small item, wiggling his ears at Everready.

“Well, you see,” explained McCoy, “Doc, here, and me had a little disagreement as to the luck equation. He said there was no such thing; I claimed that there was, and then you came along and proved it for me!”

“How nice!” groaned the peewee. “I’m glad that

I helped you out. Would you care to have me try it again?”

“Sure—go ahead!” I entreated. “I muffed half of the act, anyway.”

“Pay less than no attention to the boob, colonel,” interrupted McCoy, lifting the stranger to his feet. “Doc and loose talk are twins.”

“I don’t mind loose talk so much as loose soap,” moaned the chap. “Besides, I know of a more painless method of studying astronomy than bumping on the floor.”

“Too bad,” said Everready soothingly. “Come in and sit down for a while, won’t you?”

## II.

THE acrobat limped into the camp, and sat on the bed, giving McCoy and me a chance to see what he looked like, if anything. For one thing, he wore a complete set of black hair, half curly, and weighed about one hundred and twenty-five pounds by the clock.

“Belong in New York?” buzzed McCoy, not that it was any of his business.

“Er—no; I hail from the coast,” replied the soap-slipper.

“Traveling salesman, eh?” went on McCoy with his customary nerve.

“Er—yes; but I don’t like the work, really.”

“How do you mean—work?” I snorted. “All you’ve gotta do is sell stuff; that’s all!”

“Don’t mind the fool,” put in McCoy. “He’s a hysteric of the third declension.”

“I am not!” I tossed back. “I’m a citizen of the United States.”

“I was speaking about your head, not your home. I didn’t want to be blunt and say that you’re a little balmy in the bean—though you certainly are!”

I ignored the compliment and centered my attention on the new bimbo. “What do you peddle?” I asked.

“Lingerie,” replied the floor-faller with a peculiar smile.

“What kinda stuff is that?” I shot back. “Grocery supplies?”

“All wrong, stonehead,” said McCoy with a chuckle. “Lingerie is a word derived from the French, and refers to women’s apparel.”

“Well, what do I know about ladies?” I snapped. “I’ve only been married ten years.”

"It's a tough job," sighed the chaperino. "And I don't like the work, anyway. In fact, I've always wanted to be an actor."

"Ha—that sounds interesting," vociferated McCoy. "Maybe I can help you out. You see, Doc and I are just snooping around New York on a sort of adventurous vacation; and we both dote on helping other fellows to find themselves—Doc especially. He's got a heart as big as the Rock of Gibraltar."

"Yeah," I put in; "and, believe me, it's just as hard!"

"I wasn't referring to your head, Doc," he came back.

"Take my advice, mister," I said to the stranger, "and leg it out of here before McCoy gets you a season pass for the Hotel de Tombs. If you don't, he'll get you into more trouble than a mosquito trying to walk over a yard of flypaper."

"What's your name, may I ask?" said McCoy.

"Er—Christopher Land," replied the lightweight.

"Named after Columbus both ways, hey?" I grinned. "His first name was Chris and he went after land. Ha, ha—pretty good—what?"

"Idiotic," quoth McCoy. "As a humorist, you're the world's greatest crape hanger." Then, turning to the sequel to Columbus, he said: "Ah—what makes you think you want to be an actor?"

"I can imitate a lot of famous people—especially Charlie Chaplin," he replied modestly.

"Ever been on the stage?" queried Everready.

"No; I haven't. You see, I don't know how to go about it. I—er—lack the nerve, to tell the truth. And, anyway, I don't know any booking agents."

"Good night!" howled McCoy. "How do you ever expect to get by in this world without nerve, eh? It can't be done. However, I have already discovered, just by looking at you, that you are burning up with latent talent. Positively! And listen! I'm the bird who's going to get you a booking!"

"All of which," I slammed in, "is a lot of frappe a la piffle! Since when do you know any booking agents, hey?"

"What's the difference, you jellyhead!" raved McCoy. "I don't have to know any, do I? I'll just take Mr. Land around to their offices and tell 'em that Christopher Land is the greatest embryonic imitator of celebrities in the world. The least they can do is to give him a try-out."

"Sure—a try-out the door!" I hooted. "How the so ever, I don't care what happens, because I'm not going with you. I'm entirely too young to be mutilated. My wife has the rolling-pin privileges for my head, anyway."

"How does the idea strike you, Chris?" Everready asked the timid sparrow.

"Er—do you think that I'll get by?" he wanted to know.

At that, McCoy went up in the air like a duck feather in a cyclone. "Haven't you any confidence, any faith, any pep?" he roared, pacing the room. "For the love of Colonel Harvey, brace up. Be like that bird, the Count of Monte Cristo, who shouted that the world was his. Monte had the right spirit! Nothing like trying—anything at all. If you never try, you'll waste more time in later life wondering what would have happened if you had. Better to try, and lose, than never to try at all!"

"Well," glooped Christopher, "I believe that I could make good—if I don't lose my nerve."

"Of course you can!" pepped Everready, bawling the poor pickle on the back. "If you haven't any faith in yourself, how do you expect other people to have any? Come on—we'll dash around and see some booking agents right now. Spruce up, Chris—hop along, Doc. Let's go!"

### III.

McCoy, myself, and Land, the weak-kneed Mprune, ambled out of the camp and swellevated down to the main floor. As we reached the street the proposition struck me as being as sane as a flipper turning in fire alarms for amusement. Figure it out for yourself. I innocently dropped a slice of soap while currying my face, or map, and the same skipped into the hall. Along came a yapbean, who took a nose dive on the stuff, and landed on his anatomy. Next, the gent was assisted into our wigwam; McCoy got his name and business; then decided to put the to-let noodle over as an actor.

All of this happened within the short time of five minutes. Speed, eh? I wouldst like to see Ralph de Palma beat that. How the so ever, I was unnaturally suspicious and a great admirer of the State of Missouri. Furthermore, and to wit, I began to see a tour around a complete set of hospitals. Not that I was afraid, understand. To be certainly not! Because I can sprint too fast to be scared of

anything. The bird who can whip me must be a champion sprinter or he'll lose. I'm just wise. That's me all over—and under!

"Listen," I remarked as we hit the trail for Broadway, "I wouldst like to send a telegram to the wife. Sort of break-the-news-to-mother message, as they say."

"Do you think that our venture is liable to be dangerous?" asked the flipjay, raising his eyebrows an inch.

"Not very," I tossed back. "The way I see it, it should be as safe as resting your neck on a subway track. But don't worry. I was reading an article in *The Evening Fiction* the other day, and it says as how New York has the best and speediest ambulance service in the world. All free, too."

"Pay no attention to the lunatic," said McCoy as he dragged us down the street. "He can talk more and say less than an alderman. Hop along!"

Well, about fifteen minutes later, we rounded into Broadway, the home of booking agents, road agents, and the ditto.

"Ha—here we are," swooped Everready, halting in front of a collection of brick, entitled Hutnam Building. "This is where all the big theatrical agents have their headquarters. "We'll start on the top floor and call on everybody in the place."

"We'll all be booked out the door by the janitor," I declared. "You can't get this bird booked, anyway. Who ever heard of him?"

"Come on, Chris," he said as if I was then out of sight or dead. "We'll start canvassing. Keep up your nerve!"

The elevator had no more than dumped us out on the sky landing, than Everready began to slant the names on the doors to see which agent he'd pester. At last he stopped in front of a suite of rooms that had the name Dan Duluth gold-lettered on the glass.

"Guess we'll try Dan," he announced. "Come on—in we go!"

McCoy snapped open the door and dragged us in after him. The camp was decorated with assorted flowers, et cetera, and looked like the office of the King of the World. My heart registered zero, and I began to shiver so that I thought the buttons would fall off my vest. A young lady, with enough beauty to make the Queen of Sheba look like an advertisement for Grandma's Old-fashioned Fudge, stood up, twirled a wisp of golden hair around her shell-like ear—whatever that is—then greeted us

with a smile that was all to the Mary Pickbanks.

"Do you wish to speak to Mr. Duluth?" she opened.

"If you please," beamed McCoy, bowing halfway to the plush railing.

"Has he got a gun in the office?" I asked, as I measured the distance to the door.

"I beg your pardon?" glipped the angel.

"Don't mind the comedian," put in McCoy; "he's just trying to rehearse his new act." After which, he tapped me in the shins.

"What do you wish to see Mr. Duluth about?" asked the lady suddenly.

"Tell him, if you will, that there's a party out here, from the outdoor show world, who would like to give him the first opportunity to book a novelty act. My name is McCoy. Thank you."

She flounced into the inner works and, a second later, fluffed out again. "Mr. Duluth will see you," reported the successor to all the magazine-cover girls. "Step this way, please."

Well, McCoy led the parade into the lion's den. I got one slant at Mr. Duluth and saw that the gent was well named. He looked as big as Michigan—both upper and lower. He was so blame fat that I had a tough time guessing whether he was sitting or standing. Right away I began to figure how I could grab off that baby for my side show. He was wearing his hair in the latest sanitary style. I saw at once and promptly that his comb and brush expenses were less than nothing. In different words, that flipper had a complete set of baldness.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Duluth as we entered. "Now that you see me, what do you want to see me about?"

"I'd like to know if you have much trouble sleeping in a Pullman upper berth?" I asked with the greatest of innocence. But I didn't get far with that kind of stuff. McCoy nabbed me by the yoke, or neck, and tossed me into a chair.

"Mr. Duluth," opened Everready, "I called to present to you a man who is due to be the coming sensation in vaudeville."

"Ha, ha!" yelped the heavyweight. "Your opening is brand-new—same as Egypt. What do you mean—sensation?"

"I mean," went on McCoy, "that the young man you see before you, Mr. Christopher Land, is able to imitate any screen star now in the public eye. He can even imitate the great Charlie Chaplin. Can't you, Chris?"

“Yes, sir,” replied Chris nervously.

“That’s nothing new,” snorted the agent. “Mr. Chaplin has had a million so-called imitators, but they can’t imitate! No, sir; nobody can imitate Charlie.”

“Is that so?” fired back McCoy.

“Chris!” he snapped to the would-be actor. “Give Mr. Duluth a correct imitation of Mr. Chaplin! We’ll show ‘em, won’t we, Chris?”

“Now?” asked the boob, opening his mouth a yard.

“No,” I said; “wait till New Year’s.”

“Haw!” squawked Mr. Duluth. “He can give a good imitation of a dumb-bell.”

“Go ahead!” snapped Everready to Chris. “Show Mr. Duluth what you can do. Make it pretty!”

At that Chris braced up promptly, and commenced to flat-foot it around the office. Now and then he’d tip his lid, or hat, a la Charlie, and wobble his head. Not bad, I’d say.

“Hey, what’s he doing?” demanded the agent. “Rehearsing for a pall-bearer?”

“What’s the matter?” howled McCoy.

“Why, that imitation was perfect. Show ‘im some more, Chris!”

#### IV.

CHRIS took another turn around the works, this time on the double-quick. As he rounded the far end for the third time, he raced into one of them one-legged skids, keeping the other leg suspended in the air. And I gotta admit it wasn’t so worse!

“Say!” swooped Mr. Duluth, “who is that man trying to imitate—Shakespeare?”

“What do you mean—Shakespeare?” raved Everready. “Why, man, that imitation was just fine, splendid! Are you blind?”

“Horrible, terrible, fierce!” snorted the fat bird. “If he’s an actor, then Ethel Barrymore is a ball player!”

“What’s the matter with ‘im?” McCoy shot back.

“Everything, and more,” barked Mr. Duluth. “I bet you that he never even seen Chaplin on the screen. He’s wasting time. Take my advice, and get him back to the factory where you no doubt discovered him. I hate to see good mechanics being led astray. The United States now needs—”

Just then the young lady breezed into the office

and gave the boss a card. “Show ‘im in,” said Mr. Duluth, after slanting the pasteboard. “I’m not busy now; these here fellows are just squandering my time.”

The lady waltzed out and, a moment after, a tall, well-dressed flipper, supported by a mustache and a Malacca cane, stood framed in the doorway. He started to speak, but halted suddenly with his eyes aimed at Christopher. Chris, on slanting the newcomer, tried to pull his hat down over his eyes. Right away I began to sniff something phony. Ha—thinks I—Chris must have robbed that bird, and is trying to duck! I was wrong.

“Well, well, well!” beamed the caller, advancing toward Chris. “If it isn’t Mr. Chaplin! How are you, Charlie?”

Blam!

Dan Duluth was the first to collapse.

As for McCoy and me, we played a double-header with the same.

“Glad to see you, Mr. Howells,” said Chris or Charlie. “But I’m sorry that you broke up my little masquerade. I was just beginning to have a good time, too!”

“Ah, I see,” said Mr. Howells, “you’re up to one of your favorite tricks, eh? Traveling incognito—what?”

“That’s right,” replied the soap-slipper; “but somebody is always taking the joy out of life.”

“Doc,” said McCoy hoarsely, “let’s go away from here!”

“Just a moment,” said Charlie Chaplin with a smile, as we started toward the door. “Forgive me, won’t you? You see, it’s a hobby of mine to try and forget that I’m somewhat of a celebrity, and be just plain folks. That’s why I registered at the hotel as Christopher Land. And—er—well, you know the rest.”

“Positively!” I agreed.

“If you ever find yourselves out Los Angeles way,” went on the great comedian, shaking us by the hand, “be sure to drop in and see me. I’ll show you around the studio. Good-bye, and good luck!”

“Bye-bye,” grinned McCoy.

“So long, Charlie!” I tossed back as we blew out of the door.

“You know, Doc,” opened Everready, when we reached the street, “I knew that he was Charlie Chaplin all the time. Ha, ha—the joke’s on you!”

“Tell it to the mayor of Egypt!” I snorted.