

# LI'L ABNER

## and the RATFIELDS





# LI'L ABNER AND THE RATFIELDS

Adapted from  
the famous newspaper cartoon strip

By Al Capp



*A United Feature Syndicate Release*

**THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
**AKRON, OHIO** **NEW YORK**

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Registered at Stationers' Hall  
Printed in the United States of America

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**Li'l Abner on his way to call  
on Julie Roy.**

# LI'L ABNER AND THE RATFIELDS

## CHAPTER I

### DAISY MAE'S APPEAL

“Ah brang some birdseed all the way fum Noo Yawk fo’ thet hootie owl which lives in the ole Blackheart house,” said li’l Abner. “Ah’ll drap in on the way home an’ give it to him.”

Li'l Abner Yokum, standing more than six feet in his stockings—though he seldom wore stockings—and weighing almost two hundred pounds, had just left the railroad train at Pineapple Junction, after a trip from New York City. He had reached the junction late at night, so nobody had been there to meet him.





**Li'l Abner was leaving New York City  
for Pineapple Junction.**

But the fearless young man, who was determined to get home to Pappy and Mammy Yokum, slung his little bundle of clothing on a stick over his shoulder and set out alone on the long walk to Dogpatch.

He was carrying the small bag of birdseed in his right hand, and occasionally glanced down proudly at it, thinking



**He was carrying the small bag  
of birdseed in his right hand.**

how happy the gift would make hootie owl. When he was almost to the old Blackheart place, he noticed an old tree beside the path and said:

“Thar’s the ole crooked tree! Many’s the pleasant hour thet Ah’ve spent a-lyin’ underneath it!”

When li'l Abner neared the old Blackheart house, the long



**"Thar's the ole crooked tree!"**

muzzle of an old rifle was thrust out of an open window. Then the person holding the gun muttered:

“A man! An’ he’s a-carryin’ somethin’ ovah his shoulder. Mebbe it’s a gun. Mebbe he’s one o’ *them!* Oh, Ah jest don’t *wanta* kill, but ef he passes thet ole crooked tree, Ah’ll shoot! Ah’ll *have* to shoot!”



The muzzle of an old rifle  
was thrust out of an open window.

As li'l Abner strode up to the old tree, the voice continued:

“Ah cain't take any chances. He might *not* be one o' them, but then ag'in he *might* be. So does he take one step *beyond* the ole crooked tree, Ah shoots, an' shoots to kill!”

But just as li'l Abner reached the crooked tree he was confronted suddenly by a lovely





**"Ah shoots, an' shoots to kill!"**

young girl who delightedly exclaimed:

“Oh, li'l Abner, yo' is back! Oh, Ah've bin *so* lonesome wif yo' away!”

“So whut, Daisy Mae?” demanded the young man, halting abruptly. “Don't yo' know thet yo'll be jest as lonesome now thet Ah is hyar?”

“Yo' is jest the same as evah,



**“Oh, li'l Abner, Ah've bin so lonesome  
wif yo' away!”**

li'l Abner," she cried in distressed tones. "Yo's a coward! Yo's afeared to admit thet yo' loves me!"

"Ah hain't a coward, Daisy Mae," replied li'l Abner calmly. "An' Ah hain't afeared to admit thet Ah loves yo'."

"Oh, li'l Abner," sobbed Daisy Mae happily, "Ah jes' knowed it all the time!"



**"Yo's a coward! Yo's afear'd to admit  
thet yo' loves me!"**

The stalwart young man glanced down at the girl in surprise, then asked:

“Jest whut did Ah say then, Daisy Mae?”

And now the gun barrel was lifted from the window sill. A young woman held the weapon in her hands as she looked at the two who were standing beneath the old crooked tree.



**“Thank heaven Ah didn’t shoot!”**

“Thank heaven, Ah didn’t shoot! It’s jest a boy—an’ a girl like me. No, *not* like me! She’s free, an’ Ah is a rat in a trap fum which thar ain’t no escape!” she said.

She tried to turn away from the open window, but the two under the old crooked tree held her gaze and her closest attention.





**She tried to turn away from the window,  
but the two held her gaze.**

“It must be nice to be like her,” she murmured enviously, “young an’ purty, an’ wif a boy to court her. *Ah’m* young—an’ *Ah’m* purty, too, tol’ably—but whar’s the boy?”

Once more she turned to glance with tear-misted eyes toward the old crooked tree. She dropped the butt of the long gun to the floor as she continued:



**She dropped the butt of the long gun  
to the floor.**

“But thar *might* be a boy somewhar who might like to court me! N-not a great big han’some boy like *him*, but mebbe jest a short boy—a k-kinda homely, bow-laigged boy—one thet—” Then as the musing girl saw li’l Abner sink down to the ground beneath the old tree and Daisy Mae sit down beside him, she added:



**Daisy Mae sat down beside him.**

“Oh, most *any* kinda boy'd be awright, Ah guess—ef only Ah was free like her—free to come an' go, free to love an' to be loved!”

She seated herself on a low chair beside the open window, glanced at the candle which had burned itself out on the little table, and said sorrowfully:

“But them things hain't fo’



**She seated herself on a low chair  
beside the open window.**

me. Ah gotta wait hyar in the dark wif a gun in mah hand. An' whut is it thet Ah'm a-wait-in' fo'? *Death*—thet's whut—*sartin death!*"

But out under the old crooked tree all was not as serene with the boy and girl as it appeared to the lonely woman who kept watch in the old Blackheart house.





**Li'l Abner had turned his broad back  
on Daisy Mae.**

Li'l Abner had turned his broad back on Daisy Mae, and she was saying:

“Fo' y'ars an' y'ars now, li'l Abner, Ah've bin a-taggin' along after yo', a-hopin' an' a-hopin' thet some day yo'd come to care fo' me like Ah does fo' yo'. An' fo' y'ars an' y'ars now yo've treated me *mean!*”

There was no reply from li'l



**"Fo' y'ars an' y'ars now  
yo've treated me mean!" she said.**

Abner, and Daisy Mae leaned closer to him as she continued bitterly to upbraid the boy she loved:

“Yo’ve treated me awful mean—an’ still Ah allus keeps on a-hopin’. But, oh, li’l Abner, Ah can’t go on like this—Ah jest gotta know the truth! Does yo’ want me, or does yo’ *not*?”

When there was no answer to



**She paused a moment then wailed:  
"He's asleep!"**

her impassioned appeal, the girl bent still closer and spoke more clearly:

“Tell me quick, li'l Abner, fo' this is the greatest moment o' mah life—Ah kin hardly breathe a-waitin' fo' yo' to answer—”

She paused a moment, then wailed:

“He's asleep! He's a-snorin' like a mule!”

Slowly, silently, Daisy Mae rose, and with bowed head and sorrowing heart ran away from the sleeping youth.

## CHAPTER II

### "AH KISSED HIM AS HE SLEPT"

The girl in the old Blackheart house was amazed when she saw Daisy Mae spring to her feet and look down at the young man lying there. First making sure that the candle was burned out, she seized the gun and hurried





**She seized the gun and hurried over  
to the door.**

over to the door. Then she exclaimed:

“Why, she’s runnin’ away—she’s leavin’ him thar all alone!”

For a few minutes she stood there in the doorway trying to decide what to do. At last she said:

“He’s out thar all alone—mebbe some harm will come to him. Ah must see.”



**Clutching the gun, she made her way  
to the old crooked tree.**

Clutching the gun, the girl carefully made her way to the old crooked tree. When she came near, she peered down at the young man lying there so quietly. Then she whispered:

“She’s gone an’ he’s alone—sleepin’! Now I wonder whut thet kin mean—don’t she love him none, or have they had a lovers’ quarrel?”



**"She's gone an' he's alone—sleepin'!"  
she whispered,**

Stealthily she laid the gun aside and stole still closer, murmuring:

“Oh, how lovely 'twould be ef Ah were free, like *her!* How sweet 'twould be to sit underneath a mountain moon wif a boy—wif *any* boy!”

She knelt close beside the sleeping youth and gazed at him intently. Then she brushed a

stray lock of hair back from her face and leaned still closer. She gently laid a hand on li'l Abner's shoulder, and then she softly placed her cheek against his hair as she again murmured:

“An' as Ah sat thar, mebbe Ah'd pat his haid jest a li'l—an' mebbe Ah'd—kiss him, ef he axed me to, or even ef he *didn't!*”

Now the rattle of stones in the

rough road and the sound of an automobile engine came to her ears. Alarmed, she sprang to her feet, caught up the rifle and looked toward a curve in the road.

“It’s a car a-comin’,” she exclaimed, instantly alert. “An’ it m-might be *them!*”

Darting back toward the old house, the girl glanced back and





**Alarmed, she sprang to her feet  
and caught up the rifle.**

saw a big truck rounding the curve and starting up a little hill.

The driver of the truck was clutching the wheel with a death grip and muttering:

“I can't stand it any more! I never should've t-taken the job—three hundred miles o' drivin' this load o' dynamite over rough mountain roads! An' with my heart in my throat every time



**She darted back toward the old house.**

I hit a bump—expecting every second to be blown to bits!”

Near the top of the steep little hill he stopped the machine, set the brakes and climbed down from the cab. As he hurried away down the road he kept repeating:

“I *won't* drive that truck another inch! I quit right here—I'll walk the rest of the way



The driver of the truck was clutching  
the wheel with a death grip.

to the quarry, an' I'll tell 'em to send someone else out here to drive it in."

For a few minutes all was quiet under the old crooked tree and at the truck standing deserted just below the brow of the steep little hill.

Then the brakes creaked a bit, and the heavy truck moved back an inch or two. Another creak,



**He climbed down from the cab  
and hurried away down the road.**

and the truck moved a foot. Then there was a sharp *crack!* as the brakes gave way. The truck moved faster and faster as the weight of its heavy load forced it down the hill.

All unconscious of his danger, li'l Abner slept on. Not even the creaking of the brakes nor the rumbling of the truck disturbed him.





**All unconscious of his danger  
li'l Abner slept on.**

But when the truck left the road at the curve near the old crooked tree, it swung toward li'l Abner, struck the tree and there was a tremendous *boom!* Bits of truck and tree and rocks rained down on li'l Abner as he slept.

The girl looked from the door of the old Blackheart house and gasped in awful dread:



**Not even the creaking of the brakes  
disturbed him,**



**The truck left the road  
and swung toward li'l Abner.**



**Bits of truck and tree  
and rocks rained on li'l Abner.**

“Only one li'l minute ago he were alive an' strong an' handsome. Only one minute ago Ah —*kissed* him!”

Her heart filled with forebodings, she ran to the scene of the accident and seized li'l Abner's hand. As she dragged him from the mass of twisted iron and splintered wood, she cried:

“It were only one minute ago



The girl looked from the door  
and gasped in awful dread.

thet Ah kissed him as he slept hyar—so strong, so han'some! One minute ago this pore mess o' rags were a boy!"

She raised li'l Abner's bruised head and listened for his heart-beat.

"It's beatin' jest a li'l," she said thankfully. "Mebbe ef Ah brang him into the cabin an' tended to his wounds, he'd get well again."





**She dragged him from the mass  
of twisted iron and splintered wood.**

But then she began to think of the consequences of such an act. As she summed them up, her eyes grew wide, and she said to herself in dismay:

“Whut is Ah thinkin’ of? Ah cain’t bring him in thar! He might find out whut’s in thar— an’ Ah cain’t stay out hyar wif him!”

Then she smoothed the rough



**She raised Mr. Abner's bruised head.**

ground as well as she could and tenderly laid li'l Abner's head on a bit of sod. Then she jumped to her feet and rushed to the house, dashing the tears from her eyes and wailing:

“Good-bye, big, strong boy! Heaven fo'give me, Ah gotta leave yo' thar to die!”

She sat down at the window and wept pitifully as she looked



**She rushed to the house,  
dashing the tears from her eyes.**

at the helpless youth lying on the hard ground.

“Ah cain't bring him in hyar, else he'd larn the secret of this cabin,” she mourned. “It's the cut in the wrist thet's drawin' the lifeblood outa him. Oh, ef only *somebody* else 'd pass by! Thar's still a chance to stop the flow o' blood!”

And then she saw Pappy and



**"Ah cain't bring him in hyar,  
else he'd larn the secret of this cabin."**

Mammy Yokum coming along the road. "Oh," she cried, "thar's someone now!"

As Mammy looked at the pile of wreckage she said disapprovingly:

"Tsk, tsk! Whut a mess!"

The two elderly folks stopped to examine the wreck and she added:

"This jest proves whut Ah





Mammy looked at the wreckage and said,  
"Tsk, tsk! Whut a mess!"

allus said—them onnatural contrivances will *nevah* take the place o' the mule!”

“Mebbe thar’s somethin’ valuable in the wreckage, Pansy,” suggested Pappy. “Ah’ll look on t’other side.”

“No, Pappy,” said Mammy, decidedly. “Come along! Thar hain’t nothin’ thar thet belongs to *us!*”



**"Mebbe thar's somethin' valooable  
in the wreckage," suggested Pappy.**

“Yo’ is right, as usual, Pansy,” replied Pappy as his wife firmly seized his arm and led him down the road.

But in the old Blackheart house the girl watched Pappy and Mammy Yokum leave the scene of the roadside wreck and she moaned:

“Oh-h-h, they’re goin’ away, an’ leavin’ him!”



**"No, Pappy," said Mammy decidedly.  
"Come along!"**

## CHAPTER III

### THE RATFIELD-ROY FEUD

The girl who was crouching at the window of the old Blackheart house despairingly watched Pappy and Mammy Yokum leave the wreck of the truck. For a few minutes she carefully planned her next move,



**Exerting every bit of her strength,  
she lifted the young man.**

then went out to help li'l Abner.

Exerting every bit of her strength, she lifted the young man to his feet, and drew his left arm around her neck and over her shoulder. Then she turned back toward the old cabin, half carrying, half leading him.

“Ah cain't leave him hyar to bleed to death,” she murmured.

“Ah jest gotta take a chance o’





**She drew his left arm around her neck  
and over her shoulder.**

him larnin' the secret o' the cabin."

After she had bound up li'l Abner's wounds, the young man slowly regained consciousness. He sat up, rubbed his forehead and muttered brokenly:

"S-somethin' musta h-hit me— Ah feels awright n-now—merely a li'l dizzier 'n usual in the haid."

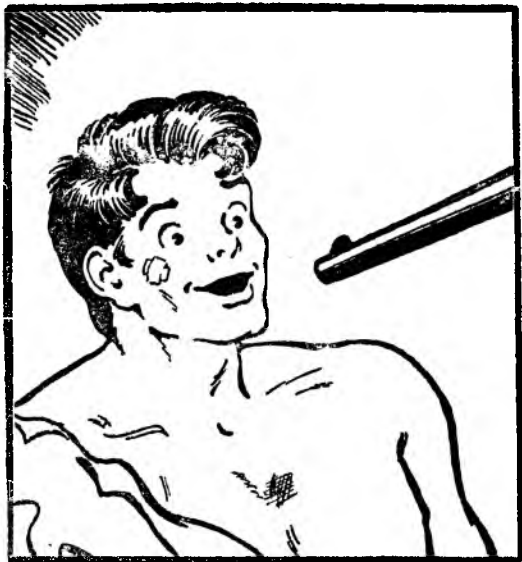


He sat up and rubbed his forehead.

Seeing that her patient had recovered consciousness, the girl suddenly caught up her gun and shouted:

“Then yo’ must git right outa hyar!”

As li’l Abner looked up into the muzzle of the rifle, he commenced to put two and two together. “B-but it musta bin yo’ which bound mah wounds an’



**Li'l Abner looked up into the muzzle  
of the rifle.**

saved mah life," he said wonderingly. "Ah wants to thank yo', freckled gal."

"Nevah yo' mind thet!" she gritted in reply. "Ah'll give yo' *three* to get out o' hyar or Ah'll blast yo' haid off!"

Then she stepped back a few feet, raised the gun and began to count:

"One! Two—"



**She raised the gun  
and began to count: "One! Two—"**

Li'l Abner rose from the hard floor and said:

“Ah heahs someone a-cryin’ behind thet door. Who yo’ got in thar?”

Disturbed by the young man’s abrupt question, the girl gazed at li'l Abner a moment. He was quick to take advantage of her confusion.

“I said thar’s someone behind



thet door, freckled gal," he repeated. "Someone's a-cryin' in thar—an' Ah aims to see who!"

"Strong boy," replied the girl, who had regained her composure, "Ah said thet Ah'd give yo' *three* to git out o' hyar or Ah'd blast yo' haid off! An' hyar's yo' last chance. One! Two—"

Li'l Abner walked steadily up



**"Someone's a-cryin' in thar—  
Ah aims to see who!"**

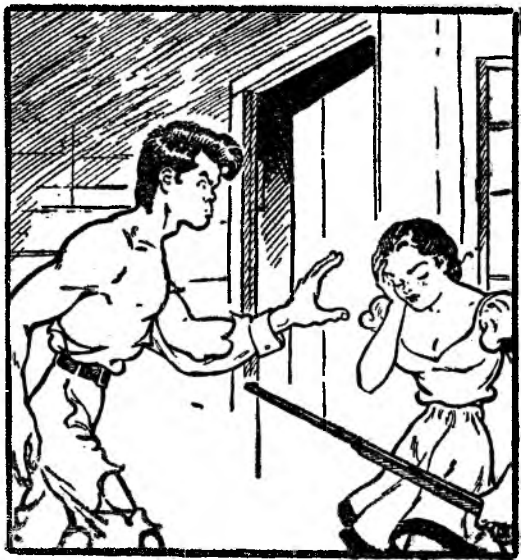


**"Ah said Ah'd give yo' three  
to git out o' hyar!"**

to the muzzle of the gun, and the girl commanded: "Stan' back, strong boy! Ah hain't a-foolin'!"

Li'l Abner kept advancing as he replied firmly: "Nor me neither!"

The girl dropped the muzzle of the gun, put her right hand to her eyes and began to sob quietly.



**"A-Ah jest can't s-shoot,"  
she said brokenly.**

“A-Ah jest *cain't* s-shoot,” she said brokenly. “Y-yo’ is so purty!”

Stepping past the weeping girl, li'l Abner strode over to the door, jerked it open and peered into the room. As his eyes became accustomed to the gloom and he distinguished the sole occupant, he exclaimed in amazement:



**He exclaimed in amazement:  
"Wal, fry mah hidel!"**

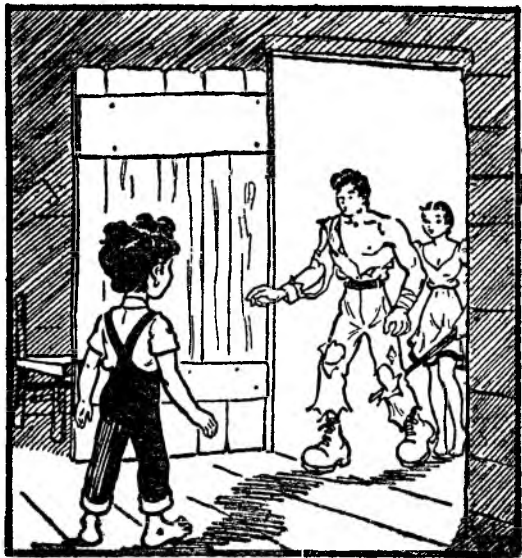
“Wal, fry mah hide!”

Then the young man opened the door wide and entered the room, still exclaiming: “Fry mah hide—it’s a li’l chile!”

The girl followed him timorously. And as li’l Abner went over close to the little boy, she said:

“He’s the last o’ the Royals  
Yo’ has heard ’bout the Rarfields





He entered the room, still exclaiming.  
"Fry mah hide! It's a fit obile!"

an' the Roys, hain't yo', strong boy?"

Li'l Abner lifted the tiny lad up and smiled as he answered the question by asking another:

"Does yo' mebbe mean the rugged mount'in boys, freckled gal?"

"Yes," replied the girl, speaking more confidently now. "The Ratfields an' the Roys feuded



**"He's the last o' the Roys!" she said,  
following him timorously.**

fo' ovah a hunderd y'ars. One by one, the Ratfields kilt off us Roys, ontill thar were jest mah Pappy, mah baby brother an' me."

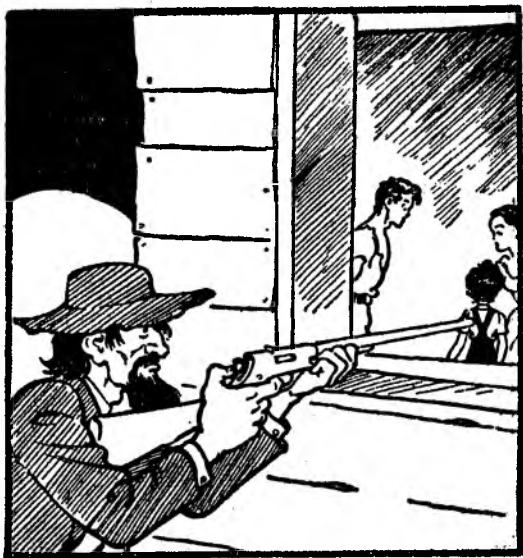
Outside the old Blackheart house, a black-bearded man armed with a long rifle stole stealthily toward the open window. He heard the girl as she told her story of the feud:



**A black-bearded man stole stealthily  
toward the open window.**

“Seven y’ars ago the Ratfields found mah Pappy an’ they finished him. But Ah grabbed the baby an’ run off. Since then we’ve bin a-hidin’ in the valley an’ in the hills. Oh, it’s bin so hard!”

The black-bearded man thrust the muzzle of his long rifle in through the open window as the girl continued:



**He thrust the muzzle of his long rifle  
through the open window.**

“But now they’s found out thet thar is a man-chile name o’ Roy still alive, an’ they’ll git him like they got—all—o’ us—Roys!”

The ugly black-bearded man grinned fiendishly when he saw the small boy standing near his sister as the girl told her pitiable story to li’l Abner. Then he drew the gun to his shoulder and was about to fire when the raised

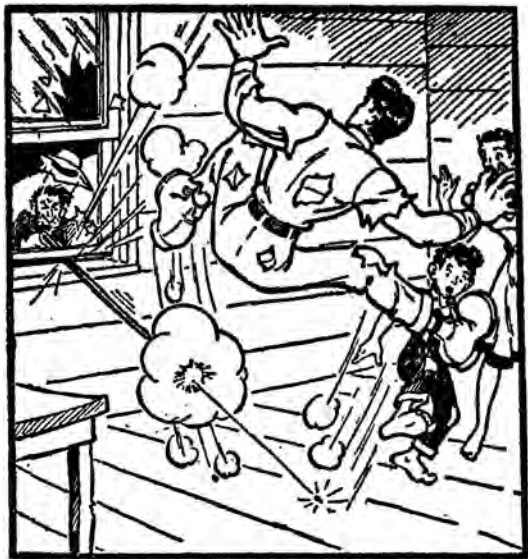




**He drew the gun to his shoulder  
and was about to fire.**

window sash fell with a *bang!* The falling sash ruined the villain's aim, but discharged the gun.

Startled by the sudden explosion, li'l Abner leaped into the air as the bullet ploughed into the plank floor. The youngster ran to his sister for protection, and she caught up her gun, rushed to the door and fired at



**Li'l Abner leaped as the bullet ploughed into the plank floor.**

the black-bearded man as he was running away at top speed, leaving his gun hanging in the window.

The girl and li'l Abner ran out into the yard as she explained:

“Ah missed him! But he'll be back—he an' all the rest o' the Ratfields. They has found us at last!”

The girl and li'l Abner went



**He was running away at top speed,  
leaving his gun.**

back into the house, and the young man again took the little fellow up in his arms as she spoke warningly:

“The feud o’ the Ratfields an’ the Roys is a-drawin’ to a end. But thar’s no sense o’ yo’ gittin’ kilt in mah feud, strong boy. So go to yo’ home whilst yo’ still kin.”

Holding the last man-child of



**"The feud is a-drawin' to a end."**

the Roys tight in his arms, li'l Abner replied with quiet determination.

“An’ when Ah does go, yo’ is a-comin’ wif me,” he said. “Someone wif brains could figger out a better way to end this feud than yo’ two bein’ kilt, like all yo’ menfolks has. An’ thet someone is mah Mammy!”



## CHAPTER IV

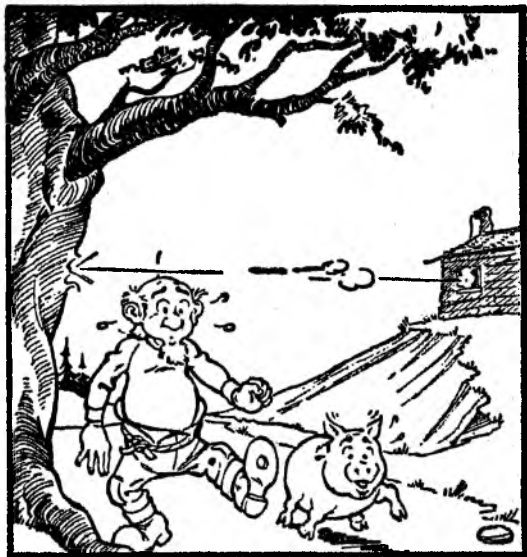
### HUNTING FOR THE RATFIELDS

It was broad daylight when li'l Abner reached his home with the girl and the small boy who had been living in the old Black-heart house.

He introduced the strangers to Pappy and Mammy Yokum as

Julie Roy and her young brother, and the sad-eyed girl again told of the feud which had existed between the Ratfield and Roy families for many, many generations.

Mammy Yokum listened carefully, smoked her pipe and deliberated while Pappy was out in the back yard chasing li'l Abner's pet pig out of the gar-



**Pappy was chasing li'l Abner's pet pig  
out of the garden.**

den. Presently Mammy said:

“HMMMM! An’ so yo’ say thet all the Ratfields is out a-gunnin’ fo’ this po’ li’l chile—an’ he’s the last man o’ the hull Roy fambly?”

“Yes’m, thet’s the truth. But, oh, yo’ folks mustn’t git into this! It’s jest between the Ratfields an’ the Roys.”

“Right!” exclaimed Mammy,



**"Yo' folks mustn't git into this,"  
cried the girl.**

puffing furiously at her pipe as she brought out the battered old family Bible.

“Now, Julie,” she said, “put yo’ left hand on this book, raise yo’ right hand an’ repeat after me: *Ah, Julie Roy, bein’ the eldest o’ mah fambly, hereby adopts li’l Abner an’ Pansy Yokum into the Roy fambly ontill cert’in matters is settled.*”



**"Raise yo' right hand  
an' repeat this after me."**

Repeat it, gal!" she commanded.

This Julie obediently did.

Then telling the girl to remain quietly in the house with her small brother, Mammy nodded to li'l Abner and the young man silently followed her out to the yard. While Mammy pulled on her black jacket, she said to her son:

"Now that the feud is between





**Mammy pulled on her jacket and said,  
"Let's go, son!"**

the Ratfields an' *us Roys*, let's go, son!"

"Right!" said li'l Abner as he clenched his fists.

Mammy whirled and darted away, with li'l Abner close at her flying heels. As they passed Pappy in front of the cabin, he called:

"B-but, Pansy, don't yo' know, all o' them Ratfields is armed to



**Pappy called: "Don't yo' know  
them Ratfields is armed to the teeth?"**

the teeth? An' yo' hain't even got guns!"

Mammy didn't lose a step as she replied:

*"We got brains!"*

"Yo' an' me *both*, Mammy," li'l Abner panted as he sturdily forged ahead.

However, after a mile or two the young man paused to ask a question.



**Mammy didn't lose a step  
as she replied: "We got brains!"**

“Mammy,” he began as he caught his breath, “*how* is we gonna lick the Ratfields, ef we don’t even know *who* or *whar* they is? Hadn’t we better jest wait roun’ in the ole Blackheart place until *they* comes thar a-gunnin’ fo’ *us*?”

“No, no, son,” she replied patiently. “The best defense is a attack! It’ll be easy fo’ us to find



**"Mammy, how is we gonna lick  
the Ratfields?"**

out whar the Ratfields is. We'll ax folks ef thar's bin any strangers a-hangin' roun' Dogpatch lately."

In a few minutes they met an enormous man who was astride an exceedingly small mule. Li'l Abner called:

"Why, howdy do, thar, Barney Beargrease!"

"Barney," said Mammy, "has





**"Why, howdy do, thar, Barney Beargrease!"**

yo' seen any strangers roun' hyar lately?"

"Ah sho' has, Mis' Yokum," replied Barney as he began to tremble violently. "Three o' 'em. Two men an' a ole lady. They was a-lurkin' roun' the ole Blackheart place."

"Thet's sho' 'em awright, Mammy!" said li'l Abner. And then he inquired, "Whut did



**Li'l Abner inquired,  
"Whut did yo' say they look like, Barney?"**

yo' say they look like, Barney?"

"Wal," replied the big fellow quaveringly, "one o' the men were all whiskery, an' the other one were as hairless as a snake!"

"An' the ole lady—does yo' remember whut *she* looked like?" asked Mammy anxiously.

"Thet ole lady—d-don't ax me to deescribe her! Don't, oh, *don't!*"



**"D-don't ax me to deescribe her!  
Don't, oh, don't!"**

As he answered, Barney held his hand to his eyes as though he would like to shut out some horrible sight. Then he yelled at his little mule, kicked the poor animal's ribs and shouted as he galloped away:

“K-kin Ah *evah* f-f-fo'git it? O-oh, thet ole lady—thet p-pee-kool-yar ole lady! Br-r-r-r-r! Br-r-r-r-r!”



**He yelled at his little mule  
and galloped away.**

“Wal, fry ma’ hide!” exclaimed Mammy as she gazed after the frightened fellow.

But li’l Abner was saying to her:

“Hyar come Gran’pap Mc-Skonk. Le’s ax him.” Then li’l Abner leaned over and whispered:

“Psssst! Gran’pap works in a slaughter-house. He’s used to





**"Has yo' seen any strangers  
roun' Dogpatch lately?" asked Mammy.**

seein' horrible sights. He'll describe that ole lady to us, awright."

"McSkonk," began Mammy as they met the old gentleman beside a twisted tree, "has yo' happened to see any strangers roun' Dogpatch lately?"

"Sho' nuff," replied the old fellow shakily. "Two men an' a ole lady. One o' the men were



**"Them's the Ratfields, awright,"  
declared Mammy.**

all hairy, an' the other one didn't have no more hair than a had-dock."

"Them's the Ratfields, aw-right," declared Mammy. "Now deescribe the ole lady fo' us, Gran'pap McSkonk."

"The old lady!" repeated Gran'pap McSkonk, clapping a hand to his forehead and beginning to tremble violently. "No,



**"Oh, thet ole lady! Thet onusual  
ole lady!"**

no! Ah wants to f-fo'git thet Ah has evah seen her! Oh, thet ole lady! Thet onusual ole lady! Br-r-r-r!"

As old Gran'pap McSkonk tremblingly tottered away, li'l Abner remarked:

"Mammy, nobody which has seen the Ratfields will deescribe the ole lady to us. All they does is shiver an' run off when we



He listened a moment, then asked:  
"What's that?"

axes 'em jest whut she looks like."

He listened a moment, then asked: "Whut's thet?"

"It soun's like somebody's a-fallin'," replied Mammy.

They looked about and found a man lying senseless beside a little brook.

"It's Fearless Willie Gooch," said li'l Abner as Mammy





**"The water's a-revivin' him,"  
replied Mammy,**

dipped an old tin can into the little brook. "He's the bravest man in all these hills. An' he's fainted!"

"The water's a-revivin' him," replied Mammy, splashing another canful on the poor fellow's pale face. "Whut happened, Fearless Willie?" she asked as he lifted his head.

"Oh, them people!" gasped



**"The Ratfields!" exclaimed li'l Abner.**

Fearless Willie. "Them three strangers—t-two men an' a ole lady! One o' the men were all hairy, an' the other were bald as a aig!"

"The Ratfields!" exclaimed li'l Abner.

"Right!" declared Mammy. Then she asked, "An' the ole lady—whut did *she* look like, Fearless Willie, kin yo' tell us?"



**"Fearless Willie has done fainted ag'in,"  
said Mammy.**

“Thet ole lady—thet extry-ordinary ole l-lady—” began Fearless Willie Gooch. Then he commenced to tremble violently and tumbled down flat.

“Fearless Willie has done fainted ag’in,” said Mammy.

“Wal,” ejaculated li'l Abner, “thet sho' must be *some* ole lady!”

## CHAPTER V

### MAMMY'S VISION

For a few minutes after the startling collapse of Fearless Willie Gooch, li'l Abner and Mammy were silent. Presently, however, the young man slowly shook his head and said:

“Mammy, has yo' noticed thet



**"Mammy, everyone we axes to deescribe  
ole lady Ratfield faints."**





**"Thar's jest one person left fo' us  
to ax—Ole Man Mose!"**

everyone we axes to deescribe ole lady Ratfield to us faints or runs off a-hollerin' or somethin'? It's all so confoosin' to me!"

"Son," replied Mammy as she puffed at her pipe vigorously, "thar's jest one person left in all the worl' fo' us to ax—Ole Man Mose! Ah hopes he hain't kicked the bucket yit, fo' he's *seen* everythin', he's *heered*

everythin', an' he *knows* everythin'—but he *fears* nothin'!"

Following this wise suggestion, li'l Abner and Mammy went to the great cave in which the aged hermit lived. When they came near, the white-bearded old gentleman was leaning on his cane in the entrance to his home. Mammy called:

“Ole Man Mose, we is a-lookin’ fo’ the Ratfields! We knows jest whut the two boys looks like, but we needs a good deescripshun o’ the ole lady.”

“Ole lady Ratfield?” asked the aged hermit in quavering tones. “Is *she* in these parts?”

Mammy and li'l Abner walked close to the old man as Mammy replied:



**“Is she in these parts?”  
asked the aged hermit.**

“Right, Ole Man Mose! Has yo’ seen her?”

With one scrawny, clawlike hand the ancient of days seized the end of a rope which hung from the top of the cliff. The other he raised as if imploring aid from heaven. But all that he said in faltering tones was “R-r-right!”

Then Old Man Mose jerked



**With one scrawny hand he seized  
the end of a rope.**

the heavy rope, and a great rock fell from the roof of the cave, completely blocking the entrance. On the outer face of this immense stone was carved:

KEEP OUT

And then the two anxious seekers after knowledge heard sepulchral tones issuing from the rock-bound cave:





**A great rock fell,  
completely blocking the entrance.**

“Ah seen her once—twenty y’ars ago! An’ Ah *nevah* wants to see her ag’in. Oh, thet ole lady—thet pee-kool-yar ole lady o’ Ratfield!”

“Thar’s only jest one way left to find out who Mother Ratfield is,” muttered Mammy as li’l Abner impatiently snapped his knife blade, trying to think of some clever device to gain their



**"That's only jest one way left,"  
muttered Mammy.**

end. "Ah gotta conjure up a vision," said Mammy decisively, "an' to do thet Ah needs fresh drawed blood. Yo' knows whut *thet* means, mah son!"

"Ah does, Mammy, indeed Ah does," replied the young man. "Excoose me while Ah steps behind thet tree."

Mammy Yokum sighed and wiped her dimming old eyes as



**"Ah gotta conjure up a vision.  
Yo' knows what tbat means!"**

she thought of the torture her son was enduring for her sake. And from behind the tree came another sigh, as li'l Abner unflinchingly pricked his thumb with his jackknife.

Presently Mammy heard li'l Abner coming, and went over to the tree to meet him. He was wiping the thumb of his right hand on his trousers as he held



**He held out the dripping knife blade  
in his left hand.**

out the dripping knife blade in his left.

As the fresh bright-red blood fell drop by drop into Mammy's extended palms, she looked proudly at li'l Abner and solemnly said:

“Thank yo', mah son.”

“It were jest mah duty to yo', Mammy,” replied li'l Abner graciously. “An' Ah done it!”



And then, with li'l Abner and his pet pig looking on, Mammy began to explain her mystic rites.

"Fust," she said, "Ah marks a X in blood on mah brow. An' then Ah whirls roun' an' roun' an' roun' three times—"

As she fell to the ground and became silent, li'l Abner continued:

"Then yo' lays stiff an' still,



"Ah whirles roun' an' roun' an' roun'—"



**It's Abner and his pet pig looked on.**

repeatin' the secret words yo' gran'mammy teached yo', an' then, Mammy, it'll come—the vision o' ole Mother Ratfield!"

Kneeling beside the still form, li'l Abner clasped his hands above Mammy and kept on with his singsong chant:

"Her eyeballs is a-whirlin' roun' an' roun'. Now they has stopped! It's a-comin' at last—



**"Mammy, it'll come—the vision  
o' ole Mother Ratfield!"**

*the vision o' ole Mother Ratfield!"*

There was a terrific rolling crash of thunder. Then the heavens seemed to open and a mighty flash of lightning flared to meet the wisp of smoke curling upward from Mammy's pipe. Her heels raised from the ground—she moved, sat up!

Li'l Abner rushed over to



Her heels raised from the ground—  
she moved, sat up!

help her rise. He lifted her to her feet and asked impetuously:

“Did yo’ see her, Mammy? Did yo’ *see* her?”

“Y-yes, mah son,” his mother replied haltingly, “Ah d-done s-seen h-her.”

Puffing her pipe, Mammy quickly regained her usual calm.

“Whut do she look like, Mammy?” li’l Abner asked. As





**"Did yo' see her, Mammy?" he asked.**

she hesitated, he began to beg:  
“Please deescribe her to me!”

Then Mammy commenced to tremble—her voice was weak, and she spoke haltingly:

“N-no, s-son, Ah will n-not deescribe h-her to yo’—yo’ is too y-young an’—innercent fo’ sech things!”

Then Mammy rubbed her eyes with her gnarled hands, as



**Mammy rubbed her eyes as though  
she were awakening.**

though she were awakening from a deep sleep and she exclaimed:

“Mother Ratfield! Ah done seen Mother Ratfield!”

“Then yo’ thinks yo’ better not deescribe Mother Ratfield to me, Mammy?” said li’l Abner, too disappointed to dispute his mother’s edict. “Yo’ thinks thet Ah is too young an’ too inner-



**"Yes, mah son, Ah seen her—  
an' Ah is a-goin' after her!"**

cent fo' sech things, does yo'?"

"Yes, mah son," Mammy replied firmly. "Ah seen her an' Ah knows whar she is—an' Ah is a-goin' after her!"

"Mammy," cried li'l Abner as he clasped her tiny hand in his great paw, "yo' hand is shakin' like a leaf! Oh, Mammy, kin it be thet yo' is a-skeered—*yo?*"

"Nevah in all mah life has Ah



"M-mammy, yo' m-might n-not c-come back!"

been a-skeered o' anythin'. Jest remember this one thing, son: When yo' Mammy went out to meet ole Mother Ratfield, she warn't a-skeered!"

"M-mammy," whimpered li'l Abner, "yo' speaks like—jest like m-mebbe yo' m-might n-not c-come back!"

"Don't be ridikerlus, mah son," she snapped, yet not in un-





**"Don't be ridikerlus, mah son,"  
she snapped.**

kindly tones. "An' another thing Ah wants yo' to remember, son: Ah were allus a good Mammy to yo'!"

As she turned to leave him, li'l Abner followed her with extended arms, crying:

"Yo' allus *were* a good Mammy to me, an' yo' allus *will* be!"

As she disappeared over the



**She disappeared over the brow  
of a little hill.**

brow of a little hill, Mammy called back:

“The main thing fo’ yo’ to remember, mah son, is thet Ah allus *were!*”

## CHAPTER VI

### MAMMY FINDS MOTHER RATFIELD

Li'l Abner watched Mammy sorrowfully as she bravely marched down over the little hill in her search for old Mother Ratfield. And he thought he heard her say to herself:

“When Ah conjured up thet

vision o'—*ugh*—ole Mother Ratfield, she were alone. Ah knows whar *she* is, but Ah don't know whar her two boys is!"

But so far as she herself was concerned, Mammy had little reason to fret as to the whereabouts of those two Ratfields. They were lying in wait for the daring young man who had rescued Julie Roy and her little

She said to herself, "Ah knows  
what she is."



brother from their fiendish clutches. They were watching for li'l Abner!

Lurking in the deep forest near the old Blackheart place, they awaited his coming. Suddenly the one whose bald head was covered by a tattered old white felt hat muttered:

“Thar he comes! Thet’s him, brother—he’s the boy Ah done





**Lurking in the deep forest,  
they awaited his coming.**

seen wif the Roy gal when she chased yo' fum the old Black-heart house. He's the Roy gal's friend!"

"Anyone who's a friend o' a Roy is a blood enemy to us," growled the black-whiskered brother. "An' specially ef he helped her to chase me. Git behind thet tree, brother!"

Far down the path which



**"Thar he comes! That's him!"**

wound through the deep forest they saw li'l Abner approaching. He was striding along briskly, thinking of Mammy and her quest for old Mother Ratfield, but never dreaming that just ahead grave danger was threatening him.

Now the baldheaded Ratfield whispered to his black-bearded brother:

“Thass fine! We’ll let him have it fum both sides at once when he passes! We’ll blow his haid clean offen him! Thass whut th’ Ratfields ’ll do!”

Meanwhile li'l Abner was wistfully thinking:

“Ah wish thet Ah was wif Mammy. It don't seem right thet *she* should be a-walkin' smack into danger, an' *me* as safe as ef

Ah was back home in mah own Pappy's arms."

His pet pig had followed li'l Abner all the way from the hill-top where Mammy had said farewell. Now it ran on ahead, sniffing the ground and grunting happily.

The baldheaded brother Ratfield hissed: "We'll let him have it when he passes, brother!"



**"Ah wish thet Ah was wif Mammy,"  
Abner was thinking.**

And the black-bearded brother Ratfield replied:

“Ah’ll fire when yo’ fires, brother!”

“Pore Mammy,” thought li’l Abner, following his pet pig as it trotted up the path straight between the trees. “Mah pore Mammy,” the young man worried, “a-walkin’ to her doom!”

Suddenly the forest quiet was





**"We'll let him have it  
when he passes, brother!"**

broken by a shout—by *two* shouts, coming from behind trees at opposite sides of the narrow path.

“*Leggo, Salomey!*” yelled the the black-bearded brother Ratfield.

“*Leggo, Salomey!*” howled the baldheaded brother Ratfield at the same instant.

As the frightened pet pig



**Above his head whistled the bullets  
from the guns.**

whirled to run back to its master, li'l Abner tripped over the animal, and almost fell.

Above his head whistled the bullets from the guns of the Ratfield brothers. But instead of blowing li'l Abner's head off, they lodged in the brains of the murderous brothers, and the two men fell to the ground beside their smoking rifles.

The patched soles of the black-bearded brother's boots were exactly across the path from the bare, calloused feet of his baldheaded brother!

For a moment the pet pig stared wonderingly at the two men lying there so quietly. And li'l Abner, too, gazed first at the black-bearded brother and next at the baldheaded one. Then he

put his hand to his brow and exclaimed:

“They both done polished each other off! How they musta *hated* each other!”

He studied the situation for a few moments, and kept muttering:

“Sech hate! Tsk, tsk! Sech *awful* hate!”

In the meantime, Mammy



**“They both done polished each other off!” said Abner.**

Yokum, who had been following the path so plainly shown her in her vision, arrived at her destination.

She halted before a high rock wall in the side of which an enormous doorway had been built of huge stones. Mammy shifted her pipe and gazed about. After studying the lay of the land for a few minutes, she again shifted





She halted before an enormous doorway  
built of huge stones.

her pipe and called loudly:

*"Mother Ratfield! Oh, Mother Ratfield, is yo' in thar—or is yo' not in thar?"*

The reply to her question came with startling suddenness and explosive force:

*"Yes!"*

Mammy stood her ground fearlessly, merely gripping her pipe a bit more firmly between



"Oh, Mother Ratfield, is yo' in thar?"

her teeth as old Mother Ratfield kept on:

“Sho’ nuff, dearie, Ah *is* hyar!  
And Ah *is* Mother Ratfield!  
But Ah hain’t got no time fo’  
soshul calls. Ah is hyar merely  
to *kill the Roys!*”

At this Mammy Yokum advanced boldly and answered defiantly:

“Then yo’ kin commence yo’



**"Then yo' kin commence right now,  
fo' Ah is a Roy!"**

killin' right now, fo' *Ah* is a Roy!"

She placed her fists on her sides, puffed on her pipe and smiled as she continued:

"Yo' see, Mother Ratfield, *Ah* got mahself adopted into the Roy fambly jest today. But us Roys is willin' to let bygones be bygones! *We* is willin' to call the feud off—is *yo'?*"

To this Mother Ratfield replied:

“Wa-al, thass a fair prop-osition, dearie. But mebbe we’d better talk it over a little. Step in—”

“Sho’ nuff, Ah will!” interrupted Mammy Yokum.

Then she boldly walked right into the entrance, saying to herself:

“Wal, fry mah hide! Hyar fo’ hunderds an’ hunderds o’ y’ars the Ratfields an’ the Roys bin a-killin’ each other. But wif jest one remark Ah busts in an’ stops the hull bloody mess! It merely shows yo’ whut *brains* kin do!”

So thinking, Mammy innocently walked through the enormous doorway and found herself in a long, high hallway,





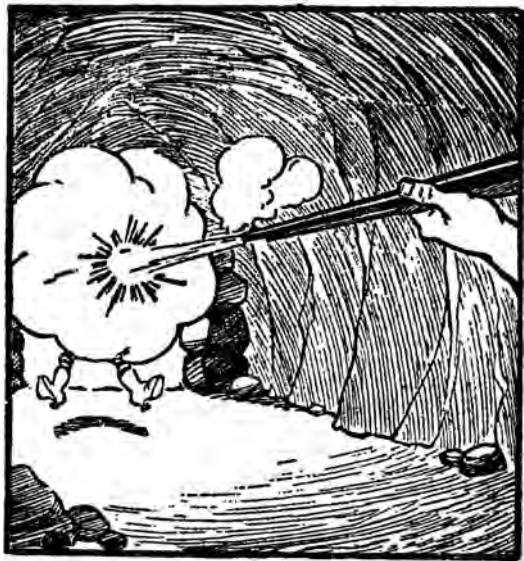
**She walked right into the entrance  
saying, "Wal, fry mah hide!"**

which had been hewn from the solid rock of the mountain.

Then a gun roared, smoke filled the great hallway, and Mammy Yokum's last remembrance was of a hideous voice cackling:

“Heh! Heh! Heh!”

Struck down by the bullet from Mother Ratfield's gun, poor Mammy Yokum lay help-



**Then a gun roared and smoke filled  
the great hallway.**

less on the uneven rocky floor of the cave in the side of the mountain. Presently a rifle barrel was thrust from a crevice in the wall and that dreadful cackle sounded again:

“Heh! Heh! Heh!”

Smoke silently curled from the muzzle of the gun and mingled with the smoke which ascended from Mammy's pipe.



**Smoke silently curled from the muzzle  
of the gun.**

But for a few moments a brooding, sinister stillness filled the great cave.

Then a faint shuffle came from the farther end of the cavern; a rock was displaced and it rattled as it rolled over the uneven floor.

The butt of the gun appeared just above an enormous bare foot. The foot slipped beneath



**The foot slipped beneath Mammy's head  
and lifted it.**

Mammy's head and lifted it from the floor. And then the dreadful voice chuckled:

“Cold as a fish!”

The foot was jerked away, and poor Mammy Yokum's head thudded to the floor. She lay with outstretched arms, quiet and helpless, as the foot swung up and over her face. Then the great foot was pressed firmly





**The great foot was pressed firmly down.**

down, forcing her head hard against the rocky floor.

And now a hand clutching the rifle appeared, as Mother Ratfield stood triumphant above her vanquished foe. The hoarse voice grunted in satisfaction:

*"Thet sho' will teach her not to mess no mo' wif Mother Ratfield!"*

The shuffle of bare feet re-



**"'Thet sho' will teach her not to mess  
wif Mother Ratfield!"**

treated along the hallway—and then once more the brooding silence possessed the great cave in the mountain.

## CHAPTER VII

### "NOW WE IS MATCHED!"

Li'l Abner Yokum soon tired of looking at the two dead Ratfield brothers. And then he began to be troubled because Mammy had set out so impulsively and all alone to seek the home of old Mother Ratfield.

At last he decided he must overtake her, and as he rapidly sped along, he thought anxiously:

“Mebbe Ah got no right to disobey Mammy this a-way, but good gracious! Mammy’s got no right to tackle that ole Mother Ratfield—whoever she may be—alone, neither. Ah’m gonna find mah Mammy!”



**"Ah'm gonna find mah Mammy!"**

Mile after mile the young man hurried through the forest and up the mountains. At last he paused to rest a moment beside a cliff and said: "She sho' went this a-way."

Then he glanced down the valley and exclaimed:

"Hyar come someone! Mebbe they've seen Mammy—but Ah cain't make out whether whut's





**"Hyar come someone!  
Mebbe they've sean Mammy."**

a-comin' is a hooman or a ani-  
mule!"

Running his hand through his  
rumped hair, li'l Abner trem-  
blingly exclaimed:

"It's a *l-lady!* But it's the most  
pee-kool-yar lookin' l-lady thet  
Ah has evah seen. *Whut a*  
*l-lady!*"

Then li'l Abner cautiously  
advanced along the foot of the



**"It's the most pee-kool-yar lookin' l-lady  
thet Ah has evah seen."**

cliff to the place where he had seen the peculiar-looking lady standing. Facing the blank wall, the young man said:

“Lady, has yo’ seen mah Mammy? She is li’l an’ cute, wif a black bonnet. She started after Mother Ratfield. *Ah* has nevah seen Mother Ratfield, but them which has say she’s a very pee-kool-yar lookin’ lady.”



**"Lady, has yo' seen mah Mammy?"  
said the young man.**

“Will yo’ kindly step a mite closer, dearie?” asked a weak voice imploringly. “Yo’ see, Ah’m hard o’ hearin’.”

Li'l Abner came closer to the rocky wall and the voice continued:

“So yo’ is lookin’ fo’ yo’ Mammy, eh, dearie? An’ she’s gone a-huntin’ Mother Ratfield, is she?”



**Li'l Abner then proceeded  
with his story.**

“Yas'm. *Ah* nevah met Mother Ratfield, but she's hyar to kill off the Roys—on account of the feud between the Ratfields an' the Roys.”

Pausing a moment for breath, li'l Abner then proceeded with his story:

“Yo' see, thar ain't no fightin' Roys left, merely a gal an' a li'l man-child. So Mammy an' me



---

got ourselves adopted into the Roy family. So now *we* is Roys, yo' see, an' the Ratfields has gotta lick *us*, too. Which is jest impossible, natcherly!"

When he ended, a brawny fist burst through the side of the cliff and struck him right on the nose!

As he toppled to his knees, two hands and arms reached out from the wall and began to beat



A fist burst through the side  
of the cliff.



**Li'l Abner was struck right  
on the nose.**

the young man's head with the stock of a rifle. And then Mother Ratfield's rough voice announced:

“Yo' Mammy is daid, dearie, an' in a minute yo' will be likewise. That's whut gen'r'ly happens when folks mess roun' wif Mother Ratfield.”

Poor li'l Abner was struggling to his hands and knees, try-



Two arms reached out from the wall.

ing to keep from falling flat on the ground. He lifted his head and replied to the taunts of the furious woman:

“Ah cain't not defend mah-self, Mother Ratfield,” he explained. “Mah Mammy she allus tole me not nevah to strike a lady, on account thet ladies is weaker'n us men, an' also mo' gentle an' reefined!



**"Yo' Mammy is daid, dearie, an' in a minute  
yo' will be!"**

“Ah has gotta admit thet were quite a clout yo’ give me on the haid, after yo’ bust mah jaw wif yo’ fist, Mother Ratfield, but ah cain’t not strike a lady!”

“An’ Ah gotta admit yo’ bin well brung up, dearie,” replied Mother Ratfield. “But ef yo’ jest won’t fight back, they’s no need to waste bullets—an’ Ah kin finish yo’ off mo’ e-co-nom-ical!”





**"Mah Mammy allus tole me not nevah  
to strike a lady."**

Then she struck out with the butt of the gun and knocked poor li'l Abner Yokum flat on his face.

Li'l Abner raised his chin an inch or two from the ground and now at last saw the awful Mother Ratfield in person. A huge woman with a bushy head of coarse hair sprang right out of the cliffside. She swung the



**She struck out and knocked li'l Abner  
flat on his face.**



**Li'l Abner raised his chin an inch  
from the ground.**



**He saw the awful Mother Ratfield  
in person at last.**

clubbed gun high above her head and struck li'l Abner with it time after time. At last, almost exhausted, she paused and said:

“Ah jest *cain't* keep this hyar up fo'evah, yo' know. *So die, Ah tell yo', die!*”

Li'l Abner replied politely but unfalteringly:

“Ah would, Mother Ratfield, an' be glad to obleege yo', but



**Mammy sprang from the cliff.**

how *kin* Ah, when all yo' do is bash me in the haid?"

But now help for li'l Abner was at hand. Mammy, recovered from the cruel shot which Mother Ratfield had fired at her, climbed to the top of the cliff and as the furious cave woman swung the gun high for the finishing blow, sprang from the cliff and caught the gunstock.





**Mother Ratfield felt the weight  
and yelled: "Who's thar?"**

Mother Ratfield felt the additional weight and yelled:

“Who’s thar?”

“Me,” replied Mammy, gripping her pipe hard as she clung to the gunstock with both her hands.

“Thass a lie!” roared Mother Ratfield angrily. “Ah done shot yo’ an’ left yo’ lyin’ in the cave as cold as a fish!”



**Mammy clung to the gunstock  
with both hands.**

“Yo’ bullet done missed me!” replied Mammy exultantly. “An’ fo’ the fust time in mah life Ah done passed out—when Ah seen yo’ face to face!”

“Now look at who’s a-talkin’!” exclaimed Mother Ratfield, incensed at the criticism. “Yo’ ain’t no prize booty yo’self, Ah’d say!”

“Ah’m mebbe short o’ booty,”

---

Mammy generously conceded,  
"but Ah'm long on *brains!*"

Then the gun broke in two and Mother Ratfield was left with nothing but the useless gun barrel in her hands.

Li'l Abner again struggled up on his hands as Mammy danced about, doubled her fists, puffed great rings of smoke from her pipe and shouted:



**“Yo’ bullet done missed me!”  
replied Mammy exultantly.**



**"Now look who's a-talkin'!"  
exclaimed Mother Estfeld.**

“Yo’ shootin’ iron’s rooned!  
So put up yo’ hands an’ fight,  
Mother Ratfield! Now we is  
evenly matched!”



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIGHT BEGINS

And now began the greatest hand-to-hand battle ever known in all the long history of the savage feuds of the simple mountain folk. For years it was told and retold in the cabins scattered among the hills.

Old Mother Ratfield, massive though slow-moving, was pitted against Mammy Yokum, slight, but tough and agile.

The first few moments of the struggle favored Mother Ratfield, heroine of a score of desperate encounters. She caught up Mammy Yokum, swung her about her head and hurled her far over the hill, clear



**Mammy alighted right in the middle  
of their dining table.**

through the side of a mountaineer's plank shack.

The mountain family were sitting down to their frugal mid-day meal when Mammy unceremoniously alighted right in the middle of their dining table.

Not a whit daunted, however, the little woman apologized for her abrupt entrance, then valiantly returned to the combat.



**And now Mother Ratfield sailed  
through the air.**

And now it was her turn. Mother Ratfield sailed through the air and as the stout walls of the little cabin crumpled like paper, the monstrous woman crashed through and landed in the bedroom of the astonished family.

Springing to her feet, Mother Ratfield dashed from the hut and again faced her doughty foe

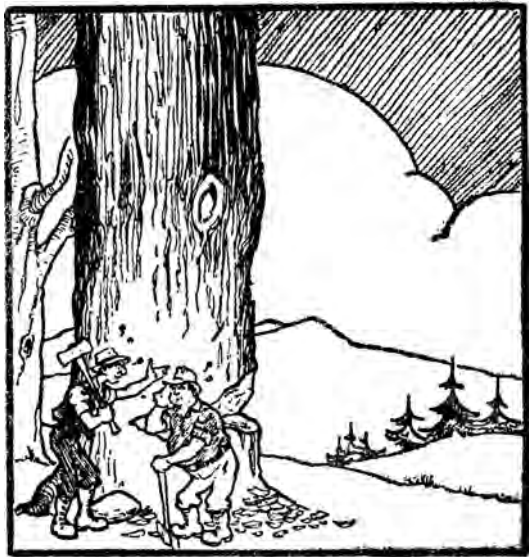


**Mother Ratfield dashed from the hut  
and again faced her foe.**

as the startled mountain folk peered through their shattered walls at the struggle between the giantess and the pygmy.

With alternate advance and retreat the fight continued. In a far valley two woodcutters were about to leave their work. They were utterly discouraged, and as they picked up their saws and axes, one of the men said:





**Two woodcutters were about to leave  
their work.**

“We’ve bin a-sweatin’ out our hearts a-tryin’ to cut this here big ole tree down fo’ three days now. An’ it ain’t a-comin’ down.”

“It jest cain’t be did,” declared the other workman, wiping great beads of sweat from his brow. “So let’s give up an’ quit.”

But before the weary woodcutters had gone ten paces, the great tree began to quiver. Its



**The tree suddenly splintered  
near the ground.**

thick trunk suddenly splintered near the ground—the tree began to topple and then majestically swayed to its fall.

Mother Ratfield had thrown Mammy Yokum across the valley, and as the little lady struck the tree with all the force of a projectile from a sixteen-inch cannon, the mighty king of the forest crumpled!

---

A little later a man and a woman halted their automobile in the shade of a wide-branching tree at the roadside. The top of the machine had been laid back, affording an opportunity to look at the pleasant surroundings. After discussing the place for a moment or two, they got out of the car and sat down to eat their lunch.

At that instant, from the stump of the great tree Mammy Yokum hurled Mother Ratfield with perfect aim. The mother of all the Ratfields alighted in the car as the startled man yelled:

“Good heavens, Betsy, that li'l ole lady done slammed the big woman clean across the road an' into ouah cyar!”

In her wild tumble, Mother



**The mother of all the Ratfields  
alighted in the car.**

Ratfield's clutching fingers grasped the ignition switch, her flailing foot accidentally struck the gas pedal and in a moment, to the surprised owner's amazement, the machine started down the road.

"Somethin's done happened!" cried Betsy in alarm. "See, the cyar's a-runnin' away, Reuben!"





**"The cyar's a-runnin' away, Reuben!"**

With a tremendous grinding of gears and a swirl of blinding dust the car leaped ahead—Mother Ratfield was making her get-away from her tiny assailant!

But Mammy Yokum, lithe and nimble, was not to be foiled so easily. Clamping her teeth on her pipe, she sprang after the machine as it raced away and caught the top with her strong



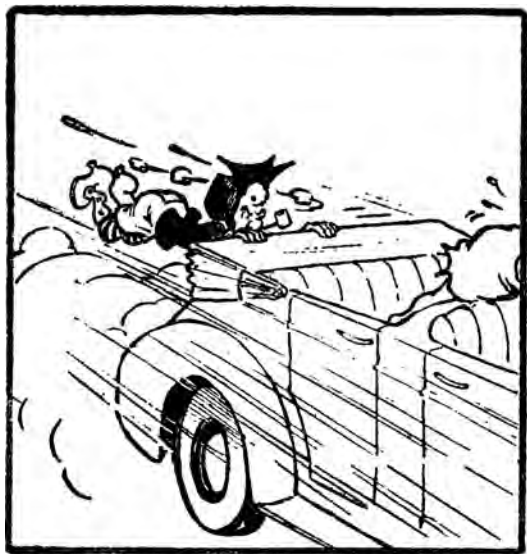
**Mother Ratfield was making her get-away!**

fingers. Then she cried exultantly:

“So, Mother Ratfield, Ah’ve got yo’! An’ yo’ is a-tryin’ to excape me, is yo’?”

Frantically Mother Ratfield looked about, seeking for a means of attack. Then she mumbled to herself:

“Thar must be some useless objeck hyar in front thet Ah kin

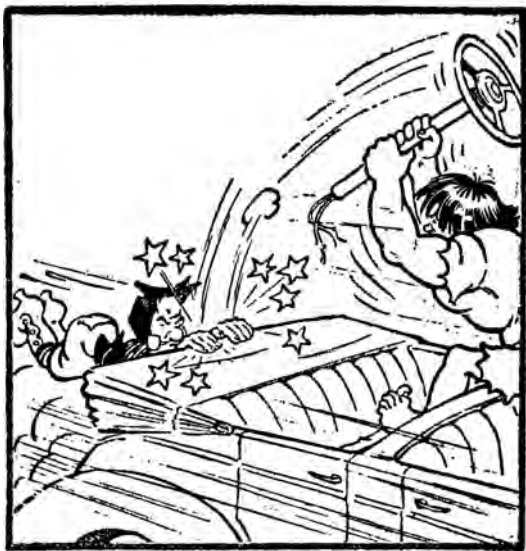


**Mammy Yokum caught the top  
with her strong fingers.**

use fo' a club an' batter her haid off!"

She ripped the steering wheel and its post from the speeding car and whirled to finish off her foe. She used the heavy steering post as a club and beat Mammy's fingers viciously, swinging the improvised weapon like a heavy mallet.

After half a dozen stinging



**She beat Mammy's fingers viciously.**

blows, Mammy shifted her pipe and howled: "*Ouch!*"

Then, suddenly remembering just where she was, the little lady courageously shouted to her burly opponent:

"Does yo' give up?"

"Huh!" grunted Mother Ratfield scornfully. "Jest look at who's a-talkin'! One o' them feudin' Roys!"



---

Avoiding the terrific swings of Mother Ratfield, Mammy Yokum nimbly climbed over the top and into the machine. Just as the runaway car swerved from the highway and crashed through a stout fence, Mammy yelled a warning:

“We is a-goin’ ovah the big cliff!”

And then she knelt in the ton-

neau, clung to the back of the driver's seat and stared ahead into the death trap that awaited her.

Mother Ratfield whirled once more—this time she was certain she had her enemy in her power. Now was the moment for the finishing blow. But at that instant Mammy Yokum shouted:

“Tain't no use a-wastin' yo'



**Mammy shouted: "Look, we is a-goin'  
ovah the cliff!"**

stren'th a-killin' me, Mother Ratfield! Look, we is a-goin' ovah the cliff!"

The gigantic woman paused as she caught sight of the dreadful chasm yawning before them.

And then sudden realization came to her—she was looking a fearful death straight in the face! In her confusion she began to whimper:



**She was looking a fearful death  
straight in the face.**

“Oh, save me, dearie, *please* save me! Fo’ Ah don’t wanta die!”

Faced by disaster, the gigantic woman sank to the seat and clasped Mammy Yokum in her brawny arms.

Mammy Yokum calmly shifted her pipe so that she could reply:

“N-neither does Ah, but it’s



**"Oh, save me, dearie, please save me!"**

not so much on account o' mahself, Mother Ratfield. It's on account o' mah fambly—they jest cain't spare me right now."

"Oh," sobbed Mother Ratfield, wringing her hands in her anguish, "Ah unnerstan's, dearie. Yo' see, Mammy, Ah is a mother mahself, an' one mother's heart allus unnerstan's another's. An' so we must stick



together always. Hold me tight  
—fo' hyar we goes!"

The runaway car's speed had been reduced by a heavy fence, and it coasted ahead slower and slower until the front wheels dropped over the edge of the high cliff. The two frightened women clung despairingly to each other as they trembled on the verge of eternity.

Then the car quivered for a moment, stood still! And Mammy Yokum shouted in her relief and joy:

“Look, Mother Ratfield, the back wheels done ketched on the aidge o’ the cliff. *We has bin saved!*”

However, no sooner were the representatives of the Ratfield and Roy families sure of their



**"Look, Mother Ratfield,  
we has been saved!"**

safety from immediate death than they renewed the battle.

Mother Ratfield swung a vicious right at Mammy Yokum's chin, but Mammy dodged and jabbed Mother Ratfield with a quick straight left to the nose.

"Thet'll sho' larn yo' manners," exclaimed Mammy indignantly. "A-hittin' a feller when be's 'most down!"

## CHAPTER IX

### MOTHER RATFIELD'S FATE

Providentially saved from a terrible death, the mother of all the Ratfields and the recently adopted member of the Roy family continued the bitter struggle they had commenced in front of the cave Mother Ratfield called

home. Now every thought of mercy or fair play was forgotten—each fought for victory by any means.

The struggle became even more violent—so violent, in fact, that at last the stout fence which had prevented the auto from plunging over the cliff began to creak and to sag. And then it gave way under the strain and



**The machine hurtled downward.**

the machine hurtled downward with the fighting women.

Fortunately, however, there was a large stack of hay at the foot of the cliff, and as the car whirled downward the two women were tossed out and landed on the hay.

Mammy Yokum disappeared completely, and of Mother Ratfield nothing was to be seen





**There was a large stack of hay  
at the foot of the cliff.**

except her bare feet. But she began to congratulate herself, saying:

“Safe! Ah sho’ done landed safe or mah name hain’t Mother Ratfield!”

Then as she desperately tried to dig out of the hay, she muttered:

“Ah feels a body a-squirmin’ roun’!”



**Nothing was to be seen except her feet.**

Twisting and turning, she at last caught something in her hands and cried:

“Ah got it! Ah got it by the throat! Now Ah squeezes—ugh—still a-squirmin’, is she?”

Two or three times Mother Ratfield grunted savagely, then exclaimed:

“Thar—she hain’t a-squirmin’ no mo’!”



**She tried to dig out of the hay.**

Then she clawed her way from the haystack and began to caper about, chuckling in her exultation.

“Ah felt the body weaken an’ grow stiff,” she laughed. “Wal, she sho’ put up a good fight anyhow!”

As Mother Ratfield strode away from the haystack she repeated gloatingly:



**She began to caper about.**

“Ah felt the body grow stiff as Ah strangled it. It sho' were a mighty good fight while it lasted.”

Then Mammy Yokum scrambled from the stack and ran after Mother Ratfield, crying:

“Oh, no, no, 'tain't all ovah yet, Mother Ratfield! 'Twarn't Pansy Yokum yo' strangled in this haystack!”





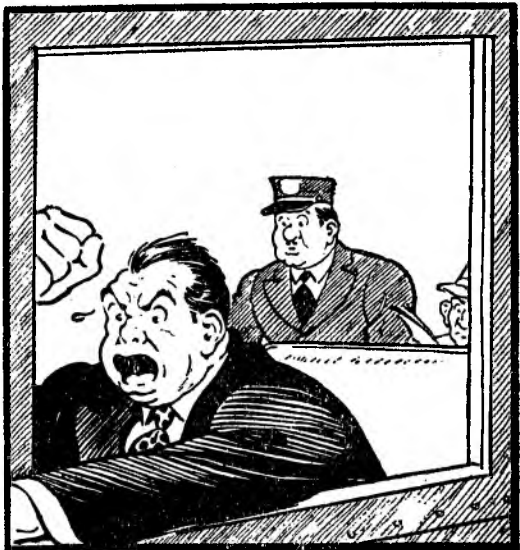
**Mammy Yokum ran after Mother Ratfield,  
crying, "'Tain't all ovah yet!"**

Behind the two women a tattered tramp crawled from the haystack and rubbed his aching throat as he wailed:

“There I was, a-mindin’ my own business, an’ she almost kilt me!”

A few minutes later a passenger on a railway train began to shout:

“Hey, look at that, will you!



**"Stop this train, conductor!"**

Stop this train, conductor!"

The conductor looked out and saw two women struggling on the next track. As they whirled round and round in a cloud of dust and pebbles, he replied:

"They're not on *our* track. We won't have to stop the train."

Then all the windows on the special train were thrown up and the passengers yelled:

“Not stop? Do you mean that you’ll go right on and miss the greatest fight of the century?”

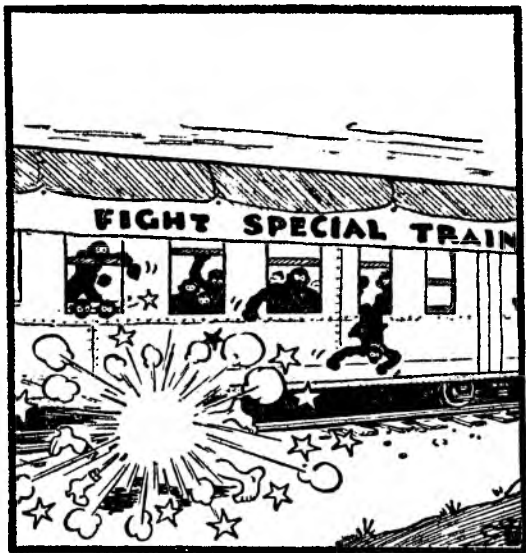
“But we’ve got just time enough to make the Joe Louis fight,” argued the conductor, looking at his watch.

“What has Joe Louis got that they haven’t got?” howled one passenger.

“Why, I saw Jack Dempsey



**"Not stop? And miss the greatest fight  
of the century?"**



**"But we've got just time enough to make  
the Joe Louis fight!"**

massacre Jess Willard, and I saw Tunney massacre Dempsey, but I've never seen *anything* half as ghastly as *this!*" shrieked still another fight fan as he leaned far out of his window to watch the battle as the train rushed on.

When the train had gone, Mammy Yokum punched old Mother Ratfield until the giant-





**"Ho-hum, Ah is a-feelin' a mite  
sleepy," said Mammy.**

ess saw stars. Then the little lady said:

“Mother Ratfield, we has bin a-fightin’ fo’ two days steady now. Ho-hum, Ah is a-feelin’ a mite sleepy.”

“Odd thet yo’ should menshun thet,” replied Mother Ratfield, “fo’ *Ah* could use some shut-eye mahself.”

Then as old Mother Ratfield



**Mother Ratfield gently kicked  
Mammy Yokum in the face.**

gently kicked Mammy Yokum in the face, she added:

“How 'bout a-callin' a rest period an' us both ketchin' fo'ty winks, dearie? Then we ups all refreshed an' simply rarin' to go!”

“Ah craves me jest a little booty sleep,” answered Mammy. “We'll give each other ouah word o' honor not to start



**They clasped hands to bind  
the agreement.**

a-bashin' ag'in till sunup. So?"

As they clasped hands to bind the agreement, Mother Ratfield yawned and said:

"Awright, then. Till sunup, Ho-hum!"

And Mammy Yokum shook her enemy's hand and echoed:

"Till sunup. Ho-hum!"

Then the two weary champions for the honor of their fam-



**Mother Ratfield glanced  
at her sleeping foe.**

ilies lay down for a little rest.

But only an hour later Mother Ratfield roused, raised on an elbow and glanced at her sleeping foe. As she reached for a convenient axe, she mumbled suspiciously:

“How does Ah know but whut she'll git up while Ah'm a-sleepin' an' bash me? Ah'd better finish her off now, befo'



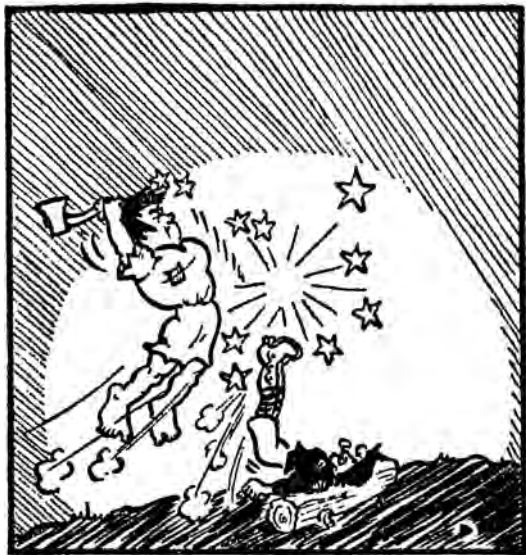


**Mother Ratfield determined to put  
an end to any treachery.**

she gits any sech dishonorable idees in her haid."

So old Mother Ratfield rose, grasped the axe in both hands and stole over to Mammy Yokum's side.

"How does Ah know she'll keep her word not to start fightin' ag'in befo' sunup? She jest *might* double-cross me while Ah's a-sleepin', so jest to make



**"All this time Ah been a-sleepin'  
wif mah one eye open!"**

real sho' she don't, Mother—”

Mother Ratfield lifted the axe, determined to put an end to any treachery on the part of the Roy representative. But Mammy Yokum suddenly lifted both her feet and kicked the axe from Mother Ratfield's hands as she muttered:

“Tsk, tsh! An' all this time Ah bin a-callin' mahself a skonk



**She threw Mother Ratfield  
into a trash barrel.**

fo' not trestin' her, an' a-sleepin' wif mah one eye open!"

Then she seized Mother Ratfield and threw her into a trash barrel standing near.

The trash barrel upset and as it rolled away Mother Ratfield screamed, "Halp! Save me!"

But there was no one to help the poor mother of all the Ratfields, and after rolling a long



**The barrel plunged over the high  
bank of a river.**

way, the barrel plunged over the high bank of a river, and dropped into the water with a great *splash!*

Mammy Yokum cautiously crept to the edge of the high bank and peeped over. Then she said regretfully:

“Thar she go, down ovah Suicide Falls. An’ *thass* the end o’ Mother Ratfield!”





**"An' thass the end o' Mother Ratfield!"**

## CHAPTER X

### THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

When tired Mammy Yokum reached home late that afternoon, she found Pappy, li'l Abner, and Julie Roy anxiously waiting for her.

In a few words li'l Abner told her about the end of the Ratfield

brothers. "The last Ah seen o' the Ratfield boys," he said, "was when they was both finished off by each other."

"An the last *Ah* seen o' ole Mother Ratfield," said Mammy, "she were a-hurtlin' down ovah Suicide Falls in a barrel. She sho' had a gran' fightin' heart—but she'll nevah come back," she concluded with a deep sigh.



**Li'l Abner told her about the end  
of the Ratfield brothers.**



**Then Pappy turned to Julie and said,  
"Thet'll be the end o' the feud."**

Then Pappy turned to Julie and said:

“An’ now ef yo’ll *unadopt* Mammy an’ li’l Abner, thet’ll be the end o’ the feud between the Ratfields an’ the Roys.” He also sighed deeply as he thought of the end of all the excitement, and added respectfully: “They sho’ was rugged mount’in boys!”

And Julierespondedsincerely:

“Ah *unadopts* yo', an' Ah sho' thanks yo'. Now me an' the li'l man-chile kin go—”

She faltered, then stopped, for her emotion was so deep that she could not go on.

Li'l Abner quickly interposed to demand:

“But jest *whar* is yo' a-goin', Julie?”

“A-Ah d-dunno,” replied the

girl sadly. "But we'll find *some* place to live."

Daisy Mae and the small Roy lad had entered the room, and Daisy Mae now suggested:

"Ah allus has craved a gal o' my own age fo' a friend. We got a big place, so please come an' live wif us, Julie. Yo' likes Dog-patch awright, don't yo'?"

"Yes, ah does," Julie replied





**"Please come an' live wif us, Julie,"  
Daisy Mae suggested.**

promptly, "Ah *loves*—" she glanced at li'l Abner—"Dog-patch!"

"Then it's all settled," cried Daisy Mae jubilantly. "Yo'll live wif me!"

Sitting quietly beside the fireplace, Mammy Yokum puffed her pipe and meditated:

"HMMMMM! Now I wonder ef Daisy Mae reelizes jest whut



**"Ah loves—" Julie glanced at  
li'l Abner—"Dogpatch."**

it is 'bout Dogpatch thet Julie loves?"

A few days later several of the Dogpatch swains happened to meet at the door of Daisy Mae's home. While one of them obligingly and proudly held out a bunch of flowers for another to smell, he said:

"Daisy Mae spread the word all roun' thet thar were a new



**Several Dogpatch swains met  
at the door of Daisy Mae's home.**

gal a-stayin' wif her, so we all done come a-wooin'."

"Huh," snorted the other, "ef she'd be smart, this new gal, she'd send these other critters away—*Ah* done took a bath!"

"An' so did I," declared another—"*last y'ar!*"

Meanwhile a chubby lad was interviewing Julie in the doorway. He said:



**"We all done come a-wooin'!"**

“*Ah* got bear grease on *mah* hair! Ef yo’ woos wif *me*, Ah’ll rest mah haid on yo’ lap, an’ yo’ kin smell it!”

“Git out, all o’ yo’!” cried the girl, amazed and disgusted with her suitors.

Surprised, Daisy Mae said to her:

“Ah sho’ reckoned thet yo’d be *pleased* ef all them fine young



gennulmen came to call on yo', Julie."

"Ah wouldn't care ef they was the finest young gennulmen in all the world!"

Daisy Mae picked up the broom and commenced to sweep the room, saying:

"Yo' jest don't like boys, huh?"

"Ah *scorns* 'em!" cried Julie

fiercely. Then suddenly her tone changed and she exclaimed: "Hyar come li'l Abner! Is mah hair awright? How does mah dress look?"

"But yo' jest said thet yo' wouldn't care fo' the finest young gennulman in all the world," exclaimed Daisy Mae. And at that moment the truth suddenly dawned upon her —



**"Hyar come li'l Abner!  
Is mah hair awright?"**

Julie was in love with li'l Abner!

“Ah takes it all back,” said Julie, as she sat down on a bench to pull on her stockings. “How did Ah know he were a-comin’ to call on *me*?”

She bowed her head in thought for a moment, then added: “But he must be a-comin’ to call on me, fo’ who else is



**"Ah takes it all back,"  
said Julie, pulling on her stockings.**

thar hyar fo' him to call on?"

Daisy Mae dropped the broom as she thought:

"S-she don't know 'bout how *Ah* loves li'l Abner, an' how *Ah* hopes that he feels likewise 'bout me! She don't even realize that he *might* be a-comin' to call on me!"

As li'l Abner drew nearer to the house, Daisy Mae thought:



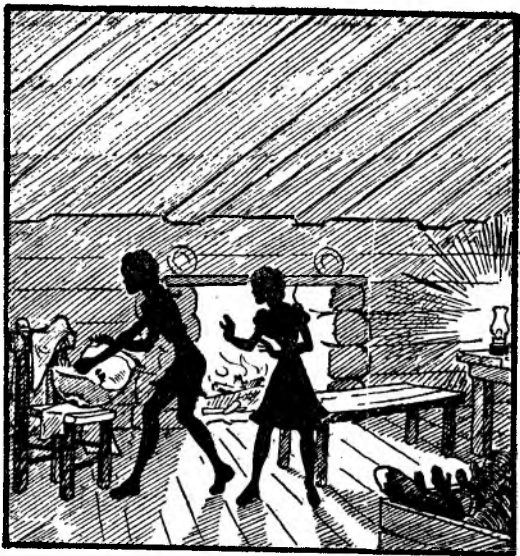
**“Who else is thar hyar  
fo’ him to call on?”**

“But still, he nevah *did* call on me 'less Ah forced him to. An' Ah didn't even try tonight. An' it's the fust Saterdag night she's bin hyar—an' he's a-comin' to call. She's right—'tis her that's bringin' him!”

Then Daisy Mae suddenly commenced to arrange things for the other girl.

“Look, Julie,” she said kind-





**"Leave the bench nice an' clean  
an' invitin'," she said kindly.**

ly, "throw all the pillows on *this* chair, an' leave the bench nice an' clean an' invitin'. Then he'll jest *hafta* sit thar, an' thar'll be no other place fo' yo' to set—git it?"

When everything had been shifted to Daisy Mae's satisfaction and she was about to leave the room, she suggested:

"Ef yo' jest dims thet lamp a



**"Ef yo' jest dims that lamp a lil'  
the room gets romantical."**

li'l, the room gits all kinda shadowy and romantical—Ah gotta git out—now,” she said as she darted away, dashing the tears from her eyes.

“How clever yo' is!” exclaimed Julie, turning the light low. “Ah bet *yo'* could git any boy yo' wanted to!”

From the protection of a large tree out in the dark yard, Daisy



**Daisy Mae watched  
as li'l Abner knocked at the door.**

Mae watched as li'l Abner knocked at the door and Julie met him. She sobbed:

“Oh, unhappy day! That he is a-makin' purty speeches to her, an' presentin' her wif a *bootiful* bokay o' flowers!”

As li'l Abner entered the cabin and took off his hat, he replied to a timid question by saying carelessly:



**"Sheeks, no! Ah didn't come  
to call on yo'."**

“Shecks, no! Ah didn’t come to call on *yo’*—Ah come to present this ham bone to the li’l man-chile—*yo’* li’l brother, *yo’* know.”

“Oh, yes, Ah knows,” replied Julie, keenly alive to her responsibilities as a hostess. “He’s asleep jest now. We kin set by the fireplace hyar until he wakes up.”





**Beside the tree Daisy Mae was watching  
and waiting patiently.**

Beside the tree Daisy Mae was watching and waiting patiently. At last she murmured:

“Oh, it *must* be love! It's way past midnight, an' they's still a-settin' thar by the fireplace!”

Inside the cabin, however, li'l Abner had just aroused to yawn, stretch himself and exclaim:

“Say, Ah'm a-gittin' kinda weary! When is the li'l man-



**Li'l Abner stretched himself.  
"Ah'm a-gittin' kinda weary!"**

chile gonna wake up, Julie?"

"Oh," exclaimed Julie, as she clasped her hands delightedly, "t'morry mornin'!"

"Shecks!" exclaimed li'l Abner impatiently, again stretching himself. "Why didn't yo' tell me the li'l man-chile hain't gonna git up till t'morry mornin'? Ah mighta set hyar waitin' wif yo' all night!"



**"Ah mighta set hyar waitin'  
wif yo' all night!"**

“Oh, happy night!” exclaimed Julie, her eyes beaming up at her hero.

As the young man was leaving Julie at the door, Daisy overheard him ask:

“Does yo’ reckon thet it’d disturb the li’l man-child ef Ah tip-toed into his room an’ kissed him goo’night?”

“Oh, Ah’m *shore* it would,”



**"Ef yo' give me a goo'-night kiss  
fo' him, Ah'll see he gits it."**

the girl replied. "But ef yo' give *me* a goo'-night kiss to give to *him*, Ah'll see that he gits it the very fust thing in the mornin'!"

"Thar cain't be no harm in that," said li'l Abner, stooping to let her put her arms around his neck while he kissed her.

And then Daisy Mae saw a heavy-set man run around the corner of the cabin, draw a re-





**Id'l Abner stooped and kissed her.**

volver and demand of li'l Abner:

“Up to your old tricks again, eh? Well, stick 'em up!”

Daisy Mae dashed out to intercept the man, crying:

“D-don't point thet gun at li'l Abner, mister! Yo' might hurt him!”

And Julie pleaded almost tearfully:



**"Up to your old tricks again, eh?  
Well, stick 'em up!"**

“D-don't do him no harm, *please* don't!”

“So now you've got *two* of 'em on the string,” growled the man. “What I want to know is how does a chap like you win the love of such sweet, innocent girls?”

The frightened girls threw themselves between li'l Abner and his accuser, pleading for the



**"D-don't do him no harm, please don't!"  
pleaded Julie.**

young man's life. "Please don't do him no harm," begged Julie.

"But that's *always* been the way with him," argued the fellow. "Hundreds and hundreds of girls have already fallen for his good looks and his smooth line of talk."

"Has they?" asked li'l Abner, staring at the stranger in surprise. "Tsk, tsk!"



**"Has they?" asked li'l Abner.**

“Now don't try pulling any of that innocent country-boy stuff on *me*,” growled the man angrily as he shoved the gun almost into li'l Abner's face. “These two poor lovesick girls might fall victims to it, but not *me*! I'm experienced—and besides, I *know* you!”

As the fellow paused long enough to get his big cigar go-





**"Don't try any of that innocent  
country-boy stuff on me!"**

ing well, the bewildered young man stammered, "Ah sho' hopes yo' does, mister!" And then, being greatly embarrassed, he tried to loosen his collar, which had suddenly become exceedingly tight.

When the man ordered the youth to get into his car, li'l Abner replied:

"No, Ah thanks yo' kindly,



**He ordered li'l Abner to get  
into his car.**

suh! But mah Mammy has always tole me nevah to axcep' rides fum strange men!"

"Go on, get in!" exclaimed the man. "Are you blind? Can't you see that I've got a gat, and I'll shoot, if you make me!"

But li'l Abner turned on his heel and stalked away indifferently, saying:

"Ah does not care a hoot 'bout



**"Ah'm goin' home to mah Pappy  
and mah Mammy."**

shootin' irons, mister. They do not faze me. An' so Ah'm goin' home to mah Pappy an' mah Mammy. Goo' evenin' to yo', suh!"

THE END

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