

SMUGGLERS IN THE DUST, OR, HOLLYWOOD HITS BACK

New racket, consisting of the smuggling of tourists into film studios, is being stamped out by industry execs, working in collaboration with the Better Business Bureau. Gang in downtown Los Angeles had been slipping visitors, at \$7.50 per head, into the picture lots through bribery and other subterfuges.—*Variety*.

(Scene: A rather sordid opium den in downtown Los Angeles. Two tiers of bunks at left and right contain huddled figures, obviously slaves of the poppy. Downstage, at centre, an unearthly greenish glow picks out the figure of an Old Man crouched over a kerosene lamp. He is turning an opium pill on a hatpin over the lamp flame and muttering the inscrutable wisdom of the East. At left, a sliding panel in the wall, marked "Sliding Panel," and at right a telephone, unfortunately without any wires.)

OLD MAN (muttering the inscrutable wisdom of the East): Five thousand years ago the sage hath said, "If a pepper seed takes wings, it will turn into a dragonfly, yet if a dragonfly loses its wings, it will not revert to a pepper seed." That is what the sage hath said five thousand years ago. (The door at rear opens suddenly and Bob Bundy, a young motion-picture executive, enters. He looks about curiously.)

BOB BUNDY (aside): What a strange place! My chum Tyrone Rukeiser must have been joking when he told me to meet him here. But then, he is the smartest investigator in the Los Angeles Better Business Bureau and as bright as a new penny. With his resourcefulness and cool daring, we should soon see the last of the gang which has been slipping visitors, at \$7.50 per head, into the picture lots through bribery and other subterfuges. (Sees Old Man huddled over lamp) Hullo! Perhaps this bit of human flotsam can assist me. . . . Have you seen a young man answering to the name of Tyrone Rukeiser?

OLD MAN (querulously): No savvy Tylone Lukeiser. This No. 1 sordid hop joint, catchum plenty first-chop opium.

BOB (aside): John Chinaman is a slick customer; I shall have to match wits with him. . . . Have you a telephone, my fiend?

OLD MAN: Telephone here but no wires along him.

BOB: Perhaps it will work without them. (Into phone) Hello, Central? Give me Tyrone Rukeiser, ace investigator of the Better Business Bureau and

sworn nemesis of the gang which has been slipping visitors, at \$7.50 per head, into the picture lots through bribery and other subterfuges. . . . What, he left hours ago? Oh, beans!

OLD MAN (chuckling): Tylone Lukeiser allee samee big fool.

BOB (hotly): Easy, Mister, easy! Anything you say about that party goes double for Bob Bundy!

OLD MAN: Bob Bundy him likewise a jerk.

BOB (advancing with doubled fists): Darn your impertinence, you scum— (Old Man rises, slips off his disguise, revealing Tyrone Rukeiser.)

TYRONE (good-humoredly): Not so fast, Bob Bundy!

BOB (gasping): You had me nonplussed for a moment. You could pass muster anywhere, old man!

TYRONE: You bet I could pass muster [mustard]; I hate it. . . . Now look here, Bob, we have no time to lose. Have you a "roscoe" on your person?

BOB (pats his pocket significantly): Yes, I brought my Mauser.

TYRONE: Good. We'll need your Mauser [mouser] for these rats.

BOB: But tell me—where are we?

TYRONE: In the stronghold of "Shameful Roger" Esterhazy, guiding genius of the gang himself.

BOB: Phew!

TYRONE: Exactly. And tonight finds our precious friend on the threshold of what may well be his most audacious exploit. You recall the recent disappearance of a certain Eunice Haverstraw, only daughter of wealthy Judge Haverstraw of Vandalia, Mo.?

BOB: I thought little of it at the time.

TYRONE: Few did. Through sources of information at my disposal, however, I soon found that Shameful Roger is keeping her prisoner in this maze of underground tunnels, employing a drug, as yet little known to science, which paralyzes the will. (Lowering his voice) Bob, I have every reason to believe he plans to substitute her for glamorous Irene Dunne in the R.K.O. production



"She Married Her Public Relations Counsel"!

BOB: The man must be a devil in human guise!

TYRONE: Furthermore, he intends to smuggle himself into Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, fob himself off as Louis B. Mayer, and embark on a veritable orgy of substitution!

BOB: How to circumvent this mad enterprise calculated to strike at the very heart of the flicker industry?

TYRONE: I have been racking my pate for the solution. Luckily, I have wormed my way into the confidence of "Feathers" Blake, Esterhazy's moll, whom I am expecting here at any moment.

BOB (soberly): This is playing with fire, old chap. Keep your nose clean; you are treading on dangerous ground.

TYRONE (pushing him out the door): Look, you go and reconnoitre. And if you can't find Eunice Haverstraw, for God's sake dig up some new metaphors. (As Bob exits, the sliding panel opens and "Feathers" Blake enters sinuously. She wears tight black satin and silver foxes, carries a mesh bag containing a wicked little pearl-handled revolver.)

FEATHERS (her eyes smoldering): Hello, you two-timing bastard.

TYRONE: Why, what's the matter, Feathers?

FEATHERS: Nothing. I always say that whenever I enter a room. (Lifting her face to his) Like me a little?

TYRONE: What do you think?

FEATHERS: What do I think?

TYRONE: Yes, what do you think?

FEATHERS: About what?

TYRONE: I forget.

FEATHERS: The trouble with you is you're more in love with love than you are with me.

TYRONE (parrying): Love is a sometime thing.

FEATHERS: Well, get this, brother. You remain true to me or I'll kill you.

TYRONE (thinking to pass it off lightly): You'll have to make me a better offer than that—ha-ha-ha!

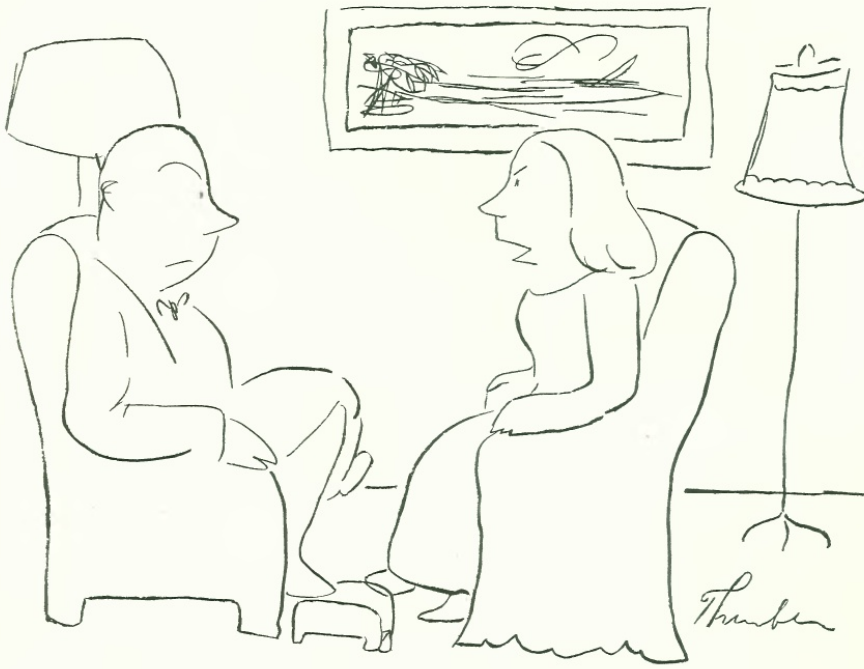
FEATHERS: Quiet, you lug. (She seals his mouth with a kiss.)

TYRONE: I wonder if we're being quite fair to "Shameful Roger" Esterhazy.

FEATHERS: Pah! He's busy with that blonde milksop, Eunice Haverstraw.

TYRONE (craftily): Where do you suppose he keeps her concealed?

FEATHERS (off her guard): In a suite of apartments directly above,



"Which you am I talking to now?"

furnished in truly Oriental splendor.

TYRONE: Say, let's sneak up there—it might be a lark! (*A gong sounds; they turn, startled, to find "Shameful Roger" Esterhazy in the doorway. He is a sinister, well-groomed individual on the order of Cesar Romero, educated both here and abroad, and speaks several languages miserably. The occupants of the bunks slide down and surround the guilty couple.*)

ESTERHAZY (*blandly*): Good evening, my dear. . . . So you're the young man who has been meddling in my affairs. (*His men seize and bind Tyrone and Feathers.*)

TYRONE (*boldly*): Your goose is cooked, Esterhazy. All the facts relative to your dubious operations are in a safe-deposit box at the Cordwainers' and Poulterers' National Bank—and the D.A. has the key!

ESTERHAZY: Yes, my friend, but I have you. Now, Mr. Rukeiser, we shall have a little *divertissement*, so you will please to sit very quietly in that chair. (*His aides produce a gunnysack, place Feathers inside, and open a trapdoor.*)

TYRONE (*playing for time*): You are a cunning adversary, Shameful Roger. I confess I hardly expected to see the Los Angeles River here.

ESTERHAZY: Simply a tributary, my dear fellow, but the effect is the same. You're next, so watch closely. Lower away, lads. (*As they pick up the bag, the sharp notes of a bugle ring out offstage and eight comely misses in Girl Scout uniform burst in the door, brandishing swords made of lath. They quickly overpower Esterhazy and his confederates.*)

CORPORAL DORA AMMIDOWN (*to*

Tyrone): We got your message in the nick of time.

ESTERHAZY (*with an oath*): Jeekers! Who are you, anyway?

THE GIRLS: The D.A.R.!

ESTERHAZY: Who?

THE GIRLS: The Daughters of Albertina Rasch!

BOB BUNDY (*entering with a beautiful heiress*): And here is Eunice Haverstraw, in fairly good condition. (*A portly gentleman in cutaway and silk hat pushes through the throng and embraces Eunice.*)

JUDGE HAVERSTRAW (*to Tyrone*): You've rounded up a dangerous nest of radicals, my boy. Here is my certified check for fifty thousand dollars Mex. (*His eyes twinkling*) And if Eunice still wants you—well, son, there's always a partnership open in Dostoevski, Griscom, Zarathustra & Haverstraw.

TYRONE: Thanks, Judge, but—well, I guess I have a previous commitment.

JUDGE HAVERSTRAW (*loudly*): Why, what do you mean, you insolent guttersnipe?

TYRONE (*softly, to Bob*): Shall we tell them?

BOB (*blushing*): If—if you like, Tyrone. (*Bob hastily removes his disguise of motion-picture executive, revealing himself to be Rosalind Russell. An instant of surprise, and then all join in a long locomotive for the lovers and troop off, leaving Feathers to kick around disconsolately in her gunnysack until the stagehands release her.*)

CURTAIN

—S. J. PERELMAN

LITANY FOR A NEW A.E.F.

Epaulettes of Farragut,
Powder-horn of Boone,
Hawaii's fateful morning,
Shiloh's fearful moon.

(*Be with us as we embark.*)

Bayonets in Belleau Wood,
Song of Marion's men,
Fox-holes in the Philippines,
Wake's grim garrison.

(*Be an example unto us.*)

Lincoln's face, its sadness;
"That from these honored dead
We take increased devotion . . ."
Other things he said.

(*Support us in the battle.*)

Stars above our cornfields,
Morning-colored wind,
Snow, and wood-fires burning
On hearths we leave behind.

(*Shine for us, dear beacons.*)

God of the hidden purpose,
Let our embarking be
The prayer of proud men asking
Not to be safe, but free.

—HENRY MORTON ROBINSON