

SERIAL STORY 'BLACKOUT' BY RUTH AYERS

Yesterday, Mary and Vincent hurried to the hotel as the air raid siren blared. A letter awaits Mary. It contains a message from Vincent. As Mary addresses a card to Vincent, she notices a card from her dress. It bears only two words: "At Midnight."

CHAPTER III A SHARP rap on the door awakened Mary Carroll. "Seven o'clock!" the maid called through the door.

Slowly Mary sat up in bed. Through her window, she saw the uncertain light of a London morning and the silver balloons guarding the city. This was the day she and Vincent were to sail on the Moravia to America.

The joy of this thought suddenly swept away all the fright and foreboding of the night. Gone was the haunting fear that had kept her awake half the night. She had imagined Vincent in Carla's home—Vincent, completely ensnared by the personal magnetism of this strange woman.

Her blue eyes lighted on the card atop her dressing table. Its terse message—"At Midnight"—no longer frightened her.

"What a ridiculous old Mother Worry I was," she chided herself as she reached for her slippers.

Last night, those two words had flooded her mind with nameless terror. But this morning, it all seemed far away and unimportant. The message might have meant the time of a radio broadcast or a train departure or something equally harmless.

"And there I was," she reflected, "thinking up all kinds of mysterious rendezvous and secret meetings."

She had barely closed her last piece of luggage when a knock sounded on her door.

"A letter, Miss." She found a sixpence for the bearer and her trembling fingers tore open the envelope. She read:

"Sweetheart; Sorry—had to dash off on last minute commission. Don't worry. I'll make the boat without fail. All my love, Vincent."

Mary's lips quivered as she studied the note. Suddenly, all the shadowy fears of last night returned. For the first time since she had known Vincent the chill of doubt struck her. Oh, of course she knew he was a gentleman adventurer and a soldier by profession. He'd never denied it. But until this minute Mary had never questioned. Now she fought back her suspicions.

AT noon, when the boat train from London pulled into Southampton Mary's heart began to beat expectantly. She would soon be with Vincent. She presented her ticket and her passport and followed the steward up the gangplank. The huge bulk of the Moravia loomed like a towering monster up from the water.

"D'eck, three flights below and to the left." The porter knew where he was going. "Here you are, Miss." He swung open a door. "I beg your pardon, Miss," he addressed an unseen person in the cabin. "Sorry for not knocking."

"It's quite all right," a low quaver came from inside the cabin. When Mary stepped in she saw a frail girl in gray. Red-rimmed eyes betrayed recent tears.

"Oh, hello," Mary said. "We're cabin mates, I guess. I'm Mary Carroll."

"My name's Anna Winters. I live in Bournemouth. The boat's so crowded—I hope you won't mind."

Mary paid scant attention. Only one thing was important to see Vincent. The girl went on:

"I've put my things over here. I'll be glad to unpack for you."

Mary smiled absently. "Thanks," she said and tossed her luggage keys onto the bunk beside Anna.

"I'm going up on deck to wait for my fiancé."

There was a bustle of goodbyes in the passages and the beating of wings. Page boys' calls, laughter and a babel. Beneath all the confusion the throbs of the engines. The difficulty Mary edged her way to the gangplank. There, pushed and shoved and elbowed by the crowd, she waited for Vincent as the minutes dragged.

Afraid she might have missed him in the jostle, Mary made her way to the purser's office. It was nearly an hour before she moved up to the window.

"Has Mr. Vincent Gregg come aboard?" she asked the harried Britisher.

He made an expert search through a pile of documents. "His ticket isn't here, Miss." Seeing her disappointment, he added consolingly. "There's still an hour before sailing."

MARY rushed back to the gangplank, a thousand fears mocking her. When a double blast of the ship's whistle announced only a half hour remained before sailing she realized there was only one thing to do. She was not going to cross the Atlantic on the Moravia alone!

Turning, she fought her way through the swarming crowds. "Look smart there, Miss," a luggage carrier warned as she tripped over a mound of baggage. Picking herself up, she finally gained the companionway and the three flights to D deck.

"Quick!" she cried to the gray clad girl in her cabin. "Give me my bags, I'm not sailing. Hurry!"

One glance about the cabin and Mary realized that Anna Winters had faithfully kept her promise to unpack Mary's belongings.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Carroll. I have everything put away."

"Help me get them together again," Mary sobbed. "I've got to get off this boat."

Then sharp and clear in the passage came the steward's call, "All ashore that's going ashore." Beating gongs sounded louder.

For a minute, Anna Winters was too taken aback to make an utterance.

Then, as she flew to the cabin closet, she became all sympathy. "Oh," she stammered, "I'm so sorry. Your fiancé hasn't come aboard?"

"No—something's delayed him. I won't sail without him. We are going to be married—very soon. If he's had to stay behind, I'm going to stay, too."

From the closet, came armfuls of Parisian frocks—Mary's trousseau. There was a sudden interruption in the flurry of this frantic packing with a sharp knock on the door. Eruptively, the steward called—"All visitors ashore."

Mary let the lovely gowns slip from her hands. "There isn't time," she said. "I don't dare wait."

WITHOUT a backward glance or a goodbye, she ran out of the cabin and into the passage. The crowds had thinned. Farewells were over. Even so, the twisting stairs seemed endless as Mary raced the three flights.

When she reached A deck, the gangplank was already in the air, pulleys easing it shorewards. For a minute, Mary was so stunned she could only watch as the last tie between her and Vincent vanished.

ished. Then her startled cry brought a steward to her side. "What's wrong, Miss?" "I've got to get off. I'm not sailing."

He understood the emergency at once. "If we're quick, you can catch the third class gangplank before it's lifted. Come with me."

(To Be Continued)



GIVE PLEASE!—A combination hard to resist was this pair, glamorous Ann Sheridan and little Shirley Beaman of Dallas, Tex., who's passing the hat to collect money at a charity party given at Beverly Hills by Mrs. Basil Rathbone.

FLAPPER FANNY By Sylvia

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OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS



THE QUICK RIPENING J.R. WILLIAMS 1-5

OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



BY FRED HARMAN



RED RYDER

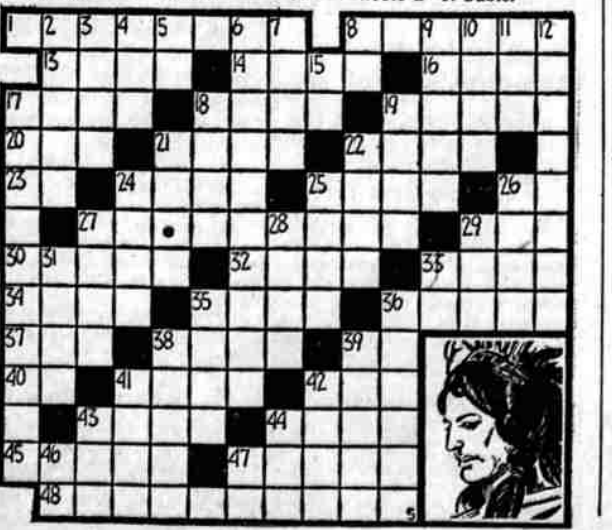


BY HAROLD GRAY



FABULOUS INDIAN

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE. HORIZONTAL: 1 Most famous Indian of fiction. 8 He is the hero of many Indian legends. 13 Cart. 14 Arabian. 16 Toilet box. 17 Cut of meat. 18 Fissure. 19 Fog. 20 Ancient. 21 Divided into equal parts. 22 To point. 23 North Africa. 24 Without. 25 Perishes. 26 France. 27 Glitened. 29 Stream. 30 Last. 32 Kiln. 33 Pertaining to air. 34 To redact. 35 Afresh. 36 He was a wonderful Mohawk.



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



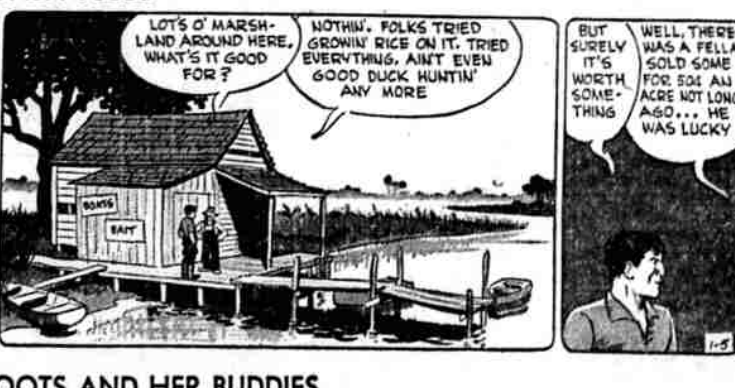
BY BLOSSER



WASH TUBBS



BY CRANE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY MARTIN



ALLEY OOP



BY V. T. HAMLIN