

SERIAL STORY

BLACKOUT

BY RUTH AYERS

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YESTERDAY: Mary accepts her fate and resigns herself to being Anna Winters, until her facial injury is cured. Dr. Lenox is sympathetic, tries to help. Mary recognizes him as the doctor who helped her during the air raid alarm. She is soon well enough to leave the hospital.

CHAPTER XI

A SQUARE yellow tick: a bore the word "Discharged."

It was Mary Carroll's permit to leave the hospital.

"A lot of good it will do me," she mused bitterly. "I've no place to go. And no money."

Two pound notes and a single sixpence in Anna Winters' pocket-book was her entire capital. "About \$10 in American money," she thought.

She had resolved to begin life anew under the severe handicap of an altered appearance and a muffled, halting speech. And how she would begin her strange new existence as Anna Winters, a former English governess, she had not the slightest idea in the world.

"You're looking better already," the busy floor nurse said briskly. "The thought of being released seems to have helped you."

"Thank," Mary murmured, but there was no bravado in her spirit.

She'd been sheltered and shut off from the world in the nursing home. Dr. Lenox had buoyed her up with his kindness and hope. In a short while this would be all gone.

Mary realized that she had become dependent on Gilbert Lenox. She wondered where he was this morning—why he had not come to bid her goodbye.

An efficient British matron approached her with an armful of well-worn, tweedy clothes.

"Here, my dear, are some things you can wear to tide you over," she was saying. Mary knew the woman—Lady Ponce-Townsend—had been in the ward repeatedly, doing her "bit" for the refugees. "You'll find this dress very serviceable and this coat will do nicely for a while."

Mary drew back. She who had been a fashion stylist—she who had worn only the most expensive clothes—clad in castoffs.

Then, everything that had happened came back to her and listlessly she donned the coarse garments.

Lady Ponce-Townsend looked on approvingly. "The very thing," she said animatedly. "You'll do perfectly."

Mary started to laugh at the high-born woman's obvious patronizing. In her ears, the chuckle had a familiar ring. It was her own old laugh!

Something had happened to her face! The paralysis that had kept her right cheek as inflexible as iron relaxed a mere trifle.

"Thank you, Lady Ponce-Townsend." The words were made audible only with effort. "The outfit will do nicely indeed."

The English aristocrat looked at Mary critically. It was as if she detected a possible hint of disdain in Mary's attitude. But there were hundreds of survivors of the Moravia to clothe and a score of them would be discharged from that very hospital that day. She had work to do. She walked away from Mary with a nod.

Mary went up to the floor nurse to say goodbye.

"Good luck," the nurse said, when Mary proffered her thanks. "And cheerio!"

Mary blinked to keep back her tears when she returned to say goodbye to Mrs. Tully. A generous soul withal, Mary would miss her kindness when she had gone.

"You've been a mighty brave girl. Here's hoping things will be brighter for you now on. Wipe away those tears and powder your nose so you'll look real cheerful when you say goodbye to that nice American doctor. He's been so devoted to you."

But as Mary left the ward, there was no sight of Gilbert Lenox. She could not understand her own disappointment at his failure to see her off. Was it because she'd grown to depend on him? Or was it merely the way all patients felt towards the doctor who brought them through dark hours?

SHE walked slowly toward the outside door. Here she was, at last leaving the hospital on her own. What lay ahead? The gray winter world of wartime London. "Oh, Miss Winters, someone called. 'You don't think I'd let you go without saying goodbye!'"

She looked up into the serious face of the red-haired American doctor. "I didn't know," she began, miserably.

"You weren't walking out on me, were you? After all, I meant every word I said about helping you. When Dr. O'Connell returns

from the front, I'll want to get in touch with you."

"I did want to say goodbye to you and I looked for you," she answered. "But I realize only too well how busy you are."

"What are your plans and where are you going?"

Mary looked down at the yellow card in her hand with its single word—"Discharged."

"I'm not sure yet." She hesitated. "I really haven't any place to go."

"You mean you haven't a home or friends waiting for you?"

"That's right—I'm quite alone."

"But look, I've been thinking of something that may help you."

Mary loved his forthright American way of coming right to the point. "I've a couple of rooms in Soho that I'm not using. Since the war broke out I've had to live in the hospital and they're doing me no good at all."

"Oh, but you are too good. I couldn't accept."

"But they're no use to me. The lease is taken until spring and they're already paid up. You could use them, at least until you've found a job."

Mary tried hard to keep the tears from falling.

"You mustn't think that I'd bother you," he spoke eagerly. "I never go there at all. So you might as well be using them. Here's the key."

From his pocket he produced a large, old-fashioned brass key.

"A key like this means business," he tried to speak lightly. "You English don't fool with flimsy patent locks."

"We English?" Mary started to say. But she remembered in time that she was Anna Winters—and English, as far as Dr. Lenox knew. She was grateful that he seemed not to note the interrogation in her voice.

"And here's the address, all written out." He handed her a slip of paper designating an address in Soho. "Mrs. Simmons, my landlady, will take good care of you. She'll even char for you if you like."

Without waiting for Mary to refuse he walked away.

She stood irresolutely twirling the key in her hand. Should she go there? Should she take advantage of the doctor's kind offer to use the rooms he no longer required?

She wond red.

(To Be Continued)



Named sponsor of the 35,000-ton battleship that bears the name of her state. Miss Isabelle Hoey, above, will journey to Brooklyn Navy Yard for launching in June. She is daughter of governor of North Carolina.

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BY FRED HARMAN

RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

BY HAROLD GRAY



BY HAROLD GRAY

FLAPPER FANNY By Sylvia



WILY ANIMAL

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers.

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE

WASH TUBBS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY MARTIN

ALLEY OOP



BY V. T. HAMLIN

