

SERIAL STORY

BLACKOUT

BY RUTH AYERS

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YESTERDAY, Vincent summons Mary. He is in a jam, really. He begs her to come with him. They ride out of London to a small airport. A plane is waiting. Vincent points an attractive young pilot at a housewife in a smart dress. Mary begs him to stay and face punishment. He drags her to the plane.

CHAPTER XXV

MARY drew back with newfound strength. "Vincent, you're playing the part of a fugitive. You'll be hunted down, perhaps killed. I'm willing to wait for you. You can't escape. You owe it to yourself to stay! You owe it to me!"

He turned and there was something in his face she had never seen there before. In review, everything came into focus. She thought—he's a soldier, yes, but willing to fight for the cause that pays most. He's likeable and charming but there's nothing behind it. No matter where he flies, there'll always be a day of reckoning just over the horizon. And some day he won't be lucky enough to escape it.

"There's not another second to spare. Coming with me?" She stared at him. "Please—for my sake," she tried to say.

He shook off her hand from his arm. "So long," he said almost jauntily. "I love you, but I'd rather face a firing squad than stay here a prisoner. If you won't go with me, I'm going alone."

As a mechanic stepped out of the plane, Vincent leaped in, pulling on helmet and goggles. The plane taxied along the runway and then lifted, its wings at sharp angles against the morning sun.

Standing there motionless, Mary knew then that when he went, some part of her life went with him. Always, she'd remember the way he'd smiled and the crooked lift of his eyebrow. He loved her—the gay part of it—the carefree part.

She knew, too, that Vincent had planned all this. The borrowed car, the waiting plane. He'd even used her to shield his getaway. Yes, he'd rather die than be imprisoned. Perhaps he was in this spy plot deeper than she knew. But even if he were, she could never hate him—she could only pity him.

TURNING toward Vincent's car, Mary saw another auto pulling down the sandy road. Startled, she thought it was a Scotland Yard patrol. Instead, she began to tremble when she saw Gilbert Lenox's red head.

She ran towards him, her arms outstretched. "Oh, Gilbert," she cried. "You're the one person in all the world I want to see most. Vincent's gone. I couldn't stop him."

"I know," Gilbert put her head against his shoulder. "As soon as you walked out of the hospital, I knew I had to follow you, foolish, loyal little idiot that you are. I kept track of you when you joined Vincent at the tobacco shop. There were some awful minutes when I thought you might weaken and try to go with him. But when I guessed his destination was this air field, something told me you would stay behind."

Mary broke down in the comforting protection of Gilbert's strong arms. "I'll have to go to Scotland Yard at once," she began in a strangled voice. "It's my fault that Vincent got away."

"Come on," Gilbert said gently, "although I've a hunch you don't have to worry. The morning papers are filled with your wonderful feat. You're England's heroine today—and I'm proud you have my name."

She could only stare at him, all her heart looking out of her eyes. She'd wanted to spare him this hateful publicity—and here he was, glowing with pride in her.

In Inspector Babcock's office, it was as busy as it had been hours before in the excitement of Carla Marchetta's capture. The inspector saw Mary and beckoned to her. "My dear, I know what you're going to tell me. Vincent Gregg got away—but it's not your fault. And it really doesn't matter for the present. The Regency is saved and we've had a full confession from Felix, the Marchetta woman's real confederate. There's time enough to get the other members of the ring."

He leaned closer, his eyes fatherly as they rested on her drawn face. "Because of the great service you've done for us, we were prepared to do nothing worse to your sweetheart than to exile him. And now he's done that himself."

"Thank you!" Mary's head dropped. No time now to explain to Inspector Babcock that Vincent was no longer her sweetheart. Her last loyalty to him had ended when he'd waved goodbye from the plane.

GILBERT was waiting for her in his car outside. "All set?" and he was smiling.

Joy at the sight of him overflowed in Mary. This red-headed doctor was so strong, so steady, so exactly everything that a real man should be.

"It's like coming home," she sighed as she leaned against him. "You bet it is," Gilbert said huskily. "I've loved you right from the start—in the air raid that first night and from the minute you were brought into the hospital as Anna Winters."

Anna's name brought a thousand memories flooding back. Anna Winters, the dear, gentle English girl who'd died on the Moravia. But Anna, dead, had lived on in the happiness she'd at

last brought to the girl who'd taken her name.

"No time for tears," Gilbert was saying, his handkerchief patting her cheeks.

If all Scotland Yard had been looking from the windows, he wouldn't have cared as he bent to kiss her.

As if it had been a signal, sun broke through the London fog. "Happy is the bride," Mary murmured, "the sun shines on."

No blackout could ever blot out her happiness again.

The End



HIS TERMS: CASH—Unless he gets a boost in his reported 1939 salary, \$15,000, "Red" Rolfe, Yankee third baseman, may ring up "No Sale" at his Penacook, N. H., filling station where he awaits arrival of his 1940 contract.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



"Fan says tell you she'll be ready in just a minute. So you better take off your coat an' let me get you a sandwich an' some magazines."

LONG-BILLED BIRD

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for horizontal and vertical words.

Crossword puzzle grid with a picture of a bird in the center.

OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



TWIGGS MAKES A BLANKET CHARGE



RED RYDER



AND AGAIN AS THOUGH DRIVEN BY AN INVISIBLE THIEF, GENERAL PURE-BRED HORSES BOLT PAST RED.

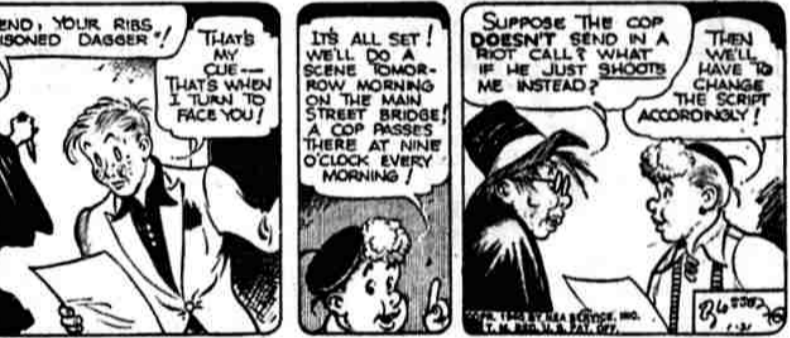
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BY BLOSSER



WASH TUBBS



BY CRANE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY MARTIN



ALLEY OOP



BY V. T. HAMLIN

