

SERIAL STORY

This Could Be Your Story

BY MARGUERITE GAHAGAN

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YESTERDAY: Returning from a baseball game, Sue Mary overheard Natalie and Vera discussing her. Nick is not serious, Vera says. He's using Sue Mary, just as Vera is using Nick. Just as Vera is using Nick, just as Nick is using Vera. There's no chance of Nick's falling in love with the little, glib little office worker.

DOUBTS BEGIN TO RISE

CHAPTER XIV

OUT on the dark street with the cool night air against her flushed face, Sue Mary walked slowly, trying to think. It was as though she had had a glimpse backstage. The show she had been so innocently watching took on an entirely new aspect; all the seemingly obvious things had different meanings.

Nick's interest, his newly displayed love; Vera's work at the office; the mislaid paper; Natalie's insistence that she come and live with her; the YP campaign. Half-forgotten words, acts, suspicions came rushing upon her.

Yet she couldn't understand why she was important enough for them to have bothered with. Back in the recesses of her mind she brought forth that first conversation with Nick: the day she had wandered into the studio, and Nick had asked her where she worked. She remembered his questions about the law office.

"Murders and divorces, I suppose," he had said with that crooked, half-cynical smile.

And when she had explained that the work was more with large corporations "like Centerville Motors and Gull Plane," Nick had become interested. He had questioned her casually, in that friendly way that made her feel he was interested in herself alone. And then that time she had told him how, with the war orders, the office was tightened with new regulations; how the big vault now held many important papers.

"You've been reading G-man stories," he had teased and she had laughed at her own seriousness.

Things began to add up. She walked and walked still trying to piece together the jigsaw puzzle. Vera was in the office, apparently where she had meant to be from the beginning. Nick was making love to Sue Mary because

he wanted a hold over her. At least that was Vera's supposition, although Natalie believed he was beginning to love her for herself. Sue Mary felt a little sick. To be used, to be so blinded by her own shortsightedness. Joe was right, had always been right. He had said that something would have to happen to wake her to what was going on.

She was awake now. She felt as though she had been beaten awake. Her head ached and her legs felt leaden. She supposed she would have to go back to the apartment; have to go along somehow until she could find an excuse to get away. It was hard to see how she had become so involved in the whole crazy business anyway.

Leisure time, she told herself bitterly. It was being lonely and having nothing to do. This seemed such fun, it opened such a new world. And now, what an awakening!

VERA was gone when she went back to the apartment and Natalie was in bed fast asleep. She stirred when Sue Mary came in.

"Out with Nick!" she asked. "No. I want to be a ball game; an old American custom," Sue Mary answered as she undressed. Hatred was beginning to stir within her, but some remnant of caution still remained, despite the weariness and disgust she experienced. She knew she must do something tomorrow. Somehow she would have to think this through.

Tomorrow came, and another day, and still another, and Sue Mary blindly felt her way along. It was hard trying to pretend that nothing had changed. Going to the hall, listening to the members talk about keeping America safe, of retaining American freedom of speech and thought, of the witch hunts started by ax-grinding politicians to frighten respectable people, of the speedups in plants and the resultant burden on the workers.

"But the workers aren't complaining, are they?" she asked. The sound of her own voice came as a surprise. She didn't mean to make herself conspicuous. All she wanted was to be forgotten, to break away from this. And yet in the back of her mind was a fear: a fear that these people weren't as simple as she once thought.

"Aren't complaining," Vera repeated. "Good heavens, the factory owners are getting twice as much work out of them now as before, just because they say the orders are for national defense." "Well, even if they are working so hard, it's for the good of the nation, isn't it?" persisted Sue Mary. "I mean I should think a man would rather work in a factory now than fight in a trench later on."

Someone laughed and Vera shook her head, smiling patiently. "Sue Mary, sometimes I don't think you can read, or hear, or think, for that matter. This is a capitalist's war. Please remember that."

with every one trying at once to make her see the point. Then Nick came in and made them stop. "Haven't you anything better to do?" he demanded. Who was supposed to arrange for that dance at the summer school? We were to have a speaker there for Fritz King. A lot of these students are old enough to vote. And who was supposed to draw up that resolution to present to the city council? We want to use that school for a meeting and they haven't a right to keep us out. This is a free country."

EVERYONE was working again and Sue Mary slipped into the inconspicuous corner she had been seeking. But Nick found her there, behind a big stack of out-of-town papers she was clipping. "Hiding from me, little sweetheart?"

"Just working, Nick. That's what you want us to do, isn't it?" She wished he'd go away. Knowing now what she did, she was afraid of him, yet she remembered what Natalie had said.

"I've seen his face when he's with her. He's in love." And now he was with her and his nearness, the feel of his arm against hers, his breath on her hair as he leaned over made her tremble.

She hated herself for being moved by his physical presence, tried to remember that it was Nick who had used her from the start; tried to recall Joe's face and the sound of his voice.

Nick covered her hand with one of his own, and pressed his shoulder against hers.

der against hers. A lock of dark hair had fallen over his forehead and he pushed it back with that familiar gesture. "You look tired," he said softly. "Have a hard day at the office? Is all that national defense stuff taking its pound of flesh from you, my darling?"

She shook her head, refusing to meet his gaze. "Every day's the same, Nick. Today was no different."

(To Be Continued)



P. D. Houston, Chairman of the American National Bank of Nashville, Tenn., is pictured in Atlantic City, N. J., where he was elected President of the American Bankers Association at their recent convention. He will work for "improved banking service through effective cooperation."

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER: Yes and no. Each autumn, older needles toward the trunk of the tree turn brown and drop off.

COLLEGE OFFICIAL

Answer to Previous Puzzle									
1 Pictured American college head.	20 To scream.	31 Skin.	33 Street (abbr.).	34 Anything steeped.	38 Kite end.	40 Metal.	42 To plump.	44 Strong vegetable.	46 Cupolas.
13 Frozen water.	14 Tart.	15 Perished.	16 Puddles.	18 Stain.	20 Ray.	22 Bugle signal.	24 Deity.	26 Influenza.	27 And.
29 To scream.	31 Skin.	33 Street (abbr.).	34 Anything steeped.	38 Kite end.	40 Metal.	42 To plump.	44 Strong vegetable.	46 Cupolas.	48 Passably.



OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. WILLIAMS



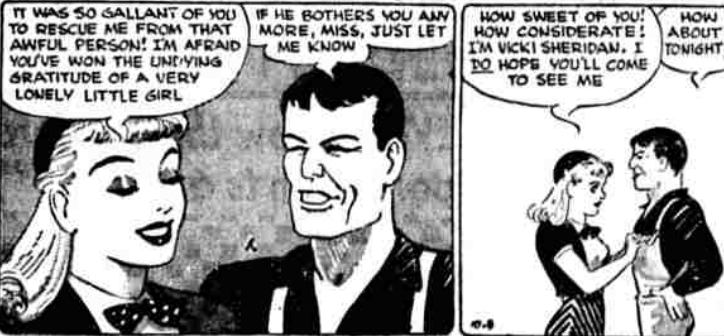
RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With MAJOR HOOPLE



BY FRED HARMAN



BY HAROLD GRAY



BY CRANE



BY BLOSSER



BY MARTIN



BY V. T. HAMLIN

