● SERIAL STORY

CONSCRIPT'S WIFE

BY BETTY WALLACE

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YESTERDAY: Martha cannot forget the neighbors' gossip, finally decides to see Paul less frequently. On her first night at home alone, she finds time dragging. Suzanne calls, wants to come over. When Martha questions her about the cause of the quarrel with Paul, Suzanne admits: "We quarreled over you."

* * *

"PAUL LOVES YOU!"

CHAPTER VI

"ABOUT me?" Martha echoed in bewilderment. "But, Suzanne, what in the world—how could you and Paul quarrel about me? I don't understand."

"Don't you?" Suzanne's eyes were narrowed, her face was pale under the rouge. "That's just what I'd like to know. Don't you really understand?"

Martha stirred uneasily. "No, really."

The other girl touched her hand. Her fingers were icy. "Listen, Martha. Every time Paul asked me for a date, it was to come up here. Wait! I'm not talking about now, since Bill's gone. That is, not entirely. I'm talking about before, when we four always used to go out. Sometimes, you know, I didn't feel like a foursome. Sometimes I wanted to be alone with Paul, have him come to the house for dinner, or just to talk . . ."

Her voice trailed off. She tightened her hold on Martha's fingers and suddenly she was saying passionately, "There's no use denying it. I'm in love with Paul! I always have been! Even before he met you—years ago. I was so happy when you married Bill, I wanted to get down on my knees and pray!"

A host of half-forgotten memories came back to Martha. The time she and Paul met Suzanne and some man at a country club dance, and Suzanne had looked her over with a veiled hostility. Then, after they were engaged, Suzanne went on that trip to Honolulu. Was gone for months and when she returned, the society pages were busy with the dinners, dances, and the sensational New Year's Eve party she gave.

Because Paul had drifted away from the country club set—because Martha had never been one of the Sugar Hill Colony, she hadn't noticed how seldom they came in contact with his old friends. And yet, they ran across Suzanne every now and then. In a restaurant where they were dining. In the lobby of a theater. Once Suzanne came to the plant with some friends from out of town, asked Paul to show them around . . .

SO many things, now that she knew Suzanne had always been in love with Paul. Even before Martha wore his ring.

"Martha," Suzanne was saying huskily, "when you were engaged to him, I played it square. I tried to keep out of his way. I didn't do a lot of things I could have done. Oh, it wasn't easy. Sometimes I couldn't help wanting to see him, just for a little while. But I didn't run after him, I didn't play any tricks, I told myself it was over and I tried to get along without him."

"Yes," said Martha faintly. "Yes."

"It was all right to begin again when you married Bill. I was wildly happy when Paul began to call me again, ask to see me. But, Martha, it didn't take long before I realized that he—we—well, we were always a foursome."

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do. You must! Surely you weren't that blind! We'd sit right here in this apartment, and Paul's eyes never left you. He'd look at you so hungrily—and all the while he never heard a word I said . . ."

"You're crazy, Sue," Martha whispered. "Crazy." Her brain was spinning dizzily. "You imagined it."

"Did I imagine it when they took you to the hospital, that time when you almost had pneumonia, and Paul almost lost his mind—stayed there all night—"

"He was with Bill! They sat up together, smoking, until I came out of it . . ."

"Bill! His best friend! Do you think that was easy to take? Don't you see he had to pretend to—to be friends with him? And then, instead of dropping you both, letting it wear out, Paul kept on seeing you. As if he couldn't live without seeing you!"

"No, Suzanne. You're wrong. It wasn't like that at all!" Martha got up, began to pace up and down the living room. Thoughts flashed in and out of her mind, memories of all the times she and Bill and Paul had been together. "But never once did he do anything—say anything—"

"He wouldn't have told you! He—" Suzanne choked. "He prides himself on being honorable! Honorable! And what about me?"

She leaped to her feet. She came and grabbed Martha's shoulders and looked straight into her eyes. "Listen, that's why I stopped coming here so much before Bill left. That's exactly why. Oh, I couldn't stay away altogether. I—I'm the same way about Paul, he is about you. I just had to see him!"

"Suzanne, you must stop! You mustn't say things like that!"

"Why must I stop? It's the truth! You know it's the truth! That's why we quarreled! That's why he didn't tell you what it was all about, you fool! Because I told him straight out I was sick and tired of being camouflage—being used as a blind so he could see you without people talking!"

"Suzanne!"

* * *

SUZANNE'S hands dropped, wearily, and a shudder ran through her slender frame. "Oh, what's the use? I thought if I told you—if you understood—" She whirled, suddenly. "I've been a fool! You probably knew all about it. A woman always knows when a man loves her. You did know! You must have known, and you encouraged him!"

"Suzanne!" Martha's knuckles were white as she gripped the edge of the end table. "You've got to stop talking like this. I won't have it. Not a word of it is true! You're just—just making trouble . . ." All at once, she was sobbing. Helpless tears stung her eyes, and her mouth quivered. "Why should you come here and s-spoil a f-f-friendship that was clean and—"

"Because it was never merely friendship. For Paul."

"That isn't true! You know there's nothing—nothing at all—between Paul Elliott and me! Why, I was engaged to him! If I—if he—why, I'd have married him, wouldn't I? How dare you say I encouraged him? I didn't. I never even guessed. I married Bill and I—" She was faltering stupidly, the tears getting the best of her.

After a while, Suzanne lit another cigaret.

"It's no use crying," she said in a hard little voice. "I suppose I went too far when I said there was actually something between you and Paul. If there had been, I suppose, he wouldn't ever have needed me for camouflage. All right, I'm sorry I said that. Maybe you never guessed that Paul was still in love with you. But if you didn't, Martha, then it's time someone told you."

She stood up. "I'm going. I've said enough. But remember, there's only so much one human being can bear. And it wouldn't be very nice, would it, if someone should tell your husband exactly how often Paul comes here, exactly how much he takes you out and—exactly how he feels about you."

(To Be Continued)

SURPRISE

McKEESPORT, Pa. (AP)—A man and his wife in their late sixties, admitted to a hospital as charity patients, will get plenty of attention while there and probably a terrific shock in the form of a bill when they leave.

Attendants said the man, who collapsed on the street, had in his clothing $120 in cash, bank books showing $200 in one account and $4,000 in another. Further investigation disclosed the woman held real estate valued at $1,000.

PRISONERS' SONG

HAZARD, Ky. (AP)—The prisoners couldn't have sung much louder, and when they burst into full-voiced song the second night in a row, Jailer Grant Campbell went up to the second floor to hear better and maybe to help.

What he saw didn't do much toward harmonizing relations between jailer and jailee.

Two of the 16 prisoners, he said, were taking turns keeping time with a hacksaw.

And not on the bars of the song, either.

Much more light is required when one is sewing than when one is reading, especially when a dark thread is being used on a dark cloth.

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

ANSWER: When Hanson Gregory, New England sea captain, was a boy, he noticed the center of his mother's cakes were doughy, and suggested the center be cut out before cooking.

STAGE STAR

HORIZONTAL

1, 6 Famous actress of former days.
14 Sandy.
16 Sooner.
17 Vicious.
18 Inside.
20 Wine vessel.
21 Thick shrub.
22 Made hard.
24 To complete.
26 Either.
27 Gladly.
28 To plant.
29 Tone B.
30 Carmine.
31 Fish.
34 Red cosmetic.
35 To card wool.
36 Jumbled type.
37 Tribunal.
38 To cry.
39 Doctor (abbr.)
41 Afternoon meal.
43 To exist.
44 One who idealizes.
48 Self.
49 Banana.
51 Evergreen tree.
53 Solitary.
55 Principle.
56 Table-land.
57 She was a native of ——.
58 She was the —— actress of her time.

VERTICAL

1 South America (abbr.).
2 Bower.
3 To peruse.
4 Conjunction.
5 Stop!
6 Acts of kindness.
7 Roll of film.
8 Nostrils.
9 Hour (abbr.).
10 Room recess.
11 Verse.
12 College heads.
13 Transposed (abbr.).
15 Local position.
19 Northeast (abbr.).
21 She —— or acted throughout the world.
22 Starry.
23 To accomplish.
25 She was called the "—— Sarah."
27 Envoy.
30 To polish.
32 Duet.
33 To make bitter.
40 Stiffness.
42 Winged.
43 Exalted happiness.
45 Spanish lady.
46 Frozen water.
47 Caroled.
48 Sprite.
50 Chewed.
51 Lawyer's charge.
52 Rodent.
54 Half an em.
56 Mountain (abbr.)

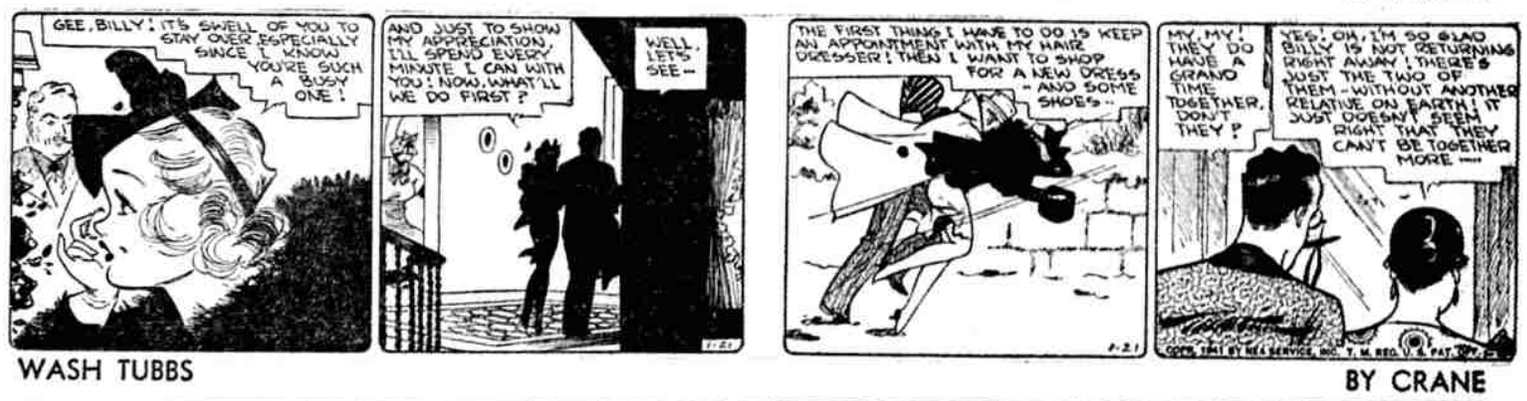
Answer to Previous Puzzle

OUT OUR WAY — By J. R. WILLIAMS

RED RYDER

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE — BY HAROLD GRAY

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES — BY MARTIN



WASH TUBBS — BY CRANE

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS — BY BLOSSER

ALLEY OOP — BY V. T. HAMLIN

OUR BOARDING HOUSE — With MAJOR HOOPLE

BY FRED HARMAN