

SERIAL STORY
SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR
BY BLANCHE ROBERTS

THE STORY: Judith Kingsley is secretary to the president of an airplane factory. Her cousin, Tom Burke, is a pilot. She is sending her to the factory's west coast branch to investigate "snags" in the organization. Boarding a westbound plane Judith sees Tom Burke, whom she has quarreled. Tom is also bound for the west coast factory with plans for a new bomber. Before the plane leaves Judith sees two men watching Tom intently.

CHAPTER II
"COMFORTABLE" inquired the air hostess, bending over Judith and smiling pleasantly. "Oh, yes," she answered cheerfully, even though she felt depressed at the moment.

The pretty girl turned to the man across the aisle and repeated her questions. Judith started at the sound of his voice. He spoke with a heavy accent, gruffly, as if he were being bothered. When the hostess passed on, he looked at Judith. She smiled, and for a moment it seemed he would not return her greeting. Then he grinned, breaking the stern expression of his face. But his eyes did not smile, only his mouth. Judith had heard of cold-blooded people and now, she was sure, she had met one.

"You like flying?" he asked, and his voice made her think of someone with a mouth full of mush. "I think it is the only way to travel," she answered. She decided if the man thought she was easy to talk to, she would not be taking too great a risk in speaking to Burke later and warning him to watch out for this fellow.

After a moment the man in the seat in front of her craned his neck to look at her. She tried the same winsome smile on him and he worked.

"Everybody on this plane will believe I am an easy pickup," she told herself. "But so much the better." She instantly averted her eyes and looked out the window.

As the miles flew swiftly by, Judith thought over the situation. "Those men watching Tom know about the plans he is carrying. The blond one is a foreigner, and the other to her, I don't know about the heavy man in front of me. He may be just a curious passenger."

She opened her purse and felt the small automatic there. Then her hand came in contact with a tiny package. She pulled it out to have a look and her eyes widened.

"Ye fishes!" she thought. "Helen's sleeping medicine she had me buy for her this morning." She lifted her eyes and looked at the back of the man's head in front of her.

"If he should make trouble and I got the chance, I could put him to sleep with this." She smiled at her childish plan and dropped the package back in her purse. She was supposed to be an intelligent investigator, not a silly girl.

SHE turned again to stare at Tom's seat and as she did, he turned his head and glanced backward. His dark eyes met hers in astonishment. A bright gleam flickered in them and died as she chose to ignore him.

He faced the seat abruptly and she smiled, satisfied with the turn of events. The man across the aisle grinned at her, thinking probably that she had tried to flirt with the young man and been snubbed.

"At least, Tom knows I am aboard the ship. That will give him something to think about," she decided.

At sundown the hostess informed each passenger the next stop would be half an hour and there was an airport cafe if anyone cared to have a bite. Shortly after that, a light in the front of the ship flashed "Please fasten safety belts."

The big ship came down on the runway without a bounce, taxied back to the buildings and rolled to a stop. Judith was the first passenger off. But she lingered nearby to give Tom Burke an opportunity to reach the cafe first. She followed him in and sat down at the counter next to his stool.

"Please continue to be indifferent, but listen to me," she whispered as the other two men took places at the far end of the counter by the door.

Burke half turned his head and stared at her serious face. There was inquiry in the lift of his brows and disturbing sparks in his eyes that made her heart beat unevenly. He toyed with the glass of water before him while he asked from the corner of his mouth:

"Why are you here, Judith?" "On business—not following you," she said curtly.

"Oh! The way he said the word was maddening. 'You're horrid, Tom,' she said, her cheeks burning. 'Mr. Watson is sending me to the coast to check on the office force there. But that's beside the point. I'm sure one or both of those men at the end of the counter are interested in you or the plans of that bomber. I thought you might like to know.'"

But he did not bother to glance where she indicated. "One sits behind you and the other across the aisle."

Between bites of food he said, "Thanks for the warning, darling. I more than appreciate your interest." There was a twinkle in his eyes that infuriated her.

"I don't want anything to happen to the plans," she said sweetly. He deliberately turned and grinned at her. He was so much better looking when he smiled. She gave her stool a spin and slid to the floor. Without a backward glance she walked to the cashier, paid her check and left the cafe, red head in the air.

SHE paused outside the ship to have a smoke in the crisp eve-

ning air. She was just lighting it when a hand was put to her elbow and the cigarette taken from her mouth. Before she realized what was happening, she was pushed into the cabin of the plane.

"Just what do you know about the plans and who told you? It was a secret," Tom's voice was low and his hand was warm and firm on her arm.

"Mr. Watson told me. He thinks there is a leak in the company and I'm on my way to investigate the office force at the factory." She looked squarely into his face, chin up. "Something tells me the foreigner knows you have the plans."

"Well, don't worry your beautiful little head, honey," he told her, and his own head bent towards hers.

She stepped back instantly. "I am merely minding my job," she said cuttingly and sat down.

"Then I'll ignore you," Burke moved on to his place, but turned and looked back at her before he sat down. Their gaze met and held until Judith pulled her eyes away.

"Oh," she breathed to herself angrily. "He knows I don't hate him and he's trying to make me admit it. Well, I can be just as stubborn as Tom Burke."

She picked up her purse to repair her make-up.

"You are a fast eater, young lady." She looked up quickly to see the heavy-set man pausing by her chair. "Or maybe you were not hungry."

"I can eat when there is no flying to be done," she replied pleasantly.

"Or a young man to flirt with?" he grinned knowingly.

"He won't flirt with me," she remarked and pouted her lips. She

spoke loudly and her voice reached Tom Burke. He turned and scowled at them both, playing his role well. "See what I mean!" The large man nodded with an understanding wink and sat down. The other passengers took their places, and in a moment the voice of the hostess came to Judith's ears from outside. There was a curious concern in the tone. "Changing co-pilots? What happened to Bill?"

Judith did not hear the answer but she turned to see the two flyers come through the door and make their way to the control room up front. As they passed her an uneasy feeling swept over her like a warning.

(To Be Continued)

FRIENDLY CREDIT
ON ALL PURCHASES OF MEN'S WEAR
No Interest
No Carrying Charge
No Red Tape
OREGON WOOLEN STORE
8TH AND MAIN

THIS CURIOUS WORLD By William Ferguson

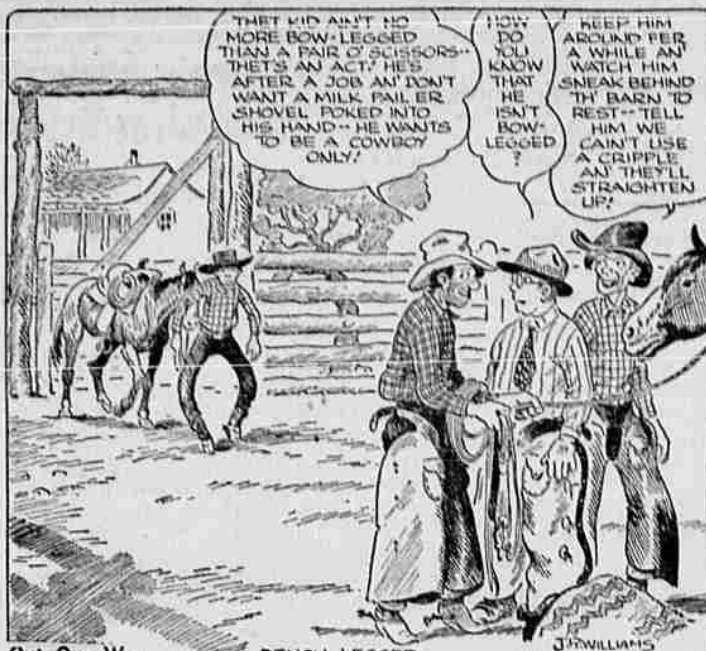


ANSWER: Mollusks, or sea shells.
NEXT: Room and board from a cactus plant.

CIVILIAN DEFENSE UNIT

HORIZONTAL
1 Depicted in insignia of U. S. Civilian Defense Corps.
6 They— instruction in driving in blackouts.
12 South African strap.
14 Highway.
15 Sandpiper.
17 Shakespearean fairy queen.
19 Precipitous.
21 Australian birds.
22 Pointed mass of ice in a broken glacier.
24 Rescue.
25 Tear.
27 Heart (myth.).
29 Sesame.
30 Let it stand.
32 Stringed musical instrument.
34 We.
35 Size of shot.
36 Go on (music).
37 Toward.
ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE
18 Soul (Egypt).
20 Acts of dispossessing tenants.
23 Vehicle.
26 Perfume.
28 Slan.
31 Et cetera (abbr.).
33 Heavy rod.
39 Cuddle up.
40 Furtive watcher.
41 Protective coverings.
42 Form of headress.
45 Years between 12 and 20.
47 Row.
49 Forenoon.
50 Moccasin.
51 Symbol for erbium.
52 Ages.
54 Brazilian money of account.
56 American poet.
58 South Carolina (abbr.).
59 Greek letter.
VERTICAL
1 Restrain through fear.
2 Burst in.
3 Contends.
4 Exclamation of mild fright.
5 Ream (abbr.).
7 Symbol for erbium.
8 Variety of lettuce.
9 Consumes.
10 Preconceive.
11 Dislodge.
13 Distant.
16 Emanations.
17 Myself.
38 Quichuan Indian.
39 Harum.
42 Foot part.
43 Place (abbr.).
44 Cooking.
46 Institution (abbr.).
48 Joyous.
52 Sea eagle.
53 Stirring.
55 Insane.
56 Opposed to verse.
57 Sediment.
59 Groan.
60 New World.
61 Surmises.

Crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1 through 61.



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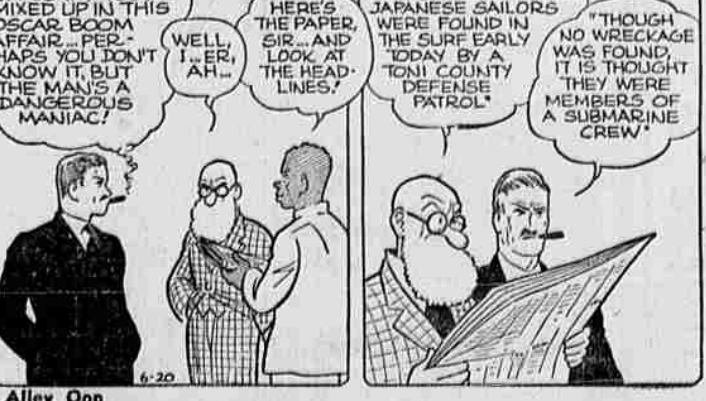
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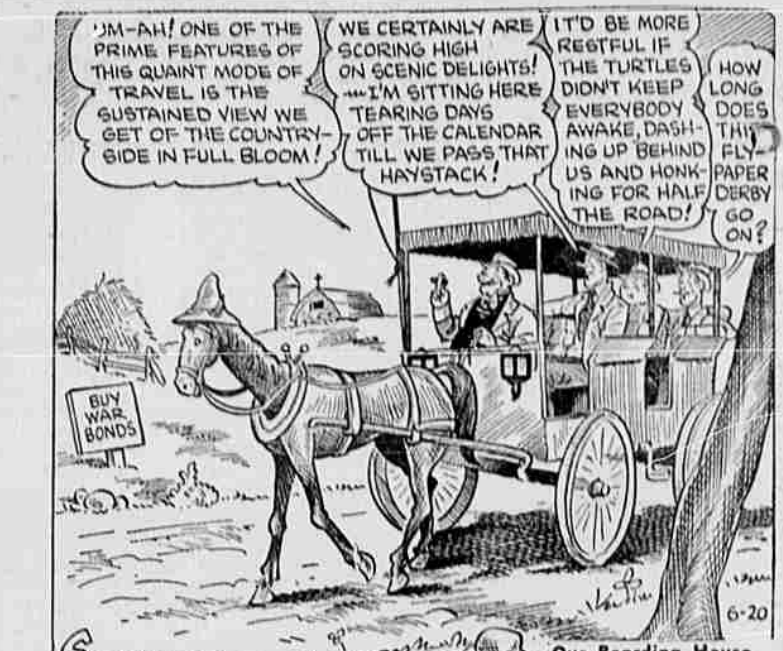
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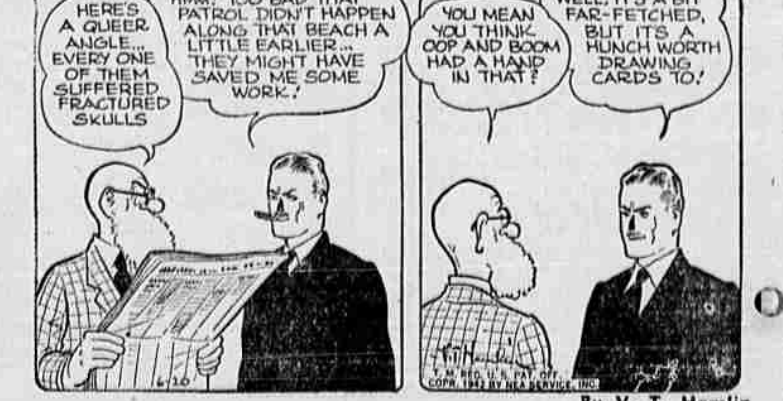
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