

SERIAL STORY
SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR
BY BLANCHE ROBERTS

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THE STORY: Judith Kingsley and Tom Burke, employees of an airplane factory, are on route to the factory's west coast branch—Judith to investigate a "leak" in the organization, Tom to take the place of a new bomber. Tom and Judith are in love, but have quarreled. As they are about to take off again, Judith hears the hostess say they are changing co-pilots.

SKYWAY HOLDUP
CHAPTER III

JUDITH noticed most of the passengers were nodding in sleep except Tom, the foreigner and the large man in front of her. Everything was peaceful, with nothing to substantiate her fears.

Then suddenly the plane rocked and her spine grew rigid with fright. Everybody on the ship came awake instantly. Someone screamed. The hostess came running through the aisle.

"Fasten your safety belts, please," she urged, her voice calm. She hurried to the front of the plane, but when she tried to turn the handle of the control room door it was locked. She turned to face the frightened passengers, but just as she opened her mouth to speak, the plane leveled into smooth flying again.

Then a man exclaimed: "Why, we're landing."

"I believe so," smiled the girl in the uniform, trying to ease the tension. "Please be calm. I am sure everything is all right. Forced landings are not uncommon."

Judith glanced at Burke. He was sitting erect, his right hand hidden beneath his coat. The foreigner, too, was waiting expectantly. She shifted her gaze quickly to the man in front of her, and as she did so, he stood up. Her heart rose in her throat.

"You heard the lady," he roared gruffly. "Take it easy. Just a forced landing." He backed toward the control room, ignoring the pleas of the hostess to return to his seat. When he stood with his back against the closed door, he drew a gun. There were gasps of terror. A woman screamed and wilted in her seat but no one made a move to help her.

As the plane wheels hit the earth, Judith opened her purse and her cold fingers closed about the little gun she always carried when she traveled. Until now she had never used it.

THE big liner rolled to a bumpy stop and the door to the control room opened. The co-pilot stepped out. His eyes darted over the people.

"Good work, Heavy," he said to the man with the gun. He strode down the aisle and disappeared through the door.

Judith's eyes were fastened on the foreigner. Here the one she feared most, but so far he had made no move. He sat very straight in his seat, his eyes fixed on Tom. An electrified excitement that she had never felt before enveloped Judith.

She saw a light flare from the outside at a distance and draw nearer. While she watched it approach, she wondered how she could get off the plane and follow if the men only took Tom with them.

Judith drew on her courage and said brightly, "This is very exciting."

Heavy, the man behind the gun, grinned at her while the passengers turned and glared. When Tom Burke looked at her, there was a light of understanding in his glance.

The co-pilot put his head in at the door.

"All right, Karl."

Instantly, the foreigner came alive and stood up, an ugly grin in his hand covering Burke from the back.

"Come along," he ordered curtly, nudging Tom with the point of the pistol.

Burke stood up. As he moved down the narrow aisle he bumped Judith's seat. A packet of papers slid quickly and noiselessly from his right sleeve and dropped beside her. She looked at the papers, her arm to cover the bundle and Burke walked on to the door with the foreigner behind him.

Little pricks stung at Judith's skin as she realized she had the plans of the bomber in her possession.

Heavy waved his gun and moved down toward the outside door. "Don't anybody move," he warned, pointing at the door. "I ain't minding to pull this trigger. And don't get off this plane until morning if you value your health."

In another moment, he dropped to the ground and slammed the door. A car roared off.

The hostess was the first to come alive. She jumped up, ran to the pilot's compartment and pulled back the door. There was a horrified gasp from her, as she dropped to her knees. Two men rushed up behind her.

One of them said, "Here—let me in. I'm a doctor."

The door closed after them. But almost immediately it opened again and the hostess came out.

"The pilot has been hurt. We are trying to use the radio. I am afraid we will have to make the best of the situation. I'll try to make you comfortable."

BUT from the moment Judith was far from comfortable. Her calmness had deserted her now. She kept thinking of the papers her fingers grasped in the seat beside her. When the spies discovered the plans were missing, they would return and make a thorough search for Tom's accomplice.

She stuffed the papers into her purse and stood up. She made her way to the cabin up front and edged in.

"How long before he will come around?" she asked the doctor.

He shook his head slowly. "Can't say. It looks like a bad concussion."

sion. He was hit over the head—a nasty blow."

"They may come back," said Judith, and for the first time in her life her voice trembled with fright. The plans made her pulse bulge, and reminded her constantly of the real danger she was facing.

The man spoke again.

"I wonder what those fellows wanted? What they were after?" Judith pretended not to hear. "I think I'll go outside and have a look. I really don't believe anyone is around now."

"I'm coming with you," Judith told him and followed quickly. Others, seeing their intentions, came too.

"You'll have to jump for it," said the man with a grin. He leaped to the ground and reached to help her down. "My name is Harry Hornsby."

The stars twinkled overhead, but there was no moon. Someone playing a flashlight over the ground discovered the car tracks on the hard sand, winding in and out among the sage brush. Judith followed the tire marks with no definite purpose in mind.

Then in the distance, a light suddenly appeared. Her heart stood still but she did not cry out. In a moment one of the others saw the glow and exclaimed: "They're coming back! Get back to the plane everyone. Don't give them an excuse to shoot."

When Judith did not follow, Hornsby turned back for her. She pulled away from his hand.

"No. I can't. Please return with the others and just forget where you saw me last. I will be much safer that way. Please!"

At first Hornsby refused to leave her, but she insisted frantically, on the verge of desperate tears. He turned and hurried back to the ship, almost running.

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



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NEXT: The Japs don't practice what they preach.

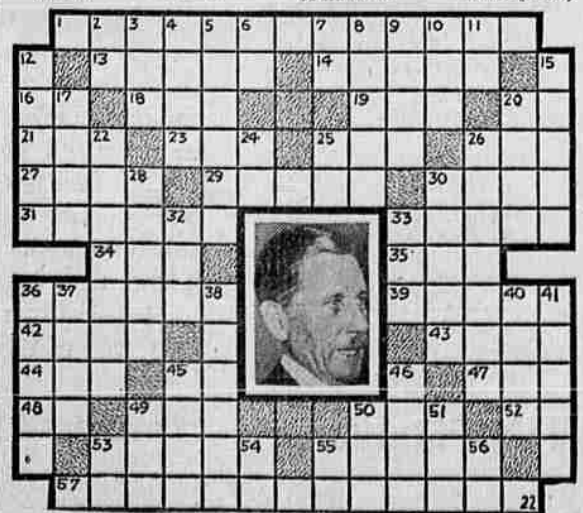
U. S. MINISTER

HORIZONTAL Answer to Previous Puzzle

1 Pictured U. S. Minister.
13 Brig.
14 Decay.
16 Fleet Surgeon (abbr.).
18 Nothing.
19 Tap lightly.
20 British (abbr.).
21 Turkish cap.
23 Fall behind.
25 Pronoun.
26 Falsehood.
27 Space.
29 More recent.
30 Ventilates.
31 Inclined.
33 Separately.
34 Ancient Irish fortification.
35 Three (prefix).
36 Annoys (abbr.).
39 Kind of dyestuff.
42 Sea eagle.
43 Short letter.
44 Insane.
45 Alternating current.

VERTICAL

2 Jewish month.
3 2000 lbs.
4 Truck.
5 Body of land surrounded by water.
6 Court (abbr.).
7 High School (abbr.).
8 Higher in place.
9 Bellow.
10 Ignited.
11 Cloth measure.
12 Rubbish.
15 French city.
17 Withered.
20 Impetus.
22 He is U. S. Minister to New.
24 Symbol for germanium.
25 Film.
26 He is also military officer there.
28 Plant.
30 Protective garment.
32 Compass point.
33 Dined.
36 Time.
37 Ages.
38 Fasten.
40 Bit of news.
41 Requires.
45 Midst.
46 Company.
49 Auricle.
50 Obese.
51 Golf device.
53 Parent.
54 Spain (abbr.).
55 Pair (abbr.).
56 Registered Nurse (abbr.).



For a second Judith stood undecided. Then she found a large bunch of sage near the wheel tracks and crouched behind it. (To Be Continued)

IT'S ALL TALK

WILSON, N. C. (AP)—For 10 years a group of men met from time to time in front of Harry Walls' tailor shop and talked of the weather, politics and world problems. In the winter, they sat inside. They called themselves the Squatters' club.

Walls moved away and the men, afraid a new proprietor might not like their company, chipped in and rented his shop quarters.

Now there'll be no business there except talking.

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Alley Oop



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