

• SERIAL STORY  
**OF BRIGHTNESS GONE**

BY HOLLY WATTERSON

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BIRTHDAY PRESENT  
CHAPTER XV

It was working out, Candace thought happily, in a way that was almost too good to be true. The big intramural dance, Martin's birthday and, best of all, her transfer all coming at once like this!

She had several days off before she was to start at Good Samaritan. They gave her a chance to make arrangements with Mrs. Prosser for a birthday supper after the dance, and to do some personal shopping.

She squandered long-saved money on a dress she felt befitting to such a great occasion. Candace was pleased when, at dinner, the solicitous waiter left them alone. She sat back, smiling at Martin. "What is it, Peter said he had to do?"

They had planned to have dinner together, the three of them, and some girl Peter had asked; but at the last minute Peter had sent word that he couldn't make it.

"Some case they've been following went bad," Martin said. She leaned forward a little. "Martin," she said softly, "I have a wonderful surprise for you. A wonderful present. We won't have to be separated any more. I've gotten a transfer to Good Samaritan."

He didn't say anything. But he didn't look moved, he looked startled. First startled, and then guarded. She saw, with a sick shock, that he was displeased.

All her happiness, all her assurance was abruptly stripped from her. Dazed with disappointment, she heard herself apologizing. "I won't hang on to you, truly I won't. If you think it might be embarrassing, it needn't be generally known that we're engaged. I thought that with us both in the same hospital, even though we'll each be busy and won't have much time off, it will still be something just to catch a glimpse of each other occasionally."

Then, when Martin still didn't say anything, "You're not happy about it," you're not pleased," Martin said softly. "I'm surprised, naturally." Nothing more. But later, when they were in a taxi bound for the dance, he said abruptly, "Candace, there's something you should know."

With a frightened sense of impending doom she cried out sharply, "No!" Then she tried to lighten that. "You sound so serious, let's not be serious tonight."

The evening was a failure. No amount of pretending could save it. Peter didn't show up at all, but she never noticed. Her mind was a blank, she was sick with this sense of foreboding.

She was relieved when Martin finally said savagely, "Let's get out of here."

She went back to Mrs. Prosser's. At the sight of the table and the cake with its candles waiting to be lighted, Candace shivered.

Martin had felt her shiver. "This is the damndest damp moldy place," he said. A fire had been laid and he applied a match to the shavings and drew a rickety chair close to the fireplace for her.

When Martin no longer had any excuse for fussing about, he said finally, "Candace."

"You remember Pete and I told you about that tea for the prospective brides? You remember we mentioned that girl, Faith Hartshorne, the daughter of the chairman of the board? I looked at a dog of hers that was sick, you remember that? Well, the girl was grateful or something and she must have mentioned it to her father and he was too and they phoned me one night and asked me to dinner."

Candace made a move as if to speak but he said, "No, wait. Wait until I've told you—I felt I couldn't refuse because after all I wanted that appointment. Oh, I know it sounds silly. But Good Samaritan isn't like most hospitals; pull counts a lot with the appointments. You wouldn't know about that." (Oh, wouldn't I, she thought bitterly; she'd pulled some strings of her own to get Martin!)

"Anyway, Hartshorne is number one boy there, and I felt I couldn't afford to have him down on me. So I went."

He added abruptly, "I've been seeing the girl occasionally since."

The hospital tea had been months before. All this time, then—Candace said slowly, "And you never told me, Martin? Why?"

He shrugged impatiently. "Because I was afraid you'd get upset, I was afraid you'd think it was important. And it wasn't!"

It was important enough to tell her now, though—important enough to have turned her gay laughing Martin into a gully, hostile stranger. "... But now? Why are you asking me now?"

HE had forgotten that Peter had insisted on it; that was swallowed up in this new and embarrassing development. He pointed out reasonably, "If you were to turn up at the hospital suddenly like that, don't you see how it would look? It would look as though I've been trying to put something over—"

"Do you mean," she said, "do you mean—you've never told her about me, either?"

He laughed bitterly. "The first minute she was nice to me I suppose I should have warned her. Don't you go falling in love with me; I'm taken! That would have marked me down as a nice chump, wouldn't it?"

Candace flushed resentfully. "All these months since, though," she suggested; but he didn't answer that. She persisted, "You'll tell her now, won't you? You'll go to her, tomorrow, and tell her

about me? About—us?"

Martin swore. "No," he said explosively. "Going to her, dramatically, like that—Suppose she told her father? It might even cost me my appointment."

"Why? Why? Unless—" She struggled with stiff dry lips against words that hated to come, "—unless she's in love with you."

He didn't deny that she was in love with him. "She's a kid," he said. "She thinks a penniless internee is 'romantic.' In six months she'll be over it." He sounded bitter.

She asked slowly, "And if she isn't, Martin? If she isn't? Suppose I help you to lie and cheat a little longer and she still doesn't 'get over it,' what then?"

He didn't answer and she thought, "I'm in competition with his ambitions. He feels I'm in the way. . . . Her chin went up. "Suppose the other hand," she said, "that I refused to be a party to deceiving someone else as I've been deceived. Suppose—that I made it no longer necessary for you to lie and cheat. That I—released you."

He had flushed a deep, angry red. "I'd have my brain examined if I wasn't glad. If I didn't feel I was lucky to be free of a jealous, nagging woman—" His foot struck savagely at a log and sent it crashing into the fire.

Candace felt as though she herself had been kicked. A dizzying wave of nausea swept over her. When it had passed, she rose slowly. "How nice for you, then," she said, mocking him. "How nice! Because you're free of me. And so your career as a fashionable physician, providing this girl doesn't 'get over it,' starts much sooner, doesn't it? And it starts right at the top."

She would not allow him to accompany her, she shrank even from letting him help her on with

her wrap. And then she was alone in the hallway outside and Peter's white face was swimming up to her through a sick mist. (To Be Continued)

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OH, ME!

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By Harold Gray

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ANSWER: The Appalachians.



Freckles and His Friends



By Blosser

**FORMER U. S. PRESIDENT**

**HORIZONTAL**

1 Pictured former U. S. president. —Howard

11 Constellation.

12 Weird.

13 High school (abbr.).

15 Siamese coin.

17 Neither.

18 Italian river.

20 Belongs to it.

22 Footlike part.

23 Sedan.

24 Disconcert.

28 Tax.

29 Make a mistake.

27 Age.

29 Born.

30 Like.

31 Morindin dye.

32 Court (abbr.).

33 Boundary (comb. form.).

35 Hops' kiln.

36 Dutch city.

39 County in New York.

**ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE**

**VERTICAL**

1 Trouble (var.).

2 Man's name.

3 Small.

4 Parcel of land.

5 Within.

6 Myself.

7 Six and four.

8 In a line.

9 Evergreen.

10 Symbol for tellurium.

13 Employ.

14 Heavenly body.

16 Him.

18 Wan.

19 Shield fillet.

21 Constrains.

22 Book of Psalms.

23 Struggle.

25 Obliterate.

28 Hideous giant.

34 Genuine.

35 Sioux Indians.

37 Dreadful.

38 Actual being.

43 Home of Abraham.

44 Valley.

47 Consumed.

48 First woman.

49 Wine vessel.

50 Varnish ingredient.

52 Senior (abbr.).

53 Type measure.

54 South latitude (abbr.).

55 Music note.



Wash Tubbs



By Crane

**Boots and Her Buddies**

OH, I'M NOT WORRYING EXACTLY

ONLY LOOK AT ALL THE THINGS THAT CORA AND THE PROF ARE DOING

YEAH, BUT YOU'RE UP TO YOUR EARS IN DEFENSE WORK, TOO

WHAM! WHAT KIND OF A VINE WAS THAT I GOT A HOLT OF?? WHOOEY!

A RUBBER VINE! I BETCHA I'VE FOUND JUST WHAT DOC TOLD ME TO FIND FOR HIM--RUBBER PLANTS!

Alley Oop 9-22



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin