• SERIAL STORY

OF BRIGHTNESS GONE

BY HOLLY WATTERSON

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THE BITTER TRUTH

CHAPTER XXV

DR. FRAZIER and Miss Bech came out of room 721 together, walked into the chart room. He made a notation on 721's chart and she took it from him and hung it on its proper hook.

"You look tired," he said.

Candace had been only days on the case but it seemed like years. "I am tired," she said. She passed a hand wearily across her face, as though by the motion she could erase the blue smudges from under her eyes.

"Everything about this case makes me tired: that poor husband slinking around with the air of a criminal as though by giving her a baby he had personally sentenced her to death; that mother, that pathetic father slipping in there to hold her hand and crying. And through it all she just lies there, refusing to get well, practically willing herself to die! I've tried bringing in the baby to her and she just shudders and turns her head aside—"

She asked suddenly, very low, "Peter, do you think she knows? Who I am, I mean? About me—and Martin?"

"No," Peter said, "I'm sure she doesn't. What gave you that idea? Has she been talking at all?"

"Not a word. It's just that—well, she hates having me around, I'm sure of it, and yet she won't let me out of her sight. It seems to me to be a form of self-torture, as though she wants to punish herself for something. She makes me feel she's wearing me as a hair-shirt."

Peter said gruffly, "I don't think it will be for much longer, though. I'm sticking around this afternoon. I have a feeling you'll be needing me—"

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CANDACE was sitting at the window, trying to read, when she thought she heard the girl call. She stepped quickly to the bedside. "Yes, Mrs. Eustis?"

The girl's eyes weren't open, but the lids were fluttering, and her lips moved slowly. "Tell Faith," she was whispering, "tell Faith—" The eyes opened suddenly wide. "Tell Faith I love her," she said clearly.

Candace straightened, abruptly with shock. "Talk sensibly, Mrs. Eustis," she commanded sharply. "You don't have to wander in this way. It's time you thought of making some effort to get well."

The girl looked up at her beseechingly. "I've been wanting to ask you," she begged, "you never told me. Did he—did he say anything else?"

"Who?" Candace demanded. As though she didn't know, as though every nerve in her body wasn't waiting to jump at the sound of his name on those lips. . . .

"Why, Martin," the girl whispered. "Martin, of course."

Candace found herself struggling with a swimming nausea. This was what had tired her more than anything else, the fear of some reference to Martin. She grasped the headrail of the bed for support.

"Mrs. Eustis," she said reasonably, trying to distract the sick mind, "you're not talking sensibly. You're married, your husband's name is Harvey. You have a sweet baby in the nursery downstairs—"

"I know." The girl rolled her head impatiently, as though shrugging all that away. "I know that. I know you don't want to tell me, too; you don't want to talk about Martin to me because you despise me. I don't blame you. I've been unfaithful to Martin. To have had Martin's love and then just because he was—was called away, to have married someone else—! You have a right to despise me for that."

Her voice was getting weaker. "I was frightened, I couldn't stand it without Martin, that's why I married. I tried to pretend when—when my husband held me in his arms, that it was Martin holding me. I tried to pretend it was his baby. And I'm too tired to pretend any more. I want to go to him—"

Candace took a deep shuddering breath. This, then, was the secret of that determined slipping away from life. This was the havoc a well-meant gesture of her own had helped to bring about. Blind, not to have seen it sooner. Blind, blind!

• • •

SHE said, making her own voice steady and quiet with an effort, "Mrs. Eustis, I know you're ill, very ill. You've made yourself so, but I'm afraid I've helped. You can't go on in this vicious way any longer. There's something you have to know. Right now."

She took a wasted hand firmly in both her own, as though to lend of her strength. "I don't believe Martin Corby ever loved you. Certainly he never sent you any message the night he—he died. I told you that, well, because I knew you loved him, you yourself were hurt, perhaps dying, and I thought I was making his going easier for you—"

She fought for a tone, firm, reasonable, that would carry conviction to the sick girl. "His last message was to me," she said. "It was that his engagement to you had been all wrong.

The blue eyes were wide open now, in horror, as though Candace was the patient, and mad. "What are you saying? Who—who are you?"

Candace said clearly, "I'm the girl Martin was engaged to when he met you."

The girl cried wildly, "It isn't true! You're making this up. It couldn't be true. That message, you couldn't have made that up, you couldn't have known my name—"

"Oh, couldn't I, though?" Candace said bitterly. "I knew you and everything about you. But the most important thing about you to me was that your father had money and influence, that he could help Martin Corby in his career. That's why Martin left me for you."

"You're lying!" the girl gasped. "You're a fiend! You're doing this to torment me, because you hate me—"

"I'm not," Candace denied gently. "I don't hate you. If I did, I'd let you go on thinking this thing, wrecking your life and all the happiness you could have for the sake of a dead man who never loved you, who wasn't really capable of loving anyone but himself." She herself was realizing that, definitely and finally, at last. "No, I'm really grateful to you. Because you've made me see what a fool I've been, too.

"I've let Martin poison my life. With me it doesn't matter, there's only myself to hurt. But with you there's more than that, much more. You have a husband whom you promised to love and honor; you have a baby son you've brought into the world. And unless you're as selfish as Martin, you'll get well and try to make up to them for this—"

She started for the door. "You won't be wanting me around after this. I'll send Dr. Frazier to you now. If you're doubtful about all this, if you don't believe me, you might ask him if it's true. He knows. And—good luck," she finished gently.

(To Be Concluded)

HOLD EVERYTHING!

"Gosh, I hope this defense plant transportation problem doesn't get any worse!"

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UHLIG'S

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

ANSWER: A wild pig, specifically the peccary.

NOTE: A new species of elephant discovered in New York.

MAGNOLIA STATE

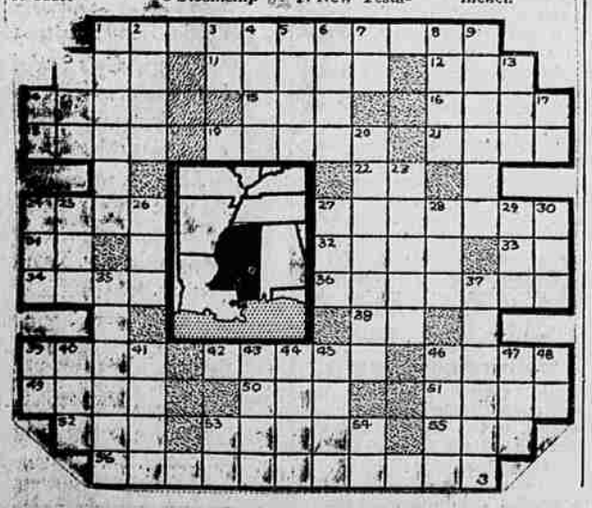
Answer to Previous Puzzle

HORIZONTAL

1 Depicted state
10 Reverend (abbr.).
11 Visible vapor.
12 Conclusion.
14 Violent wind over Adriatic sea.
15 Tree.
16 Jacket.
18 Norse god.
19 Valleys.
21 Confined.
22 Symbol for tellurium.
24 Portico.
27 Its capital is ——.
31 Italian river.
32 Shield fillet.
33 Sorrow (var.)
34 12 months.
36 Thrashing.
38 And (Latin).
39 Pace.
42 Follows second.
46 Czar.
49 Roman emperor.
50 Compass point
51 Retained.
52 Consumed.
53 Jaeger gull.
55 Indian.
56 Stutterings.

VERTICAL

1 Breed of sheep.
2 Man's name.
3 Steamship (abbr.).
4 Genus of shrubs.
5 Vend.
6 Identical.
7 I am (contr.).
8 Chirp.
9 Buries.
10 Wand.
13 Russian river.
14 Burmese chieftain.
17 New Testament (abbr.).
20 Adorned with stars.
23 Applause.
24 Foreign agent.
25 Pedal digit.
26 Swiss river.
27 Book of the Bible.
28 Lock opener.
29 Possess.
30 Treenail.
35 Prevents.
37 Inserts.
39 Symbol for tin.
40 Beverage.
41 Writer of poems.
43 Ship's steering apparatus.
44 Small island.
45 Bring up.
46 Ruffian.
47 Malt drink.
48 Road (abbr.).
53 Part of "be."
54 Symbol for nickel.



Out Our Way
By J. R. Williams

Our Boarding House
With Major Hoople

Red Ryder

By Fred Harman

Little Orphan Annie

By Harold Gray

Freckles and His Friends

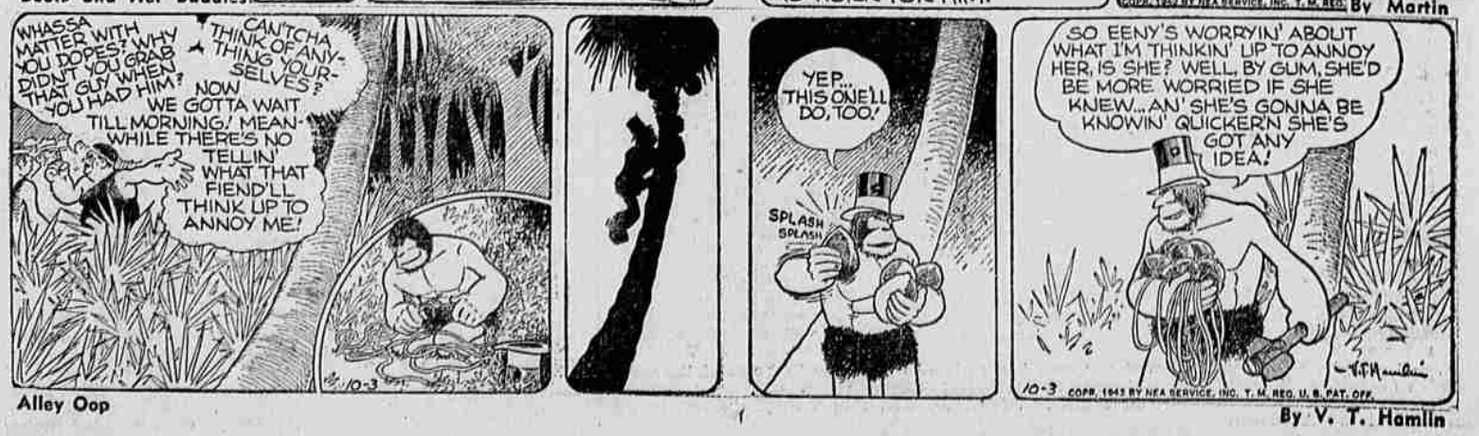
By Blosser

Wash Tubbs

By Crane

Boots and Her Buddies

By Martin



Alley Oop

By V. T. Hamlin