

• SERIAL STORY

PLAY BY PLAY

BY PAUL DAVID PRESTON

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THE STORY: Blythe Miller, suspicious, follows a stranger to the apartment of Nancy Hale to see if she is a spy. Blythe is a young widow of a soldier, and was brought to the field with her young son, homeless and penniless, after being hurt in an auto accident. She falls in love with Duane Hogan, cadet pilot and a star of the football team coached by Blythe's father, Pop Miller. Blythe also loves Duane and is jealous. But she also becomes curious and frightened when she hears the stranger offer Nancy \$1000 to give Duane and another player sleeping pills before the next football game—and hears him make a threatening remark about her father.

BLYTHE IS DISILLUSIONED

CHAPTER XIII

BLYTHE MILLER thought the world would surely explode. This drama, here on the stairs, just couldn't be! It was like a lurid novel. Or a Class B epic down on one of the side street third-run movie houses. It wouldn't have surprised her if some orchestra had started mood music behind scenes, as on the radio; or if everybody had suddenly broken it and laughed, as the cadets did when they got to clowning.

But no, this was real! Blythe knew all too surely that Nancy Hale and the brass-voiced gent upstairs there were characters not from a story but from real life. One of them had just finished his main speech and cued the other. She waited breathlessly for Nancy's response.

It came slowly. "You mean," Nancy remained calm, however, "that you... want me to... drug Norman Dana and Duane Hogan. So they can't play good football and win the game. You want Lincoln Field to lose."

"It's all right," said Nancy. "You're smart!"

A thunderous silence followed that. "What's a ya say, sister? Okay for playing wif us, hrm? The boys'll treat you right. You just say the word now, and we'll start wif this grand and no questions asked, see."

Suddenly Nancy answered him. "All right," she said, still cool. For a moment the brassy gent became expansive. "At last! It's the girl!" He chuckled and patted her shoulder. Then quickly he turned grim. "But no monkey business, sister! We'll see it done ourselves, this time. Now get this—I give you the rest pills, see. Give 'em to you now. Five o'clock Wednesday me and a pal come here. You fix it so we can hide and watch what you do. We can tell in half an hour, these pills make 'em lazy, see? ... You get me?"

"Yes," said Nancy. "At's a girl! You put us—you got a closet, eh? Clothes closet, maybe, where we won't be seen and we can still watch! Okay then, everything's jake, see. You get the dough Wednesday night before we leave. No harm done. Nobody ever know it. You can salt the money down, scatter it, do what you like. Sure. Later—you and me, huh? Sure, baby. Don't forget, 5 o'clock Wednesday. Slip us in."

He broke off with a low laugh of victory and Blythe saw he would start back down. She heard Nancy say "All right" once more; heard the word with quick, stabbing horror, then, silently fled.

If Blythe had been in mental turmoil yesterday, she said to herself, she was nearly insane now.

Sobbing quietly, but hysterically, she scooted along the privet hedge, past the taller shrubbery and through the first tunnel that led to the top of the stadium.

Up there nobody was in sight, here in the middle of Monday morning. She fled without reasoning about it. She just knew she couldn't go back to Pop's office and wait for the business call, or be there when Nancy Hale came in. Too much inside herself was like a hurricane. She had been snooping and—in common with most snoopers—heard only something which built distrust.

The great stadium yawned in its emptiness now like some gigantic dragon. At least it seemed horrifying to Blythe. Everything, in fact, seemed horrifying. Nancy Hale. That brassy man. The war. Life in general. . . .

She was half running along a row of seats, climbing as she ran, without direction. She came alongside the press box. Against the stadium, the booth was cozy small, like an attic nook or a hall closet to which a scared little child might run and hide. Blythe ducked in. Sure enough, the cold wind was off her in here. The glassed room, touched by November sun, was even warm. In a moment, she was leaning on the reporters' long front table, crying in utter abandon.

That complete breakdown lasted a quarter hour or so, then ebbed away. The isolation here atop the stadium had been a blessing; and as tears can be, the complete giveaway to them had been needed relief. Presently she was sitting erect, staring down at the lime-striped field and breathing normally again. But her dependency was deeper than ever—and more bitter.

So friendship, sacred to decent folk, had been made a bloody sacrifice. . . .

friend her. Everybody did. Picked her... picked her literally out of the gutter! . . . Saved her life, gave her a new start in a new home. And. . . And. . .

Afraid she would start crying again, Blythe ground her teeth in sheer anger. Anger at Nancy and at the sardonic, sneering things Fate can do.

She ceased trying to put all the pieces of her puzzle together. Still missing were the parts about Pop's anger in his office last week when she surprised him. Still unanswered were questions about that fat envelope in his desk. She had definite hunches now—she "thought" she knew! But she would have to reason all that out later, or solve it in another way, perhaps by going frankly to Pop himself when he should again be well and out of bed.

It was incredible! Nancy, pretty as a picture, sweet as pie. Turning traitor like—no, worse than Benedict Arnold! Benedict Arnold at least did what he thought was right, history shows. He still risked his life fighting even though for America's enemy in that distant day.

But Nancy Hale had listened to the lure of money and nothing else. And this same Nancy was the girl who had made a fool of Blythe. Not only had she sought Blythe's friendship, she had sought to win the man Blythe loved, and had the temerity to ask Blythe's help in winning him! It was altogether the cruelest, most damnable piece of business Blythe had ever encountered, she told herself anew.

Expose Nancy? . . . Go quietly and tip off Pop, and the Lincoln Field authorities, and the downtown police? . . . Set a trap for

her and the sneaking gamblers who offered the thousand dollars? "Certainly!" Blythe whispered, vehemently, alone there in the high press box. "It's only justice! She has it coming to her. Let Nancy Hale be exposed! And then—and then—she was beginning to sob again—and then maybe Duane Hogan will come to his senses!"

(To Be Continued)

OLD DEAD EYE

DENVER, Colo., (AP)—"I'm a faster man with one of these than any Jap I'll ever meet," John Ellington told the missus as he reached for the pistol in his hip pocket. "Just watch me draw!"

But John was quicker on the trigger than the draw. An explosion tore away the seat of his britches and his army induction at Fort Logan has been delayed pending healing of a bullet wound.

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER: Oxford, Ohio.

ENGLISH WRITER

HORIZONTAL—Answer to Previous Puzzle—20 Those who use dynamite.

18 Pictured British playwright, George.

12 Profound insensibility.

13 Assert.

14 Weird.

16 Sand.

17 Matched group.

18 Bounded.

19 Baffled.

21 Smeared.

22 Depart.

23 Cunning.

24 Norse name.

26 Paid (abbr.).

28 Symbol for tin.

29 Holding device.

32 Grain.

34 Be quiet.

35 Born.

36 Sleeping vision.

38 Air raid precautions (abbr.).

40 Size of shot.

41 Riddle.

45 Grape refuse.

20 Those who use dynamite.

25 Winnow.

26 Seed vessel.

27 Indian timber tree.

30 Encountered.

31 Fondle.

33 Golf device.

34 Diminutive of Samuel.

37 Reply.

39 Jail.

42 Talk idly (colloq.).

43 Symbol for manganese.

44 Sharp and harsh.

46 Abdominal pain.

47 Frozen water.

49 Cupola.

50 Great Lake.

58 Turned.

59 Pertaining to river.

53 Pig pen.

55 Bachelor or Business Administration (abbr.).

57 No.

60 Babylonian deity.

