

PLAY BY PLAY

BY PAUL DAVID PRESTON

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DUANE VOLUNTEERS

CHAPTER XIX

AS Mom Miller had expected it would, the luncheon for the two cadets in her home turned out happily. Indeed, it is impossible to damage soldier morale with a friendly home-cooked meal.

Norman Dana left the table literally pounding his chest. "Let me at 'em!" he boasted. "In the air or on the ground!"

"Mom's propaganda has to do with on-the-ground scrapping first," Blythe reminded them. "And the field of battle is a football field."

"Mom Miller," Norman pinched Mrs. Miller's cheek, "for you'll make a personal touchdown. What about it, Hogan?"

"Shake!" said Duane. "That's the mood they were in. Mom was starry-eyed with pleasure, and Pop himself beamed at his two talented 'lads.' Blythe couldn't keep from covertly watching Nancy Hale. Blythe's own smile was of surface depth only. Inside, she felt darkness like an impending doom."

When Norman, Duane, Nancy and little Scooter were leaving, Blythe stole a moment alone in her room. "I've got to manage somehow not to upset things," she reasoned, frantically. "Until I can think what to do!"

Think what to do. That was the problem which weighed on her. She had overheard Nancy agree to drug the two players, but she had not been able to work out a suitable counter-plan. She had simply procrastinated, torn miserably from within, in the wishful little-child feeling that something good would probably turn up to solve the problem for her.

Nancy and baby Scooter left the Miller home first. Pop had orders to lie down and rest an hour, and Nancy would go on back to care for his office where there was a lot of going and coming here in the week of the State U. game. Then Norman left; he had two hours of flying duty before he could report back for the last football workout. Blythe overheard them, departing. She was about to decide on going with Nancy when she heard Duane speak.

"If you aren't going to sleep, Pop," he drawled, gently, "mind if I kind of sit with you? I'm on leave, you know."

"I'd be tickled, son. Sleep is for babies!"

"Yes, sir." Mom was staring out the door. "That Nancy! Tlk-lik-lik!" Mom clucked her tongue in benign blessing. "If she ain't the darlin' thing!"

"Yes, ma'am," Duane agreed, courteously.

"Duane, I wonder if you know how much you have meant to her?"

"Ma'am?" Pop was fidgeting his hat brim and beaming happily. "What she means, son, is that Nancy needed a sort of big brother that night of the car wreck, and you happened to be the one. You'll have to excuse an old man for preaching, but it don't never do any harm to show unfortunate people a favor that way. You understand?"

"Yes, sir. I was glad to help, what little I could. But it wasn't just me. It was all of us. You folks, most of all. And the team." "She thinks most of you, Duane," said Mom.

"Well, I appreciate that, but it's not—" "I tell you what, Duane," Pop was stretched out comfortably on the big sofa now, and jabbing a finger at the younger man. "If I was some of you young bucks, be dogged if I wouldn't be looking at Nancy!"

Mrs. Miller held up her hands and laughed. "For goodness sake, what do you think they are doing?" she demanded. "Norman was even crying her right out in the open, here today!"

For no reason—no reason at all that Blythe could see—all three of the others turned and looked at her. And so far she hadn't said a word! Their looks were open, frank, quizzical, until all at once they became self-conscious.

"A-humph, humph!" Pop put on a very poor act of coughing. He didn't have a cough, and the transparency of it simply made the little matter worse. To her own consternation, Blythe felt herself blushing. She, Blythe Miller, sophisticated of 1942, turning hot on the neck like a Lizzy-Jane somebody from away out on an R. F. D.!

She tore off all the pretense. "Listen, you folks," Bly said, smiling self-consciously, "don't look at me! Of course Norman was 'crying' Nancy! Why shouldn't he? She's a very pretty girl. And Norman certainly isn't the least bit retiring."

AND then—contradicting her own self—she suddenly loved them for it; all at once she knew she wouldn't have these good people any other way! Sophisticated? Modern? That kind of pretending didn't tell any more. The warmth on her neck was gone again, and Bly had an odd little desire to hug all of them, hug them and kiss them then and there.

Mom was making small talk again, going toward the kitchen to start the dishes, and Bly would have followed but Duane motioned her to stay. When Mom was away, he softly closed the living room door. All at once then he was serious.

"Pop—Coach," he said, "I have been talking to Bly."

Both Pop and Bly looked at him in surprise. Duane was unconsciously flexing his arm muscles, fist clenched.

"Yes, sir," he nodded. "And I wanted to tell you, I don't know what the score is, but you can count on me. I'm not too smart at figuring things out, but if there's a job of work at hand—" He paused, a bit lamely, appealing silently to Blythe.

"I ought to say, Pop," she put in, "that the pistol I brought you didn't come from Captain Foster, as you asked. It's Duane's. I didn't think any of the Lincoln Field officials—well, maybe they oughtn't to get suspicious of anything. Until you are—until we—"

"Yes, sir," Duane nodded. "And whatever needs to be done, I wish you'd let me do it for you. Fists or gun!"

It was a tender moment, and Pop honored that offer of friendship with a long silence. He was deeply touched.

All at once Blythe realized that this was the moment to tell what

she knew, too! To tell that Nancy Hale had agreed to turn traitor for a thousand dollars. (To Be Continued)

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By William Ferguson



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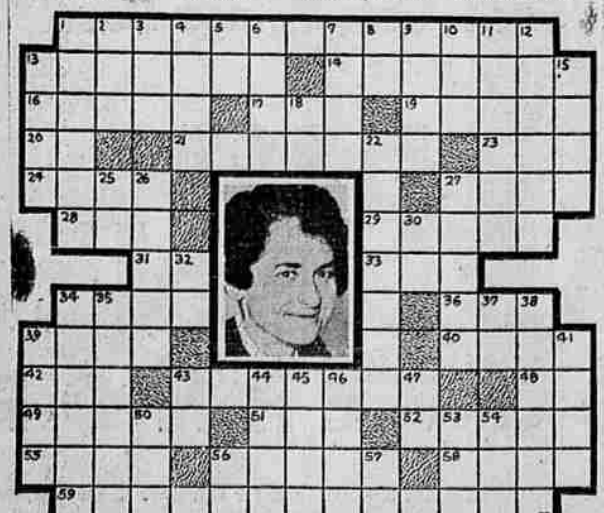
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A TWENTY-ONE INCH CUBE CAN BE DIVIDED INTO HOW MANY TWO-INCH CUBES?

HEADS WAVES

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| HORIZONTAL | Answer to Previous Puzzle | 22 Brazilian bast fibers (pl.). |
| 1 Pictured director of the WAVES, Dr. | SERRANO SUNER | 25 Toward. |
| 13 Marvel. | IRAJAPE BINGO | 26 Escape. |
| 14 Delains. | ANWITSERIE ME | 27 Relieves. |
| 16 Obliterate. | ANGELTATIONE ED | 30 Right (abbr.). |
| 17 Boat paddle. | BEL SUSTAIN ARE | 32 Steamship (abbr.). |
| 19 Emanate. | WRENIS | 34 Operatic heroine. |
| 20 French article | NOW | 35 Elixir of life (Hindu). |
| 21 Bestowed. | ADDED | 37 Symbol for radium. |
| 23 Girl's name. | ASS DR | 38 Pulverizes. |
| 24 Princely house of Italy. | ISTADO | 39 Line of junction. |
| 27 Observes. | RE DIENE AMID ID | 41 Black. |
| 28 Peruvian silver coin. | NE NEE LAG AC | 43 Symbol for cerium. |
| 29 Impudence (colloq.). | TIONGS SPANISH | 44 Secure. |
| 31 We. | | 46 Unmixed. |
| 33 Belongs to it. | | 48 War god. |
| 34 Bounders. | | 47 Special (abbr.). |
| 36 Unit of work. | | 50 Nevada (abbr.). |
| 39 Identical. | | 53 Reverend (abbr.). |
| 40 Principal garment of a Hindu woman. | | 54 American humorist. |
| 42 Make a mistake. | | 56 South latitude (abbr.). |
| 43 Direction finder. | | 57 Music note. |
| 48 Not out. | | |



Out Our Way By J. R. Williams THE FOLLOWING



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Little Orphan Annie



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Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



By Fred Harman



By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By Martin



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