

PLAY BY PLAY

BY PAUL DAVID PRESTON

CHAPTER XXVII

THE snow of this November afternoon was spiced with bits of steel, much as it had been that night weeks ago when Nancy Hale's car crashed into the Lincoln football team. Nancy was thinking of that when she ran out of Pop's office this Wednesday at 4. She wished she could stay and help Pop, but Bly was here, and Nancy herself had an extremely urgent piece of business planned. "Scooter's out at our home with your Mom," she told Bly hurriedly. "But I want him for dinner when Duane and Norman are there."

tell your pals what's going on! The man called Ed pleaded that, grinning and nursing a bruised chin.

After five minutes of talking it still wasn't clear. Everyone here, as in Pop's office, seemed to be talking at once. The two detectives, Blythe, Nancy, Even big Duane, who grew more and more indignant as he began to understand things.

"We were just trying to get the straight of it, Nancy," Blythe said, rather desperately. "We had such a fight! It's a wonder somebody wasn't—"

"She thought we was the gamblers!"

"No, no—no!" Nancy took over firmly now. "You must listen to me. I—oh, I hope there is still time. If we—"

Nancy hadn't gone directly out to the Millers after Scooter, though. She had another appointment, prearranged. She filled that appointment. It took hardly a quarter hour.

When she did get to the Miller residence, Mom was knitting Scooter a new cap. Also, she had baked him a whole dozen gingerbread men. One leg was stuck gruesomely into his mouth now, and the man's torso had been smeared all over his hands and face. But Scooter was having himself a time!

"This is the nicest baby, Nancy," Mrs. Miller said. "I declare, you ought to be very proud of him!"

"I am. But, Mrs. Miller—will you excuse us if we rush now? I—I've got an awfully important something to do this evening. I guess I—I want to leave Scooter in Pop's office a little while, then maybe I can—"

"Of course, dear. I haven't forgot that you invited the boys to dinner, you know! Do you want to borrow my linen set?"

"Oh... no, Mrs. Miller. No, thanks. I don't need it, and anyway—I can never repay you for what you and Bly and Pop have done for me already. Never!"

She said it so emphatically that Mrs. Miller looked surprised. "Don't feel it that way, Nancy dear. We love to help our friends. Are you—you aren't distressed about anything, are you?"

"No. I'm just in a kind of hurry, I guess. Come on, Scoots."

She knew her nervousness must be starting to show now, and she almost wished she had left Scooter there for the evening. But then—

"I want him close to me! In case anything—happens!"

She could leave him in Pop's office, she knew. The men would be delighted to have him there, and anyway it wouldn't be more than an hour. She was a little frantic when the trolley seemed to crawl. The time was getting on toward 5! And that was a crucial hour.

Pop's office, however, delayed her again.

"There-r-r-re she is!" None other than Abe Loumann himself saw Nancy and recognized her the moment she came in. He boomed out, loud. "T. J., grab her quick! That's Nancy Hale and her baby! Get that contract out and fill it in right now! Miss Hale, you're working for World Features. I'm buying you from Coach Miller. You and your son, you're America's new Sweetheart of the Air. The Cadet's Dream. The Spirit of Aviation. The—"

"What in the world do you mean!" Nancy's pretty forehead was puckered in astonishment.

"I'm making it \$1200 a week to start. We want to get some atmosphere shots tomorrow morning right here at Lincoln Field, and some at the game in the afternoon. Make it combined aviation and football. That's it, T. J. Sure! A girl falls in love with a flying cadet, see. He's a man from England over here working with the Yanks. She's a typical American girl. He learns to play football and she—"

"Please!" Nancy demanded, looking around at all the men.

Glenn Summers of the Journal took Scooter from her arm. "It's a harmless sort of spam, Miss Hale," he said gently. "But it's real enough. All you do is say yes. And say it in a hurry, while we all can be witnesses. You're a movie star. Get it?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!" she told them. "And I can't talk now anyway. Pop, please keep Scooter a little while. Or—Mr. Summers, you help him! I—I'm in a terrible hurry. I really am!"

She was gone, just like that! Loumann was ranting at his associate, T. J. Natwick, to get the contract forms all filled in and ready for signatures. And everybody around them seemed again to be talking at the same time.

NANCY literally ran to her room in Pop's office. She tripped upstairs—and halfway up heard voices!

"Oh... Oh!" She paused there in alarm. "It must have happened already. And I wasn't there! They said I'd have to—give them the evidence they needed!"

Her heart was thumping furiously as she climbed slowly on. Then in fresh astonishment she recognized the voices as Blythe Miller's and Duane's. Quickly she went in.

"Nancy!" Blythe gasped out. "Mrs. Hale, for heaven's sake

HOLD EVERYTHING!



Remember how she kept our ball when we busted her window? She's probably just the type that hoards sugar and stuff!

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THE BRUSH EATERS Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



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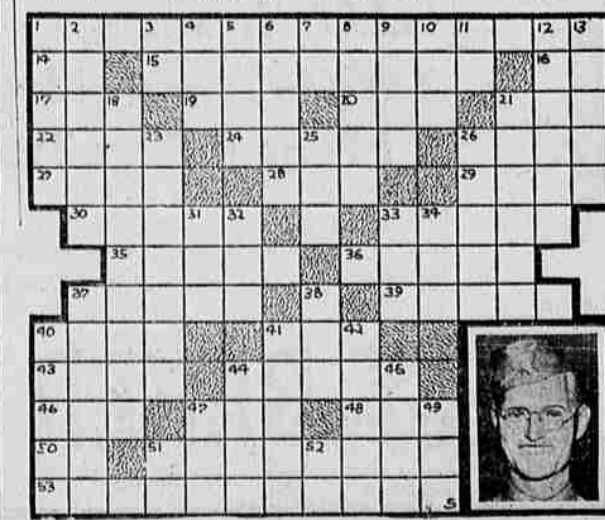
THIS CURIOUS WORLD By William Ferguson



ANSWER: In 1770, Jacob Priestly noticed that it would rub out pencil marks, and named it rubber.

GENERAL'S SON

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for horizontal and vertical words.



Little Orphan Annie



Freckles and His Friends



By Harold Gray



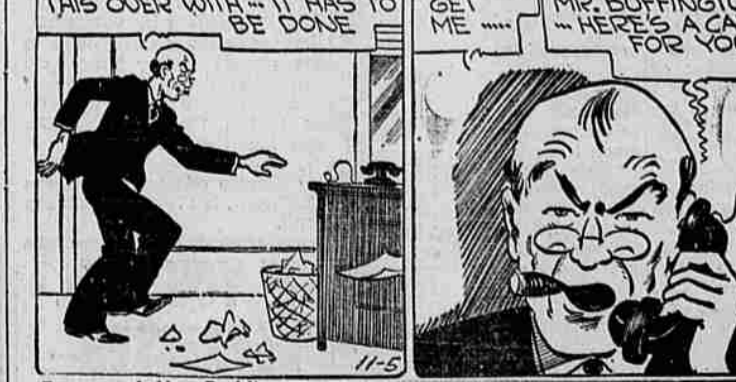
By Blosser



Boots and Her Buddies



By Crane



Alley Oop



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin



By V. T. Hamlin