

# The GIRL From The DOUBLE R

BY BETTY BLOCKLINGER

CHAPTER IV

"They'll probably leave your ranch alone for a while," he was saying. "It would take a ouija board to tell where they'll strike next. Meanwhile, you keep off the range. When there are women involved, neither side can operate freely."

Shortly after Rusty's talk with Doctor Westmore, she and Manny drove away.

"Gosh," breathed Manny, "he sure is one swell guy! Only he's got more 'don't touches' around his spread. Don't touch this and don't go in there. There were tough guys in there too—that shed room, I mean."

"You—didn't hear anything, did you?" asked Rusty. Then, as Manuel gave her a reproving look, "And don't look like that. If ever anyone was born to hear things not meant for his ears—"

"Yeah, but they were too careful," admitted her brother.

Fortified by a drug-store counter lunch, she left him at a motion-picture theater while she made the rounds of employment agencies in search of a cook to take Conchita's place.

Some of the reception clerks were polite; some laughed openly when she said she was looking for household help. The one or two cooks available demanded such exorbitant wages, Rusty couldn't consider them.

She had no better luck at the Cattlemen's Association. The secretary of the association shook his head. "Darned if I know why it's considered patriotic to assure our fighting men food; however, if we try to hold riders on the ranches when they want to go into war industries, we're accused of hindering the war effort."

Rusty went on with the doubtful assurance of "Anyone turns up, we'll send him on."

Manny, torn from an exciting reproduction of aerial warfare, zoomed and machine gunned until Rusty demanded he be quiet.

"You're going to be drafted into the Double R Army," she told him, "and you're on KP until further notice. That wood box has to be kept filled, and the coal hod. And it's up to you to do much of Pedro's work, feeding the chickens and the hogs and hoeing the garden."

With Manny quieted by visions of his immediate future, Rusty's mind could return to the problem which had lain dormant throughout the day.

Doctor Herb Westmore. How could she become so interested in such a person? Yet she was. Even though she doubted him, the thought of him made her sing.

She turned off the main highway, dipped through the tiny stream of the Little Sandy, and spun along the road until the Big Sandy lay in sight.

"Gee, you sound happy," remarked Manny. "Guess you're in love. Doc says it affects some folks that way; makes them sing—"

Rusty nearly stalled the old car in the middle of Big Sandy.

"Manuel Rowland, why did he say that? What had you said?"

"Oh, I just asked how a guy could tell whether or not his sister was going to marry a guy. I didn't mention no names. I just said I'd heard of a guy who'd heard another guy pop the question to his sister and didn't know if she was ready for the fade-out or not because all she told the guy was there was something missing, and when he asked what, she said 'mud in his hair.'"

"Manny!" wailed Rusty. "How—I mean, what did Doctor Westmore say?"

"Well, he sort of lit up, red-like. Then he began to sing, and then he said when people were in love, they sang. He said he could love a girl if he wasn't so busy. What did he mean by that? And why did he say if a guy really loved a girl, he'd forget it sooner than involve her in—in—gosh, Sis, I don't remember what."

"It doesn't matter," Rusty answered softly.

The lights of the ranch house starred the black hulk of the Nopocos as she drove into the Double R. More stars burst into the darkness when she drew up before the house. Rusty wondered if she had stumbled onto some celebration.

Decker appeared beside the car to open the door.

"Where on earth have you been? Jed said you took Babe to Doc Harness' successor, but when I telephoned, he said you weren't there nor had you been there."

"What?" demanded Rusty.

"After the furore he's started

among the ranch girls where he called, I thought I'd better let him know you'd been claimed. I asked to speak to my fiancée, told him who I was and that I was calling from the Double R."

"Yes?" There were sparkles in the blue-gray of Rusty's eyes.

"And he said that not only was my fiancée not there, but she had not been there, and then—then he made that same remark you did the other night, something about mud in my eye. Naturally, I hung up, and believe me, if we had another decent vet within five hundred miles, I'll never call him again."

"Imagine condemning a man for telling the truth," murmured Rusty and, gathering up her new kitten, she started for the veranda.

Rusty found the house filled with neighbors, the men deep in argument in the living room, the women milling around in the kitchen.

"Community dinner," her mother told her as she entered the kitchen. "Each one brought something—"

Rusty slipped into the pantry long enough to pick up a pitcher of milk. Then she carried her kitten out to the brooder pen.

"This will have to do you for the night," she said, tossing fresh straw into the little house at the end of the pen. "There's big business afoot and I don't want to miss anything."

When she returned to the house,

she went to the living room, to be greeted by a pause in the men's conversation.

"Well, Rusty," said her uncle. "We're organizing the ranch vigilantes—"

Decker spoke up hotly. "They're trying to fight 1945 gangsters with 1845 methods."

"Your 1945 methods didn't keep them from getting more cattle last night, Ladue," someone reminded him.

"Losing the first skirmish doesn't mean the battle's lost," he retorted.

"Does this mean you're not coming in with us?" asked Jed. "What else can I do?" Decker said.

A buzz of conversation started, to be stopped by the ringing of the telephone. Rusty answered it, then returned to the room looking stupefied.

"Decker, that was your mother. There's been a raid on your ranch. One of your men, Slim Jack, has been shot."

The fried chicken glazed in its grease, the cole slaw lay limp in the salad bowls, yet the men did not return from Decker's.

Rusty paced the veranda and yearned alternately for Ralph and Babe—Ralph to handle things; Babe to carry her to Decker's for every car and horse on the place had disappeared.

(To Be Continued)

## Poultrymen Must Develop Markets

Glutted markets for eggs and poultry in North Carolina were the rule rather than the exception before the war.

While these gluts were seasonal in nature, still their existence and persistence for a period of years indicated a great need for the development of a marketing program on a state-wide basis to prevent such gluts.

Prof. Roy Dearstyne of State College says that to a certain extent North Carolina producers have lost their local markets because many chain stores are selling eggs produced outside the state. This has been largely due to the fact that the great majority of poultry products produced in North Carolina is by small units, and also facilities for collection, grading, and storage of the products are not adequate.

"If an orderly progress is to be made in the future the situation

must be attacked in a vigorous manner," Dearstyne suggests. "Group action on the part of producers seems to offer at least a partial solution to the problem. It is very likely that there will be more direct marketing in the future than in the past, with the curb market playing an important part in this movement."

Enough time was lost from farm accidents last year to have produced five bushels of wheat for each of the 137,000,000 persons in the United States, says National Safety Council.

Concentrates for livestock feeding in the next year will total about 153 million tons as compared with 162 million in the 1944-45 year.

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## They Also Serve Who Wait . . .

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Yet, though she gives you a smile and a cheerful greeting, you do not really know her. She is the Woman Who Waits.

This war is personal to her. And while her's may not be the loudest voice you hear at a War Bond rally and she may wear no uniform of any kind, you can be sure her rationing coupons are her own. Only she and her God will ever know what it means to wait—and wait—as the days go by; though the postman can tell a thing or two. For the Woman Who Waits the war still goes on. It will not end until her boy comes home.

Never complaining, seldom showing her fears and anxiety, facing the world with a smile, the Mother with the Service Flag, more than any single one of us, continues to set an example of Courage and Devotion. We rise to salute HER on this day of VICTORY!

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