Runaway June

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER and LILLIAN CHESTER

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By special arrangement for this paper a photo-drama corresponding to the installments of "Runaway June" may now be seen at the leading moving picture theaters. By arrangement made with the Mutual Film corporation it is not only possible to read "Runaway June" each week, but also afterward to see moving pictures illustrating our story.

SYNOPSIS.

June, the bride of Ned Warner, impulsively leaves her husband on their honeymoon because she begins to realize that she must be entirely dependent on him for money. She desires to be independent.

June is pursued by Gilbert Blye, a wealthy married man. She escapes from his clutches with difficulty. Ned searches distractedly for June, and, learning of Blye's designs, vows vengeance on him. After many adventures June is rescued from river pirates by Durban, an artist, who uses her as a model for "The Spirit of the Marsh." Mrs. Durban becomes jealous and drives June out. She is kidnaped by Blye and Cunningham.

June is taken by Blye to the boarding house of Mrs. Russel. She escapes, gets a job sewing and engages a cheap room in a tenement. The failure of another woman's attempt to be independent and a home maker opens June's eyes. Blye finds June in the tenement.

FIFTEENTH EPISODE.

"At Last, My Love!"

CHAPTER I.

AT the moment that Blye met June Ned Warner was springing up the stairs, his jaws set and his fists clinched.

It was thus that Ned Warner had, after all his weary pursuit, found his bride—in the presence of Gilbert Blye! Behind Ned came the runaway June Warner's stern faced father and gentle faced mother; came Iris Blethering, June's bosom friend; Bobbie Blethering, husband of Iris; came Marie, June's high cheek boned maid, with her friend and admirer, Officer Dowd; came fat old black Aunt Debby, panting and out of breath and shrieking for her Miss Junie; came that handsome and energetic collie, Bouncer, leaping and barking and encouraging the excitement with all his canine might.

For only an instant Ned Warner stood nonplused before the door of the room; then he seized a chair, and, striding to the door, he swung the chair, while the others of the little throng, which had piled in after him, fell back.

Beyond the door the dark, handsome man with the black Vandyke had led

"The viper!" hissed Honoria Blye.

the beautiful little runaway bride to a heavy man with thick lidded eyes and a round head bristling with short hair. He sat in a chair, and in his hands was money. He rose as June was led up to him, and into her hands he thrust the money. Then he smiled at her, while Gilbert Blye stepped back, sauvely smiling and stroking his black Vandyke with his long, lean white fingers.

June shrank from the fat hands which were about to be clasped upon her shoulders and from that wide, thick smile upon the face of the heavy man and, laughing nervously, turned to Gilbert Blye, who bent his dark, handsome head above her and spoke to her in his low voice.

Crash!

The door splintered and gave way, and through it burst the wild eyed Ned Warner, his jaw set and his fists clinched. For a second he stood bewildered by the strange light which flooded this large room; then, with an oath, he sprang for the black Vandyked man. He clutched his fingers around the throat and, with a savage roar, bore Gilbert Blye to the floor. The runaway bride uttered shriek after shriek.

At the door downstairs there stopped an electric coupe, driven by a sharp featured woman with a long nose and high arched brows. She jumped out, and from the dim hallway there came a short, thick man with a short, thick stub of a cigar in one corner of his

Iris and Father and Mother Moore Bent Forward Eagerly.

mouth. It was the well known and justly famous private detective, Bill Wolf.

"Got him, Mrs. Blye!" he triumphantly husked. "Your husband is right upstairs—with the girl!"

"The viper!" hissed Honoria Blye and dashed into the dim hallway.

Bill Wolf caught her as she started up the stairs.

"Not so fast, madam!" he called and laid hold of her arm. "This way, please."

"But my husband! The girl, June!"

"They're here all right, and they can't get away. Here's your pictures, ma'am, and here's your bill."

He handed her a large roll of paper and two photographs, one of Gilbert Blye and one of June Warner.

Upstairs there was a scene of wild confusion. The runaway bride, her mother, Iris Blethering and the vivacious Tommy Thomas were screaming in hysteria, while the heavy man with the thick eyelids and the man with the white mustache and Bobbie Blethering and half a dozen other men rushed upon the fiercely struggling men on the floor.

"My husband!" shrieked June. "My husband!" And she ran around and around the excited pack of scrambling men, followed by the leaping, barking Bouncer.

Into this tumultuous scene there rushed Marie and Officer Dowd and fat old black Aunt Debby just as Bobbie by main strength dragged from Gilbert Blye the maddened assailant who had sprung upon him.

Gilbert Blye rose feeling of his throat, and for a moment he contemplated Ned Warner with dazed bewilderment; then a flush of anger came into his cheeks, and his black eyes blazed.

"Let him go!" he yelled, and, thrusting the heavy Edwards out of his way, he made a mad rush for the man who had attempted to strangle him.

It was huge Officer Dowd who this time jumped in between the two furious combatants and, with the aid of half a dozen young men, prevented the desperate encounter which would have ensued.

"My husband!" sobbed June and tried to throw herself upon him, but he turned from her. "Ned! Mr. Blye!"

A hand was laid upon Ned's arm—Iris Blethering's. She had forced her way through the excited throng.

"Why, Ned!" she called, shaking his arm and looking at the eyes from which the light of reason seemed to have fled. "Ned, listen to me. It's Iris! Don't you see? This is a motion picture studio!"

They all had to repeat it again and again before they could reach his dazed intelligence. He had seen but two objects in all this huge room, crowded with its moving picture machines, its properties, its scenery, its banks of strange lights, and those two objects had been his runaway bride and Gilbert Blye.

June! She stood now supported by her father and mother, her large, lustrous eyes turned appealingly on Ned, waiting the moment when she dared approach him again.

"Don't you understand, Ned?" she frantically cried. "Won't you understand? It's a motion picture play!"

Slowly he turned his glassy eyes in her direction. He comprehended at last, but there was no softening in his face, for there still stood the dark, handsome Gilbert Blye. Ned made a sudden lunge for his enemy, but Officer Dowd, watching him narrowly, stopped him.

"You have been with that man ever since you left me!" savagely charged Ned, turning suddenly toward the trembling June and shaking his finger at her.

In the abandoned bank room below Bill Wolf stood near a dusty window with Honoria Blye and rolled out before her a bill, yards long, covering all the separate items of his sleuthing on the trail of Gilbert Blye and June Warner.

"Go over the list, ma'am, item by item," confidently invited the faithful detective. "You'll find them correct. And here's a check on your own bank all ready and made out for you to sign and here's a fountain pen, ma'am."

Honoria Blye took the long list and began to check it off, item by item.

In the studio above a score of indignant eyes turned on Ned Warner, and there was a loud chorus of protest as he pointed accusingly at his unhappy runaway bride.

"What do you mean?" demanded the cold, stern voice of Gilbert Blye, and he advanced, his black eyes glowing. "This girl has done no wrong!"

They all talked at once, and they all talked indignantly at Ned Warner—Tommy Thomas, the white mustached Orin Cunningham, the round headed Edwards, Marie, Officer Dowd, Bobbie and Iris Blethering and all the camera men and members of the Blye Stock company. According to them, June Warner was the sweetest and best little wife any man dared wish for, and if Ned Warner chose to criticise her in any way he would have to answer to every person here, including fat old black Aunt Debby, who breasted straight up to him, waddling her voluminous self defiantly from side to side.

"Looky hyah, you, Mr. Ned!" she flared, and Bouncer, who had been rushing around the separated bride and groom, stopped to bark ferociously up at Ned. "Ain't that Marie been with our honey ever since she done come an' got her clothes? Ain't you got no gumption? Why, looky hyah, if you say a word about our Miss Junie I'll jest about squash you!"

Iris and Father and Mother Moore bent forward eagerly toward Ned, and all smiled reassuringly. Then father Moore turned to June.

"My daughter," he said, "come home."

Mother and daughter wept in each other's arms.

CHAPTER II.

"NED!" It was a pathetic little figure which turned appealingly to the scowling young man. Her big eyes were full of tears. "It was all a mistake, dear!"

She choked back her tears, and there was a tense silence, in which Ned Warner stood with cold eyes and folded arms waiting.

"Oh, Ned, can't I make you see and understand?" And there was a piteous wistfulness about her. "We were all so happy on that day of our wedding, so happy as we started on our honeymoon trip! And when we stood alone in the Pullman drawing room, surrounded by our white ribboned baggage, there seemed to be no cloud in our sky!"

"Then why did you leave me?" Ned Warner's voice was harsh.

"It was the money!" Her lip trembled. "Don't you remember when I missed my purse? The porter came in just then, and you gave him a dollar. When he went out you gave me $30 and in just the same generous way you gave it to the negro. The difference was $29."

They were all startled by the force of the comparison. Only Gilbert Blye smiled, and the smile did not escape Ned.

"Do you remember I cried and you put my head on your shoulder? You thought I was tired, but I cried from humiliation. I felt like a beggar. I realized that for the rest of my life I would have to accept gifts of money from you. Then I dreamed about it. I dreamed that I was a piteous little beggar, always holding out my palms for alms; that I was receiving pay for being your wife just as mother paid Aunt Debby and Marie." Both Aunt Debby and Marie sniffed sympathetically. "And last of all I dreamed that I was being dragged home from the altar by a ring in the nose as the savages of old dragged home their brides. And when the train stopped and woke me up I couldn't stand it. I threw down your money and ran from the train."

"To meet this man!" interrupted Ned sternly. "Gilbert Blye was waiting on the station platform at Tarnville." And he noted that June looked at him in surprise.

"Hold on there!" Gilbert Blye spoke sharply. "I was waiting, but for a New York train. I had been to our Tarnville factory. I saw this beautiful girl on the platform and thought immediately what a good motion picture subject she would be. I was right. She screens perfectly." And he smiled approvingly at June.

"So you were strangers," remarked Ned, and there was an implied sneer in his tone. "You helped her on the train, and I saw you in the car talking with her!"

"You?" Both the runaway bride and the dark, handsome Blye asked that question.

"Yes, I!" this triumphantly. "I caught an express and overtook your local as we pulled into the station at New York, and through the car windows I say you bending over her and smiling, and she was smiling up at you!"

There was a pause, and the listeners looked from June to Blye and then at Ned.

"Oh, yes!" and June's brow cleared. "I had sold my watch to a funny old lady on the train to pay my fare. Mr. Blye bought the watch from her and very kindly offered to let me repurchase it whenever I found it convenient. He gave me his card; that was all."

"All!" Ned thundered. "He chased you from the train in a taxi, and I followed, but I lost you both."

"I did not!" Blye heatedly retorted. "I jumped in a taxi and tore straight for Cunningham's hotel," and he turned to the white mustached man for corroboration. "We were due at a dinner

And she looked in fright at Ned. There was a sneer on his lips.

"Well, Bouncer found Mr. Ned in Mrs. Villard's garden, and I knew you were hiding from Mr. Ned until you could make some money, so I told the chauffeur and the gardener not to let Mr. Ned see you or speak to you, and the next thing I knew Mr. Ned was gone."

He glared at Marie and June's heart sank. He shrugged his shoulders, as if dismissing Marie's narrative.

"I saw no cameras at Mrs. Villard's that night." And now he turned scowlingly to Orin Cunningham. "Yet I saw this man distinctly making love to my wife. And I saw Gilbert Blye doing the same thing!"

"We were rehearsing, Mr. Warner," explained Blye quietly.

"Yes, Ned!" June was crying, but, though Ned saw her, he paid no attention to her.

"We were to take the actual picture the next morning in the studio, and we were working out some scenes. It may help you if I tell you that Mr. Cunningham is the pursuing villain in 'The Runaway Bride.' I have been directing the pictures. I have taken the liberty several times of showing Mr. Cunningham how I wished scenes enacted I also play the deserted groom." And his black eyes flashed.

Ned laughed, but there was no mirth in it. June shrank under his contemptuous gaze, and her mother patted gently the hand which lay in her arm.

"I'll swear it was not a moving picture rehearsel the night you dragged my wife out of the New York cafe and took her on board your yacht."

"You bet it wasn't." It was the heavy T. J. Edwards, and he was bobbing his round head vigorously. "A contract is a contract. When your wife saw you she wouldn't go on board the yacht; she wouldn't finish the pictures; she couldn't do anything. My heavens, man, do you know I had already spent $75,000 on this feature? And if this girl quit we couldn't get another one to take her place, could we? So we dragged her on board the yacht." And he glared his defiance at all of them. Money was money.

Ned Warner had been sitting on the edge of a table. Now he sprang to his feet, and his eyes flamed. He caught his wife by the wrist and pulled her away from her mother.

"Here's one thing you can't explain." He dropped her wrist, and she stood swaying with half closed eyes, but there was no mercy in him. "I saw you rush from a house in a filmy stage costume."

There was a strained tensity in the group which surrounded them. John Moore started to come to his daughter, but Ned fiercely waved him back. "It was moving picture work. Very well. But tell me this—how could any girl who could not endure the humiliation of accepting money from her husband consent to appear on the street for any purpose in such a costume?"

There was a deathlike stillness among them, broken by a wild sobbing from the little runaway bride.

"Ned!" she cried. "Oh, Ned!" And she clung upon his arm. He held coldly rigid. "Forgive me! You can't know how I've suffered! You can't know how I've loathed it all! I was so mistaken, so wrong! I thought I had such a wonderful ideal. When I had achieved my independence, when I need no longer look to you for money, I was to return to you, and we were to walk hand in hand through life in that love which can be founded only upon mutual respect, which asks love for love and nothing more. I meant our love to be without a flaw. No man can understand the hurt to a woman when after marriage she becomes absolutely dependent on his charity."

"Why, Junie!" The small, mild voice of Mrs. Moore, and she stepped forward with deep concern on her gentle face. "What is all this talk about a husband's charity?" And she turned with wonder to Father Moore. "A husband makes only one gift to his wife, and that is at the altar. After that everything he has is hers, if people will only remember the marriage service. Your ring is a symbol of it. 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow.'"

Gilbert Blye clutched his black Vandyke and looked at the ceiling; then he smiled suavely.

"That's a great idea! I'll work it into the feature!" But no one heard him. There was an audible sniffle from Iris Blethering, and Tommy Thomas was looking intensely sentimental.

"And you, my son!" She turned with surprising severity on Ned Warner. "Have you forgotten that you promised to love, cherish and protect my daughter?"

There was a cry from the little runaway bride and a sob from Ned Warner as, oblivious to all around them, they clasped each other in a solemn embrace.

From that loving clasp the beautiful wife of Ned Warner raised a radiantly happy countenance to her mother.

"And I have no problem," she laughed, and then she cried. And Iris Blethering and Tommy Thomas sobbed together and formed a lasting friendship. And everybody was happy, including Marie and Officer Dowd, who had become conscious at the mention of the marriage service, and Aunt Debby, who was praising her Redeemer in an unconsciously audible voice, and Bouncer, who was leaping and barking indiscriminately for the benefit of everybody and anybody.

"Where are they? Where are they?" screeched a shrill voice, and Honoria Blye burst into the group.

Gilbert Blye walked serenely over to meet her.

"You may go home to your parrot, Honoria," he advised her quite happily. Then there came a cold somberness in his black eyes. "You can't interfere with my business this time, as you

party that night and were to stop at Mrs. Russel's, where all the girls of the company afterward boarded."

"And I went straight to Iris!" added the aggrieved June.

"Indeed she did!" heartily agreed Iris.

"She told us she had left you because you had given her money." And Bobbie Blethering was still profoundly perplexed.

"You remember I came out to the house for June's purse." Iris turned to Mr. and Mrs. Moore. "She wouldn't even let us lend her money, because she had a principle about being independent. When you and Ned chased in and drove poor June from our house and Ned found Gilbert Blye's card in her glove, then it was all off!"

"When I slipped out of Iris' window I had my purse, but no clothes," June pathetically remembered. "So I went out home to Brynport and stole my clothes and Marie."

"Why did he go to Brynport at the same time?" Ned glared savagely at Blye.

"It was an inspiration." Gilbert Blye smiled suavely and stroked his black Vandyke with his long, lean white fingers, and his black eyes glowed. "We had just formed the Blye Stock company at the dinner party. Mr. Edwards," and he nodded to the heavy man with the thick lidded eyes, "is our financial backer. Mr. Cunningham," a nod for the white mustached man, "is our leading actor, who has also an interest in the company. I showed them the picture of the beautiful girl in the watch. It had given me a great idea for a motion picture play, 'The Runaway Bride.' They were delighted with it, but we had no girl of the type."

"Wasn't I the jealous little party?" laughed Tommy Thomas. "I was to be the only leading lady of the Blye Stock company."

Gilbert Blye favored the vivacious brunette with a pinch on the ear.

"I remembered hearing Mrs. Warner tell the old lady on the train that she must earn her own living. I was certain that she would screen well. Why not get the original heroine of the idea? Edwards and Cunningham were enthusiastic. I had her address in her watch. I jumped in Cunningham's limousine and hurried right out to Brynport."

"And we reached the cafe just in time to chase you." Bobbie Blethering was beaming with eager interest. He was pieceing together a puzzle which had baffled him. "When Ned found your card we went to your house, and your wife told us you were at the dinner party."

"My wife," and a shade of annoyance passed over Blye's dark, handsome face.

"And on the way in from Brynport my taxi broke down," June went on. "Mr. Blye appeared out of the darkness as if by magic and offered his limousine."

"I have a confession to make," interrupted Blye. "I threw glass on the road." And there was a general movement of shocked understanding. All their cars had popped tires on that glass. "It was my only opportunity to stop the runaway bride. On the way in to the city I persuaded her that she could earn her independence easier and quicker in moving picture work than in any other way."

"So I became a temporary member of the Blye Stock company. I was to play the lead in the feature which he elaborated after I told him about my money problem."

"That was a great idea!" Blye was very enthusiastic. "The man, the woman and the money! It will appeal to every class and condition of people.

"I was to be the only leading lady."

We're spending a fortune in advertising it. Look at this new twenty-four sheet poster." And, moving a piece of scenery, he displayed a big lithograph of "'The Runaway Bride,' by Gilbert Blye; Portrayed by the Blye Stock Company."

Ned Warner was the only one who paid no attention to the lithograph. His arms were still folded; his eyes were still cold. June looked at him, and her eyes filled with despair.

"Why was it necessary to bind and gag me and leave me all night in the woods?" the husband demanded.

"Ned, what do you mean? Did some one do that to you?" June was half sobbing, and there was general surprise on the part of the Blye Stock company.

"Oh, Miss Junie, I didn't mean it to go so far!" the high cheek boned maid, Marie, cried, and she was pulling her thumbs in rapid succession while Aunt Debby glared ferociously at her.

"You!" June cried. "Why, Marie!"

have done ever since we were married, and you can no longer assume a dominance over me with your money." Suddenly the glow returned to his black eyes, and he looked to June and smiled his suave smile. "I have worked out my independence."

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a gay supper party at the New York cafe that night. The Blye Stock company entertained their departing star and her friends. Ned Warner sat beside his happy June. There seemed an extra affection tonight between Father and Mother Moore and Bobbie and Iris Blethering, and Tommy Thomas was the gayest of the gay. The eyes of the white mustached Orin Cunningham twinkled incessantly, and heavy T. J. Edwards sat with a smile of intense satisfaction on his thick lips. The feature was finished without an accident, and the first of the films was fine. Bobbie Blethering and Blye took an instant liking to one another. The old feud was entirely forgotten.

"They're good people, Ned," whispered the happy June. "And they were so good to me!"

Ned beamed down at June with delight in every inflection of her voice, in every turn of her beautiful head, in every fleeting expression of her lovely countenance, in every glance of her lustrous eyes. Quite forgotten was all the tearing strain of these past days; quite gone were all his bitterness and hate.

In her wedding gown, which she had donned once again, June was a vision of beauty.

Up rose Gilbert Blye at the head of the table. In his hand he held a small shining object. He made a wonderful speech about it, a speech full of wit and sentiment and good will and things which made everybody happy, and with an extraordinary flourish of words he presented that watch to the little runaway bride.

Amid whacking applause the little runaway bride made a blushing speech of acceptance; then there was a whis-

June Was a Vision of Beauty.

pered consultation between herself and the deserted groom, begun by a suggestion from the latter. Then up rose the beaming Ned Warner and made a manly speech, a generous speech, a speech full of heart bursting happiness, and amid great applause he presented that tiny watch to the dark, handsome, black Vandyked Gilbert Blye.

Then up rose Bobbie Blethering and looked at the clock and motioned to the head waiter.

"Well, it's train time," he proudly announced.

Two of the party looked up in perplexity. Every one else was grinning.

"Goodby, Junie, dear!" And Iris Blethering, jumping from her chair, threw her arms around June's neck and sobbed happily.

"Here are your tickets, Ned," called smiling eyed Father Moore, tossing over an envelope, and at that moment the doors of the private dining room opened, and in marched Aunt Debby and Marie laden with white ribboned honeymoon luggage. June's mother was at the farewell dinner, and she smiled with Father Moore at the thought that the happy couple did not know that on the back of the Moore car which was to take them to the railroad station to finish their uncompleted honeymoon was this legend: "JUST MARRIED."

Aunt Debby led the way with the bride and groom as they started to leave.

Bouncer leaped up as the rice began to shower upon the embarrassed bride, and Mother Moore leaned far across and whispered:

"Junie, dear, don't forget your purse."

THE END.

It Made a Change.

"Do you find the air of this neighborhood salubrious?" asked the new arrival.

"Not any more," replied the oldest inhabitant. "There has been a big improvement since they moved the glue factory to the other side of the county."—Richmond Times-Dispatch.

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