

MULBERRY SQUARE

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SYNOPSIS

To the quiet household of Doctor Ballard, in Mulberry Square, youthful Dr. Hugh Kennedy, comes as an assistant, to stay a year. He first meets Janie, nineteen-year-old daughter of Doctor Ballard. Her older sister, Celia, a petted beauty, is away from home. Hugh regards Janie, a universal favorite, as a small girl, to be treated as a chum. Hugh sees a photograph of Celia, and is impressed by her loveliness. He continues to regard Janie as, as he expresses it, a "good little fellow," a "funny kid," but she has a far different feeling for him. Celia returns home. She accepts Hugh's open admiration as her due, just one more in her train of admirers. Tom McAlister is another, and Carter Shelby, whom she has met on her recent trip, is a third. Shelby is believed to be wealthy, and Celia longs to escape from the "drabness" of Mulberry Square.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

"The prodigal son," he said, "did not depend on a motor . . . Mulberry Square! You described it so beautifully, Celia."

Celia's lips trembled. Janie thought very quickly.

"Why don't you go out to Aunt Lucy's?" she suggested.

"I'll call her," Celia felt almost grateful to Janie.

They heard her talking at the telephone in the hall . . . "If it wouldn't be too much trouble," the silver harp strings were singing. "Thank you, Aunt Lucy! That's simply darling of you . . ."

She was smiling when she returned to the living room.

"I'll run you out," Hugh offered.

"No, thank you," Celia's smile was not for Hugh. "Aunt Lucy is sending William in with the sedan."

III

"Hugh," Mother stood in the living room door. Her expression was worried and anxious.

"Yes, Mrs. Ballard," Hugh looked up from the chess board. Janie halted the victorious march of the ivory knight.

"Celia seems terribly upset," Mother's hand trembled against the dull blue portiere. "And the Doctor is out. Will you fix her something to make her sleep?"

A few minutes later Hugh knocked gently at Celia's door.

"Come in," a faint voice called.

Celia lay propped up against a heap of fluffy pillows in the lilac and ivory bed. Her face was wan and wistful.

"What is it, Celia?" Hugh drew a chair beside the bed.

"I'm utterly wretched." Her lips quivered. Her eyes were misted with tears. "I can't go to sleep."

"Drink this." He lifted her head from the pillows, tingling at the touch of her hair and the petal smoothness of her skin.

She drank the mixture like an obedient child, her misty eyes lifting above the rim of the glass.

"Tell me what happened, Celia?" Hugh settled the pillows behind her head. "You'll feel better if you talk it all out."

"It's just—me." The silver harp strings were muted to threads of sound. "I can't bear to be disappointed in my—my friends."

That Shelby with his mocking eyes! Hugh's hand knotted into a capable fist.

"Tell me, Celia." His voice was unsteady. There was a hammering in his ears. She looked so lovely and helpless and fragile in the nest of fluffy cushions.

"Don't, Celia! Don't cry!"

"Life is so hard. Sometimes I think I'll go into a convent."

"Celia!"

"It would be heavenly, Hugh." She wore her "Saint Cecilia" expression. Hugh saw her, lovely, fragile and forever beyond his reach in the somber garb of a nun. "No more hurts and disappointments. Just nothing but silence and praying and peace."

"My lovely Celia!"

"You do understand me, Hugh?" Celia returned from the convent. She smiled faintly, a poignant smile, misted over with tears. "You don't think I'm just an over-sensitive little goose?"

Her hand lay like a porcelain flower against the spread of lilac silk. Hugh stooped quickly, brushed it with his cheek.

"Celia," he said brokenly. "Celia!"

CHAPTER VIII

The White Marsh creek wound its twisting course through stretches of yellow-green reeds. Janie pulled occasionally on the oars to keep the boat in the current. In between times she sat very still and thought of many things. This was her last day at home.

Father was fishing. He sat in the stern of the boat and patiently trolled a line. It was a labor of love. There were, apparently, no fish left in all of the winding creek. Father didn't seem to mind. He puffed on his pipe and watched the lazy sipples. Dear Father! Janie's heart swelled with tender affection. She could feel it,

pressing against her chest, knotting a lump in her throat.

She was glad she was going away. It hurt more than she could bear to watch Hugh fall in love with Celia. He still went swimming with Janie and teased her and called her "a good little egg." But it wasn't quite the same. He was moody and thoughtful. His eyes, when he glanced at Celia, had a new sort of worshiping look. It had happened—Janie thought back through the past two weeks. It had happened, she decided, just after Carter Shelby had come and gone.

It was strange about that visit. The postman brought no more square gray envelopes. Mother dreamed no longer over the picture of a rose brick mansion.

Celia refused to discuss the matter. Mother and Great-aunt Rose believed that Celia had dismissed Carter Shelby because he had failed to measure up to her high ideals. It brightened Celia's halo. It shed a radiance about her. It made Janie a little sick . . .

"Look out there, Skipper!"

Janie roused with a start. The boat had nosed itself into the rushes; the oars were tangled in clumps of reeds.

"I'm sorry, Father. I was thinking."

"This is a good place to stop." Father pulled in his trailing line. "Let's see what Rachel packed in the basket. I have an appetite these days."

There were sandwiches in the basket and peaches and cookies stuffed with figs. Janie sat in the bottom of the boat, hugging her knees in her arms, leaning her head against Father's knee.

She was going away! It would be three months until the Christmas vacation. Three months and three hundred miles stretching between Janie and Mulberry Square. Perhaps, then, she wouldn't mind so much. Ninety days. Hugh had marked them on the calendar in the office. Hugh . . .

"I'll miss you, little fellow."

Little Fellow! Hugh called her that. He called Celia "darling." Mrs. Ballard had heard him in the garden one night. Darling! Darling! Darling! . . .

"I'll miss you, Father," she said.

"You aren't really eating, Janie. You're nibbling like a mouse."

"I—I'm not very hungry."

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"I have a lump in my throat."

"Tell me . . . Can you, Baby?"

She could always tell Father. As far back as she could remember, she could always tell Father about the things that hurt. Only this time it was different . . .

"It's going away, I guess."

"We'll do something pleasant to-night."

"I have an engagement with Hugh. He asked me to have supper with him at the Inn because it's my last night at home. We'll dance for a little while . . . Dancing with Hugh. There would be a moon. It was waiting now in the sky, misty, unnoticed, a thin white ghost of a moon . . .

"I'm proud of Hugh," Father said warmly. "Between us we're doing a pretty good job."

They were silent for a moment. The reeds all around them rustled with a gentle slurring sound, like the rustle of the taffeta skirts that Mother used to wear . . . "Janie is such a plain little thing." "Curse to Aunt Rose, dear. See—like Celia does." "Celia is a sweet tempered child. Sing your French song, Celia." Celia! Celia! Celia! Celia! . . . "Darling, darling, darling," sang the Chinese nightingale. Only it wasn't a nightingale. It was Hugh, talking to Celia in the garden . . .

"Next June," Father presently said, "you and I are going to take a trip."

"Where?" she asked, not caring very much.

"A fishing trip to Canada." Father's voice was excited and pleased. "Jumping Trout lake. I haven't been there for more than twenty years."

"Is it pretty?" She wanted to be interested in Father's lake. But she wasn't, really. She kept hearing the Chinese nightingale. Only it wasn't a nightingale. It was Hugh, talking to Celia in the garden . . .

"Janie! You're crying, Janie."

"No—no, I'm not."

"There's a tear on your knee."

She saw it, catching the sunlight, a small round tear on her bare brown knee.

"What a funny place for a tear!" She tried very hard to smile.

"Janie—" Father's voice was very gentle. "Are you unhappy, dear?"

She nodded.

"Why?"

She couldn't tell him why. It was like being happy, mixed up with so many things; being glad to go away, not caring about Father's lake. Hugh was in love with Celia. "Darling, darling, darling," sang the Chinese nightingale . . .

"I just feel sad," she said.

"You care so about things, Janie."

"I wish I didn't." She looked up at him with troubled young eyes.

"It isn't a bad way to be. You are hurt more often but you enjoy everything more. Remember, Janie, if you couldn't feel very unhappy, you could never feel very happy. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father."

He talked to her, then, about being brave and learning something from all the hurts. It was sad and very beautiful. She wanted to feel how much she loved Father, how happy she would be to camp with him on the shore of his silver lake. But she couldn't, somehow. She kept thinking of dancing with Hugh. Her heart grew larger and larger. There was an aching in her wrists. All of her was racing forward toward the evening. She didn't want to race away from Father. It was something she couldn't help.

Suddenly guilty, she pressed her cheek against his knee.

"Why, Janie!"

"I love you, Father," she said.

II

Janie dressed with the greatest care. Filmy underthings, chiffon stockings, garters with wee pink roses. There was going to be a moon . . .

She brushed her hair until it shone. How brown she was! Mother was right. She did look like a gypsy. If only she could be as pretty as Celia! Just for tonight. Father said she was prettier inside. If only just for tonight she could wear herself inside out!

The creamy dress from Paris. It was a beautiful dress. She thought she looked rather nice. Perhaps she could borrow Celia's shawl with the silky golden fringe. Aunt Rose gave it to Celia for Christmas.

Celia was not in her room. Janie wondered idly where Celia had gone. She thought she would use a little per-

ume, a drop on the lobe of each ear. There was a new bottle on Celia's dressing table. Lilies-of-the-valley . . . "That's how I thought of you," Hugh had said, "Lilies-of-the-Valley." Janie pushed in the stopper. She wouldn't touch it, not even a single drop.

Where did Celia keep her shawl? Janie crossed to the wardrobe. A letter was lying on the floor beside the cream and ivory desk. Janie recognized Muriel's writing. She picked up the letter. A sentence caught her attention . . . "Carter Shelby had dinner with us last night . . . There was a mark on the paper, the mark of a small French heel. It must have been an angry heel which stamped with a great deal of force. Even the nail prints showed."

The shawl was not in the wardrobe. Janie decided not to rummage around. She could ask Celia just as well.

Celia was not downstairs. Janie questioned Mother.

"She went out about three o'clock." Mother was setting the table. "Why are you wearing that dress?"

"Hugh asked me to have supper with him." Janie spoke the words slowly. It made them seem more real. "Just set the table for three."

"Be home by ten, dear. You'll have to make an early start in the morning."

Tomorrow? There was no tomorrow. There was only a moon and tonight . . .

The clock on the landing struck six. Hugh had not come in. Celia had not returned. Father came down the stairs.

"Hasn't Hugh come in yet?" he asked.

Janie shook her head.

"John," Mother said. "I'm worried about Celia."

Father was familiar with Mother's worrying habit.

"She's out on Manor street," he said easily, "or at Rhoda's, perhaps."

"It isn't like her not to tell me." Mother fretted. "She knows how I worry. You'd better eat something, Janie. Goodness knows—"

"I'm having supper with Hugh." Saying the words aloud reassured her.



"Next June," Father Presently Said, "You and I Are Going to Take a Trip."

III

She heard less distinctly the clamor of fear in her heart.

Through the hall, through the living room, out on the porch, back again to the hall. The clock on the landing struck seven. Were they together, Celia and Hugh? . . .

"I am simply distracted." Mother was talking at the phone. "I've called everybody . . . Hugh isn't here either. . . . Well, I had thought of that" . . .

Janie had thought of it, too. Hugh and Celia. Mother was pleased. Why shouldn't she be? She didn't know that Janie was being hurt. A small grave person, silent and tense, on the Chesterfield in the hall. A frock with a border of flowers stitched in colors around the hem. Small kid slippers that wanted to dance . . .

The fan-light paled from amber to mauve, the gray of twilight to night.

Mother talked at the telephone. . . . "I'm at the end of my wits . . . It isn't like Celia . . . Hugh isn't here, either" . . .

Hugh with his tumbled bright hair and his laughing ruddy-brown eyes. "Five feet tall, rather small" . . .

"John, it's after nine o'clock." Mother expecting the worst.

"I'm going out on Manor street." Father at the door. "You can reach me at Archer's or Leland's. Want to go, Janie?"

"No thank you, Father. I'd rather stay here."

They came as the clock was striking ten. They came like a burst of music in through the wide front door. Celia was radiant. Hugh had a shine in his eyes.

"Where have you been?" Mother cried. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Mother!" Celia flung herself into Mother's arms with a pretty radiant gesture. "Oh, Mother! What do you think?"

"We've been getting engaged," Hugh said in a voice that was solemn and happy and hushed. "That is, if you have no objections."

Janie said nothing at all. She sat silent and still, her fingers twisting together.

"Celia darling!" Mother was laughing and crying, too. "Well, Hugh, this is a surprise!"

Janie slipped out into the kitchen. The slippers that had wanted to dance tripped and stumbled climbing the dark back stairs.

That was Hugh! Janie, curled up in the window seat of her own small room, was breathless and very still. She couldn't talk to Hugh tonight. The happy sound of his voice was more than she could bear.

"Janie, dear," Hugh was calling. "Have you gone to bed?"

Janie said nothing at all.

"I'm coming in anyway." He opened the door. Janie saw the happy shine in his eyes. She turned her head.

"Why are you sitting up here alone?" he asked with a crinkly smile.

"I—I'm thinking."

"They're making a fuss downstairs." He sat beside her on the window seat. He was obliged to sit very close. "But you weren't there."

"Did you miss me, Hugh?"

"Of course I missed you," he said softly. "I've been searching all over the house. Why did you run away? Aren't you glad I'm to be your brother?"

Janie nodded. In the place where her heart should have been there was nothing at all but an ache.

He told her how happy he was. He said lovely things about Celia. He didn't remember that he had invited her to have supper with him. He didn't think that her slippers had wanted to dance. He didn't know that the moon had been waiting all day to shine for Janie and Hugh. She didn't tell him. She just looked down from the window at the blurred yellow lights in the Square. Hugh was looking down, too.

"Lord," he said in a hushed sort of voice, "the Square is grand tonight. There was moonlight the night I arrived. Do you remember?"

Did she remember? Would she ever forget as long as she lived?

"We sat under the mulberry trees," he continued. "I told you a story about a boy named Hugh."

He talked softly on and on. He did not appear to notice that Janie said nothing at all. He was absorbed in his own great happiness. Janie forgave him. He didn't know she was being hurt. He never, never should know.

"I didn't like it at first," Hugh said presently. "I thought it was pretty dreadful. I never dreamed I'd find the loveliest thing in life right here in Mulberry Square."

He didn't mean a "good little egg" who had scolded him and taken him swimming and made him toe the mark. He didn't mean a brown little girl named Janie who loved him very much. He was thinking of Celia all creamy and golden, pretty selfish Celia with her look of a porcelain saint . . .

"You're quiet, Janie." He remembered her after a while. "What's the matter, little fellow?"

Little Fellow! If he just wouldn't call her that . . .

"I—I feel sort of sad."

"Why?"

"Leaving, I guess."

"It won't be long until Christmas." He lifted her hand. "Here's something to take with you." He kissed the palm of her hand and folded her fingers over the kiss to keep it from slipping away.

Oh, Hugh! But he didn't know he was hurting her worse than she had ever been hurt in all her life before. Oh, dear big laughing Hugh! . . .

"I want something in exchange." He tilted her chin. "I want your lovely smile."

She had to smile. He was looking at her with eyes that were tender and teasing. She had to smile. There were tears on her lashes and a choking lump in her throat. But somehow, she managed it—her wide gay gorgeous smile.

Hugh pretended to catch the smile and tucked it into the pocket over his heart.

"I'll take it out when it's raining," he said, "and turn it on like a moon."

He took it away with him, Janie's smile in his pocket. He left a kiss in the palm of her small brown hand. He went downstairs to Celia with a swift and hurrying step.

Janie curled down in the window seat among the chintz cushions. She was tired, so dreadfully tired. The candles burned lower and lower. The leaves outside rustled drowsily against the screen. Too tired to think. Too weary for tears. Tired, so dreadfully tired . . .

She fell asleep with her cheek pressed close against the palm of her hand.

Part Two CHAPTER I

The wheels of the train made a singing sound against the icy rails. Janie tucked her feet up under the edge of her coat, buried her chin in the soft fur collar and wondered if she would ever again be warm.

It was the inside cold that was hardest to bear, the icy cold of fear. She had not been able to believe it. The telegram had slipped away from her hand. Midge, her roommaid, had read it, fat little Midge . . . "Father is ill. Come at once" . . . Midge had a cold in her head. It made the words sound queer. Funny to think of a thing like that. Father was ill and all that Janie had thought of was Midge with a cold in her head.

Father had never been ill. In all her life Janie could not remember when Father had ever been ill. A dreadful thing couldn't happen so quickly as this. Two days ago she had received a letter from Father, a jolly letter, full of plans for Christmas when Janie would be at home. Now she was going home, a day ahead of time. Midge had read the message . . . "Father is ill. Come at once" . . .

She couldn't believe it. The telegram was in her pocket-book. She unfolded the creased yellow sheet and read the message again. Hugh had sent it. Hugh! She tried to see Hugh in her mind; his copper-gold head, his wide laughing mouth, his eyes that were the color of sherry wine.

She looked at her hand where Hugh had kissed it that last lonely night at home. It was just Janie's hand, the pink of the palm traced with faint uneven lines. If she could remember how she had felt that night maybe then she could cry. But she couldn't remember how she had felt. She couldn't cry or make it seem real that Janie's father was ill . . .

Christmas! They had made such beautiful plans. Hugh had written to her about it and Father and Mother and Celia. At first she had dreaded going back home. But the worst of the feeling had gone. Celia seemed to be happy, being engaged to Hugh. She wrote Janie affectionate letters. Because she was human and not a saint, Janie couldn't exactly rejoice. But she could not mind quite so much if Celia loved Hugh and both of them were happy.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Patron Saint of Lawyers

The American Bar association says that St. Ives was Helroy Ivo or Ivo, born at Kermartin, Brittany, 11th of October, 1233. He studied at Paris and practiced law at Rennes and Irequier. Later he studied for the priesthood, and after his ordination in 1284 he was parish priest at Tedrez and Lorraine. He was known as the bishop's judge, interesting himself greatly in ecclesiastical legal matters. He was also the lawyer of the poor, strictly just and honorable, and, what was a marvel at that time, strictly inaccessible to bribery. He became in his later life so full of solicitude for the poor and helpless that he turned his own home into an orphanage. He died March 19, 1303, at Kermartin. His relics in the Cathedral of Irequier were respected and saved in the French revolution. He was canonized by Clement VI in 1347, and he was adopted as the patron saint of lawyers.



FINANCE IN THE GULCH

"I'd kind o' like to start a bank," said Cactus Joe.

"A national bank?" asked the traveling salesman.

"No. I don't want to have to 'tend to all that bookkeepin'. What I want to start is a faro bank, where the boys can come in and leave their wages and then forget about 'em forever."

Taken at His Word

Her father snorted contemptuously.

"You have the nerve to come and ask me for my daughter's hand. You!" he snapped at the shaking suitor.

"That's so, sir," said the young man.

"But she doesn't want to be tied to an idiot all her life," barked her father.

"Well, why not let me take her off your hands," said the suitor coolly enough.—Stray Stories.

What, Again?

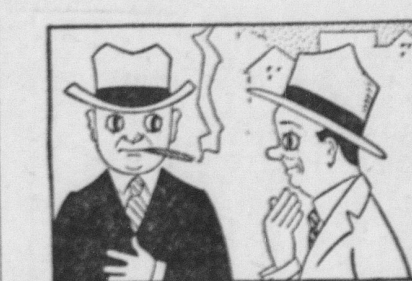
Tony—Are you going to Helen's birthday party?

Henry—What birthday is it?

Tony—Her twentieth.

Henry—No, I went last year.—Pathfinder.

NOT INFALLIBLE RULE



"If you want a man to do you a favor, strike him just after he has had a hearty meal."

"It doesn't always work out. A hearty meal gives some fellows indigestion."

Not His Fault

Mother—Did you know that every times you draw your breath, some one dies? I've just been reading about it.

Son—Well, I can't help it. If I stop drawing my breath I'll die.

It Is Indeed

"You ask high wages for a man with no experience in the poultry business."

"Well, sir, it's much harder work when you don't know anything about it."

Some Compliment

Hostess—Dear, you are eating nothing.

Her Boy Friend—My pet, when I look at you it takes my appetite away.—Chelsea Record.

An Owl, of Course

Englishman—What's that bloomin' noise I 'ear outside this time of night?

American—Why, that's an owl.

Englishman—Of course it is, but 'o's 'owling?

Looks Like a Habit

"What makes you think Peggy will marry you?"

"She's married other fellows."

Antiques

"She's always out to find antiques."

"Yes, I saw her buying an old century plant."

Watchful

Flubdub—Does your steno graph clock?

Hamfatt—Yes, also the calendar.