

MULBERRY SQUARE

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WNU Service

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. Following a visit by Shelby to the Ballard home, Celia is visibly depressed. Hugh and Celia unexpectedly announce their engagement. Janie, heartbroken, arranges to return to college. She is summoned home when her father is seriously hurt in an auto accident.

CHAPTER I—Continued

The train rushed on through the early twilight. She looked at her watch. She prayed little soundless prayers. The train seemed not to be moving at all. An endless eternity passed. The station lights bloomed more thickly now. Janie pulled on her green cap edged with beaver, fastened the beaver collar of her new green coat, buckled her galoshes and then sat very still.

The train ran slowly in under the tunnel of shed. She moved with the stream of passengers toward the door. She felt the wind nipping her cheeks and her fingertips. A red-cap had her bag. She was following him through the crowded station.

"New Kingston, Miss?"

"Has it gone? Oh please, has it gone?"

"Waitin' fo' the express."

Oh, thank you God or the P. R. R. or whoever makes branch trains wait! A quarter for the porter. People pushing. Icy steps. A hand helping her up.

"Well, Janie!"

She looked up into a familiar face. It was Mr. Mapes, the conductor, who lived in New Kingston.

"Father?" she asked.

"He's holding on."

"How? When?"

"Accident. It happened early last night in the storm."

The sound of a familiar voice after the long, weary journey alone broke the ice around Janie's heart. She clung to the friendly conductor, pressed her face against his buttons, sobbed gratefully in his arms.

"There, there, Janie." He led her into the car. "We're ready to go. In half an hour we'll have you safe at home."

II

Hugh was waiting on the platform. Janie saw his face, raised to watch the windows as the train moved past. Her heart turned over. She knew that he would be sorry, of course. She had not expected to find him so haggard



The Train Rushed On Through the Early Twilight.

and white and distressed. He saw her and lifted his hand. His eyes, beneath the down-turned brim of his hat, brightened for a moment and then were somber again.

"Hugh! Oh here I am, Hugh!" She tumbled down the train steps straight into his arms.

"Janie! Thank God you are here!" Horatius was parked in the station drive, chugging sturdily, covered all over with snow.

"Tell me about it, Hugh."

"He crashed into a gully beyond the White Marsh creek." They were moving now. Horatius was plowing through the snow.

"Was he alone?"

"Yes." Hugh's voice was rough and husky. "He was coming home from

the Weaver place. There's another baby out there."

"Is—is he terribly hurt?"

Hugh did not answer. Icy fingers clutched Janie's heart.

"Tell me, Hugh." She clutched at his arm. "I have to know. Is he—"

The word stuck tight in her throat.

"He's still unconscious. They don't know yet." Hugh repeated the words dully as though he had said them a great many times. "He's at the hospital."

"Can I see him tonight?"

"Not tonight, little fellow. Tomorrow, perhaps."

He told her, in words which Janie could understand, what Father's condition might be. She couldn't believe, somehow he was talking about Father. She had heard Father and Hugh discussed cases like that dozens and dozens of times. It couldn't be Father. This dreadful thing couldn't be true. . . .

"God wouldn't let Father die," she said with a sort of confidence. "He's always been so kind and so good. God couldn't let Father die."

"Do you believe that, Janie?" Hugh asked brokenly.

"I—I'm trying to."

"Keep on," he said, "and make me believe it, too."

The car drew up at the curb in front of the old brick house. The downstairs windows were lighted. The fan-light was a yellow crescent. The lanterns were twinkling. It was home.

Hugh lifted her out of the car, held her for a moment before he set her down on her feet.

"I'm glad you're here, little fellow." Her cheeks brushed his. His cheek was wet. It might be the melting snow.

"Oh, Hugh!"

The front door opened. A wave of light washed down the snowy steps.

"Janie!" Celia was clinging to Janie as though she would never let go, Celia who was three years older than Janie and taller by three full inches. "Oh, Janie, I'm glad you're home."

Celia was pale. There were shadows under her eyes. Janie was sure that Celia hadn't noticed they were becoming. It made her love Celia as she had loved her once a very long time ago. The flash of the ring on her slender left hand was hard, for a moment, to bear. After that she didn't mind—at least, not so much.

"Where's Mother?" It all looked so usual; the polished stairs, the Chesterfield, the painting in the hall. Surely in just a moment Father would come out from the office, smiling, calling to her, holding out both of his arms. . . .

"Mother is staying at the hospital." There was a sweetness about Celia. She had never looked so lovely. "I'm taking her out some things."

"Can't I go?" Janie asked.

"You couldn't see Father," Celia's eyes brimmed over with tears. "And you must be tired. Take care of her, Hugh. Stoney will drive me out."

Rachel, suspiciously red around the eyes, lumbered out into the hall.

"Rachel!" Janie's arms were around her neck. She was clinging hard to something that was familiar and solid and dear.

"Go on wid you!" Rachel was wiping her eyes on her apron. "I'm fixin' a bite of somethin' to eat." She lumbered back toward the kitchen, grumbling.

It was Hugh who removed Janie's coat and set her on the Chesterfield to unbuckle her galoshes. Celia picked them up to put them away in the closet.

"They're so tiny," she said. "I never remember that Janie is so small."

"Small," Hugh added, "and nice. She's a very good little egg."

III

Janie lay on the living room davenport pulled close to the crackling fire. Hugh sat on a foot stool and fed her things from a tray.

"Open your mouth, small person. One more bite. We can't have you getting sick."

She swallowed the bite obediently. In spite of everything, it was lovely to be at home.

"I'm getting warm." She snuggled into the cushions. "I've been so cold all day."

"Poor baby!" Hugh held her hand in both of his. "It's my fault, Janie," he said.

"What is, Hugh?"

"All—all this."

"You mean—Father?"

He nodded his head.

"Why is it your fault, Hugh?"

"It was my patient." His voice was rough and husky. "I knew that baby was coming. I had been there at noon."

"Where were you?"

"I'm ashamed to tell you." He stared miserably at the fire. Janie could feel that his hands were shaking.

"Please, Hugh. Tell me, please."

"I was at the movies. They called twice. Then Doctor Ballard went."

"I was, Janie," he repeated dully. "I was sitting in the movies. Doctor Ballard went out to do my job. He hadn't expected to go out at all last night. He had given Stoney the eve-

ning off. It had begun to storm. You know he doesn't see well enough to drive at night."

"Oh, Hugh!" She could only say it over and over, that husky reproachful "Oh, Hugh!"

"I'd have done anything for him." Hugh dropped his head on the edge of the davenport over her hand and his own. She felt a wetness on his cheeks. There was no snow in here. "He's been like a father to me. It's my fault, Janie. I can see well enough to drive at night. I shouldn't have let her—" he stopped abruptly.

Janie was, all at once, breathless and very still.

"It wasn't her fault," Hugh said quickly. "I shouldn't have let her—"

"She coaxed you to take her?" Janie asked evenly. "Oh, Celia! Celia!"

"I have been busy." Hugh framed a defense for Celia. "I haven't had time to take her places. She's been sweet about it. I'm horribly jealous, Janie."

"She said she would go with somebody else?"

"She might." His hands were knotted into fists. "Sometime, she might. I was thinking of that. I—I took her to the movies."

Janie wanted to comfort him. It hurt her to see him so miserable. If only she knew what to say. . . .

"Come here, Hugh. Sit down."

"Do you want to talk to me, Janie? I should think you would despise me."

"Despise him? You loved the people you loved no matter what they did. You were sorry and hurt but you loved them just the same. Janie couldn't quite reason it out. She knew only that, in the case of Janie, it was true.

"Hugh," she said very gravely, "you mustn't take all this blame. It might have happened some other way. It might—"

"But it happened this way." Hugh's eyes were young and tragic. "I swear to you, Janie, I'll do anything to make up for it—anything in the world."

The vein in his forehead was throbbing. It always throbbed when he was angry or very much in earnest. Her eyes traveled slowly over his face. The old laughing Hugh was gone. She wanted him to come back. She wondered if ever he would.

"Things happen," she said. "We can't help them. We can try to be brave."

"Janie!" He dropped his head into the hollow of her arm. He looked tired and very young with the firelight glinting across his hair and his chin so stubbornly set.

"I talk like a lady reformer." Janie was laughing and crying, too.

"You're a comfortable small person," Hugh said wearily. "I'm glad you've come back to the Square."

Janie drew a quivering sigh. She felt entirely grown up.

IV

"What is it?" Janie, her heart in her mouth, switched on the light beside Mother's bed. Celia, huddled in a bathrobe, was closing the door behind her.

"I was frightened. Can I sleep in here with you?"

Janie snapped off the light. They lay curled together in the middle of the wide soft bed.

"It wasn't my fault, was it, Janie?" Celia presently asked.

"I don't know."

"Janie, please say it wasn't." Celia was trembling all over. "It might have happened anyway. Please say that it wasn't my fault."

"I don't know," Janie repeated.

"How could I know?" Celia was close to hysterics. "I love Father dearly. Hugh is absurd. It wasn't his fault or mine."

"Don't think about it now," Janie said gently. "Father wouldn't want you to be unhappy."

"I'll be nicer," Celia promised, "if God will let Father get well. If you'd only say that it wasn't my fault. If you'd only tell me, Janie."

Janie couldn't say that. She couldn't scold her, either. Celia was trembling so. She put her arms around her instead and nestled very close. They cried in the soft wide bed. Towards morning they slept, curled together, Celia's cheek against Janie's, the brown head and the golden head nestled into the same warm hollow of pillows.

CHAPTER II

There were anxious days in the old brick house. Father railed, at times, only to sink back into unconsciousness again. Mother stayed on at the hospital. She had a small room next to Father's with a communicating door. They sat there, sometimes, in the afternoon, Mother and Celia and Janie, holding each other's hands, waiting, talking in whispers, listening for sounds beyond the closed white door.

"We're doing everything possible," Doctor Alden, the chief of staff, would say. "We can't tell yet."

Once the door opened, Janie saw Father. He looked very young and thin in the narrow white bed. His eyes were closed under white wrap-

plings of bandages. His hand was lying on the counterpane, thin and brown and familiar. Janie remembered how he had stroked her hair that day on the White Marsh creek. She heard again the rustling sound of the reeds, saw the bird with the speckled brown breast. That day she had run away from Father. She had been thinking only of Hugh. If they might go fishing again. . . .

Doctor Alden sent them out for drives in his car. Father's car could never be used again. Hugh plowed grimly around in Horatius, trying to do all of Father's work. Stoney drove Doctor Alden's big closed car. Mother and Celia and Janie would sit together on the back seat. Downtown was gay with Christmas, the air and the bustle, with holly wreaths in the windows along Manor street. The signs of Christmas, the stir and the bustle, were more than they could bear. Stoney would drive them out along the country roads which were clear enough for traveling. They talked of other Christmases.

"Do you remember when Father made the fire burn too high and everything in our stockings melted?"

"Remember when Celia wanted a pink teddy-bear and Father searched all over Philadelphia and then, at the last minute, Mother had to dye a white one pink?"

"Remember the Christmas eve Father was snowbound in the country and Janie wouldn't look at her presents until he came at noon on Christmas day?"

Remember? Remember? . . .

Mother often rebelled.

"To think of Father being sacrificed for a Weaver baby," she would say with tears in her pretty blue eyes. "They have more now than they can feed."

Mother didn't blame Celia or Hugh. She blamed Father's passion for service. Sometimes there was a hint of fear in the high lovely blue of her eyes.

"If anything should happen to Father," she would say. Janie knew she was thinking of money. There was never more than just enough. As Mother often remarked, people thought of Father first in times of distress and last when they paid their bills. There were more unpaid accounts than even Mother suspected in Father's untidy ledger. Janie knew. It seemed unimportant now.

"We'd get along," she would say, thinking only of a world without Father in it anywhere.

"Celia will be taken care of, anyway." Mother would glance gratefully at the ring on Celia's left hand. "Janie and I could manage, I suppose."

Mrs. Quillen, stout and good-natured and anxious to help, was installed in the old brick house. Meals were an ordeal. Three of them, Celia and Janie and Hugh, at the long dining room table. Celia sat at Mother's place and poured the coffee or tea. Father's vacant chair was more than Janie could stand.

"You sit there, Hugh," she suggested one evening at supper.

"I couldn't, Janie." His face was working queerly.

"Father would like it."

"Do you think so?" he asked eagerly.

"I'm sure of it."

Hugh seated himself in the vacant chair. He looked, Janie thought, as though a general had pinned a ribbon on his chest and kissed him on both of his cheeks.

A shadow lay across the Square. People knocked at the kitchen door, shabby people with unashamed tears in their eyes; girls from the mill, the frowzy citizens of Vine and Juniper streets.

"How's the Doctor this morning?"

"They're doing everything possible. They can't tell yet."

The Square, proper, called at the front door; the rector and Mrs. Warden. The rector cleared his throat very often and quoted things from the Bible. . . . "Greater love hath no man" . . . It belonged in church, Janie thought, or cut in a marble tombstone. It had nothing to do with Father who had been last summer so healthy and happy and brown.

All day there was a stream of callers. From uptown and downtown, from Manor street and the mill section, people came to inquire for Father. Celia, very pale and lovely in demure little gray wool frocks, answered questions, smiled faintly, led callers in and out of the living room. Celia was wonderful, Janie thought. She wished she herself could talk and smile. She couldn't. There was always a lump in her throat.

Aunt Lucy came, unexpectedly, with Muriel and Uncle Frank.

"I was so anxious," she said. Aunt Lucy, framed in an astrakhan collar, looked very anxious indeed. "We're going to open 'Sportsman's Hall' and stay until after the New Year, at least."

"Anything I can do to help?" Uncle Frank said.

"I'll be in and out every day." Muriel hugged both Janie and Celia. . . . Celia and Janie and Muriel

playing house in the Square. That was a long time ago. . . .

So the days crept on toward Christmas eve. There was no bustle of preparations in the old brick house this year. There was waiting and anxiety, a new quick fear whenever the telephone rang. Father's condition changed very little from day to day.

"We're doing everything possible," the doctor said.

Janie and Celia clung to each other. Hugh worked on with a dogged sort of persistence. He slept in Father's room because there was a telephone on the table beside the bed. Sometimes Janie heard him getting up in the middle of the night. Once she



"You're Lovely, Celia," He Said.

wanted to make him some coffee because it was very cold. She pulled on her bathrobe and slippers and started down the stairs.

Celia was making coffee for Hugh. There was no light in the room except the rosy glow of the flames. Celia, in her quilted blue kimono with her hair in silky skeins, was making coffee for Hugh. Janie saw Hugh kiss Celia's wrist as she handed him the cup.

"You're lovely, Celia," he said.

Janie clung to the banister rail. She felt better after a moment. She slipped back upstairs and crawled into bed.

II

It was seven o'clock on Christmas eve when Doctor Alden opened the door. His face was shining; his eyes were moist. Mother stopped rocking back and forth. Celia's hands crept up to her heart. Janie stood very still. They all looked at Doctor Alden.

"Merry Christmas," he said and blew his nose very loudly.

"You mean—?" Mother's eyes asked the question her lips were unable to frame.

"We're not out of the woods, by any means," Doctor Alden had closed the door into Father's room. "But he's conscious and asking for you. You can see him for a moment."

Mother gave a happy cry. Celia flung herself at Doctor Alden and kissed his gray mustache. Janie just stood still.

"Can I go in first?" she asked. Her grave little face was pale.

Mother murmured. Celia made a low sound of protest. Doctor Alden nodded and blew his nose again.

Father's room was dim and full of shadows. There were flowers everywhere and Father's head on the pillow in a dim circle of light. He was pale and woefully thin but the eyes under the bandages were Father's eyes. They looked at her and smiled.

"Merry Christmas, Janie," Father's dear voice said.

In a moment she was beside the bed with her cheek against Father's hand.

"Father, oh Father!" was all she could say.

"You look like a Christmas candle." Father tilted her chin.

"I'm happy." Her eyes were shining; her lashes were jeweled with tears.

"I'll be home pretty soon." Father's voice was pitifully weak.

"We'll go to Canada next June. Jumping Trout lake." Father's eyes brightened. "You and I, Janie. It's a date."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Canada's First Incorporated Town Saint John, N. B., is the oldest incorporated city in Canada. It takes its name from the river at whose mouth it lies, christened by Champlain when he arrived there on the twenty-fourth of June, 1604, the day of the feast of St. John the Baptist. The City of Saint John was first called Parr Town, being founded in 1783 by United Empire Loyalists, and named after Colonel Parr, the governor of the province. In 1785 it was incorporated as a city and the name changed to Saint John.



CORRECTED

A fourth-grade boy was reading his weekly composition in English class for the criticism of his classmates. One of the sentences he read was: "Edgar did not hit airy one of the birds."

When he sat down, the teacher asked for remarks about the composition.

William jumped to his feet and exclaimed: "He said airy when he ought to said nairy."

Empty

A lawyer was endeavoring to impress the court with the fact that his clients had always been anxious to settle the case by agreement. "Your Honor," he said, "eighteen months ago we held out the olive branch."

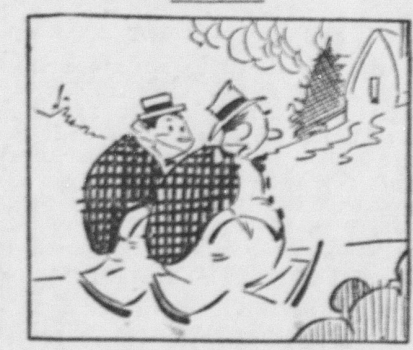
"Yes," responded the judge. "but there were no olives on it."—Boston Transcript.

Confession

Friend—Doesn't it shock you to hear your daughter using expressions like "Oh, h—!"

Mother—No, I envy her. I've wanted to use them myself a good many times, but with my strict bringing up I just can't get up enough nerve to spit them out, though I do think them.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

EXPLAINED IT



"What was the racket over at Bobb's last night?"

"They were having a china shower."

As Time Flies

"Are you going to have much to say in the next congress?"

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum. "Of course you will think before you speak."

"When possible. The trouble is that if you spend too much time in preliminary cogitation, you are liable to miss your turn."—Washington Star.

Learn to Cook, Brother

"Rise every morning," a magistrate advised a man in court, "with the fixed determination to make your wife realize that you are master of the house and see what happens."

We know what will happen. He'll have to get his own breakfast.—Boston Transcript.

One Consolation

"It must be dreadful for you to have your own son in jail for joy-riding."

"Anyhow, it's a comfort to know where he is at nights."—Border Cities Star.

Bills and Bills

Mr. Zipp—Meet Mr. Zink, wife. You often heard me talk of old Bill.

Mrs. Zipp—You talk about so many old bills I can't remember them all.

Life's Darkest Moment

"Pa, what's dignity?"

"Dignity, my son, is what you think you possess until the boss says, 'What is the meaning of this?'"

Real Tragedy

Fair Young Thing (to friend)—Not only has he broken my heart and wrecked my whole life, but he's messed up my evening!