

# MULBERRY SQUARE

## LIDA LARRIMORE

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### SYNOPSIS

To the household of Doctor Ballard, in Mulberry Square, youthful Dr. Hugh Kennedy, comes as an assistant. 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 as a small girl, to be treated as a chum. He 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," 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 McAllister is another, and Carter Shelby is a third. Following a visit by Shelby to the Ballard home, Celia is visibly depressed. Hugh and Celia unexpectedly announce their engagement. Janie, heartbroken, returns to college. She is summoned home when her father is seriously hurt in an auto accident. Hugh bitterly blames himself, feeling responsible, for allowing the elderly physician to drive at night, his eyesight not fitting him for the task. Kennedy had been at a theater with Celia, she insisting on his going. Doctor Ballard hovers between life and death. Hugh shoulders the burdens of the double work. The family learns Doctor Ballard's spine is injured so that he may never be able to walk again. There is hope in an operation, for which he must be taken to New York. Celia meets Carter Shelby again.

### CHAPTER III—Continued

"She's engaged to him, isn't she?" Janie's heart beat swiftly. She felt that her cheeks were flushed.

"Don't be quaint, little girl."

"Gracious, then, how do I know?"

"They will be married in June?"

"When Hugh's year with Father is finished," Hugh and Celia. Celia and Hugh. Getting married and going away together. Janie would be a bridesmaid. Hugh and Celia. Celia and Hugh . . .

Janie wondered if Muriel cared because Carter was dancing with Celia. She glanced up at her swiftly. Her eyes were tranquil and ever so faintly amused. What was she thinking?

Muriel was thinking of the words Carter had whispered when he left her to dance with Celia.

"I owe a great deal to Celia," he had said with his charming low voice setting the words to music. "But for her, I might not have known you."

Carter had stressed the pronoun. He was made that way. It was something he could not help.

### III

"It's nice to dance with you again," Carter stressed the pronoun.

"I like it, too." The silver harp strings quivered. Her left hand fluttered away from his shoulder, rested against her throat. Glancing down, his eyes caught the shine of the ring on her slim third finger.

"Is that a warning?" he asked.

"I'm engaged, you know." It pleased her to say it. It pleased her because she was fragile and lovely in the slim little black crepe frock.

"I got drunk the night that I heard." It pleased him to exaggerate a bit because, after all, there was the ring on her finger and she was very lovely in the slim little plain black frock.

"Oh, Carter!" The violet eyes reproached him. "You shouldn't do things like that."

"I had to—forget." He held her close because—well, there was the ring on her finger and her head against his shoulder was small and fragrant and blond. "Will he make you happy?" he asked as they danced into the shadows again.

"He's sweet." The pleased dreamy expression crept into her lifted eyes. "We shall go abroad for a year."

"I should have liked to show you beautiful places." His voice was touchingly sad. "Paris. The Mediterranean. The Italian lakes."

"If things had been different," Celia murmured vaguely and dropped her head against his shoulder.

"If things had been different," she repeated and held her very close. "Are you happy, Celia?"

"I've been unhappy about Father." The silver harp strings were trembling again.

"I'm sorry. You were made for happiness, my dear. If there is ever anything I can do—" His voice trailed off into silence, promising many things.

"Thank you, Carter," Celia murmured. "I shall think of you as my friend."

They had moved into a shadowy corner. The fire and the lights were very far away. He stooped swiftly and kissed the creamy hollow of her throat.

"That's for remembrance, my lovely lost Celia," he said.

He was made that way. It was something he could not help.

### IV

Hugh was sitting in the armchair beside the living room fire when Janie and Celia returned from "Sportsman's Hall." His tired eyes brightened. He rose and crossed to the door.

"I've just gotten back," he said. "I phoned. They said you had left."

"William brought us home." Celia's manner was detached. She turned toward the stairs.

"You aren't going up just yet?" Hugh asked wistfully.

"I'm sleepy," Celia patted back a dainty yawn.

"But I haven't seen you all day." Hugh made a motion with his arms. Celia edged ever so slightly towards the stairs. Janie fumbled with the buckles on her galoshes. They seemed unusually hard to manage. Perhaps that was because she couldn't see them very well.

"It isn't my fault," Celia implied that she had been neglected and Hugh was entirely to blame. "I'm tired. I want to go up to bed."

"Good night, then, Beautiful." He stooped to kiss her. His lips merely brushed her cheek.

"Good night, Hugh."

"What?" There was a note of fear in his voice.

"Good night—darling."

"That's better. Happy dreams, my sweet."

Celia moved away from the door. Her hand rested against her throat as though it held there something precious which might be lost. Her heels made a tapping sound on the polished steps. Upstairs a door closed gently.

### CHAPTER IV

Father was removed to New York at the end of January. Mother accompanied him, leaving behind her all sort of instructions and worries and prophecies. The matter of Janie's return to college had been the subject of many discussions. Janie had been firm. She didn't want to go back this year.

"Father understands," Janie was sitting close to Mother on a hassock beside her chair. "And I will go on," she promised. "I'll send for my books and study every day. Doctor Warden will help me with Latin and I can read French with Professor Mantell."

"I wish you wouldn't go there," Mother fretted. "Those Mantells are shiftless and not even decently clean."

"He'll help me with French," Janie tried not to be indignant, because it was Mother's last night at home. "I can take the exams next fall and go on with my class. I couldn't bear it to be so far away from home."

Mother sighed and looked as though it was all too dreadful to be endured.

"You'll write to us every day," Janie implored with her arms around Mother's neck.

"Every day," Mother promised.

"And telegraph," Celia added, "as soon as she—"

They couldn't speak of the operation. They clung together in the upstairs hall, Mother and Celia and Janie, faced with an uncertain future, wondering if ever they would all be happy again.

"You'll have to be careful about money," Mother said with a worried frown. "I did want a nice wedding for Celia," wistfully.

As though it would matter, Janie thought, what kind of a wedding you had if you were getting married to Hugh.

"Don't worry about that," Celia relinquished orange blossoms and a satin train and a tunnel of awning in front of the church. "We must think only of Father." She looked noble and self-sacrificing with tears on her lashes and shadows under her eyes.

"You're so brave, darling," Mother marveled. And somehow it seemed more wonderful that Celia should relinquish the satin train than that Janie should study alone. Janie's gallantry was silent. Celia's came with a blowing of trumpets and a beating of many drums.

Mrs. Quillen was reinstated in the old brick house. Life settled into a quiet routine. Hugh was kept very busy. The flu epidemic had crept through Vine and Juniper streets up into the Square.

"You're working too hard," Celia said one day with a pretty air of concern.

"I must." The angle of Hugh's jaw was lean and square and determined. "Can't you go out to Dolly's with me tonight?" Celia sat on the arm of his chair, twisting around her finger a lock of his ruffled bright hair.

"I can't, darling. I'd flop on the table and snore."

"There's no use killing yourself," Celia's expression was fretful.

"It was my fault." The vein in Hugh's forehead was throbbing.

"That's morbid, Hugh."

"It's honest, at any rate." He was looking at her strangely. Celia's expression changed.

"I know, darling," she said softly. "You're sweet, Hugh."

"Do you love me, Celia?" He pulled her down into his arms.

"Of course." She looked up at him and smiled. She wore her "Saint Cecelia" expression. Beneath it she thrilled at the worship in his eyes. It gave her again that thrilling sense of power. If you were beautiful you could take what you wanted from life . . .

"Just me, I mean," Hugh continued earnestly. "Not the money my father left or—"

"Hugh!" Her eyes reproached him. There was in her expression a hint of the hidden loveliness which held

him with its promise. Some day he would find it, the real loveliness of Celia, hidden beneath her moods and pretty poses.

"I love you so much," he said.

"I love you, Hugh."

She was quiet in his arms, her eyes dreaming off into the distance.

"What are you thinking?" he asked, hoping to catch a glimpse of the real lovely Celia.

"Will you take me to Paris, Hugh?" Her voice was warm with anticipation.

"And Venice? Dolly Bruce is so superior because she has been to Venice."

Hugh's expectations were dashed. He blamed himself. He hadn't yet been able to reach her. He did not blame Celia for the accident. He blamed his jealousy, his fear that he might lose her. His love for her was a madness. He hadn't thought it would be like that. He wanted love to be sane and beautiful, a warm steady emotion, like a fire on a friendly hearth . . .

The days lengthened into weeks. Janie busied herself with going to market and keeping accounts and writing a long letter to Father every day. She toiled patiently over her books and read French in the evening with Professor Mantell who was often tipsy and always entertaining. She watched over Hugh with a motherly air of concern. She conferred with Rachel and Mrs. Quillen over household matters which had to do with coal bills and plumbing and beef loaf instead of chicken. She had an interview with Tom McAllister, who was going over Father's accounts.

"Your father is a saint on earth," Tom said impatiently, "but he hasn't, so far as I have been able to discover,



"I Love You So Much," He Said.

an ounce of business sense." He opened the shabby ledger. "Some of these accounts have been standing for fifteen years."

"Can you do anything about it?"

"There are notes in the bank." Tom's brows drew together in a frown. "He has made himself responsible for every Tom, Dick and Harry in town."

Janie knew very little about notes. There had always been money enough. They had lived very well in the old brick house in the Square. Father never mentioned money. He hated to bother about it.

"Don't look so tragic," Tom smiled away his frown. "I'll collect what I can. Perhaps we can set it all straight before your father comes home. Just try to be careful and don't run up any staggering bills."

Janie flung herself into a frenzy of economizing. They decided to dismiss the office girl.

"Celia and I can take turns," Janie suggested. "It will give us something to do."

Celia agreed. She bought herself white uniforms and wished she might wear a Red Cross arrangement on her head. The uniforms were becoming. At first she was interested and amused. Then the monotony became irksome. She faintly one evening, during office hours.

"I'm sorry," she murmured when she opened her eyes to find herself on the living room davenport surrounded by anxious faces. "It was the smell, I think."

"Never mind, Celia," Hugh was holding her wrist. "Your pulse is normal." He looked at her searchingly.

"I—I feel so faint." Her voice was a whisper.

"She's as pale as a ghost!" Mrs. Quillen made fanning motions with a folded wad of newspaper. "There ain't no color at all in her face."

Janie touched Celia's cheek with the tip of her finger. Powder! Her suspicions were confirmed. She glanced up at Hugh and saw, with feeling of alarm, that he had suspected, too. She hid the tell-tale finger in the pocket of her dress.

"I wanted to help," Celia murmured. "Her eyes, wide and appealing, were fixed on Hugh's stern face. Janie saw

the stern expression soften. Hugh stooped and kissed Celia's brow. Janie, watching intently, saw Celia's lips curve into a smile.

Hugh went abruptly out of the room. Had he seen that smile? All evening he was unusually quiet. After office hours were over, Janie walked with him into the hall. Celia was talking at the telephone. She placed the receiver on the hook when she saw Hugh watching her and adopted a languid air.

"Dolly wants me to stay with her tonight," she said. "They're driving in for me. I think it would do me good to get away."

"Perhaps," Hugh said brusquely. The set of his lips filled Janie with sudden fright.

"Will you come with us?" Celia asked.

"I can't," he said briefly. "I have some reading to do."

But he didn't read. He paced the floor of his room upstairs. Janie, playing double solitaire with Mrs. Quillen in the living room below, heard his footsteps treading endlessly back and forth.

"What ails him tonight?" Mrs. Quillen asked with an eloquent glance toward the ceiling.

"I don't know," Janie answered. That wasn't quite true. She thought that Hugh had suspected Celia. She thought that the fainting fit had not deceived him at all. What would happen? What would he do? . . .

Janie served as office girl, after the evening that Celia fainted. She didn't really mind. It was pleasant to be with Hugh.

The arrival of the postman was an event of great importance. There were letters from Mother every day and sometimes a note from Father. He was getting stronger. The operation was to be performed in a very short time. There was nothing to do except wait.

Occasionally a square gray envelope came in with the rest of the mail. Carter Shelby was writing to Celia again. Celia tucked the letters away with a casual air and seldom mentioned his name. But she watched for the square gray envelopes. Janie was sure of that. And all through February while the snow changed to sleet and mud and each gray day that passed seemed drearier than the others, Janie watched for a telegram from Mother.

The telegram never arrived. One morning, early in March, a letter came addressed in Mother's writing to Hugh. He read it at breakfast.

"It's over," he said.

"The operation?" Celia's hands crept up to her heart.

Janie's eyes asked a question. Hugh looked at her miserably. He looked away. But he had to tell them.

"It was unsuccessful," he said.

"You mean—" Celia faltered.

"He will never walk again."

Janie made a faint little moan and her fingers twisted together.

"He'll be well otherwise?" Celia asked.

"Yes," Hugh's voice was husky and rough. "He may live for years."

"Is he coming home?" Janie asked.

"Not at once. They want to keep him there for observation."

"It isn't so bad," Celia said slowly as though she were reassuring herself. "He will have Stoney to take care of him."

"Not so bad!" Hugh turned to her almost fiercely. "Never to walk! To be tied to a chair! You don't know what you are saying!"

"I only wanted to make the best of things," Celia said plaintively.

"I know," Hugh reached over to touch her hand. "It's just that I am to blame. It drives me crazy. I can't forget it. I can't get it out of my head!"

He left the dining room abruptly. They did not see him again all day.

When Hugh came in at supper time, Janie was waiting for him on the Chesterfield in the hall. She glanced up at him anxiously as she helped him pull off his driving gloves and his heavy coat. His face was weary but peaceful. He looked as though he had fought a fight and reached a final decision.

"Supper is ready," Janie said.

"That's good. I'm starved."

"You didn't come home for lunch."

"I was busy. I didn't have time."

He walked with his arm around her out into the dining room. Celia already was seated. She wore the slim little black crepe frock. Her face was pale. There were shadows under her eyes. The candles were lighted. They cast a glow over the table that now was set for three, over the silver tea-set, over Celia's white hands busy among the cups.

Celia glanced up with a smile for Hugh.

"I didn't know when you'd be in," she said.

"That's all right." He pulled out Janie's chair, settled himself in Father's place at the head of the table. Janie wondered why Hugh's face, so tortured when he strode away from the breakfast table, should now have that look of peace.

"I have written to Doctor Ballard," he said when dessert had been served.

"I told him I would stay here as long as he needs me."

Janie's heart leaped into her throat. What did it mean? What would Celia think? Whatever would happen now?

"You mean—even after June?" Celia asked faintly.

"As long as I can be of use to him." There was a note of finality in Hugh's steady voice.

"No!" It was a sharp instinctive cry. Celia was caught off guard. "No Hugh! You can't do that! There's no need."

Hugh looked at Celia. He looked away.

"I want to," he said simply.

### II

Janie lay on the hearth in front of the living room fire, propped up sideways on her elbow, her cheek in the palm of her hand. Celia wandered restlessly around the room.

"It's sleet," she said. The silver harp strings jangled.

"Hugh ought to be back pretty soon," Janie said drowsily.

"Hugh is simply morbid. I believe he enjoys being a martyr. He has no right to sacrifice himself, to sacrifice—" She paused abruptly.

Janie knew she was thinking of herself. Celia hated the Square.

"I think he's splendid," she said warmly.

"Of course he is," Celia dropped into the armchair beside the fire. "I feel so miserable," she said. "I've cried myself sick about Father."

Celia stared at the flames. Janie stroked Kiltie's rough coat. The quiet of the room was broken only by the sleet against the windows, the snapping of the logs, the dull ticking of the onyx clock on the mantel.

"I've been thinking," Janie presently said, "that we could fix over the parlor into a room for Father."

"The parlor," Celia repeated absently.

"It would be hard for him to get up and down stairs," Janie swallowed and continued. "We could make it into a cheerful room and have a door cut through into the office and Stoney could sleep in there on a cot." Janie's face brightened with enthusiasm. "I have the Christmas money Aunt Lucy gave me, and so have you. We could do it for a surprise. Father could see people in the office and wheel himself out into the dining room for meals and—"

"Janie! How can you?" Celia interrupted.

"How can I what?"

"Talk about it so casually." Celia's face was as white as a blanched almond; her hands were clasped tightly over her heart. "How can you think of turning the parlor into a sick room? People don't have beds in the parlor except on Juniper street."

"But Father won't be exactly sick," Janie tried to explain. "And he'll still be Father. We could make it look like a sitting room except for the bed and—"

"Hush!" Celia said sharply.

Janie glanced up, her eyes wide with surprise. Celia reconsidered. The white fury in her face softened perceptibly.

"I can't bear it!" she said brokenly. "You don't mind such things, Janie dear. Sickness, ugliness tortures me. I simply can't bear it, that's all."

Janie didn't mind! The thought of Father in a chair was like a knife through her heart. The thought that now they could never tramp through the Canadian forest to Father's beautiful lake filled her with misery. Janie didn't mind! It was because she minded so terribly that she wanted to fix over a room for Father. But she couldn't tell Celia. She couldn't explain.

If Celia really loved Hugh? She didn't love Hugh. Janie realized it with a sharp feeling of alarm. When you loved people you wanted to make them happy. And it was Celia's fault really. Not Hugh's. He would be terribly hurt. He was so honest and sincere. Hugh would be hurt and Janie, who loved him so much, could do nothing to help. Oh, Hugh! Oh, dear Hugh who never laughed any more . . .

He came in at midnight. He looked completely exhausted. But his eyes brightened as he saw them waiting for him beside the fire.

TO BE CONTINUED.

### Man-Made Lightning

It requires millions of volts of stored up electricity to make one good, big lightning flash. For years man has been able to create within the laboratory the high voltage necessary to make an artificial flash similar to the real one in the skies. This man-made lightning was not created for amusement but served for the purpose of testing equipment, especially the devices designed for lightning protection. Important use has been found for this high voltage—breaking down the atom. In this process, tiny atomic particles are hurled against the nucleus at a high speed and while very little power is necessary, a high speed is essential. High voltages furnish the most satisfactory method of obtaining these speeds.—Pathfinder Magazine.

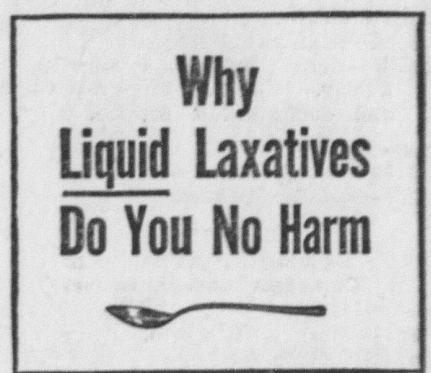
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