

SERIAL STORY

THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER

BY HELEN WORDEN

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARIE LA PORTE—model in exclusive dress shop, lives on a barge.

DAN DONOVAN—playboy son of a rich Irishman, in love with Marie.

TOMMY RYAN—leader of the truckers fighting Marie's father.

LYNDA MARTIN—society debutante, wants to marry Dan.

BAPTISTE LA PORTE—Marie's father, owner of a fleet of barges.

YESTERDAY: Mrs. Donovan lunches with Mrs. Martin, who suggests Dan's marriage to Lynda as the best way to unite the Donovan and Martin fortunes. Lynda interrupts the conversation. She is hardly settled when Dan arrives, with Marie.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Now, you and I are going to have nothing but fun for the next two hours," said Dan to Marie as he reached for the menu. "But before I even so much as order the champagne, I'd like to hear your views on the situation." He twirled the menu card and waved the waiter aside. "Remember, though, every minute is precious. You've put your own time limit on this."

Marie smiled, but her eyes were serious. "I know, that's why I don't see what made you bring me here. You'll spend all your time talking to friends."

Dan drew crazy patterns on the table cloth with a fork.

"I suppose it does seem cockeyed coming to this noisy place, but it's home to me. I think I'd turn up here if I'd committed murder and the district attorney were sitting at the next table. I guess it's a habit."

He included the entire room with a single gesture. "Now, take those people here today. Ex-husbands and ex-wives are sitting table to table. Sweethearts and wives in the same party. Old husbands and new ones at the bar. He glared around. "The Colony is sort of like a public place for confessing your sins and your pleasures."

He looked directly at Marie as he uttered the word, "pleasures." "You are my pleasure, you know," he said. "But you're more than that, you're every breath I draw."

Marie was about to speak but the waiter interrupted.

Dan looked at her, mouth quirked up at the corners.

"I intend to start this thing off the right way," his eyes twinkled. "I'm going to do the ordering."

He laughed. "I hope you like it. You can tell me later."

While he discussed the menu with the waiter she sat back in an introspective mood, hardly aware of the people around her save, perhaps, the three women in the front of the room. Without being told, she felt their antagonism. She knew that, whether they were looking at her this moment or not, they were thinking of her. Even a week at Yarnie's had taught her something about women of this class.

But she felt strangely free of their criticism because she was neither asking nor taking away anything from them. In another hour and so many minutes she would be removed from their lives forever. That morning, after she left the barge, she had made up her mind that she belonged neither in the glamorous world of Yarnie's front shop, nor Dan's sky-rocketing circle. With a maturity far beyond her years she had decided that her attempt to merge the two worlds, had caused all the trouble. She was a barge girl; a canalboat captain's daughter and nothing more. However, there was nothing to prevent her from carrying back memories with her. Dan's voice came to her suddenly.

"Snap out of it," he laughed. "Where were you? I'm jealous. I'd like to be there too."

"As a matter of fact you were there," she smiled. "I'm happy, are you?"

He caught her hand under the table. "Why do you ask?"

She drew away. The thrill was so real it made her unhappy. She did not want to encourage anything so lovely, if it could not last.

"I know," he said, you don't have to tell me. I'm outgoing, humble pie. Everything else in the world that I've wanted, I've got and now—well, I'll never ask you if you love me—until— he stopped.

"Until what?"

"Ah, that I won't tell. It depends on you." He raised his cocktail glass. "To the happiest—"

"I'm sorry," Lynda's voice interrupted. "Do you two object to a threesome for a few moments?" She smiled graciously.

"Certainly not," Dan rose to his feet, but there was no enthusiasm in his move. "Won't you sit down?"

Lynda settled in a chair opposite them. "I believe Miss La Porte and I have met before." Her voice was friendly, but her eyes were hard. "I've heard so much about your living on—"

Marie looked at her. "You mean my living on a barge? Yes, I guess you'd say I called a canalboat home. I was born and brought up on one—the same one," she added defiantly.

"Which is more than most New Yorkers can say," Dan added, "being born and raised in one place."

"That's true," Lynda's tone had lost none of its graciousness. "But canalboats are curious homes—where is yours, Miss La Porte?"

Marie laughed. "I don't think you could ever find it. It's on the East river. Does that mean anything to you?"

"No," Lynda spoke abstractedly. "Oh, I'm sorry, I must be running on. I see your mother and Auntie going, Dan." She jumped up. "I didn't want to leave without saying hello."

"Do you like her?" Marie asked, when Lynda had gone.

"I used to think I did, after a fashion," Dan admitted, "but since I met you, and then I knew it wasn't the real thing."

She was silent.

"A penny for your thoughts."

"They weren't important, just about you."

"I like that, of all that." And then they both laughed.

The rest of the luncheon went this way, laughing over silly

things that could mean nothing to anyone but themselves; discovering that they shared a common antipathy to parsnips, banana cream pie and hatless men who strolled through the streets with upturned overcoat collars, that each adored walking in the rain and that they both would rather tango and walk than eat.

"Why, everybody's gone," cried Marie, looking up. "It must be terribly late." She glanced at Dan. "I'm not even saying goodby. I can't, I'm just going."

She got up. He rose with a de-fiant, "I don't care who sees us, but put his arms around her and kissed her squarely on the mouth. "I'm coming with you!"

"No, you promised—" She laughed and slipped away.

"You may call this goodby—" he shouted, but she was gone.

Out on the street, she turned toward Lexington avenue—bending her head as the wind swirled a cloud of snow about her. But she stopped as she heard someone, a girl, calling.

"Oh, Miss La Porte!" It was Lynda Martin. "I—I don't know how to begin." She paused. "But, Dan is so young and foolish. I don't know how to explain, but— he'll break his mother's heart, if—"

"If what?" Marie's tone was sharp.

"If— it's so hard to explain—"

Marie stared at her. "You mean if he doesn't marry you?"

"Yes."

Marie looked at Lynda coldly. "You don't need to worry. I'm not going to marry him. Good-by."

Lynda stood there staring after her until she had entirely vanished in the veil of white snow.

(To be concluded)

Family Mail

COLUMBIA, S. C.—The mail is a family affair with Mrs. J. O. Smith of Columbia.

Her husband is a postal carrier. Her father was a postmaster. She was born in a postoffice building.

Her brother is a clerk in the Miami Beach postoffice. She had two brothers-in-law in the postoffice.

She has a brother in the department in Washington.

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