SERIAL STORY

DATE WITH DANGER

BY HELEN WORDEN

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CHAPTER III

The sliding door of her booth half open. "Rhinelander 4-7254," she said. No answer. "Try Whitehall 3-6300." She drew the door of her booth shut. "City," lowering her voice. "Okay, give me Mr. Ladd, the managing editor. Hello, Tom? This is Mary. Janice isn't here at the Dove. Janice isn't here and she doesn't answer her phone."

In the adjoining booth, the voice jiggled the telephone hook. "Try that number again, operator," he ordered. "Rhinelander 4-7254."

"Sorry, sir," said the girl after a few minutes. "I get a 'don't answer' signal."

The sleet, whipped by a strong wind, shrouded Lower New York. Empty office buildings loomed like gigantic tombstones in the half-dusk of early night, their blackness strengthened by the thousand lights which twinkled from the New York Morning Gazette. An occasional late worker hurried toward the building, his head bent low to save himself from the sharp prickle of the sleet when it blew in his face. Otherwise the streets were deserted.

The howling darkness made the bustle and bustle of the big newspaper seem doubly cheerful. People stood about in the lobby talking. Elevators shot up and down the shafts. Messenger boys stalked back and forth, their rubber boots gleaming with melting sleet and from the lower floors of the paper came the rumbling of the presses. On the 12th floor the clack of typewriters proclaimed the location of the editorial offices. At intervals the pounding of keys was punctuated by cries of "Copy!" as a reporter or that one hurried to make a deadline. The first edition was going to press in 10 minutes.

"Give me all the ad you've got on Janice French," Tom Ladd shouted his head out from the managing editor's office and then drew back just as suddenly.

He could do more things at the same time than any juggler who'd ever spun plates at a circus sideshow. Here was a queer man with a singular career. It was inevitable that he would eventually land on a newspaper. In his late 30s with something of the hawk in his handsome face, he had been managing editor of the Gazette five years. Before that he'd been city editor and before that cable editor. He seldom talked about his early life, but it was known that he'd gone to Harvard and that he'd shipped as a sailor to the Orient the year he left college. He'd written for pulps, edited a housewife's magazine (he never mentioned this) and once, when he was broke, composed menus for a physical culture restaurant. He'd also slept on park benches and stood in bread lines.

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Now he lived in a bachelor apartment on Lower Fifth avenue, drove a low-slung black roadster, and smoked a pipe. The newspaper game suited his adventurous philosophy. He interested himself in its functioning. He never tired of listening to the fellows talk on the city desk. He admired their irresponsible sentimentalism and he condoned their gambling spirit. He liked their good humor, their generosity, and their sudden mania for causes. He knew by instinct exactly how to treat them. He had a real tenderness for them. He could smell news. He also had a healthy temper and a strong voice. Good-looking in a dramatic way, he could be hard-boiled one moment and Chesterfieldian the next. Everybody in the office but himself knew he was in love with Mary, that is everybody except Mary.

This evening, returning to his swivel chair, he pressed a telephone to his ear and mouth with his left hand, okayed copy with his right and shoved a desk drawer shut with his right foot, the while bellowing into the receiver, "What do these fool society girls mean by playing around with veneered hoodlums like Duke Martin? Understand this, Mary! Janice French's family have asked the police to make a secret search for her. Maybe the Duke knows where she is. Maybe he doesn't. Somebody knows. Half the town may know, but the Gazette doesn't know. Get the story!"

Jamming up the receiver, Ladd began pounding the desk. "Bring me the clips on Janice French, Pete," he yelled to a scurrying office boy, "and make it snappy." Then he settled back in his chair. Half an hour later, Ladd, still excitedly puffing his pipe, pressed a buzzer marked "City Editor."

"Come in, Crossie," he called, as Padraic Croswell, the city editor, looked inquiringly through the door. "I want to talk to you about Janice French."

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Crossie was thin with a long, sallow face, prominent nose, large and bony, and great shaggy, sandy eyebrows. When he first appeared in the editorial rooms of the Gazette 15 years before, it had been rumored that he was an Irish radical. There were few in the office even now who remembered his coming, but they knew that he did speak Gaelic and that he had an amazing knowledge of the stars. Aside from this he had proved himself a good newspaper man, which was all that really mattered.

"Janice is still missing," said Crossie briefly, draping his lanky form over the edge of Tom's desk.

"That's why I want to talk to you. A grand story here if we can get at the bottom of it. Where's that office boy with those clips?"

Pete ducked in, dropped an envelope marked "Janice French" on the desk and sidled out. He'd worked on the Gazette long enough to know when to steer clear of the boss.

"Now here's a society girl who's fallen for a killer," continued Tom, forgetting, in his frenzy over the story, the sarcastic remark he was about to fling at Pete. "She's easy to look at. She's rich and she's out for thrills. A natural for a guy like Martin. Big money to him. But how are we going to prove it? Now she disappears. So what?" He paced nervously up and down. "This story isn't going to keep."

Crossie unwound his arms and held out a hand. "Let's have a look at the clips." He began shuffling through the newspaper accounts of Janice's activities. "Debut cost $50,000," he read in a monotone. "She was busy as the devil going to theater parties and known as 'Playgirl of Society.' Got a home on Fifth Avenue. Pilots her own plane. Drives like the old Nick, according to the number of times she's been arrested for speeding. Some girl, I'd say."

"Too wild," said Tom briefly. "I've run into her occasionally. Darned pretty but reckless. Always thought she'd make a good story some time. But that's not helping us now."

He walked to the window and drummed his fingers on the pane.

"Some place in this town are all the answers." He stared out over the city. A rosy haze, pink even through the veil of mist, colored the sky. "While you and I stand here, Crossie, anything may be happening and probably is."

He began pacing the floor again, puffing furiously on his pipe.

"God, man, you stand there like a stick!" He stopped abruptly in front of Crossie. "We've got to act and act quick."

Crossie, unmoved, looked amiably back at his temperamental chief.

"There are several courses to pursue in this story," he said calmly. "I think the best approach lies through your society department. Where is Mary Franklin?"

The phone buzzed on Tom's desk. "This is Mary Franklin calling from Rhinelander 4-7254," came Mary's agitated voice before Tom could say "Hello." "A man named Dick Hart has just come into this department. Send the police—" Her voice stopped suddenly, terminated by a shriek. Ladd heard the receiver crash to the floor.

(To Be Continued)

FROM DONNA

DONNA, May 12—(Special)—The Home Economics extension service unit met at the Mohawk grange hall for an all-day meeting this week. A covered dish dinner was served at noon. In the forenoon Mrs. Paul Myers and Mrs. George Bidwell made and demonstrated several simple dessert dishes. The afternoon was spent in planning next year's work. Those who attended from Donna were Mrs. Rubie Hufstadter, Mrs. Caroline Crowe, Mrs. Zelma Wallace, Mrs. Harriet Kennedy, Mrs. Hester Laffoon. This was the last meeting until fall.

Mrs. May Benton has returned to her home in Los Angeles after several days visit with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Stoddard.

Eskimos use the jawbones of whales as roofing material.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia

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"I gotta break our Sunday date because I'm washin' the dishes for Mother's Day. But honest, Chuck, it won't ever happen again."

SIDE GLANCES

"Don't make too much noise when you pass the superintendent's apartment—he's looking for an excuse to raise our rent."

Stories in STAMPS

Marshall—Interpreter Of the Constitution

NEXT to James Madison, who drafted the great document, John Marshall was the closest student of the U. S. Constitution in its early years and his interpretations left profound precedents.

Marshall was keenly aware of the deep social forces which had produced the instrument, of the breach between the aristocracy on the one hand, the mercantile group, the public creditors, the men of property, and the less well-to-do on the other. He saw, too, how closely fought was the contest for its adoption and so when he became chief justice he endeavored to weigh all this in his historic deliberations.

On Marshall's shoulders fell the task of interpreting the Constitution during the most critical period of its history. In all he decided 44 notable cases involving constitutional questions. On many of them rested the future of the very government which the Constitution had established. Marshall personally wrote the opinions in the most important cases.

Such cases were Marbury versus Madison, in which Marshall decided that the Supreme Court could declare unconstitutional an act of Congress, and McCulloch versus Maryland, giving Congress a wide latitude to execute its delegated powers. Thus Marshall laid the groundwork which is still essential to preservation of the American system.

The great jurist is shown above on a U. S. stamp of the series of 1894, $5 gray green, enlarged.

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE — The Gay Deceivers — By HAROLD GRAY

POPEYE — Now Showing—"It Looks Like He'll Have to Blast!" — Monday—"A Beautician Knows His Scallions!" — By E. C. SEGAR

SECRET AGENT X-9 — The G-Man Prefers Brunettes — By ROBERT STORM

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES — Now What? — By MARTIN

WASH TUBBS — Good Boy, Easy — By CRANE

ALLEY OOP — Collision Ahead — By V. T. HAMLIN

OUR BOARDING HOUSE - - with - - MAJOR HOOPLE

OUT OUR WAY — By WILLIAMS