

The RAINING TALENT

By ELEANOR EARLY © 1929 NEA Service Inc.

THIS HAS HAPPENED WITH WOODS, who roomed with MOLLY BURNHAM at 1214th St. and died suddenly and tragically. Molly telephoned her sweetheart, JACK WELLS, to come from New York for the funeral.

Woods has been buried, and Jack and Molly are having dinner to celebrate in her apartment. Molly is a young reporter, and making an extraordinary success of her career. Jack works in an architect's office, and has not yet met the wife.

Molly goes out to shop for dinner, and discovers that she is being followed by a short, dark, suspicious man. She is thoroughly frightened, but rather than hysterical and ask for help, she continues on her way—and the short, dark man keeps his eyes upon her.

CHAPTER XVII

Molly was down the street, revolving the most preposterous idea in her mind. Slim Boynton had warned her against the Chicago gunmen. But Slim was a dreadful alarmist. Besides, she hadn't hurt Mandinello. Why, even Slim said the racketeers ought to give Molly a vote of thanks—Slim, who had been so sure they were going to shoot her.

That horrible man was standing now directly in front of the apartment. He had turned, and was looking her. There was nothing to do but to run past him. In another moment she would be in the lobby.

She had reached the lowest step of the broad flight that led to the apartment. And now she saw the man's face quite distinctly. His eyes were wide and hunted—the eyes of a mad man. And his beard was dark and stubby.

Suddenly there was a shot. And another. And another...

But Molly heard only one. And that was so fused with the stinging pain that sang through her shoulder that she could never quite separate them—the shot and the pain.

People came running. Someone telephoned for the police. And someone called an ambulance.

Jack was there, showing his way through the crowd. Bullying the janitor, who sought to assume authority. Bullying even the police, when they arrived. And when the ambulance came, it was he who lifted Molly and laid her gently on the stretcher, and sat beside her, and chatted her still hands.

Her clothes were drenched with the blood that flowed from her shoulder. Once he opened her eyes and moaned.

Excitement spread like fire along the street where Molly lived. And presently Rita and Bob and Zip had heard the news. A girl shot in broad daylight! They ran out and saw the crowd in front of Molly's apartment.

A policeman was dispersing the crowd. And some woman was picking up the flowers that Molly had dropped. For souvenirs, probably. Even the rolls and strawberry tarts she had carried were being gathered.

Bob reached the policeman, who was waving his arms and shouting, "Move on, catcha? Move on, I say."

"We are friends of the girl who was shot," began Bob.

"Don't know nothin' about it," growled the officer.

"But where have they taken her?"

"Rialto station." The policeman intoned. "Didn't know you was really a friend of hers, Bo. That's what everybody says when they want to know something. They didn't get her. Bullet through the shoulder, as near as I could make out. She'll be all right, I guess. Grab a taxi, and head down to the Rialto station, why don't you?"

Molly was on the operating table, and two surgeons were probing her with bullets. Jack was walking nervously up and down the long corridor. Rita and Bob seemed to stand still with fear. Bob and Zip had stopped to speak to a group of newspapermen at the door.

"She's on the danger list," one of them said.

"What gang from Chicago did it?" asked another. "The stuff she wrote on the Mandinello trial was as good as asking to be shot."

The door of the operating room opened, and the surgeons walked out, followed by a nurse. They were all in white and wore rubber gloves. One of them stopped Jack at the door.

"It's all right, young fellow," he said heartily. "We got 'em both. Next as a whistle."

"Can I see her?" demanded Jack.

"Oh, she's still under ether," replied the surgeon casually. "And I reckon she's not going to feel like receiving for a while. But there's nothing to worry about. One of the nurses will let you know when you can see her. They'll be moving her out of there in a few minutes."

Another group had joined the reporter's group. A tall, thin chap with red hair and rounded shoulders.

"Look!" Rita grabbed Jack's arm. "There's Red Flynn—from her office. Haven't you ever heard her speak of him? Let's ask him what he knows about it."

Red was already talking with Bob and Zip, and in a moment they came to join Jack and Rita. Red was very pale, and Rita noticed the way his freckles stood out. Big brown freckles, like Wasky Barry's.

There's got to be the man who did it," he told them brusquely. "Dopey Dan," a broadhead that used to be with the Mandinello gang. Crazy target practice. I guess they found a list of names in his pocket, with Judge Brewster and the district attorney up at the top."

"Good Lord! Where did they get him?" broke in Jack.

"Columbus avenue."

Red drew a box of cigars from his pocket and passed them around. Rita noticed that his hand was trembling, and she wondered if it could be that Red was in love with Molly. She knew that they were working together on a play. She looked quickly at Jack, to see if he, too, had noticed Red's extreme nervousness.

"Dan was strolling along," Red was saying, "when he saw a couple of cops, coming up the street together. When dicks travel in pairs any gunman's apt to get nervous. Well, Dopey Dan pulls an orange from his pocket, and begins to suck on it. It's easy enough to spot a cokey. Hennessy and Dolan steered him up soon as they clapped eyes on him. It was Dopey Dan grabbed him. But the fellow got his gun out first. It's a wonder he didn't let the boys have it. But he turns it on himself, and takes a bullet through his lousy heart."

"The orange he was sucking was smeared with rat poison. Now if that ain't a classy way for a gunman to kick off! You got to hand it to the cokeys. They think up the cutest little things."

"It's a lucky thing he didn't try to slip any of his rat poison to Molly," declared Bob.

"Molly gets all the breaks," affirmed Red. "She's the luckiest kid I ever know."

"Lucky!" scoffed Jack. "I suppose you call it lucky to get a couple of bullets in the shoulder?"

"Sure," retorted Red, unruffled. "She might have got them in the heart. Besides, see all the good it's going to do her?"

"Good!" exclaimed Rita. "Sure. Publicity. Didn't you know Molly's writing a play? Little advertising doesn't hurt a playwright any. Molly'll have her face on the front page all over the country tomorrow morning. And if that ain't a million dollars worth of advertising, I'll eat my shirt."

"So you're the chap who's persuaded her to take up that fifth?" cut in Jack.

Red flicked an ash from his cigarette before replying.

"So you're the chap," he retorted insultingly, "who loves her in a big way?"

Jack doubled his fist furiously, and his white, set face crimsoned with rage. It was Zip who stood between them. Zip, with his eyes still red with grieving, and his boyish mouth swollen from weeping.

"Cut it out!" he told them sternly. "You're acting like a couple of guys in a book."

Red grinned sheepishly. "Suitors fight for love of girl reporter," he glibly intoned. "Jealous Swain Threatens Police Court Man."

"Don't worry, old chap. I'm not in the running. Molly's told me about you. She's a real little square shooter."

Jack tugged at his collar, embarrassed. "Sure, she's told me about you, too. I ain't mean to get like you. Sort of off my my head. The shooting had scared to death. I'm sorry, old man. Molly told me about the play you're writing."

"It's hot stuff," Red assured them. "Molly's heart-bent to be a great girl."

"Sure, Molly's a great kid. How soon do you suppose she'll be out of the ether?" Zip was trying to change the subject.

"I'll find out," Red swung down the corridor.

"Well, what do you think of that guy?" demanded Bob.

"He must be all right," responded Jack generously. "Molly likes him."

Red was back in a moment.

"The nurse says she'll see Mr. Wells," he announced. "They've taken her upstairs. The office gave me a private room and a private nurse. They'll see that everything's okay. I'll be busting along now. Got a lot of stuff to tear off."

"Oh, Mr. Flynn," Rita smiled her most beguiling smile. "Couldn't you keep this out of the paper? Molly's parents will just about die if they hear about it."

Red gazed at her open-mouthed. Unbelieving.

"Keep it out of the paper!" he repeated. "Why, girly, every paper in the country is going to lead with it. I guess you don't understand, you people. Why, Molly's going to be the most talked-of girl in the world this time tomorrow. They've already telephoned her picture. Every civilized sheet in the world is going to play this story. Shot by Gunman Beautiful College Girl."

Martyred Young Reporter. God, can't you get that? I tell you, she can't get on with her face, and her build—and the advertising she's going to get! Boys and girls, what a break! And she asks me can I keep it out of the paper? No, Miss—there's a few things we can't any of us keep out of the paper. And one of them's that guy Lindbergh. And another's going to be Molly Burnham."

"You don't mean—" began Rita breathlessly.

"Oh, I don't mean she's got a life contract for front page advertising, like Lindy," admitted Red. "But she's going to get her little share of it tomorrow, friends. And the old folks out in Snoderas, why they'll just eat it up."

A nurse approached them.

"Is Mr. Wells here?" she asked.

(To Be Continued)

One of the hottest places in the United States is in Bear Valley, Calif., between the Pasadena and Funeral mountains. Its temperature averages reaches 122 degrees above zero, Fahrenheit.

There are no railroads in the Kingdom of Afghanistan.

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

One Blunder After Another By HAROLD GRAY



SALESMAN SAM

Quite So, Sam! By SMALL



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

Boots Gets Left Out By MARTIN



MOM'N POP

Mugsy Swings Into Action By COWAN



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By AHERN



THE TINYMITES

By KNICK

