

The STRANGE CASE of JULIA CRAIG

by Nard Jones
Copyright NEA 1936

BEGIN HERE TODAY
JULIA CRAIG, pretty young secretary to GEORGE WOODFORD of the law firm of Woodford and Brooks, is ambitious to become a night club singer.
AMY, HADEN, the whom Julia shares an apartment, discourages her about this, although admitting Julia's voice is better than many professional ones.
PETER KEMP, also employed by Woodford and Brooks, is in love with Julia and has asked her to marry him, but Julia discourages his attentions. She tells Peter she is determined to become a singer and he agrees to give her a letter of introduction to his friend, HENRI LAMB, band leader at the Green Club.
NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

CHAPTER III
HAVING made his promise, Peter seemed to hesitate. Then he said, "If Henri Lamb doesn't give you a job, will you marry me?" He saw the sudden dismay in Julia's eyes, and added quickly, "All right. Just pretend I didn't ask you. I think it was the 13th time, and that would be unlucky."

Julia laughed. "It would be, at least for this time, Peter. I'll try hard to persuade Henri Lamb to try me out at the Green Club. But even if he won't—I don't think I'd quit trying so soon."

Next day Julia realized that her ideas about breaking into night club entertainings had been somewhat vague. In the cold light of morning she saw that it was her spirited argument with Amy which had crystallized the ambition so quickly.

Amy and Julia never breakfasted in the apartment. It was their invariable habit to drop in at a small restaurant on the way to work.

Julia's morning fare was orange juice, toast, and coffee—but Amy, who had a tendency to curdle in what she humorously called "the wrong place," kept rigidly to a breakfast diet of orange juice only. It was over the rim of an orange juice glass that she looked at Julia now.

"Well," she asked quizzically, "Still want to be the female Crosby this morning?"

Julia nodded. "Peter knows Henri Lamb. He's going to give me a letter to him."

"Darned if you don't mean it!" exclaimed Amy in astonishment. "I thought maybe you were just putting on an act last night. Sometimes I feel like trying to crash the movies—but then after a good night's sleep I get over the idea."

THE two left each other at the entrance to the restaurant—Amy to the gown shop, and Julia hurrying toward the tall building on whose top floor rested the dignified offices of Woodford and Brooks. It was one of the largest law firms in the city, and its personnel was a much more complicated affair than the name indicated. For George Woodford and his partner employed a veritable corps of young attorneys—and for each one there was a secretary, in addition to the telephone girl and filing clerks. Theoretically, as Woodford's secretary, Julia Craig had the most enviable job of all the girls. But there was a stifling routine about the work that she did not like; and what worried her most was the thought of being in Woodford's paneled office for years on end—as if it were a cell and she committed to it for a crime of which she had never been guilty.

In the reception hall she met Peter Kemp. He smiled his good morning, and took a sealed envelope from his pocket. On its face was neatly typed "Mr. Henri Lamb, The Green Club."

"Oh, thanks, Peter . . ." Julia returned his smile. "I really do appreciate this a lot."

"That's okay," Kemp told her. "If you're sure it's what you want, then I'm glad if I can help. Henri's office is on the second floor of the club. I think the best time to catch him is about 3 in the afternoon."

"Then I'll have to ask Mr. Woodford to let me off."

Peter grinned. "At least you're not going to give up your job first."

"Maybe I should. It—" Julia hesitated.

"Nonsense, Julia. Woodford's out of town today. Why don't you run over to Henri's this afternoon?"

"This afternoon," repeated Julia, frightened a little at the thought. Then, "I . . . I think I will."

Kemp patted her arm. "Good girl. Any—good luck."

"Thanks, Peter. I'll need it." And when the neat little electric clock on her desk told Julia it was 20 minutes until 3, she did feel as if she would need all the luck in the world. More nervous than she had ever been in her life, she fitted on her hat, glad that it was the smartest and most recent in her meager wardrobe. Then, with a final and careful look into the mirror, she pocketed Peter's letter and left the office by the side door into the hallway.

DOWNSTAIRS she decided on the extravagance of a taxi. "After all," she thought, "I don't want to be out of breath when I get there."

The taxi drew her up before the Green Club some minutes before 3. But Julia paid the driver hurriedly and walked briskly into the building. She had managed to screw her courage to the sticking point, and she wanted to face Henri Lamb while it was still there.

The pastel-green facade of the building was familiar to her, and she found the wide doors closed but yielding to her touch. When she had stepped inside she was astonished at the sight that met her eyes. The big room was deserted now, and illuminated eerily from only high, small, ventilating windows near the ceiling. Cloths were gone from the tables set on tiers above the rather small dance floor—and the chairs were stacked atop the tables.

In the center of the platform she saw the thin metal standard with its microphone at the top. "I wonder," Julia thought, "if I'll be standing there, singing to people in this room . . ."

Involuntarily, she sought the letter Peter Kemp had given her. Holding it as if it were a talisman, she went toward the stairway which she guessed would lead to Henri Lamb's office. Within surprisingly few steps she was in a tiny ante-room which held only three things—a photograph of Henri Lamb and his orchestra, a scarred bench, and a very young man who sat on the end of the bench smoking a cigaret. He surveyed Julia critically and said, "You want to see Mr. Lamb?"

"Yes," she faltered. More than once she had faced frate Woodford clients and turned them away harmlessly. But somehow she was afraid of this very young man. "I—I have a letter to him."

"I'll take it in," the young man said, holding out his hand for it. In a very short time he was facing her again. "Come on in," he said. "Mr. Lamb'll see you."

THE quick magic of Peter's letter gave Julia immeasurable courage. She found Henri Lamb a short, heavy, dapper individual who lost much of his personality out of the black jacket in which he led his band. But he seemed sincere, and Julia liked him.

"Friend of Pete's, eh? . . . Ever do any professional singing?" Julia had to admit she hadn't.

"Well, maybe that's all the better," he turned to the door. "Jim . . . Jim, turn the spot on the mike. Then go down and play for Miss Craig. She feels like singing."

"Okay," Jim said. Then to Julia: "What d'you want to sing?" "I know most of the new things," she looked at Henri Lamb. "How about 'Accent on Youth'?" Lamb nodded. "That's a good number. Let's have it. And leave your hat here. I want to see your hair under the spot." When Julia removed her hat he gave a little exclamation of approval. "Say, that ought to look good!"

As Julia went downstairs and across the empty dance floor to the platform, she walked as one in a trance. The spotlight was blinding at first, but she was grateful for it because it hid the big emptiness of the room—and it hid, too, the disconcerting figure of Lamb. But when Jim started in at the piano, Julia forgot everything but the plaintive, haunting song. And she sang it well. She knew she did.

On the final chorus, Henri Lamb walked close to the microphone. When she had finished, he patted her hand. But he was shaking his head, too, and she heard him say: "Not quite yet. But you're coming along."

"You mean I—I won't do?" "I'm afraid that's it," he looked at her seriously. "It's a tough racket, anyhow, girls. Why don't you forget it?"

Stammering her thanks, her eyes flitting with tears of humiliation, Julia rushed toward the platform. She was almost out the door when she remembered she had left her hat upstairs. She ran for it, hoping she wouldn't confront Henri Lamb again.

Beside her hat on his littered desk she saw the half-open letter which Peter Kemp had written to Lamb. Peter had typed it out in clear capitals which even her glance could not miss. It said: DEAR HENRI—THIS IS JULIA CRAIG WHO WANTS TO SING IN YOUR CLUB. BUT WHEN YOU GIVE HER A TRY-OUT I WISH YOU'D REMEMBER I'M IN LOVE WITH HER AND DON'T WANT HER TO BE A SINGER.

(To Be Continued)

PEREZ, CALIF., NEWS

PEREZ, Calif.—Mather Burns and son, Walter and wife were in Klamath Falls shopping Monday.

A. M. Zumwalt and wife have taken over the store that was operated by John Honeycutt and wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Ward, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Dean were in Klamath Falls shopping Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Slim Lubbes are the proud parents of a baby son.

Mr. W. R. Stewart went to Klamath Falls on business Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter McFrederick have their beverage house almost ready for operation at Canby.

Mr. and Mrs. Fagel and family attended a family party at Malin Saturday night.

Perez and vicinity have enjoyed springlike weather for the past week.

A. M. Zumwalt lunched with his brother Ike Zumwalt at Klamath Falls Saturday.

Rain, falling straight down, will not fill an exposed receptacle any more quickly than rain falling at any angle.

Flapper Fanny Says

Gardening is another hobby that grows on you.

OUT OUR WAY

BY J. R. WILLIAMS OUR BOARDING HOUSE

BY AHERN



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

BY HAROLD GRAY



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

BY BLOSSER



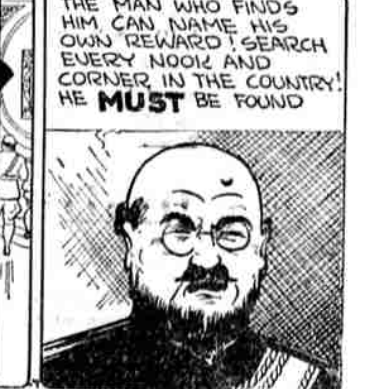
WASH TUBBS

BY CRANE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

BY MARTIN



THE NEWFANGLES — MOM'N POP.

BY COWAN

