

● SERIAL STORY

FRANTIC FESTIVAL

BY EDMUND FANCOTT

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THE STORY: Myra Mack and Fay Rathbone, two Montreal girls, are invited to spend their Christmas vacation in the Laurentians as guests of eccentric Ferdie Benson. As Myra suspected, his guests include a strange assortment of personalities: Benny Benson, theatrical agent; Leona, artist's model; Bruno McCluskey, wrestler; and wealthy Lieut. Ross Benson. The group meet for the first time in Ferdie's studio.

LUNCH WITHOUT ROMANCE

CHAPTER V

FAY RATHBONE sat opposite Lieut. Ross Benson in the spacious but crowded restaurant of the store where Benson had lately officiated as Santa Claus. He had extracted her from the studio with the neatness of one who preferred his company in small numbers and had had considerable experience in getting his own way.

He liked the way she smiled and the easy way she fenced with him. It was odd how the girls one liked to be with were not all the types one thought one could fall for, not that he was falling for anyone just yet.

Then he realized that there was a quirk of humor in her eyes that looked uncommonly as though she were reading his thoughts.

"Tell me about you," he said. "Married?"

"No."

"Engaged?"

"No."

"In love?"

"No."

"Terrible," he said seriously. "You ought to do something about it."

"Because it's Christmas, or because it's me?"

"Because it's Christmas," she fenced.

"Do you like the male species?"

"Distance lends enchantment to anything," she replied. There was a way her eyes teased him as she said it that made him grin and admit that he had found his match in some things.

"Do you work?"

"For preference?" he asked.

"No, necessity."

"Family?"

"Large and penurious."

"Hence the work?"

"No, pride. They said I couldn't do it."

"And your ambitions?"

"Art, spoken in big letters."

"You need an income like Ferdie's so that you can play at it."

"I wouldn't play at it."

"I suspect you work at it in your spare time."

She shook her head. "Sometimes only. And you, your ambitions?"

"A brighter, better world after this mess is over."

"A reformer?"

"Hardly," he replied. "Benson's Benign Bath Soap. It brought me up and educated me and I'm very grateful to it and after this mess is over I intend to devote my life to it in sheer gratitude and also to make a cleaner, sweeter world. I can conceive of no more laudable ambition . . . that is, if there is still any profit in anything after this is over."

"A materialist," she accused.

"Half and half, and the soap provides the perfect answer, a nice clean way of earning a living. But let's forget all that until the New Year."

"Forget your girl, too?" There was a look of mischief in Fay's eyes as she said this. She was aware of the working of the mind of Lieut. Ross Benson.

Sometimes a girl can walk through the door of a man's face into his mind as though it were a familiar room full of pleasant but well-remembered things as though in some former existence she has known it all before. So it seemed to Fay as she looked at Ross Benson. She was at least four years younger than he but she felt suddenly much older, understanding him and able to forestall his thoughts. She knew very well that in the studio he had made a quick survey of the available material and had decided that Leona would be the center of attraction and therefore too much in demand for such a short time as a few days.

Myra was not his idea of a frivolous companion and so she, Fay, fitted nicely in between, and naturally she would feel flattered at the devoted attention of the roughest and handsomest male in the party.

Her quick question took him aback for a moment. Then he smiled. It gave him a chance to put himself on record for the weekend that he was not in the marriage market.

"I haven't got one," he replied. "I don't think it is fair to tangle with a girl and then go overseas and leave her high and dry for the duration. And I don't believe in marriage . . . while I'm in uniform."

"You don't believe in marriage?" she asked, her blue eyes holding his with a touch of mockery in their smile.

"No, do you?"

"Not for girls under twenty . . . and particularly not with men in uniform."

"Why?"

"A friend of mine in St. John's met a man one week, married him the next and hasn't seen him since. He went overseas and where is she?"

"Sitting at home waiting for her hero to return." He answered her with a mock seriousness.

"You see the point?" Fay looked over the edge of her cup of coffee. "I do," he replied. "Particularly since I made it first. Will you have dinner with me tonight?"

"No. I'm going to mail my Christmas cards."

"May I help you?"

"No."

"Definite, aren't you?"

"They both laughed and he felt

that she would do. She was definitely not the kind of girl he would fall for. She was a little too thin for one thing and not the kind of girl men would turn round and look at on the street but she was good fun.

"Well, let me drive you up tomorrow."

That would save a railway fare and waiting at stations, thought Fay.

"Does that include Myra?" she asked.

"It must," he said. "And I'll pick you both up at the office."

Fay laughed. "She fell on her neck in sheer gratitude."

IN another restaurant Benny was entertaining Myra at lunch for old times' sake. He had sent up a cup of coffee and a sandwich to Benson, who was marooned in the studio in his underwear and a red robe, waiting to be whisked up to the northlands immediately after lunch.

Benny unburdened his troubles to Myra. Most people did.

"Why I put up with the guy I don't know. I wouldn't be bothered with him but it was me that made him the all-American wrestling champion three times following. I figure I got to help him, and seeing I was coming up here I fixed him up for a couple of weeks. Have another steak, no? Well it seems he ain't reliable any more, not since he took that correspondence course and that's the trouble about education. Some it suits and some it upsets, like putting whiskey on top of beer. But that's the way it is, dumb in some ways, and a gold mine when he's worked the right way, but now he's got this education on his mind you can't do nothing with him."

Myra listened through the meal, watching Benny talk and eat without a pause for breath. Well, he

was different from most of the men she met, if you like people different.

(To Be Continued)

EXPERT

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Roy Mason, who handles 20,000 oysters a week, was explaining how to spot one that contains a pearl. "Look for one with a bump on the shell," he said. "Now here's one with a lot of bumps." Grabbing a knife, he half-shelled the oyster, and out rolled 73 pearls.

Mason says he never got more than \$3 for a pearl, but he's going to have the 73 appraised when he has time.



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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



A BABY OPOSSUM CAN HANG BY ITS TAIL WHEN STILL SO YOUNG THAT ITS EYES ARE NOT OPEN.

ANSWER: Vireo, a bird; virus, a poison; Virgo, a constellation and a sign of the Zodiac.

MARCH COMPOSER

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured late march composer.

11 Rationed item (pl.).

12 Stagers.

13 Symbol for radium.

15 Peel.

16 Unit of length.

17 Street (abbr.).

19 Swiss mountain.

21 Measure.

22 Pound (abbr.).

23 Collection of facts.

24 Heavenly body.

26 He was a noted —.

30 Dry maize product.

32 Either.

33 Genus of shrubs.

34 Greek letter.

35 Weep.

36 Has eaten.

37 Fly.

39 Part of "be."

40 Coiffure.

43 Groul.

45 Hinder.

46 Onager.

47 Print measure.

49 Mineral spring.

50 Size of shot.

51 Chaos.

52 Auricle.

54 Senior (abbr.).

55 Legendary king of Brittany.

56 Neat.

58 Hen product.

59 12 months.

VERTICAL

1 Near.

2 Tear.

3 Snare.

4 By means of this.

5 Employ.

6 Peep.

7 Kingdom.

8 Paraguay tea.

9 He was 71 years when he died.

10 Rupees (abbr.).

13 Headstrong.

14 Singing voice.

17 Cut.

18 Ancient Irish capital.

20 Indulges to excess.

23 Certifies.

25 Stair part.

27 Pattern.

28 Thirsty.

29 Places.

31 Symbol for nickel.

32 Central America (abbr.).

36 Exclamation.

37 Prostrate.

38 Endure.

40 Crawl.

41 Spinning toys.

42 Mast.

44 Juvenile.

46 Female horse.

51 Cobra.

53 Narrow inlet.

55 Exist.

57 Written form of Mister.



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



Red Ryder



Little Orphan Annie



Freckles and His Friends



Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



By Fred Harmon



By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin