

# Clare Stinson

CAMPUS REPORTER



by

D. F. J.

*Lainey Stinson*  
CAMPUS REPORTER

by Doris Faber

ELAINE STINSON returns for her senior year at Roswell College determined to land a job as campus reporter for the city's leading newspaper. No Roswell girl has applied since a now famous writer for *Express* held the post many years ago. That's why handsome Ted Wentworth, who covers the entire University for the *Express*, is furious when Lainey is hired. Lainey's friends think he is being unfair, for her new assignment in no way jeopardizes Ted's position. Tension mounts once Lainey goes out after news; and the climax is reached when her story of the "great slacks scandal" breaks, involving the University and all the other papers in town.

Girls interested in journalistic careers will drink in the authentic atmosphere of the "city room." But essentially, this is a book for all older girls, who will thrill over the tender love story and the details of college dorm life.

Jacket and frontispiece by Catherine Scholz.



Copy 1

Faber, Doris

Elaine Stinson, campus re-  
porter.

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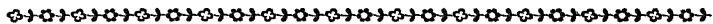
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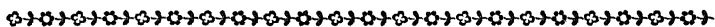
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# BRINKS?







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BY  
DORIS FABER



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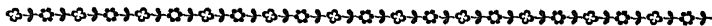
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FIRST EDITION



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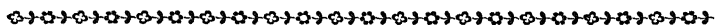
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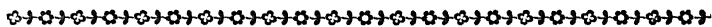
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ELAINE STINSON:  
CAMPUS  
REPORTER

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## ELAINE STINSON

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### § I §

### *THE CITY ROOM BECKONS*

IT WAS NOT a bit like her idea of a newspaper city room. Instead of telephones clanging, typewriters clattering, frantic reporters rushing every which way, all seemed drowsily calm up and down the neat rows of desks.

Through a haze of excitement, Elaine Stinson—Lainey to her friends—saw a tall, thin boy with a freckle-splashed face beckoning to her. Doesn't look any older than me, she thought, and felt a sudden surge of confidence. Taking a deep, deep breath, she started forward.

Her blue eyes stealing hasty snapshots of the people at the desks she passed—a fat man sorting crumpled papers into neat piles, a man with a shiny bald pate bent over a magazine, a woman with short gray hair sharpening a pencil—Lainey walked toward the beckoning boy.

Suddenly she heard him whisper: "He's the sourpuss at the long desk under the windows."

Lainey swallowed hard.

To think of referring to Samson K. Peters, the city editor of the world-famed *Express*, as "the sourpuss" . . .

"Don't worry," the boy murmured. "His bark is a lot worse than his bite. But, man, what a bark!"

Lainey mustered a weak smile.

Well, the moment she had dreamed of for months was finally approaching. If her knees would only stop trembling, she'd be at the city desk in a few seconds. And then her daring scheme would succeed—or fail.

Ever since that electric instant when she had scanned the caption under a faded picture in an old Roswell College *Gazette*—as feature editor, she often went through back copies—she had known what she had to do.

If a wonderful reporter like Mollie Bentley had got her start working part time for the *Express* while she was still a Roswell senior, that meant that Lainey had to try it, too.

The faded picture showing Mollie and a former dean proved by its caption that it used to be possible for a girl with nerve to get a job as Roswell correspondent of the famous *Express*.

Now it was up to Elaine Stinson to see if it could still be done.



What matter that for twenty years at least the job of Roswell correspondent had just never been filled? That somehow it had come about that the boy who was correspondent for the whole university also took care of Roswell news?

"It does seem to be a little unfair, my dear," sweet old Mrs. Oliphant in the student-affairs office said when Lainey brought up the subject. That was on a cool spring morning months ago.

Armed with this mild endorsement, Lainey began to make her plans.

First, she decided, she'd have to find someone who knew Mollie Bentley personally. This turned out to be easier than she'd expected—that plump, blonde sophomore trying out for the *Gazette* staff really came through.

She'd bragged a lot about how her mother had once worked on the old *Transcript*, but, sure enough, the mother still kept in touch with a good many newspaper friends, including Mollie Bentley. And, certainly, she'd write to Mollie. . . .

Lainey could recite the answer by heart: ". . . get in touch with me in September, and I'll see that you get an appointment to see Mr. Peters . . ."

How could she stand waiting so long?

But somehow the summer rushed by so fast back home in Brookline, where she always had such a good

time doing a few stories for old Mr. Wilson, who owned the local *Weekly*; and then there was swimming and square-dancing at the shore cottage. And September came all too fast, bringing her back to the big city, school, and the *Express*.

Now here she was, her knees still trembling as she advanced to the long desk under the windows lining one wall of the vast city room.

It was a double-length desk, back of which sat two men as unlike as men can be—one red-faced, plump, and cheerful-looking; the other sallow, thin, and glum.

Guided by signals from the freckle-faced copy boy, Lainey veered nervously toward the left end of the desk, the end occupied by the glum man. At the moment he was lolling back in his swivel chair, glaring moodily at the ceiling.

As she approached the chair suddenly shot forward.

Without looking down from the ceiling, the man groped impatiently among the papers on his desk, found an ashtray buried among them, and lifted from it a long black cigar. This he jammed ferociously into his mouth.

Then the chair shot back again.

Still staring at the ceiling, Mr. Samson K. Peters gave not the slightest sign of having noticed Lainey. In this respect, it should be mentioned, he differed markedly from just about everybody else in the huge room.

For it was not every afternoon that a slim, pretty girl with bright-blue eyes and curly brown hair turned up there. As pleasant a sight as Lainey made in her new autumn red suit was not to be ignored.

Except perhaps by Mr. Peters.

His unlit cigar clenched between his teeth, he continued to stare obstinately over her head. Off in the distance a desk drawer slammed shut. There was the faint buzz of a telephone far across the immense room. And a subdued hum of voices near the door to the elevators.

But to Lainey these sounds seemed to come from another world.

She stood, swallowing nervously. Under the circumstances, was it up to her to speak? Well, anything would be better than this silly waiting.

"Mr. Peters," she started. Her voice sounded thin and strange to her ears.

"Mr. Peters, I'm the girl from Roswell about—"

The chair shot forward again with a terrifying squeak. Grabbing the big black cigar from his mouth, Mr. Peters brandished it alarmingly in Lainey's direction, and loudly cleared his throat.

"Hmmm, yes," he muttered, still not looking at her. "What do you want to work on a newspaper for?"

"Well—" Lainey's voice was scarcely audible. "Well, I like people, and I like to meet all kinds and—"

"Hogwash!" Mr. Peters said.

Lainey felt a warm flush rising in her cheeks.

"Well, you asked me, so I'm trying to tell you," she said, her voice quavering dangerously.

"I know it's hard work, but I know I can do it. I was the editor of my high-school paper, and I'm the feature editor of the *Roswell Gazette* and I've written lots of interviews for the weekly home paper and you've got to start someplace and—"

Her outburst spent, she heard her voice dwindling uncertainly.

"Got some spirit anyway," Mr. Peters muttered to himself.

Lainey looked up, and as she did she noticed that the plump, red-faced man on the right had leaned over as if to hear better. As her eyes met his, she distinctly saw him wink.

How do you like that, Lainey thought, repressing a giggle.

"I know you haven't had a Roswell correspondent in years," she heard herself saying almost naturally. "But there are lots of meetings and things that would make real good stories, and most of the time the boy who covers the whole university doesn't even hear about them and—"

A friendly voice interrupted.

"Haven't had a girl from Roswell in looking for the job in fifteen, twenty years, Sam," it said.

Lainey looked up. Sure enough, it was the red-faced man. And sure enough, he winked again.

"HMMMM," said Mr. Peters. "That so?"

Lainey desperately sought for something to say. "You know, Miss Bentley started as a Roswell correspondent," she came up with. "I'm not saying I could do as well as she did, but it shows that having a Roswell correspondent sometimes pays off."

"Mollie Bentley," Mr. Peters sputtered. He jammed the cigar into his mouth again.

"Miss Bentley has been on the staff of the *Express* for twenty-two years," the red-faced man said cheerfully, "and there is no one more convinced of her great talent as a reporter than Mr. Peters here, but Mr. Peters is not yet truly happy about having any women in the city room."

"Oh," Lainey murmured. Was this a joke, she wondered.

"No joke," Mr. Peters grumbled, as if reading her mind. "Big nuisance, always going off to get married as soon as they learn how to write a decent lead. Or, worse still, they stay on and talk your ears off about their precious cats."

The other man smiled. "Miss Bentley keeps a num-

ber of cats," he explained. "However, that doesn't prevent her being an excellent reporter."

"Oh," Lainey said again.

She felt that this would make a great story to bring back to the dorm, but really, if they weren't going to hire her, why didn't they say so and be done with it?

"This must be very interesting to Miss . . ." Mr. Peters looked down swiftly to a piece of paper on top of one of the piles on his desk. "To Miss Stinson. But I doubt if she's married yet, or keeps cats up at her college—"

"In that case," Lainey heard herself interrupt boldly, "there's no reason why you shouldn't hire me."

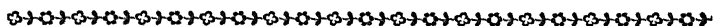
It'll be interesting, she thought with a spurt of satisfaction, to hear what he has to say to that.

But what he did surprised her.

Mr. Peters grinned. He actually grinned. It changed the entire expression of his face, making him look only mildly cynical.

"Well," he said, "I like that. What do you say, Will, should we give the girl reporter a chance?"

The red-faced man winked again, and Lainey found herself winking right back at him.



§ 11 §

MR. BOOMER'S ADVICE

LAINNEY scarcely knew how it had happened, but she was sitting on the straight chair pulled up beside the part of the big desk occupied by the red-faced man.

"I'm Boomer, assistant city editor," he said, extending his hand to shake hers. "You'll be dealing with me most of the time now. And won't I be the envy of the office!"

A broad grin creased his plump, friendly face.

"Well, I—" Lainey didn't know how to answer. What's more, she still felt as if she were somehow floating on a fluffy pink cloud miles and miles away.

"Now," said Mr. Boomer, suddenly switching to a businesslike tone, "this is what we'll expect from you. You telephone in every day about noon and let us know if you're working on something. We'll tell you then if we have anything for you."

"Please—" Lainey interrupted. "It's silly, but do I just ask for city desk?" Like in the movies, she almost added.

"Call Forest 9-6010," he said crisply. "It's a special

number for the staff. Ask for Extension 23, and that'll get me."

As if to demonstrate, the phone on his desk buzzed. With his left hand, Mr. Boomer lifted the receiver, his right meanwhile reaching for a pencil.

"Yup, Jack," he said into the receiver. "Got it out today after all, did they?" There was a long pause while he listened and his pencil raced over his yellow pad. "Only sixty-five for hospitals?" he asked once. "Better get to the commissioner about that. Maybe Edwards, too." He listened another few seconds, nodded, then hung up.

Lainey's blue eyes glowed with curiosity.

"City Hall man," said Mr. Boomer casually. "Mayor's office just got out a report about the great need for schools and hospitals, big phony just before election, but we have to run something on it, I suppose."

"Oh!" Lainey felt dizzily close to the rush of events down at City Hall.

"Where were we?" Mr. Boomer said. "Yup, about the kind of thing we'll want. No rumors, gossip, trifling teas, and so on.

"What we do want is good, solid news of general interest. We'll usually take a paragraph or two when a professor retires or a new one is appointed—more, if he's someone special. And we're likely to take something



about a new building, a big donation, a lecture or conference with a couple of good speakers."

Mr. Boomer raised his grayish eyebrows slightly.

"Now," he said, "we don't want you to go around stirring up controversy in the name of the *Express*. But if somebody else makes some interesting trouble, we want to know about it. Get what I mean?"

Lainey nodded. But to tell the truth, she didn't at all. I'll catch on somehow, she thought hopefully.

"Another thing," said Mr. Boomer. "I don't know if the *Sentinel* has a Roswell correspondent, or maybe even the *Star*. I suppose they all have boys covering the whole university, though, and they'll be in your hair whenever something big comes up.

"But don't you go palling around with them too much. Don't you forget that you're working for us. No harm in getting together at a meeting where everybody hears the same speech, but if you pick up anything behind the scenes, save it for me, and we'll get along fine."

So Mr. Boomer wasn't all winks and smiles. She would have to do more than smile back at him if she wanted to get by.

Would she really be able to do it?

To work on the *Express* must be the dream of just thousands of reporters, and here she was blithely as-

suming that she'd manage fine. Well, she'd do her very best. She sat up straight and nodded purposefully.

"Any questions?" Mr. Boomer gave her a friendly smile again.

"Well—" Lainey hesitated.

It might make him think she wasn't really interested in being a reporter if she asked about money at this point. After all, experience was the main thing now. But she had a notion that student correspondents for the other papers were paid, and a few dollars would definitely come in handy. . . .

"Well," she said, "do I get paid, or anything? I mean—"

"Don't be silly," said Mr. Boomer sternly. "Speak up or you won't get any place, girl. Of course you get paid. Space rates, just like the correspondents from all the other colleges in town. You won't make a fortune, but you can buy yourself a new hanky now and then."

"Oh," she said. She was awfully glad she'd asked.

"Now let's make sure you have it," he said. "When you call in, you give me a brief idea of what's doing. Then if you have anything worth while, you come on down later in the afternoon, tell me a little more about it, then write it, and hand it in. Night meetings, if any, there's more hurry to make the edition. Phone in as

soon as possible, and a rewrite man will take down what you have. Check?"

"Check," said Lainey, her head spinning a little.

Just then the freckle-faced boy mysteriously appeared beside her, and leaned over to drop a stack of yellow slips of paper into an already bulging basket on Mr. Boomer's desk.

"Hot off the wires," the boy muttered dramatically.

"Now, Terence," said Mr. Boomer, "don't you go trying to captivate Miss Stinson. She aims to become a serious journalist."

Lainey giggled.

"Ah," said Mr. Boomer. "Perhaps I was mistaken. Miss Stinson, meet Terence O'Rourke, a veritable demon with the young ladies in the society department, so beware."

"How do?" Lainey murmured.

"As it happens," Mr. Boomer said, "you may have frequent cause to call for Terence. He is the gentleman in charge of the green sheets on which you will make out your weekly report to the auditing department."

"Indeed I am, ma'am," said Terence solemnly.

"Do I—" Lainey started.

"Just save copies of every story you get in the paper," Mr. Boomer said, "and once a week you paste them on

the green sheet, and Terry will show you how. Now, scat, the two of you, I have work to do."

Lainey rose and tucked her new brown pocketbook under her arm.

Already sorting through the stack of yellow slips, Mr. Boomer suddenly looked up.

"One more thing," he said. "If we want to reach you, we'll call the university publicity office, so check in there a couple of times a day to see if there are any messages. O.K.?"

She nodded, and started toward the aisle leading back to the elevators.

"Say, Miss Stinson!" Mr. Boomer was calling her back again.

"Yes?"

"Sit down again for a minute, there's one other thing."

He looked so serious, was there something terribly important she didn't know about yet?

"I just want to give you a word of fatherly advice," he said, still solemn-faced, but with a twinkle in his eyes. "I have a notion you can handle such problems pretty well by yourself, but I just wanted to warn you not to let that Wentworth boy worry you."

"Who?"

Was this another Terence, who might take her mind

off her work, and prove to Mr. Peters that he had made a mistake?

"Oh!" said Mr. Boomer. "You haven't met him yet? Oh, my!"

"What—"

Mr. Boomer was stroking a plump cheek reflectively.

"Ted Wentworth is the *Express* correspondent for the whole university, has been for the last two years," he said. "He's in the graduate journalism school now, sticking it out till he gets a job here, he hopes."

"But why should he worry me?"

"He's had the university pretty much to himself," Mr. Boomer said gently. "Law school, medicine, teachers' training, boys' undergraduate—and Roswell, too."

"Ah!" Lainey began to get a glimmer. "You mean he might not like it, having me take over part?"

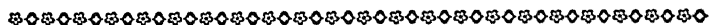
"Ted's pretty single-minded," said Mr. Boomer. "All he's interested in these days is getting a job on the *Express* when he finishes school, and anything that seems to stand in his way—he's liable not to like it."

Lainey caught herself wondering if maybe she had been hired merely to take this Wentworth down a peg. Complications already. . . .

"Now don't you let him worry you," Mr. Boomer said firmly. "If anything upsets you, just come quietly over to this side of the desk, and we'll see if we can't

straighten it out. Now, scat, and I mean it, this foul stuff is piling up in mountains.”

Lainey thoughtfully retraced her steps toward the double door leading to the elevators.



### § III §

## THE GIRLS CHEER

THE WHOLE GANG was waiting in the cluttered room she shared with Jocelyn Johnson. Even though she had tried to act casual at lunch, they all knew how much the job meant to her.

One look at her face now, and there was no need to announce the good news.

“She’s in!” whooped Julie.

“You did it, kid,” Roberta bubbled.

“Nice going!” from the slender, willowy Stephanie.

Jocelyn dropped the stack of books she’d been unpacking.

“Congratulations, Lain, I knew you’d make it,” she called out. And she grinned delightedly.

A big, broad-shouldered girl with thick blond braids framing her face, Jocelyn looked like a good prospect

for a job as a gym teacher, but she was basically the least boisterous of the lot. Poetry was her secret passion, and she hoped to be an English teacher. She and Lainey got along wonderfully well together.

“What’s this I hear?” In bathrobe and slippers, black hair still damp from the shower, Sal bounced into the room.

Hemmed in by happy friends, Lainey felt a little lump in her throat. It was a nice feeling, having them make such a fuss.

It was Jocelyn, of course, whom she felt closest to. Roommates by the whim of some mysterious power in the admissions office, they’d been awfully suspicious of each other that first day at Roswell, so long ago now.

By the look of things, it would have been really difficult to find two girls with less in common.

Slim, brown-haired Lainey, with the cashmere sweaters and the assured manners of a girl brought up in a comfortable Boston suburb, seemed like a snob to Jocelyn.

And Jocelyn, big, awkward, awed by countless sights and sounds she’d never known in Springville, Missouri, where her father was an old-fashioned family doctor, seemed a little stupid to Lainey.

But they stuck it out awhile, and pretty soon they discovered how much alike they were. Both English

majors, good students, they each had a silly side, too. They had a happy room.

It was a pretty noisy room at the moment. But over the hubbub, Lainey suddenly realized that Roberta was holding out a folded message slip for her to take.

"Picked it up downstairs ten or fifteen minutes ago," Berta murmured. "Thought you might be too excited, one way or t'other, to notice it."

Somehow the room had quieted down. A message slip usually meant a date, and that was something everybody was interested in.

But not this slip. Lainey unfolded it, then frowned.

"Mr. Wentworth called," she read, puzzled. "Now who on earth is that?"

"You're not holding out on us?" Julie asked sternly. Blonde, beautiful Julie was going steady with a Yale senior, but she still liked to keep in touch with the local dating situation.

"I don't think I am," Lainey said. Then suddenly the frown gave way to wide-eyed dismay. "Oh! That must be Ted Wentworth, I guess. He's the *Express* correspondent for the whole rest of the university! But how does he know, already? About me getting the job, I mean. And what does he want?"

Stephanie raised her eyebrows.



"Ted Wentworth," she murmured thoughtfully. "He wouldn't be in the journalism school?"

Then, answering her own question: "Why, of course he would. Well!"

"And what does that mean?" Lainey demanded.

"I don't really know him," Stevie said. "Just introduced, at a Theta party last spring. He's tall, darkish, sort of serious-looking, in a nice way. Now there's a man I'd really like to know better."

Jocelyn looked up from her trunk. She was unpacking books again.

"Where is there a man you wouldn't like to know better?" she said.

"No, seriously!" Stevie didn't take offense; they all knew perfectly well she was one of the most popular girls on the campus. "This one is really something. And he's calling you, Lainey!"

"Not for a date, I'm sure." Lainey's frown had reappeared. "I don't like it a bit. The assistant city editor warned me he might try to make trouble, not exactly relishing me cutting in on his job, but I didn't expect anything so soon."

Stephanie smiled an I-told-you-so smile.

"He's a sharp one, Lainey," she said. "You'd better watch yourself."

Lainey's frown deepened.

Jocelyn, noticing, stopped unpacking again.

"I don't get it," she said. "You didn't take away his job; they didn't fire him, did they, to hire you? So he'll still have plenty to do. You said there's been hardly anything about Roswell in the paper, so why should he mind?"

Roberta piped up cheerfully: "He probably just wants to congratulate you."

"Maybe so," said Lainey. But she didn't sound convincing. And she felt distinctly uneasy. It was a fine thing, starting out with a real enemy, and a pretty dangerous one, too, to judge by Stevie's comments.

"Well," said Julie, nodding her sleek, blond head, "this promises to be extremely interesting. Going to call him back, Lain?"

"I should say not." Lainey was indignant. "If he wants to talk to me, he can try again. Besides, I wouldn't have the faintest idea where to find him."

Stevie smiled again.

"If you need any spies or anything, count on me, Lain," she said.

"Highly dramatic," Jocelyn murmured. "But seems to me dinner bell's due in five minutes or so, and that is a matter of more immediate concern. Let's go!"

Laughing and chattering, they scattered to get ready

for dinner. As Lainey ran a comb through her short, curly brown hair, her face wore that thoughtful look again.



## § I V §

*FIRST ASSIGNMENT*

AT TEN MINUTES to eleven the next morning a breathless Lainey raced up the chapel steps. Ordinarily, she would not have hurried to a dean's Address of Welcome. But this year things were different.

Weaving through the swarm of girls gathered for the first formal event of the semester, Lainey spotted a single seat down front, way on one side but well forward. Last year, of course, she would have sat back farther, with the gang. This year, she made for the single seat down front, where she would be sure to hear every word.

Still panting slightly, she settled herself and opened her purse. From it she drew out her first investment as a professional journalist—a small, hard-covered pad for notes. Then a pencil, and a sheaf of typewritten sheets.

Really, she thought, you didn't have to rush so. The

men in the publicity office had certainly looked at her as if she were mad when she scurried off.

After all, she had the text of the dean's talk already, six neatly typed sheets.

"But suppose there's a fire, or something?" Lainey had asked Mr. Simmons, the courtly Southern director of the university's publicity staff. "In the chapel, I mean, with that mob of girls there. And don't I have to check that she reads her speech the way it's written?"

"By all means, Miss Stinson," he drawled softly. But his tone was sort of mocking, or did she just imagine it?

The whole visit, in fact, had been more than a trifle uncomfortable. To start with, she'd been dreading the prospect of maybe bumping into that Wentworth there. Luckily, it didn't happen. But even so, she wasn't exactly welcomed with open arms.

Wearing her new plaid wool instead of just a sweater and skirt—"Real career-girl outfit," Jocelyn had assured her—she'd still felt far from confident, though, when she introduced herself to the lanky fellow at the first desk inside the musty office in the university administration center. Naturally, she'd got herself good and lost looking for it, way over on the other side of the campus, and she still wasn't even sure she was in the right place.

And this fellow's first words did nothing to steady her.

"You're Elaine Stinson, the *Express* what?" he said, his voice squeaking in disbelief.

"The *Express* correspondent for Roswell this year," she repeated, as calmly as she could.

He stared at her, open-mouthed.

"Mr. Peters hired me yesterday," she said, a trace of desperation in her tone.

The lanky fellow continued to stare at her.

"I do believe you mean it," he said, finally. "Hey, boss, come here quick."

"What is it, Jonas?"

The thin, pale man at the other desk looked up. From his tone you could tell that he was the man in authority there.

Once more Lainey introduced herself, and then the thin, pale man leaned back in his chair and smiled at her.

"Well, congratulations, Miss Stinson," he said, not quite cordially. "I'm Elwell Simmons, director of public information. Jonas and I will certainly be happy to assist you in any way we can."

"They said in the office—the *Express* office, I mean—that you would take telephone messages for me."

"Of course." He spoke as though he was terribly weary. "But that's only a small part of it, you know."

"What?"

"We are here, Miss Stinson, to gather information about all worth-while activities of the university." Now he seemed to be addressing a stupid child.

"We keep on hand biographies of faculty members and suchlike, and we try to have the texts of any important talks given on the campus, and deans' reports and registrars' tables—any information that the university administration feels it is proper to release publicly."

"I see," said Lainey, and she frowned. "But if you do all that, what am I supposed to do?"

Mr. Simmons gave her a faint smile.

"We work with a great many other correspondents, you know," he said. "The great bulk of our material will not concern you at all, since it deals with other branches of the university—law, medicine, men's undergraduate and such—and all of these fall in the province of Ted Wentworth." He paused. "Mr. Wentworth, you know, has been the *Express* correspondent for the whole university."

Lainey thought she detected a faint emphasis on the word "whole." Jonas, she noticed, was thoughtfully chewing a finger.

Here comes something, she thought.

But Mr. Simmons merely cleared his throat, and went on.

“What we do gather pertaining to Roswell, which is, to tell the truth, not the liveliest news source on the campus, will, of course, be available to you. Now and then there may be some little thing you run across that we can help you work into a brief piece.

“We help you dig out facts, but you do the rest.

“You do your own interviewing, you write your own stories—grand experience, in fact, if you want to work on a newspaper when you get out of school.”

For the first time, he sounded almost friendly.

“We’ll be glad to help you learn the ropes. We have the text of Dean Atwell’s talk this morning, for instance.” Rummaging among the papers on his desk, he came up with a stapled sheaf which he handed to her. “And, early next week, we’ll be getting out a piece on registration figures this semester, compared with previous years—what states the girls come from, courses they’re majoring in, all that sort of thing.”

Lainey’s eyes widened.

She’d been thinking of spending every second she could spare from classes next week piecing together just that kind of story.

Mr. Simmons had noticed her expression.

“Yes,” he murmured, “we do take some of the drudgery off your hands. You’ll find us extremely helpful, I

trust, but, in return, we hope that you'll co-operate with us."

"But how?"

"We hope you'll pay us the courtesy of checking with us before you do a story that might, ah, reflect unfavorably on the university."

A shade of alarm fluttered over her face.

"Now don't get the idea," Mr. Simmons said, "that we're out to censor your stories. Not a bit. If you pick up something on your own, we'd just like to make sure you get the whole story, not a half-truth that would in fact give a false impression."

Nodding with a satisfied air, as if pleased to have come up with just the right phrase, he leaned back again and in an easy, chatty tone asked to hear how she'd happened to get the job.

"Nice going!" Jonas said at the end of the story. "Young Ted will be in for a little competition now."

Lainey flinched. That name again!

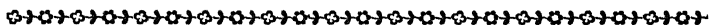
At that moment, she almost hoped that Wentworth would come striding in. Then once and for all they would get it over, whatever it was to be.

There was a pause, and Lainey suddenly thought to glance down at her watch. Seeing the time, she gave a startled cry. "The dean's address! It's way across campus, have to rush!"



"But you have the text right there," said Mr. Simmons. There was that mocking air, or was it possible she just imagined it?

Oh, well, she thought, unfolding the text on her lap in the crowded chapel, I guess I do have a lot to learn. And frowning slightly, she began to skim the first type-written page as the black-gowned dean rose to begin reading her talk.



## § V §

## A "D-HEAD"

COULD IT really be just twenty-five hours since she had first stepped off this elevator?

As Lainey walked up to the reception desk in the dim anteroom decorated with dozens of replicas of famous first pages of the *Express*, she felt a totally different person from the timid girl of the day before.

Gone was the tremor in her voice, in its place a brisk assurance.

"Good afternoon, I'm Elaine Stinson."

The burly old man at the reception desk—he'd seemed a grim, gray ogre a day ago—grinned at her pleasantly.

"Go right in, miss," he said. "I'm Young John Dobbins. You won't be having to stop by here any more, except should you care to wish me a cheery time of the day."

Lainey grinned back at him.

"A cheery afternoon to you, Mr. Dobbins," she said.

Walking purposefully down the aisle leading to the city desk, Lainey rehearsed what she would tell Mr. Boomer. Reporting in on the telephone, she'd been proud of her professional terseness: "Dean Atwell made a speech today to the entire student body. . . . Yes, I have the text."

But now she would have to "sell" the story.

"You must be Lainey Stinson."

A low-pitched woman's voice interrupted her reverie. It was the gray-haired woman who had been sharpening a pencil when Lainey walked into the city room yesterday.

"I'm Mollie Bentley," she said. "I'm awfully glad you got the job."

Lainey felt herself blushing.

"It's very kind of you," she murmured. "But it's all your doing, really, arranging the appointment—"

"Nonsense. Sam doesn't hire anyone on just my say-so. You must have been pretty convincing, yourself. I really must run—have a five-o'clock press conference

way up at the medical center, new drug or something—but one of these afternoons you must come upstairs and have tea with me.” With a friendly wave of her hand, she was off toward a back corridor.

By a determined effort, Lainey brought her mind back to Dean Atwell’s talk.

On the subway coming downtown, she had read and reread the text, pencil poised to underline the important places. Finally, she had marked excerpts from several paragraphs on the next-to-last page.

The whole first part of the talk—read word for word from the text, as it happened—was on the history of the founding of Roswell, which Lainey had to admit wasn’t exactly stop-the-press news. And then the end was more about the great traditions of the college.

In between, though, there was a bit about the responsibilities of students in a democracy today. Maybe that would do.

“Well, greetings, Miss Stinson.” Mr. Boomer put down the newspaper he had been reading, and beamed at her. “Got something hot for us?”

“It’s pretty lukewarm, I’m afraid,” said Lainey ruefully. “The dean told us all about old Abner Roswell and how he happened to give his fortune to found the college.”

“Not much in that,” said Mr. Boomer.

"But she had some stuff about students today." Lainey tried to sound enthused. "They have a duty to learn all about physics and things, to be good citizens and help make decisions."

The telephone on Mr. Boomer's desk buzzed.

"That part sounds a bit better," he said, suddenly all business. "I'll take a D-head on it." And grabbing his pad and pencil, he picked up the phone.

Obviously dismissed, Lainey turned and started to walk toward the forest of desks. She felt utterly lost again.

"Ssssst!"

It was the freckle-faced Terence.

"Take any empty desk," he whispered. "The ones back of the pillars are considered the most desirable. Boss can't see you there."

Then he darted off.

Lainey turned a furtive glance in the direction of Mr. Peters, who was studying the ceiling as if he hadn't moved an inch since the previous afternoon. Don't need any pillars to keep him from paying attention to me, she decided. Then trying to look as if she knew what she was about, Lainey set her sights on the nearest vacant desk and steered a firm course toward it.

With a sigh she could not hold in, she settled down

onto the creaky wooden chair that went with the desk.

"Afternoon."

It was the bald man who had been reading a magazine yesterday afternoon. My, all of these old friends! She hadn't noticed that she'd picked him as a neighbor.

"Afternoon," she murmured back.

As she watched, despairing, he resumed his study of the sheaf of notes cluttering his desk.

"Please," she said abruptly, "what's a D-head, please?"

The bald man looked up from his notes and studied her quizzically.

"This your first story? Guess so."

With the air of a man having made a great decision, he pushed aside his notes, then slid his chair a few feet closer to her desk.

"Albert Kalpenfeller, labor expert extraordinary, at your service, ma'am," he announced. "Now, let us start with the subject of D-heads."

And he proceeded, in a clear, decisive manner that was unexpected from such a meek exterior, to give her a brief course in the fundamentals of preparing a story for the *Express*.

He told her first that instead of referring to stories in terms of how many words long they were, it was the custom to use a different system. One-paragraph stories,

when they appeared in the paper, always ran under the same type of headline—a single line a certain number of letters long, known as a K-head in the printers' books. Hence, one-paragraph stories had come to be known as K-heads, too. In the same way, two or three paragraphs were a D-head; four to six, an M-head; seven to ten, a ½C; and so on. It was simply a matter of memorizing the code.

"Sounds as if they're making things unnecessarily complicated," Kalpenfeller said, "but once you catch on, it's a good system. Gives everyone a little more leeway than a strict word count would."

Next came a little geography. Taking Lainey by the arm, he led her back and forth across the immense room, pointing out the bins of fresh cream-colored copy paper for ordinary, short pieces. And then the bins of "books"—pre-folded sheafs of paper and carbons for stories more than a half-column long. You wrote long stories on books because carbons had to go to the assistant managing editors, as well as to the regular copy desk.

He showed her the copy desk, too, a horseshoe-shaped affair at the far end of the room. In front of each chair were a neat pile of copy paper, a half-dozen pencils with broad black points, and a pot of paste.

"For quick surgery on flowery prose," Kalpenfeller

murmured. "If you keep it short and simple, all they do is write a headline and ship the works upstairs." He gestured toward an odd-looking network of wires and pulleys running above the desk.

Then, along the wall nearest the elevators, he pointed out the row on row of mailboxes—enough, it seemed, for a good-sized apartment house. But they were all for reporters, copy readers and the men in the various special departments, like sports and movies and financial news. And even for college correspondents.

Sure enough, the last box on the right in the bottom tier had a new, typed label: "Miss Elaine Stinson, Roswell College." In the same row were boxes for correspondents from all the other colleges, and, first in the line: "Theodore Wentworth, Atlantic University."

Lainey felt a little shiver go through her.

Kalpenfeller looked at her curiously.

"Got a crush on that Wentworth, eh?" he said. "Good-looking lad, I have to admit."

"Oh, no," she protested.

He gave her a friendly grin, then steered her back to their desks, explaining on the way that she ought to keep an eye on her mailbox, for any publicity or wire-service copy on a story she was doing would turn up there.

In the aisle next to theirs, they passed a knot of men

guffawing loudly as a short fellow with sandy hair told them some kind of joke.

“. . . and that was the last word out of him till they got a stack of telephone books . . .” was all that Lainey overheard. Kalpenfeller noticed her look of interest.

“Oh, that’s just Tim Browning, one of the politics men,” he said. “Tim’s been covering Senator Taylor’s upstate speaking tour, and the Senator’s a real stuffy type, always doing something ridiculous. Tim brings back stories a d-darn sight more diverting than the ones he gets in the paper.” Then, raising his voice to carry over the desks: “Say, what did the old guy do this time, Tim?”

The sandy-haired fellow looked over toward them.

“Same routine as Schenectady, Kal. You know he’s just about five-foot-nothing tall, and the county chairman’s a great, big guy. So Taylor wouldn’t pose for pictures with him till they got a big stack of telephone books to sit on.”

“A real statesman,” Kalpenfeller muttered.

Half shocked, half amused, Lainey remembered a certain lecture in Government 21. “Senator Neal A. Taylor, sponsor of the Taylor Fair Trade Act, is a far-seeing legislator, the sort of man who gives this country stature in international conferences,” the teacher had solemnly told them. Stature, indeed!



Till it was too late, she didn't even realize that Kalpenfeller was introducing her to the knot of men.

Whipple, Neddy Silver, Ralph Shepard—she didn't catch half the names. Or connect them to the proper faces. The thin, funny-faced character who bowed low to her was Silver, she thought.

"Enchanted to know you, Miss Stinson," he said in a pseudo-British accent. "Chawmed and all that rot."

She nodded, confused, and hurried along with Kalpenfeller.

"Now it's up to you," he said as they reached their desks. "A brief word of advice: too much pencil-chewing doesn't pay. The copy desk doesn't appreciate deathless prose. Now get to work."

Nevertheless, Lainey did a good bit of pencil-chewing. She crumpled sheet after sheet of copy paper—five sheets in all, but it seemed like much more to her—before she shook her head fiercely and finally settled down.

This is what she came out with:

STINSON—ROSWELL

College students have an obligation to study physics and other technical subjects to prepare themselves

for twentieth-century citizenship, Dean Edith B. Atwell of Roswell College asserted yesterday.

She spoke at a convocation of Roswell students in the Reed Memorial Chapel on the campus at Seventh Avenue and Hilton Street. Dean Atwell also held that the students of today would have to make very far-reaching decisions as the citizens of tomorrow.

"It can no longer be considered proper for students to ignore the realities in the atomic world in which we live," she said.

Lainey folded her page of copy the way Mr. Kalpenfeller had showed her, and carried it over to the basket he'd pointed out on the city desk. Mr. Boomer and Mr. Peters were both listening intently to a tall, heavy man whose pockets bulged with folded papers. Two other men waited their turns to report in.

Feeling alone and somehow left out, Lainey dropped her story into the basket and fled.



## § VI §

*CHOCOLATE MALTEDS FOR  
BREAKFAST!*

LAINNEY woke with a start at six fifteen the next morning. It was Saturday, registration interviews all finished, no classes till Monday at nine. Nothing to do all day, except a matinee downtown with Jocelyn and Sal. But here she was, wide awake at least an hour earlier than usual.

Why?

Then like a flash, the answer struck her. Her story! Was her story in the paper? By now, stacked copies of the *Express* sat on every newsstand in the city—and she was still lolling in her bed!

Lainney glanced furtively at Jocelyn, fast asleep not two yards away. Peaceful as a babe, with an arm curled over her face, she would be good for another two hours at least. Nobody ever got up earlier than necessary, on Saturday, to stumble into breakfast as the doors were closing.

Lainney frowned. No matter how mouselike she tried to be, she would probably wake Jocelyn up, and it really

wasn't fair. With a sigh she settled back to wait another hour or so.

Deep in a glorious daydream involving a brisk Miss Stinson interviewing the President of the United States on the steps of Roswell Science—where he happened to be stopping by to glance at a new physics experiment—Lainey failed to notice Jocelyn stirring.

“You're not sleeping, Lain?”

The whisper roused her instantly.

“But”—Lainey looked down at the little bedside clock—“it's only half past six, Joc, what's come over you?”

Jocelyn, grinning, answered with a question: “Well, what are we waiting for?”

Scarcely ten minutes later the two girls, hastily dressed in sweaters, skirts, and loafers, stole through the silent corridors and down the stairs. In the big entry hall, a hefty cleaning-woman scrubbing the floor stared up at them.

“'Morning,” Lainey murmured.

Outside, it was unexpectedly bracing. Thin yellow sunshine splashed the leaves of tall old trees already beginning to turn to autumn rust and bronze. There were leaves on the path, too, as they crossed the narrow campus tucked between two bustling city streets.

Once through the gates, they quickened their pace.

Without a word of consultation, they turned to the right and made for the row of stores half a block downtown. Still silent, they hurried along past a deserted tailor shop, a travel agency, a delicatessen.

Their cheeks a cheerful pink, they pulled up in front of the corner candy store.

Sure enough, on the little stand in front of it were neat piles of all of the morning newspapers, at the extreme right the dignified *Express*.

Searching out a coin from her skirt pocket, Lainey stepped inside the store. Outside again, she reached down for the top paper on the *Express* pile. Then she hesitated. Now that the answer was so close, her knees weakened. Suppose—

“Let’s go!” said Jocelyn heartily. “I’ll take the second section.”

All hesitancy gone, Lainey turned to the last page of the first section, and began to work forward, scanning each page carefully. It was hard to hold the paper steady against the breeze. Without lifting her eyes, she laid it down on the stand.

“Nothing here but sports and business news,” Jocelyn muttered.

Lainey did not even look up. She turned another fluttering page, and then another. Suddenly, she froze.

“Look, Joc!” she almost shouted.

At the very bottom of the second column on page seventeen, she pointed to the following:

### **Dean Urges Study of Physics**

College students should study physics and other technical subjects to prepare themselves for twentieth-century citizenship, Dean Edith B. Atwell of Roswell College said yesterday.

Speaking at a convocation of Roswell students in the Reed Memorial Chapel on the campus at Seventh Avenue and Hilton Street, she said:

"It can no longer be considered proper for students to ignore the realities of the atomic world in which we live."

Jocelyn regarded her roommate with affection.

"Well, you're on your way, Lain," she said softly. "Did they put it in the way you wrote it?"

Lainey hesitated.

"Pretty much," she said. "I mean, they changed a few words, and left out one sentence. But really, it sounds better this way."

"Basically, it's what you wrote, isn't it?"

"Yup," said Lainey. "Absolutely. Oh, boy! I mean, I can't help it, I could do a jig or something."

"Seems to me," said Jocelyn reflectively, "this calls for some sort of celebration."

"What did you have in mind?" asked Lainey, her eyes sparkling.

Jocelyn glanced thoughtfully toward the door to the candy store, then looked at Lainey. Lainey looked at her. Then, without a word, arm-in-arm they marched into the store, and sat down on adjoining stools at the little soda counter.

The shirt-sleeved old man back of the counter looked at them as if they were crazy, but he shrugged, and filled their request.

And so they celebrated by having chocolate malteds for breakfast.



§ VII §

*"MEET MR. WENTWORTH"*

IT WAS ten days later, and Lainey had settled down.

She would not have admitted that the glow had worn off, but there was no question any more of anything so spectacular as a chocolate malted for breakfast.

Up at eight, she had a proper repast of cereal and eggs and toast in the dorm dining-room. Then across campus to the Social Studies Building. Her nine-o'clock was "Problems of Urban Living in the United States"—Sociology 42.

On "Problems" days, "Modern History of China" came next, then "Nineteenth Century English Novel." Tuesdays and Thursdays it was "The Bible as Literature" and "Elementary Astronomy."

A weird assortment, she agreed with Jocelyn. But she had finished all her required courses, and so was free, now in her senior year, to pick anything she wanted from the catalogue.

It would not be fair to say her choice had been dictated by the fact that for this year she was determined to have no eight-o'clocks and no after-lunches—just in case she got the *Express* job.

It would not be fair, either, to say she had ignored this factor.

Everything considered, she decided at the beginning of the second week, she hadn't done too badly. There would be a lot of papers for "Problems" and psych, but the others were mostly reading courses, and she could always make time for that.

The way it seemed to be working out, she would finish classes, gulp down lunch, then drop in at the publicity office. She'd learned pretty quickly that it wasn't really necessary to hurry there first thing in the morning—if anything came up, they had her schedule, and they could always page her in a class.

Three days so far, Jonas had had a release for her—



the promised one on registration (which had got six good-sized paragraphs in the paper), then two on new assistant professors.

She'd gotten in the habit of phoning Mr. Boomer from the publicity office. Then she'd try to pick up a little something extra in the way of news by checking on all the bulletin boards, stopping in to chat with some of the teachers she knew.

Or she'd drop into the Registrar's office to get a few extra facts to go with a publicity-office release. Somehow she didn't feel it was right just to take what they gave her, without doing something more on her own.

Even with that survey on teachers' hobbies she was working on—might make a good Sunday piece, Mr. Simmons had suggested—that left a few hours for the library, whether or not she went downtown to write a story.

And after supper, she'd put in a good two hours at her books before joining the gang gabbing in the lounge.

So she could be emphatic when she answered her mother's long, worried letter: “. . . of course, Dad and I were so proud that you impressed that awful city editor, but Lainey, aren't you taking on too much?”

Absolutely not, Lainey wrote back promptly.

But she resigned from the *Gazette* staff, just to make

sure. They really made some fuss over her there, all the kids patting her on the back as if she'd won a Pulitzer Prize or something. Little Janie Brown, the blonde sophomore who'd got her the note to Mollie Bentley, seriously asked her to let her help, run errands, anything.

"So maybe I can get the job next year," Janie said wistfully.

And Nell, of course, was a little jealous. It wasn't so much, now, being editor-in-chief of the *Roswell Gazette*. You had to hand it to Nell, though, she tried to be gracious.

"If there's anything I can do, Lain, just let me know. Gee, who ever *thought* you'd really swing it?"

It was a shame to quit the *Gazette* after all those hours she'd put in there, but she wouldn't take any chances. She even turned down a Tuesday evening date Stephanie asked her to go on, just a local movie with a law freshman, friend of Stevie's latest, but there was the psych paper to finish. . . . She was tempted, though. She had yet to hear from anyone but Mel, a dull engineer.

But it was worth it, Lainey was thinking as she strode through the door of the publicity office on Tuesday afternoon. The previous afternoon, she had picked up her first pay check at the cashier's window on the second

floor of the *Express* building: "Exactly \$3.62." But it was a start

And this morning, the psych paper had come back with a big beautiful "B-plus" scrawled at the top of the first page.

And she already had a date for Saturday night, with an allegedly handsome medical sophomore, friend of Roberta's Jim.

The sun was shining, and all was right with her world.

Breezing through the publicity-office door, she gave Jonas a cheery nod, and headed for Mr. Simmons's desk. She did not even notice till she was almost there that a tall, darkish boy in a tweed jacket had moved over from the files near the window to stare at her coldly.

It was, it must be—

*Ted Wentworth!*

Suddenly the room crackled with tension.

Mr. Simmons cleared his throat.

"Ah, Miss Stinson," he said. Yesterday it had been "Lainey." "This is Mr. Wentworth."

She murmured something polite, she didn't know what, her heart was pounding so.

But the tall boy merely continued to stare at her, stony-faced.

Well, if this was how he was going to be, she would

have to see if she couldn't play the same way. With a tremendous effort, she produced a winning smile.

"Why, yes," she said, pleasantly. "I was so sorry I missed your call, almost two weeks ago now, isn't it? It was so nice of you to phone to wish me luck."

Wentworth looked fighting mad.

"I did no such thing!" The words escaped in a rush.

"You didn't? But I got the message."

Signs of inner struggle showed on Wentworth's face.

"You're a pretty clever customer, aren't you?" he said finally. His voice was deep and resonant, she noticed. "I phoned all right, but it wasn't to wish you luck."

"No?" She made herself sound as if she just didn't believe it.

"To be perfectly frank, I called to suggest that you quit your silly job before you made a fool of yourself. But on second thought, go right ahead. You're doing swell. I suppose you earned the magnificent sum of \$3.50 last week."

That stung a little, but Lainey wasn't going to let him know it.

"Not a bad guess," she said sweetly. "Not much money, but a lot of fun."

"Have your fun, then. But don't break down and

weep when I get a job on the staff in June, and they tell you to go back to your sewing."

Oh! So that was what was bothering him.

"I don't want to stop you from getting a job on the staff," she said, willing to make peace. "But it's a pretty big staff. Why should it hurt you if I try, too?"

He looked at her coldly.

"O.K.," he said. "Go right ahead. But I warn you right now, you're not going to get your hands on anything but an occasional D-head, and maybe half a column on the precious Roswell Dance Festival. Anything else is bound to involve the rest of the university, too, and, lady, that's my territory."

"I see," she said. "You're sore because you won't get to the Dance Festival this year. Those are nice costumes the girls wear, aren't they?"

"Oh!" He was sputtering furiously.

Mr. Simmons cleared his throat.

"All right, you-all," he said sharply. "No bloodshed on the premises, please. Let's go about our business like ladies and gentlemen. Jonas has a Roswell piece for Sunday, Lainey, and you, Ted, here's that law report you were after."

But the glowering Wentworth was determined to have the last word.

"All right," he said. "Do your D-heads if you want to. Save me a lot of trouble. But don't expect to make a big hit with the city desk. Lady, you just aren't going to get the chance!"

We shall see, thought Lainey, grimly.



## § VIII §

### *THE DEAN'S EDICT*

UNFORTUNATELY, it was beginning to seem as if Wentworth was right, after all.

For three weeks now she'd been bitterly noting story after story that he must have done—a full column on the annual report of the president of the university; assorted M-heads and K's and D's; and several good long spreads on a three-day tax conference at the School of Finance.

And what had she done? A handful of dull D-heads.

Oh, yes, there had been one exception.

In "Problems," Miss Bessing had brought out a letter from someone in the city Welfare Department about the question of finding suitable foster parents for children whose mothers were temporarily unable to

care for them. The letter suggested that Roswell girls might help out by going from door to door on a couple of blocks in the campus neighborhood, asking families if they were interested in taking a foster child for a few months.

Mr. Boomer, at least, had been interested.

Not only did he tell her to go around with a group of girls doing the interviewing, but he also assigned a photographer to go, too. As a result, a half-column and two pictures appeared on the first page of the second section, where the best local features always ran—and fifteen youngsters got temporary new homes.

For her pains, Lainey got a noticeable increase in her pay check that week—it came to \$7.78, by far the fattest to date—and a few nice words from the men in the publicity office.

She also got treated to a chocolate milkshake in Brink's, pretty much as a direct result of the story. The one who treated her was Earl Norman, an earnest little fellow with horn-rimmed glasses who was the *Sentinel* correspondent for the university.

It wasn't that he said he'd buy her a milkshake because she got the story in the paper. But before that, when once or twice she'd come across him in the publicity office, he'd just nodded politely and kept scribbling away; he was always terrifically busy, it seemed.

The day the story was in—well, he sat up and took some notice.

“Gee, that’s a nice color, that suit you’re wearing,” he said, very seriously.

It was the same dark red she’d worn the first day she went up to the *Express*. She’d been wearing it an awful lot, instead of just sweaters and skirts, so that when she went down to the city room she wouldn’t look like such a kid. She was sure he’d seen it several times already.

“Thank you,” she said politely.

“It’s really a shame we’re both so busy all the time. Say, I have an idea. Why don’t we take a little time off right now and go over to Brink’s to get better acquainted?”

Lainey had a suspicion that he was suddenly interested because she’d picked up a story he hadn’t had. She remembered Mr. Boomer’s warning about palling around with other correspondents, and hesitated.

“Oh, come on,” he urged. “Don’t worry, I won’t steal any of your notes. But there’s no reason why we can’t be friends, is there?”

So she’d gone, and it had turned out that he was awfully nice. Terribly serious, and squeaky-voiced, but he knew a whole lot more than she did about the business of being a correspondent, and he told her lots of helpful little things. About checking regularly with the



Student Council president, for instance. She'd never thought of that.

She still had a sneaking feeling he was out to cultivate her in case something big came up at Roswell and he needed a bit of help. But that was all right, he'd helped her already. It didn't hurt to be nice—she'd just have to be careful not to get too chummy.

One other correspondent, a sort of fat fellow who worked for the *Star*, had turned up one afternoon when she was in the publicity office.

"So you're the gal who's getting Wentworth's goat," he said cheerfully.

As for Wentworth himself—

She shivered under the heavy blankets she'd written home for. She didn't have to get up for another few minutes; it seemed hours already that she had been going over the whole disgusting situation in her mind, but she couldn't stop herself.

As for Wentworth—she hadn't as much as caught sight of him again, and had no wish to. His schedule, it seemed, allowed him to check in at the publicity office about eleven in the morning, which was the reason she had almost forgotten about him those first ten days. He came in in the morning, she came in after lunch. They wouldn't have to see each other there.

As for the *Express* office, it was unlikely that they'd

bump into each other there, either. She'd learned by now that the city room was pretty much deserted mornings and till late afternoon, usually. Then, as reporters turned up from assignments all over town, the place began to buzz. By early evening, it was probably almost like a movie set.

She really didn't know, because Mr. Boomer had told her to come in as early as possible. "The sooner we get this sort of stuff out of the way, the better," he said. He smiled so she wouldn't be insulted, but there it was, her "sort of stuff" was pretty unimportant.

Much as she would have liked to be around later on when things were humming, she came in early.

But Wentworth, it seemed, was not in this class.

From Terence, she had found out that Wentworth never came in before six. And there was even a desk off in a corner that was officially assigned to him.

Maybe there really wasn't much use fighting, she thought, shivering again.

No! she told herself. You're giving up much too easily. This shivering stuff is nonsense. It's just that it's been so cold these last couple of days.

Now her mind was finally off her troubles and onto the number-one subject of the moment—the weather. Although it was scarcely the first of November, they'd

had four-above-zero temperature the end of last week, and probably would again today, to judge from the way it felt in their normally warm room. It was so cold that for a few days now some of the girls in Horton Hall had been wearing slacks to classes. |

Real smart alecks, Lainey thought. It would be entirely different if they were way out in the country somewhere, instead of smack in the middle of a city. Most of her gang agreed—maybe just because they hadn't thought of the stunt first, Jocelyn said.

Even if it's four below, no slacks today, Lainey decided. With a gust of courage, she pushed back the covers and hopped over to her chest of drawers.

"Two sweaters, eh?" Jocelyn had just awakened.

"Absolutely!"

"But still no slacks? How about it, Lain, you do it, and I will."

Lainey shook her head.

A few hours later, she was shaking her head again as she thawed a little in the vestibule of Roswell Administration. On the way over after classes, it seemed that half the girls struggling against the bitter wind were wearing slacks. Maybe she was just being silly. One more day and—

"Hey, Lain!"

It was Jocelyn, fur-lined coat flapping around her bare legs as she raced down the steps from the first floor toward the little vestibule.

"Hey, Lain, have you seen the dean's bulletin board?"

Lainey was mystified. There was never anything there but scholarship notices, and it wasn't time yet—

"Well, come on up, quick!" Jocelyn called.

A big cluster of girls had formed under the board, chattering and gesturing wildly. It took Lainey several seconds to edge in close enough to read the following:

FROM THE OFFICE OF DEAN ATWELL

NOTICE

It has come to my attention that a number of girls have worn trousers to classes during the last few days. While the College administration will not penalize those students who have done so, in future no student of Roswell will appear in public unless properly dressed.

(signed) EDITH B. ATWELL  
*Dean, Roswell College*

Lainey felt Jocelyn jiggling her arm.

"What do you say, Lain? Feel vindicated?"

Lainey was hardly paying attention, she was so anx-

ious to overhear what a tall blonde girl wearing gray slacks was saying to another blonde in a skirt.

"Well." The slacks-wearer tossed her head. "I'm sure Miss Atwell wouldn't want me to take them off right here."

"But you're going to go back to the dorm and do it?"

"I suppose so. It would pain my aged mother to have me bounced from school for such a reason."

Lainey felt a strange uneasiness, as if she were about to take an important exam. . . .

What was it? The fuss the edict was causing was really just comical, all this to-do about such a trivial matter. She wasn't personally involved at all. Why should she feel so strained and confused?

A light flashed on in Lainey's mind.

Well! Here was something out of Wentworth's line. And something that *might* make a good bit more than two paragraphs! But she'd have to convince Mr. Boomer, of course. . . .

Was she just imagining it? No, here was a famous girls' college right in the middle of one of the biggest cities in the country, torn in two by such a question. And the dean threatening to expel girls who wore slacks. It was obvious that's what the notice meant.

What a newspaper story it would all make! She was sure her mother would read every word. Even her

friends' mothers who didn't have a daughter at Roswell would. Even Uncle Hank would read it, and hold forth for hours about modern girls.

One thing was sure. It was worth trying.

With a wordless nod to Jocelyn—trust her, she seemed to have got the idea somehow—Lainey sidled over toward three Horton girls in slacks who were arguing seriously.

Inconspicuous at the edge of the crowd, she listened carefully, jotting down a swift phrase now and then.



## § IX §

### *A WHOLE COLUMN!*

LAINY'S HEART was beating fast as she stepped up to Mr. Boomer's desk.

On the phone in the corner candy store—some instinct had made her call from there instead of from the publicity office—she had merely said there was some excitement over the wearing of slacks on campus.

"Sounds fascinating," he had murmured, but she couldn't tell if he had meant it.

Now she had to convince him the story was worth a good, long play on the first page of the second section. To build it up some, she had quietly buttonholed a few professors she knew pretty well, so she had faculty comment, too. On both sides of the issue.

Of course, they had talked to her with the understanding that their names wouldn't be published. If the dean had already taken her stand, it wouldn't be quite right to differ with her publicly.

Well, it was all there in her notebook. Now she'd see if she'd been just wasting her time.

"Mr. Boomer," she said.

Putting down his newspaper, he smiled cheerfully at her. He always seemed glad to be interrupted at his dull chore of reading every edition of every afternoon paper.

"Now what's this about slacks?" he asked her.

"Well, it's really an active little controversy."

"Be glad to hear about it. But remember, this is a family newspaper."

"Now what sort of story do you think I'd be bringing in?" She was suddenly at ease, his little joke having served its purpose.

Briefly, but with suitable quotes from her notebook, she told him the story—the gradual appearance of slacks, the dormitory debates, then the dean's edict. A little

apologetically, as if she might be making too much over not very much, she added that she'd picked up a few faculty comments.

"Well!" said Mr. Boomer. "Sounds like a neat cold-weather feature. Say, Sam!"

And he leaned over to mutter a few sentences to that great ceiling-student, Samson K. Peters.

Mr. Peters gnawed a minute at his cigar, then lifted it from his mouth.

"Anyone else have it?" he barked.

At first Lainey did not understand that he was talking to her. Then, coloring slightly, she said: "I don't think so, sir. I mean, I didn't telephone about it from the publicity office."

He regarded her with something like approval.

"What about the other correspondents?"

"There are none just for Roswell," she said. "The boy from the *Sentinel* who covers the whole university hasn't been over once, he does it all by telephone, I think, and the one from the *Star* just ignores us."

Mr. Peters was staring at the ceiling again.

"Take a column," he muttered.

Lainey felt dizzy. A *whole column!*

Mr. Boomer grinned at her, then, as his phone began to buzz, he waved her off.

Her heart pounding again, this time half from joy



and half from worry, she made for one of the bins where they kept the carbon-filled "books." This was the first time she'd had any call to use them, and now she'd need a real stack. A whole column must be five, even six pages. Could she do such a very long story?

It seemed as if she could.

Without a second's hesitation, she started to type:

STINSON—ROSWELL

The current cold wave has produced a heated controversy on the Roswell campus uptown.

Specifically, the question is:

Should Roswell girls be allowed to wear slacks outdoors these freezing days?

Dean Edith B. Atwell answered the question yesterday on behalf of the college administration with a vigorous "No." She also threatened to punish slacks-wearers, presumably with expulsion.

To a good many students—and teachers, too—this seemed "old-fashioned," even "ridiculous."

To others, it was only sensible, considering that Roswell's neat ten acres are smack in the center of a city neighborhood where skirts are the accepted feminine attire.

What brought on the campus tempest was the ap-

pearance yesterday morning of the following notice on the dean's bulletin board:

"It has come to my attention that a number of girls have worn trousers to classes during the last few days. While the College administration will not penalize those students who have done so, in future no student of Roswell will appear in public unless properly dressed."

Clusters of girls—some in skirts, some in slacks—stood arguing under this notice all day long. In dormitories, in classroom corridors, it was the main topic of conversation.

As the day wore on, it seemed that there were fewer slacks-wearers about.

One blonde sophomore, who was wearing gray flannel slacks and a bright-red ski jacket when she rushed up to read the notice, was among the trousers-deserters.

Asked by a friend if she was going to change, or to see what would happen if she didn't, she said she'd change.

"It would pain my aged mother to have me bounced from school for such a reason," she explained.

A good many others in the pro-slacks contingent apparently felt the same way. But late in the afternoon, it was still possible to find a few diehards on the wind-swept campus paths.

What will happen to them remains to be seen.

Dean Atwell's notice did not specifically mention

expulsion, but her secretary indicated that this was what she had in mind.

“Really rather extreme in this day and age, don’t you think?” a psychology professor commented. Like most of the faculty who took sides in the controversy, she asked that her name not be published.

“If the dean has had her say, we can’t very well argue with her publicly,” a sociology teacher explained. “But really, I think she’s being terribly old-fashioned and ridiculous.”

Many students, even among the skirt-advocates, seemed to agree.

An informal pool of the student editors and reporters on the staff of the *Roswell Gazette* showed that only three out of a total of twenty-two had appeared publicly in slacks. But ten “didn’t see what was so terrible,” and sixteen thought the dean was being “much too severe.”

In view of this opinion, they were asked, was the paper planning an editorial in its next issue—going to press tomorrow—defending defiers of the skirt tradition?

“Absolutely not,” one of the editors said firmly.

“Not on your life,” said another.

“I intend to graduate—with honors,” said a third.

However, so hot a topic could not be ignored. What the paper was planning was a picture layout of the various costumes that have been accepted attire on the

Roswell campus in the 114 years of the college's existence.

"Those skirts in the Twenties were really a lot less dignified than slacks," a scholarly picture editor remarked. "If it's dignity we're supposed to be after."

Naturally, the slacks contingent agreed.

"It would be different if we were a bunch of fat things," one of them said. "But let's face it, most of us are pretty skinny, and slacks look perfectly all right."

"Besides," one of her allies chimed in, "how many outsiders show up on the campus? Sometimes a week goes by and I don't see even a single male from the main campus."

"That's all very well and good," said a dissenter in their ranks. "But if you come to Roswell, you have to act like a lady. What's so terrible about that?"

"I agree," said an astronomy instructor firmly. "Very few things are constant in this world. We have to have certain standards."

"It's much ado over very little," said an English professor. "But frankly, it would seem peculiar lecturing on Jane Austen to a roomful of girls wearing pants."

And so it went, all over the campus.

One thing, at least, was accomplished by the controversy.

Nobody talked about the weather.

Finishing page five—it really wasn't so much, considering that all copy was triple-spaced on the typewriter—Lainey started to check what she had written.

Well, I guess it's all there, she decided, weary and suddenly very hungry. Somehow she had completely forgotten to eat lunch.

As she started over to the city desk to hand in her stack of books, Kalpenfeller stopped her.

"Long piece you had today," he said, willing to chat awhile.

But Lainey felt too exhausted. Mustering a tired smile, she held up a hand with fingers crossed, and kept on walking.



§ X §

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 47,  
COLUMN 7)

IT WAS cold again the next day.

Lainey felt her legs numbing as she pushed doggedly against the wind on her way to the corner candy store. Keeping her eyes down to avoid the stinging gusts, she still managed to continue her informal census—two skirts, one more skirt, a pair of slacks—

She saw four girls in skirts standing in the shelter of a class building, gesturing excitedly over a newspaper. Too chilled to stop, she plunged onward.

This time, she dashed inside the candy store to look at the paper. Breathless, she turned to the first page of the second section, scanned it swiftly, then, unbelieving, studied it again, column by column.

There was no story about slacks at Roswell College.

A half-column on the record cold snap—"More than three hundred complaints of insufficient heat received by the Board of Health"—and a chart showing how many records had been broken.

But no Roswell story.

Tears creeping past her lids, she read carefully through the weather story to see if they had included two or three paragraphs of her hard work. She'd noticed that sometimes they telescoped features that way if space was tight . . .

No, not even that.

Just to make sure, even though it was really unlikely, she skimmed through the rest of the paper. If it wasn't with the weather story, they just hadn't used it. Well, that was that.

Chilled and miserable, her heavy camel's-hair coat no help against the wind, she made her way back to the campus.

It was a thoroughly listless Lainey who took her seat in "Problems" a few minutes later. As if mustering her last ounce of energy, she slowly opened her school notebook.

Then she stared at it, unseeing.

It took a few seconds for her to understand that she was the one Miss Bessing was motioning toward. Confused, but too dejected to wonder much at being called up to the desk before class started, really a very unusual thing, she made her way up front, then stood, pale, sad-eyed, the picture of despair.

"Ah, Miss Stinson!"

The brisk Miss Bessing flashed a friendly smile.

"Miss Stinson, was that your story in the *Express* this morning?"

"What story?" Lainey felt a little dizzy.

"The one about the slacks, of course."

Without knowing she was doing it, Lainey reached down and grasped a smooth, solid corner of Miss Bessing's desk.

"I wrote a story," she said. Her voice was scarcely louder than a whisper. "But they didn't use it."

"Why, Elaine, of course they did!"

Miss Bessing leaned over and opened the top drawer of her desk. From it she drew out a copy of the *Express*.

"Here!" she said.

With one finger, she pointed to a story with a two-column headline in the bottom left corner of the front page.

It was Lainey's story!

**Ban on Slacks Stirs  
Controversy on Roswell's  
Windswept Campus**

The current cold wave has produced a  
heated controversy . . .

And so on, with hardly a comma changed, for ten paragraphs, then "*Continued on page 47, column 7.*"

"You've certainly stirred up a little something extra," Miss Bessing said cheerfully. "In the Faculty Club at breakfast everybody was talking about it. I had no idea, you know, when I spoke to you yesterday that you'd make such a splash."

"I didn't either," Lainey said faintly.

"All I can say is I was quite a celebrity. I was the only one at the table with a pretty good idea where the story had come from. Congratulations! They must think very highly of you at the *Express* to put your story on the front page."

Lainey looked startled.

"Do you think so?" she said.

Well, maybe this would make Mr. Peters take some



notice of her. A front-page story! That was a whole lot more than she had bargained for. The first page of the second section was the very most she'd dared to dream of. Why, for a college correspondent to get a story on page one—

*Wentworth!*

Now he'd really be furious.

As far as she knew, he'd never done it. At least not this semester, since she'd been keeping such close track of what was in the paper. Well! She'd have to watch her step for sure!

“. . . I'll have to mind my P's and Q's," Miss Bessing was saying, "if you're going to publish what I tell you. Mind, I might be after you to get us some publicity for the Social Science Forum. Now, back to your seat. It's high time this class got started!"

Back at her place, Lainey furtively unfolded her *Express* and peeked inside at page 47. Real-estate news, no wonder she hadn't noticed it. But surrounded by agate on property transfers, there it was, taking up practically the entire bottom quarter of the page, just about word for word the way she'd written it.

She put down the paper and doggedly set about to pay attention to Miss Bessing's lecture.

“. . . and, naturally, the opponents of public housing for our great cities have objected to—”

The short, dumpy girl who worked part-time in the publicity office waddled into the room and broke right into the sentence. With an air of huge importance, she handed a folded slip of paper to Miss Bessing.

"All right." The instructor waved her off impatiently. "Give it to her yourself. Now, the opponents of public housing . . ."

But all eyes in the room were on the dumpy girl as she ambled back to Lainey's desk and handed her the folded slip. Then with a toss of her head, she ambled out.

Lainey felt a stab of worry as she unfolded the slip.

Why did they have to send her a message? They knew she'd be in, as usual, right after lunch. What couldn't wait? Taking a deep breath, she looked down at the unfolded slip.

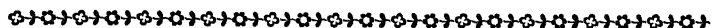
MEMO TO: Miss Stinson

Please see me at your earliest convenience.

ELWELL N. SIMMONS

*Director of Public Information*

Well! That was really peculiar. But he didn't say come right away, so she'd have to wonder for another few hours. With a tremendous effort she set herself to concentrating again on Miss Bessing's lecture.



## § XI §

## COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

INSTEAD OF having a leisurely lunch back at the dorm, Lainey rushed over to the Student Center right after "English Novel" for a quick sandwich.

Two girls at a table in the far corner were wearing blue slacks, she noted. Makes five so far today, have to check dean's office right after publicity . . .

Still chewing her last mouthful, she plunged out into the wind again.

Her eyes stinging from the fierce gusts, she hurried down the corridor toward the publicity office, about three quarters of an hour earlier than usual owing to her hasty eating.

But just being early wouldn't account for the unusual bustle. While still in the corridor, she could hear a babble of unfamiliar voices, a few typewriters clattering, a sudden, boisterous guffaw.

As she strode through the door, she stopped, amazed.

Three or four men with press cameras on their laps lolled on the bench just inside the door. At least an-

other three or four men were typing or shouting into telephones.

A tall, slim woman with jet-black hair looped in an exotic chignon stood engrossed in conversation with Jonas. In a corner near the window, scribbling away as usual, was Earl. Even the fat fellow from the *Star* was there.

A wave of hot fear rushed through her.

Had she done something terrible by writing the story without consulting the publicity office? Was all this commotion her fault? Well, what if it was?

She straightened her shoulders. She'd just been doing her job. She'd got a good story, and she had nothing to apologize for. But she felt little and mousy anyhow. She was wearing the good red suit, still she was just a kid with a pile of books in her arms . . .

Suddenly Earl looked up and caught her eye. He beamed at her cheerfully through his horn-rimmed spectacles. In spite of herself, she smiled back at him.

Just then Mr. Simmons, in quiet conference with one of the strange men, glanced up and noticed her.

"Ah, Miss Stinson!" His tone was cold as the wind outside.

Several of the men and the black-haired woman stared at her curiously.

"Won't you come in and let us congratulate you?"

The faint drawl had a definitely sarcastic edge. "You've really stirred up a fine mess of porridge, young lady."

Lainey flinched a little. No answer seemed to come to her. You'd think I'd poisoned his favorite aunt, or something, she thought.

The unnatural silence was shattered by a high-pitched chortle.

"Nice going, Lain!" said Earl, honest admiration glowing on his homely face. "I shouldn't even talk to you, after what my city editor said to me on the telephone this morning. But he calmed down—after all, the *Star* didn't have it, either. Nice going, kid!"

It was awfully sweet of him to speak up like that. A wave of gratitude warmed her.

"Thanks, Earl," she murmured. "Sorry if I got you in dutch, though."

Mr. Simmons cleared this throat.

"This is very touching, I'm sure," he said. "But don't expect everyone to take such a charitable view."

"Mr. Simmons." It was the woman with the lustrous black hair. "I'd like to meet this lovely child who knows a story when she sees it."

Lainey felt herself blushing.

Mr. Simmons lit a cigarette, and waited a minute. Then he composed his pale, thin face into a mask of pleasant good-humor.

"Rather more than a trifle exaggerated," he murmured. "But allow me. Miss Stinson, this is Miss Carlotta Malo of the Associated Press."

Lainey nodded, but she was furious now.

"What was exaggerated?" she blurted out. "The story was true, wasn't it?"

"Now, now." Mr. Simmons was being elaborately soothing. "A few girls wearing slacks to class scarcely merits a front-page story. Every photographer in town is on our necks now, trying to get pictures of girls in pants. Not a very dignified advertisement for Roswell, is it?"

"What's so terrible?" said Lainey. She knew everybody in the room was listening intently, but she didn't care.

"I didn't say it was terrible." Mr. Simmons sounded a little upset. "I suppose you can't be blamed for bringing the story into your office, but really, I'm a little surprised at the *Express* for—oh, well, I suppose you have to expect this sort of thing now and then. But, really, if you had done us the courtesy of checking with us beforehand—"

"If I had let you know, what would you have done?"

"Why we would have had the dean issue a statement, pointing out that there was no 'controversy' and putting the matter in proper perspective, then there

would be no need for a press conference this afternoon—”

Lainey interrupted, blue eyes flashing.

“You mean, you would have put out a release that all of the correspondents would have got.”

The tall, sleek woman smiled delightedly.

“The child has right on her side, Mr. Simmons, and you know it,” she said. “Let’s not be silly. Now what about that press conference?”

Mr. Simmons shrugged his narrow shoulders. Then a faint smile lit his thin features.

“All right, Lainey,” he said, still smiling. “I guess I was being an old fogey. But we haven’t had this kind of fireworks in a long time. My land, there’ll be pictures of Roswell girls in pants in every paper. What would old Abner Roswell say?”

“Probably tickle the old boy plenty,” one of the photographers said. “Now, that press conference?”

Mr. Simmons was all business again.

“Three thirty in Dean Atwell’s office,” he said. “That’s across the campus in the Administration Building.”

Suddenly the office was a-buzz again with separate conversations. Two of the photographers began to pack away their cameras, and Miss Malo was on the telephone.

Earl sidled up to Lainey and smiled sheepishly.

"Guess I stuck in my two cents, all right," he said. "Looks as if you can take care of yourself perfectly fine."

"Oh, no!" Lainey protested. "I don't know what I would have done without you."

"What about a nice hot chocolate before that press conference?" His eyes were pleading with her.

"Well, gee—" She hesitated. "I haven't even called my office yet today. And then I ought to snoop around a little, don't you think, and see how the slacks situation is this afternoon. . . ."

"Relax, Lainey," he said. "You've had your exclusive. What's to hurt if we have a hot chocolate, then snoop around a little together?"

"Well, I guess—well, I'd better call in first."

She did, and Mr. Boomer told her to catch the press conference, then come in as early as possible. Looked like a heavy news day.

"Pretty nice spot you had this morning," he said. Without waiting for an answer, he hung up.

On the way to Brink's three different groups of girls stopped Lainey. Gee, was that your story in the paper? How on earth did you get the job? Did you hear that Nell Bowen tried to get the same job on the *Sentinel*, and they wouldn't hire her?



After that last bunch moved on, Earl began to bluster.

"What kind of nonsense is that?" he demanded. "That's part of my job. Who's this Bowen girl, trying to horn in?"

"She's the editor of the *Roswell Gazette*," Lainey said sweetly. "I had an idea she'd try something like that. But they wouldn't hire her, eh? That's too bad." She tried to sound genuinely sorry.

"Too bad, my eye," said Earl belligerently.

"You know," said Lainey, "you sound just like someone I met once. Name of Wentworth."

Earl suddenly grinned.

"That I do," he said. "Poor guy, he was really in a stew this morning."

"How's that?" said Lainey.

"Well, I wouldn't go walking in any dark alleys, if I were you. Might get a stiletto between the shoulder blades. He's really sore at you."

"That's too bad," said Lainey. "Let's hurry, please. It's really freezing out."



## § XII §

*INSIDE THE DEAN'S OFFICE*

THE ANTEROOM to the dean's office was already crowded when they got there.

With Earl by her side, Lainey edged nervously through the throng. She felt distinctly uneasy. The snooping expedition after their stop at Brink's hadn't produced a single girl in slacks, and somehow she had an idea something was up, something she didn't know about.

Well, maybe the press conference would clear it all up.

But no sooner had they reached a vacant bench than Jonas jiggled her elbow and whispered: "Press conference is called off. Can't tell you any more now, but we'll have the statement mimeographed in a couple of minutes."

Lainey looked questioningly at Earl.

Now what could this mean?

In addition to needing a story, she'd been sort of looking forward to a real press conference—her first, of

course. And now if there wasn't any, what could she write?

"Isn't this a sort of run-around?" she asked Earl, timid again in the face of his greater experience.

"Doesn't have to be," he replied, as if he knew what he was talking about. "Whoever hands out the statement will probably answer a few questions, and with what we have already, that ought to be enough for a follow-story. After all, you pretty much skimmed off all the cream yesterday."

Wedge in the crowd—mostly the same reporters who'd been in the publicity office earlier—they waited anxiously. But as Jonas had predicted, they didn't have long to wait.

The door to Dean Atwell's private office opened suddenly, and through it came Mr. Simmons and Jonas, accompanied by Miss Honeyfeather, the dean's executive assistant. Jonas was carrying a thick stack of stapled statements.

"Be patient, folks," he called out jovially. "Plenty for everybody."

While Jonas handed around the statements, Mr. Simmons stood chatting with Miss Honeyfeather, but Lainey could tell he was watching the scene out of the corner of an eye. No sooner had Jonas finished, than Mr. Simmons cleared his throat.

"All right, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "It's all in the statement, but if you still have any questions, Miss Honeyfeather—Priscilla H-o-n-e-y-f-e-a-t-h-e-r, executive assistant to Dean Atwell—will endeavor to answer them."

Silence, except for the crackling of paper as they all skimmed through the three-page statement.

It was couched in Miss Atwell's elaborately wordy prose, but the gist was clear: an "irresponsible minority" had temporarily forgotten Roswell's traditions but "there will be no recurrence"; ringleaders of the minority had been called into the dean's office earlier in the afternoon and "had promised to resume their former mode of attire"; one student, who had so far forgotten herself as to wear "an improper costume" for the interview, had been suspended for six weeks.

"However, we are confident that the issue is now closed, and are hopeful that our fellow citizens of this great city will take a tolerant view of the temporary lapse of decorum on the Roswell campus."

Earl folded the statement.

"Well, that's that," he muttered, stuffing it into a pocket.

Mr. Simmons surveyed the assemblage.

"Any questions?"

The sleek Carlotta Malo raised a gloved hand.

"This, ah, improper costume, I take it, was a pair of slacks?"

Miss Honeyfeather inclined her angular head sharply.

"That is correct."

"If I may ask," Miss Malo persisted, "what color slacks?"

The male equivalent of a titter sounded from the back of the room. Miss Honeyfeather frowned severely.

"The, ah, trousers, were gray," she said. "With a white line. A thin white line, a stripe, you might say."

Lainey felt sure she had seen the suggestion of a twinkle in the frosty blue eyes.

There were one or two further questions about the offender, all of which brought the firm comment that no further information on the subject would be made public. And then Mr. Simmons, at his suavest, suggested that the story was all in their hands now.

Almost at once, the crowd began to drift off, and Lainey turned to leave. After taking two steps, she felt a tap on her shoulder. It was Miss Honeyfeather.

"You are Miss Stinson?" the elderly woman said. "Please come with me. The dean would like to see you."

Lainey felt paralyzed. Was it that bit about the *Gazette* editors wanting to graduate? That was pretty impudent, coming from a student.

Through a thick gray mist she saw Earl's eyes wide with wordless sympathy. Suspended! My gosh, what would Pop say?

Somehow her legs obeyed her, although it seemed to Lainey that she could not possibly be walking.

As she followed Miss Honeyfeather, she noticed Jonas giving her a surprised glance. And Mr. Simmons . . . Would they stick up for her? After the way she'd talked back earlier in the afternoon, of course not. . . .

There was the door to the inner office.

Miss Honeyfeather stood to one side, and Lainey stepped over the threshold, then she felt the door close behind her. Like a prison gate, the foolish thought flashed through her mind. She almost expected to hear the clank of a massive lock.

Instead it was a soft and friendly voice that broke into her fearful reverie.

"Miss Stinson?"

Dean Atwell, somehow less awesome and granite-like up close, nodded for her to take the big oak chair beside the desk. Perhaps it was her deep-lavender dress, instead of the austere robes she wore for official ceremonies, but she looked less forbidding. . . .

"Miss Stinson," she repeated, "I understand you wrote that story in this morning's *Express*."

Here it comes, Lainey thought miserably. Lavender dress or not, she's the dean.

Lainey nodded, unable to speak.

"The story, naturally, was somewhat of a shock to me," Miss Atwell said slowly. "Disconcerting, to say the least."

Lainey nodded again.

"However," Miss Atwell went on, leaning forward, "no matter how disquieting to the College administration, I can understand that you were justified according to journalistic standards."

"What?" Lainey couldn't help herself, she blurted it out rudely.

Miss Atwell merely smiled.

"No doubt you feared this summons meant some type of disciplinary action, such as we had to take this afternoon in the case of the misguided young sophomore from Horton Hall."

Something clicked in Lainey's mind, but all she did was nod once more.

"No," Miss Atwell said softly. "I do not feel there is any grounds for disciplining you. On the contrary—if you will not tell this to Mr. Simmons—I rather feel you deserve congratulations. The story was accurate, if

a trifle dramatic, but I believe that in other hands it might have turned out to be positively offensive.”

Lainey found her voice.

“You are very kind,” she murmured.

“Not at all. Now you may run along, my dear. I merely wanted to meet the first Roswell girl in more than two decades to get a story on the front page of the *Express*. Mollie Bentley did it once, I seem to recall. Something about a group of young men serenading under dormitory windows. Quite undignified, but amusing. Now, run along.”

Rising, Lainey murmured her appreciation again. Then, as an afterthought, she asked a question.

“You didn’t mean to tell me, did you, that the suspended girl is a sophomore from Horton Hall?”

Miss Atwell opened her gray eyes wide with astonishment.

“Now where did you gather that notion, Miss Stinson? If you have learned those facts elsewhere, I cannot see the harm in publishing them as long as no names are used. I suppose it might add a certain little something to your story, having a detail other reporters are not likely to have. But, mind, I’m not to be quoted.” And smiling broadly, she waved Lainey toward the door.





§ XIII §

THREE CHEERS FOR SCOOP STINSON

AFTER THIS, even her reception back at the dorm was an anticlimax.

But first, disappointment. She hadn't really expected to be welcomed to the city room like a conquering heroine, but neither had she expected no fuss at all.

Not only did Mr. Peters ignore her as usual. Even Mr. Boomer was too busy to give her more than ten seconds or so before ordering a half-column follow. He was all tied up with something about a shake-up at Police Headquarters.

It's true that Terence muttered something nice, and Mollie Bentley gave her a gay wave from halfway across the room, but nobody but Kalpenfeller actually mentioned the story.

"So *that's* what you were banging away at yesterday," he said. "Very nice. Did the copy desk treat you kindly?"

"I guess so. I mean, they didn't change more than two or three words."

"That so?" he said thoughtfully. "Well, Lainey, that's pretty good going."

"But do they usually change a lot? I mean, on your stories, for instance?"

"Well, I've been around here a good long time. No, they don't change much in my stuff. But I hear tell that sometimes it takes an hour to put a story in shape for the front page. Better watch out or you'll be working here, one of these days, instead of raising yourself a family the way a pretty girl like you ought to."

"Why can't I do both?" Lainey asked briskly. But her head was whirling at the indirect praise.

Indirect or not, it was her only inkling that she'd done any better than many other correspondents might have under the same circumstances. It wasn't till she'd been around the city room a good deal longer that she learned that good work rarely got a rise out of the desk—but bad work! Make a mistake, and you'd hear plenty!

For the time being, she still felt faintly uneasy at the lack of notice.

Back at the dorm, though, it was a different story.

Shoulders sagging a little dejectedly, she walked into their room, expecting to find Jocelyn hunched over one of her poetry magazines, but maybe willing to stop and listen awhile.

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It seemed there'd been so many weird ups and downs in just one day . . .

Instead of just Jocelyn, the whole gang was sprawled on the beds and chairs, waiting to pounce.

"All right, let's go!" Sal hollered as Lainey opened the door. "Three cheers for Scoop Stinson! Hip, hip, hoo-ray! Hip, hip, HOO-ray! Hip, hip, HOO-ray!"

It was almost deafening, the high-pitched hubbub of five healthy young females. Lainey made as if to stop her ears, but she was grinning with absurd delight. They really were a dopey bunch, but nice.

"Well, Lain!" said Jocelyn, when the tumult quieted. "Let's hear it. Nobody on campus was talking about anything else. Did you at least get a gold star from the beastly Mr. Peters?"

Lainey shook her head with mock despair.

"Not even a grumble. He just doesn't know that I exist."

"Fine thing," said Stephanie. "I would like to meet this Peters."

"Ho, ho!" said Roberta. "Think you could date him up for Saturday night?"

The tall, willowy Stevie smiled contentedly. That she had no need to scrounge around for a date was well known to one and all.

"He's missing a good bet," said Stevie firmly. "Maybe he'll be sorry one of these days."

"Hear, hear," said Julie cheerfully.

But it took the tiny, earnest Roberta to catch the hint of meaning in Stevie's words.

"You have something up your sleeve, Stephanie Carr," she said in her most serious, social-worker tone of voice. "Now out with it."

Lainey had flopped down on her bed with Julie and Sal. Now she raised herself on one elbow and listened intently. The fact that Stevie's father, who had become tremendously wealthy by shrewd dealing in Texas real estate, also published a string of newspapers out West, had long nestled in a special niche in her mind. She had never discussed the matter with any of the girls.

Had the fact been tucked away in other minds, too?

"Now don't build any dream castles," Stevie said quietly. "I sent a clipping of the story to my father this morning, but he's a hard-hearted man in business, my father is. He wouldn't hire anyone just because she was a friend of his daughter's—but if she's a real good reporter, he might. 'Nuf said, I'll let you know if I get any reaction."

The sudden silence was broken by beautiful, blonde Julie.

"Jobs, jobs," she murmured. "Jobs are very fine, I'm

sure. But I'll tell you what, Lain. How'd you like to borrow my blue cashmere for Friday evening? It'll wow that Mel."

The room was a-ripple with giggling again.

"That Mel," said Sal. "All he notices is bridges. Lend Lain a hat with a model of the Brooklyn Bridge on top, and then he'll be impressed."

There was a grain of truth in this, Lainey had to admit.

Mel's idea of an exciting date was to ride a bus to a bridge, then stand around and study it, or better still, walk across it and back. But in a way it was fascinating to see a person so buried in a single subject.

"You can have Mel all to yourself," said Stevie generously. "But what about Wentworth, pray? Have you seen anything of him, Lain? There's one I'd be interested in."

Now that Lainey thought of it, where was Wentworth?

Ordinarily, she wouldn't have expected to bump into him, but today she'd spent so much more time than usual around the publicity office . . .

Was he so furious at her front-page story that he couldn't face her?

Not very likely. Furious he might be, and probably was. But not so furious as to sulk instead of attending

to business. From what she could see in the paper, he kept pretty busy, and he did a good job of writing, too. That feature on the frat-house hoopla after the Yale game—very nice.

Then what was the explanation?

With a shrug, she pushed aside thoughts of the unfriendly Wentworth.

“He’s just a necessary evil,” she said to Stephanie. “You’re welcome to him.”

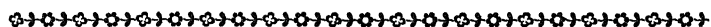
Then turning to Roberta, who’d introduced her to that really handsome medical sophomore—he’d called her three straight weeks, then silence—she raised her eyebrows questioningly.

“Have you heard from Jim lately?” she asked.

Roberta smiled.

“Jim calls,” she said. “But that’s just about all. Exams. Always exams. I’ll see if I can dig up some news for you, though, next time he calls.”

The babble of two or three separate conversations filled the small room. Then suddenly the peal of the dinner bell. In one minute flat, the room was silent, deserted.



§ XIV §

A BROKEN DATE

FRIDAY EVENING rolled around, and true to her word, Julie came through with the lush blue cashmere that just matched Lainey's eyes.

It was hardly seven o'clock, but Lainey was giving a final fluffing to her curly brown hair before going down to await Mel. He said he'd be around early so they could catch the first show at the Pix, just the nice, calm sort of evening she was really looking forward to.

This had certainly been a week! What with the slacks excitement, and two big reading reports. Then the paper on Chinese politics, which would have been a horror if not for all the stuff in the files in the *Express* morgue. Sure came in handy being allowed to use it . . .

A quiet evening with Mel would be just the thing. Shy, serious Mel might not be a glamor boy, and she sometimes made fun of him—but she felt at home with him.

She would miss not having him around. This evening, for instance . . .

She was giving a last pat to her hair when there was a knock at the door. That's funny, she thought, glancing down at her watch. Still plenty of time, he shouldn't be here yet.

Maybe it was a phone call for Jocelyn, who'd gone off with Sal to a poetry reading somewhere downtown.

"What is it?" Lainey called out.

"Telephone for you, Miss Stinson."

Well, this would be something new, to have nice, dependable Mel back out of a date. But maybe he was sick, or something.

"Coming!" she called, grabbing up her purse and coat. He might be calling to ask her to meet him at the movie theater, if he'd been delayed somehow.

As soon as she picked up the telephone, she felt something unusual about the call. She could hear a loud humming, as of many voices, the rap of a typewriter.

"Miss Stinson," said an unfamiliar male voice, "hold on a minute, will you? City desk wants to talk to you."

Now what in the world could this be? They'd never called her at night before, just two or three times during the day to ask her to cover little routine meetings they'd had notices about.

It couldn't be they had a question about a story she'd done. Since the flurry over slacks, she'd had just a



D-head, on a new course in playwriting to be offered the next semester, and nothing at all today.

“Miss Stinson.”

This was another voice, not Mr. Boomer’s, but there was something similar in the tone.

“Dave Gilway, night assistant city editor. Say, I was just wondering if you could help us out.”

“Sure. I mean, but how?”

“Well, it seems young Wentworth’s cold is pretty bad tonight, they’ve got him in the infirmary, and we were all set to have him cover that debate over in Matthew Hall at eight. You know, Congressman Heller, and that new Republican from Woodville. All the politics men are out already, so we’re really a little stuck.”

Lainey was speechless.

To be asked to cover a meeting with *two* Congressmen! And to do a job fit for a fulltime politics reporter! What matter that Wentworth was originally going to do it? They’d asked her now!

But what about Mel? Could she reach him in time? And wouldn’t he be a little hurt, to be tossed aside at the last minute?

But this was too good a chance to let go by. She’d never yet covered a night meeting, let alone a debate by Congressmen. If she hesitated—

"Why of course," she said. "I mean, if you want me to cover it, I'd be glad to."

"Fine," Mr. Gilway said briskly. "Phone in just as soon as you can."

And she heard the click of the receiver being hung up.

Well!

She didn't know what to do first. Try to phone Mel? No, he'd be sure to have left his dorm already. Go upstairs for a notebook and pencils? Good idea, then maybe Mel would arrive meanwhile, and she could explain in person, instead of just leaving a message.

She sort of hated to face him, though. He'd be bound to feel that if she had really wanted to, she could have told the desk she had a date already.

And from the look on his thin, serious face, that was exactly what he was thinking. Not that he tried to argue with her. If he had, she would have felt much better.

"I see, Lainey," he said quietly. "Of course, your job comes first."

This hurt a little. For an instant, she was tempted to tell him no, it didn't, she'd duck the assignment and . . .

But no, she couldn't do that, or they'd never feel they could count on her, and that would be the end of

any slight chance she might have of getting a job on the staff when she graduated.

Hurrying across the campus in the cold, clear night air, she cleansed her mind of regrets. Even the picture of Mel's hurt look receded as she walked quickly along the gravel paths to the cluster of lights that was Matthews Hall.

It was a low building, but wide. In it was one of the largest auditoriums on the campus, the one that usually was available when a non-campus citizens' group wanted to hire a hall. Although such meetings technically had nothing to do with the university, except for taking place there, she'd gathered that Wentworth often got to cover them. Nice experience, almost like being a general reporter.

Coming closer to the lights, she had to weave through clusters of people heading for the meeting. The West Side Community Council was sponsoring it, she remembered now. Suddenly a different set of emotions gripped her.

Could she keep up with a debate by real Congressmen? And wouldn't there be a bunch of old, experienced political reporters there, ready to smile tolerantly at her, then write stories that would make her look silly?

But after all, it was Wentworth who'd been scheduled to cover the meeting. And if he could do it, she could, too.

Why, Mr. Simmons and Jonas might be there. If not, the fat boy from the *Star*. And Earl! Earl should be there. And he would help her.

Sure enough, there he was at the long, narrow table down front—the press table to which an usher had directed her. Skinny, serious Earl, beaming at her through his horn-rimmed glasses, rose as she approached.

“Hi, Lainey,” he called. “Gee, this is nice. Ted looked as if he couldn't make it. Did he ask you to cover for him?”

“Not exactly,” Lainey murmured. “I mean, the desk did.”

“Oh,” said Earl. “Oh, you two're still not talking to each other.”

Lainey half smiled, half frowned.

“Kind of silly,” Earl said, “but far be it from me to interfere. Guess it's none of my business. Well, sit down, Lain.”

Two bored-looking men at the far end of the table glanced at her with mild curiosity.

“Evening,” one of them muttered.

Holding her chair as she sat down, Earl whispered that they were from the *Star* and the Associated Press. The fat boy, it seemed, wasn't being trusted with the assignment.

"But don't worry," Earl said confidently. "I talked to Heller's secretary couple of minutes ago, and she said he isn't going to say much."

And so it turned out to be easier than she had expected.

Congressman Heller, a bushy-browed gentleman with graying hair, in truth said very little except that he detested slums. The new Republican, an emphatic young man with a thin black mustache, detested slums, too, but felt that public housing created as many problems as it eased.

"Very interesting for Sociology 42," Lainey murmured to Earl. That was the official title of her "problems" course, and she wasn't aware she was making a joke. But one of the bored men misunderstood.

"Hey!" He slapped his thigh. "That's good, chick. Very funny. Did you get it, Sam?"

Lainey blushed, and Earl winked at her.

The question period was brief, and not very interesting. Suddenly, it was all over. Time to phone in.

Even that was easier than she'd thought. While the

chairman was thanking the speakers, she'd jotted down key sentences to make about an M-head. That was the most she thought they'd take on it.

And she had figured correctly. The rewrite man Mr. Gilway switched her to took it all down on his typewriter just as she dictated it.

"Good girl," he said, when she finally paused. "That ties it up nicely. Now wait a minute and I'll get you a good-night."

Mystified, she waited a minute. Then back he came.

"O.K.," he said, "good night." And he hung up.

Shrugging, she turned to see if Earl had finished. He'd taken the next booth in the lobby of the auditorium. Already stuffing his notes into a back pocket, he'd beaten her by a few seconds.

"How'd you do?" he asked.

"Fine. They took four paragraphs." She felt really professional for a few seconds, then a thought wrinkled her forehead. "But what's this good-night stuff?"

"Oh!" he said. She could tell he didn't mind being given an opportunity to show off. "Oh, that's just something they do when a reporter quits for the day. When the story's in, and there are no questions about it, then the city editor says 'Good night' and it means you can go home."

"In that case—" Lainey smiled and extended a hand—

"thanks an awful lot, Earl. Guess it's time to go home now, though."

"Wait a minute," he protested. A little flustered now, he was behaving like a boy-friend, not a business associate. "What's your hurry? Ted and I usually stop in for a soda after a night assignment. How about it?"

So he and Ted were pretty close buddies. What would Ted say when he heard who'd covered the meeting for him?

"Don't worry," Earl murmured, as if reading her mind. "When I saw him at five o'clock, all he wanted was to sleep for sixteen hours. He won't mind. After all, it wasn't your idea."

"No, it wasn't."

"Well, how about it? Could you do with a soda? I won't make any professional comparisons, but I can tell you that in that nice blue sweater, you're a great deal prettier than my other colleague from the *Express*."

Lainey grinned.

"Well, I hear they've just got in some fancy new strawberry-ripple ice cream up at Brink's—"



## § XV §

## TEA AT THE EXPRESS

THE TALK around the dorm was all about Christmas: Did you have fun in Brookline, Lain? Was Chicago as cold as the papers said, Sal? Honestly, Joc, was Greenwich as mobbed with handsome men as Julie promised it would be?

Then suddenly the semester was drifting toward exams, and everybody had piles of work to do. What with three term papers and two book reports, Lainey put in endless hours in the library.

As for the *Express*, her pickings were fairly slim. Several of the campus clubs had meetings with outside speakers, and she covered every one of them, just in case. But whether the speaker was a Danish woman judge (very slim and pretty, with a lovely accent), or the chairman of the city Welfare League (bald and portly and somewhat pompous), the stories boiled down to an M-head, at best.

This afternoon, for instance, it was Sir Nigel Caruthers, a member of the British Parliament, at the



Poli Sci Club; and, suave and charming as Sir Nigel was—it was lots of fun to talk to all of these types—she couldn't see how his dissertation on the British Constitution could produce more than three paragraphs.

It was an excuse, though, to go down to the *Express*. And that was something. By now, she felt a little less a stranger there, and lots of the men would stop and chat with her. Even if she didn't have much of a story, just being in the city room was worth the trip.

Once Tim Browning, the politics man who spent a lot of time in Albany, told her the funniest story about the Governor's little boy breaking into a press conference. Wanted a dime for finishing his cereal. That made quite a hit back at the dorm. And Kalpenfeller was usually ready with a silly thing about forgetting to wear a hat to the Hatters' Union convention, or something like that.

Now, finishing her four paragraphs about Sir Nigel—Mr. Boomer had taken pity on her and told her to write that much—she looked around to see if anyone seemed ready to gossip a few minutes.

Suddenly she caught Mollie Bentley's eye, and the gray-haired woman waved for her to come over.

Suppressing a tremor of excitement—for, friendly as she'd been, Miss Bentley rarely had a second to spare—Lainey strolled up to her desk.

"I'm really so ashamed," Miss Bentley murmured. "Things are always piling up so. But how about that tea right now? I have a very lightweight opus this afternoon. Just because I adore cats, Sam gave me some animal nonsense." And she brushed aside the inevitable stack of notes.

"I'd love it," said Lainey, eyes sparkling. "And I'd even love to hear about your cats. They sort of helped me get my job here."

"How's that?" Miss Bentley asked, smiling.

Chuckling appreciatively together, they walked out to the elevators. Lainey knew there was a cafeteria somewhere upstairs for people in the building, but she'd never gone up by herself, and nobody had invited her till now.

"Tenth floor," Miss Bentley told the elevator man.

The cafeteria looked like any number of others around the city, but to Lainey it was a wonderland. The lean, grizzled man with the mustache who was glowering at a cup of black coffee—wasn't he Austin Emerson, the famous drama critic? And the three men in the sharp plaid jackets—sports writers, they must be. That imposing woman with almost-purple gray hair—fashion editor, of course.

As if reading all of this in Lainey's glowing face,

Miss Bentley murmured softly: "It is fun, isn't it?"

Lainey nodded emphatically.

"Don't let them tell you it's no place for a woman," Mollie Bentley said slowly. "You seem to have the stuff—that was a fine piece on the slacks."

Lainey started. So someone had noticed . . .

"It showed the right instincts," Miss Bentley went on. "There's no reason why you shouldn't make a very fine reporter. But don't let yourself get too wrapped up in it. Keeping cats is very fine, but you mustn't forget there are other things—"

The low, thoughtful voice with an unexpected tinge of sadness was interrupted by a raucous bellow.

"Hi, Moll, mind if we sit down?"

Lainey looked up into the cheerfully ugly face of Neddy Silver, a clown of a police reporter who sometimes threw her into a dither by whistling a piercing wolf call in her direction.

With him was his tall, dour sidekick, Ralph Shepard, who usually covered Magistrates' Court.

"Sure," said Mollie, in her usual impersonal tone again. "Sure we mind, but what can two defenseless females do about it?"

"Atta girl, Moll," Neddy said. "Now, come on, Pedro." And he yanked at the arm of the dour Ralph.

"Let us entertain these lovely ladies with an account of our triumph over Louie the Bookie."

"All right, sit down," said Mollie cheerfully, "but behave yourselves."

Neddy set his tall glass of tomato juice on the table, then took a dainty sip, elaborately crooking his little finger.

"Pleasure to partake of refreshment with you, Miss Stinson. Ah, do tell us, deah Miss Bentley, what exciting news event was the cause of all that hilarity when you reported in before. Haven't seen deah old Sam laugh that way in yeah-ahs."

His Brooklyn version of a British accent would not have fooled a five-year-old child.

"Well," said Mollie, with a glance at Ralph, "today I had something in your department. A little case in Magistrates' Court about a rabbit named Bouncy Doodle."

"What?" Ralph muttered.

"This is good," Neddy confided to his tomato juice.

"Well," said Mollie, "this rabbit lives with an old lady on the top floor of a tenement. All was well there till a month ago. Then the rabbit began to bark at night."

Neddy apparently considered that all the hours he

spent watching horses at the race track made him an animal expert.

"Rabbits do not bark," he said decisively.

"That's what the judge said," Mollie went on calmly. "But you should have heard the big red-headed man from the next apartment. He said the blank rabbit kept him up every night for a month with its barking."

Ralph groaned audibly.

"And what was this joker's name?" he asked.

"Thweedle," Mollie said. "T-h-w-e-e-d-l-e, Ellsworth K. He keeps a parrot named—"

"Esmeralda!" Neddy shouted. "Guinevere! Isabella! Lulu!"

Mollie turned a mild glance at the frantic little man.

"Polly," she murmured. "But it really isn't much of a story, though. You're lucky, Ralph, you don't have to try to make something of it. The judge just told Miss Smithers and Mr. Thweedle to try to keep their respective pets quiet, and dismissed the case."

Neddy grabbed two handfuls of his grizzled brown hair.

"Oh!" he howled. "Save me. I may explode. Watch out!"

Lainey backed away a little nervously in her chair.

Mollie chuckled and said: "Oh, don't mind Neddy.

He's always like this—except when he's depressed. But enough is enough. Now we really have to go, don't we, Lainey?"

Lainey nodded. She felt like an awful dope, not saying a single word the whole time . . .

But she had plenty to say in the lounge that evening after supper when she retold the entire story, just about word for word, to the whole gang.

Wiping her eyes, crying and laughing, Jocelyn smiled at her and said: "You sure are meeting up with some characters, Lain."

Lainey smiled back contentedly.



## § XVI §

### *GLANCING AT THE FUTURE*

BUT IT WASN'T as if she was the only one giving the gang something to talk about. One bleak Monday morning, Julie announced some news that was really exciting.

"I'm engaged," she told them calmly.

The tumult was terrific. Lainey smiled as she remembered it a few hours later, during an immensely

dull lecture on Richardson's contribution to the English novel.

They'd all known Julie was pretty serious about a Yale boy she'd been dating for years. But they'd thought nothing of it, her taking off for New Haven two weekends in a row—and after the football season was over, at that.

Well, Lainey thought, that takes care of Julie, no job worries for her. And Roberta's bound to be engaged to Jim pretty soon, even if he does have two more years of medical school. Anyhow she wants to get a degree in social work.

As for Jocelyn, she'd be teaching English at Springville College back home, it was practically all settled already, and maybe she'd try a little poetry of her own. And Stevie and Sal? They'd dabble at one thing or another a year or two, then settle down with handsome husbands.

Everybody taken care of—but what about herself?

June didn't seem so far off any more, and how much had she accomplished toward getting a job? One or two stabs at bringing up the subject to Mr. Boomer—and then his phone would buzz. And she felt she just had to talk to him, off-the-record sort of, before trying Mr. Peters.

She'd have to hang around the city room a little

more, get Mr. Boomer when he had time to gab. She'd have to do it if she was serious about wanting to get on the staff.

Well, she really didn't want to get married right away, not for three or four years. Work on the *Express* till then, and maybe she'd run across someone who looked like Wentworth, but a nicer version.

Now, don't go getting ideas in that department, she told herself angrily. Then she grinned. One nice word from him, and—she had to admit it—she'd be ready to forgive and forget. You couldn't blame him for being mad at her at first—but it was sweet of him to drop that little note in her office mailbox after that night meeting when she'd filled in for him.

"Hope you didn't miss out on something interesting the other evening," he'd scrawled. "I'm sure the Congressmen weren't."

Since then, though, she hadn't seen or heard from him. Stupid to waste time thinking about him.

Well, there was really nothing wrong with Mel.

She'd felt absurdly pleased when he called her again, after that broken date. The way his eyes had looked, she'd been far from sure he would. But good old Mel—he didn't bear a grudge. He'd even taken her to a frat party last Saturday night.

And then there was Tom Lester, the medical sopho-



more. He'd begun calling anew. Very nice, but more exams were coming up. She probably wouldn't hear for quite a while again.

Of course, there was Earl; skinny, serious Earl. If she gave him half a chance, she was sure he'd be more than willing to take her out. She caught herself shaking her head, right in the middle of class, and she made a determined effort to pay attention to the lecture on Richardson.

But inevitably her mind wandered off again. Should she go out to Springville with Jocelyn for spring vacation? No, she'd seen so little of her family, Brookline it should be; maybe she could persuade Jocelyn to come up there with her. Then she could go out to Missouri right after graduation.

From there it wouldn't be much farther down to Houston, to drop in on Stevie's father. If she didn't have a job waiting for her, back in the big city.

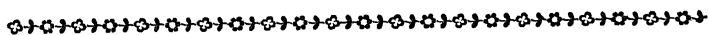
Don't be silly, she scolded herself. Of course you won't have a job here, and it's ridiculous even to think about it.

Even a dream of getting a job on one of Mr. Carr's papers was slightly far-fetched. She hadn't heard a word about what response the slacks-story clipping had produced, if it had produced any reaction at all.

You'll probably end up on the Brookline *Weekly*,

and lucky to be there, she told herself fiercely. At least you'll be writing stories, and then with a couple of years of actual experience, not just college stuff, *then* it'll be time to start thinking of big city papers.

It was really discouraging. She made another determined effort to concentrate on Richardson—and this time she almost succeeded.



## § XVII §

### THE BOOKSTORE ROBBERY

IT DIDN'T seem possible, but first-semester finals were just about finished now. Two more days, and it would be time to start haunting the college mail center, waiting for those terse little cards giving your grades.

As she hurried to the dorm for lunch, Lainey's mind was cluttered with charts of outer space, lists of Chinese warlords. She'd just come from astronomy, Chinese politics still to do tomorrow morning.

It was a thoroughly self-absorbed Lainey who took her seat at the gang's table in the dining-room. The others, just as preoccupied, scarcely murmured greet-

ings. Jocelyn's chair was still empty, she was probably snatching an extra half-hour in the library.

But it was a pink-cheeked, excited Jocelyn who came rushing up a moment later, no sign of library pallor about her.

"Lainey!" she gasped. "There's a million policemen in the bookstore. Come on!"

They got to the shop less than five minutes later, but the policemen were all gone. About a dozen girls were standing around outside the closed door of the little store in the basement of Roswell Administration—it was a special store with all the texts they used in Roswell classes, to save the girls a trip across campus to the main university bookstore.

Lainey marched up to the door and rapped on a glass pane.

One of the girls in the little crowd spoke up.

"They won't let you in," she said importantly. "There's been a robbery, you know."

One of the other girls jiggled the first one's arm and whispered something to her.

"Oh!" the first one said. "So you're the famous campus journalist. Well, let's see you get the story."

"There's no harm trying," Lainey said, purposely ignoring the slightly nasty tone. She rapped again.

Suddenly the door opened a crack, and the thin,

gawky girl who worked in the store said: "Sorry, we're closed for the day. Come around on Monday, please."

Lainey felt the eyes of the skeptic boring between her shoulder blades. Jocelyn touched her arm reassuringly.

"I'm a reporter for the *Express*," Lainey said in a clear, firm voice. "Please let me in."

There was a pause, and Lainey added: "It's perfectly all right, I'm sure."

The door swung slowly open, and the thin girl motioned for her to enter. Jocelyn tactfully stepped back, and Lainey went in. Immediately, the door swung closed again.

Inside, Lainey glanced around quickly. All seemed in order, books lining the shelves, more books piled high on tables. Then her eyes lighted on the cash register. The drawer was open wide.

The girl shook her head mournfully.

"They took every cent," she said. "One hundred and eighty-eight dollars and twenty-six cents, I'd just counted it. But, gee, I don't know if I should be talking to you. The policeman said not to let anybody in till they came back to get some fingerprints or something. I don't know, I'm sure I don't want to get in any more trouble today!"

"Well, everybody knows there's been a robbery,"

Lainey said decisively. "It can't do any harm to get the truth about it, instead of a lot of crazy rumors. Now, let's start from the beginning. What's your name?"

The girl shook her head again. She nervously twirled a strand of wispy brown hair in her fingers.

"It won't take long," Lainey said. "I promise I'll be out before the policemen get back."

To tell the truth, she was just as anxious that this be so as the girl was.

Under Lainey's gentle prodding, the girl identified herself as Mabel Carstairs, a senior, morning bookstore clerk for the past two years.

Everything had been quiet all morning, she said, as it was bound to be during exam week. She'd been tallying the week's proceeds, to be ready for the bank's messenger, when two boys walked in, ordinary undergraduate types, in heavy ski sweaters and slacks.

It wasn't unusual for men students to come over for a book that might be temporarily out of stock in the main store, so she went right on counting the money, while they browsed among the shelves.

Then the shorter of the two—they both were slight and dark-haired, but one was short, the other pretty tall—came over and asked her for a book. So she stopped to—

"What was the name of the book?" Lainey asked.

"Gee, it didn't even occur to me till now!" The girl rubbed her pale forehead ruefully. "I guess it was supposed to be a joke, or something. What he wanted was *Juvenile Delinquency* by Carter."

"There is such a book?" Lainey murmured.

"Oh, sure. It's a text they use in a couple of sociology classes, so I didn't think anything of it. It's a little odd, waiting till just before exams to buy a text, but you'd be surprised how many people do it."

While the short boy skimmed through the book, she went on, the tall one ambled over and whispered something to him, then dug a hand into his trouser pocket. She thought he was going to pull out some money. Instead, what he pulled out was a glinting metal pistol.

"It was probably just a toy one," the girl moaned. "The policeman thought it must be, from the way I said it looked. But I couldn't help it, I couldn't hear a sound of anybody coming, and it might have been real, and I'm just not so brave, I guess—"

Lainey interrupted gently.

"Anybody would have been scared," she said. "Don't let them kid you. Then what happened?"

Well, she said, they'd simply taken the money and stuffed it into their pockets, then ambled out as if they'd just done the most ordinary thing in the world.

"Did they take the book, too?" Lainey asked.

“What? Why, yes. I forgot to tell the policemen that.”

The boys hadn't even bothered to tie her up or tell her not to scream. It seemed they knew nobody was likely to be around in the basement during exams. It also seemed they knew Friday was the day when they'd get the most money. Obviously, boys from somewhere in the university . . .

After hasty thanks, Lainey hurried up to the phone booth in the hall, near the dean's office, and called Mr. Boomer.

Hardly giving him a chance to greet her with one of his silly jokes, she blurted out a summary of what she had. Then she paused, hoping he might say “Nice going” before telling her to get in touch with the local police precinct for their side of the story. She knew from chatter around the office that that's what you were supposed to do.

But there was no “Nice going.”

Instead, cold silence for a few seconds, then Mr. Boomer said: “Who assigned you to this story, Lainey?”

“Well, it happened on the campus, so I just assumed—”

“It doesn't do to assume things,” he broke in, a little harshly.

There was another silence, then he went on in a

softer tone: "I'm sorry, but you're not doing the story. Mr. Peters doesn't believe in women handling police news. When word came through on the police ticker, he had young Wentworth assigned to it. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is.

"Now, what about that memorial service for the French lady writer this afternoon? You'll cover it, of course."

"O.K." Lainey could not trust her voice to say more. Shoulders sagging, she put the telephone receiver back on the hook.



## § XVIII §

### *HELPING A COLLEAGUE*

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE was even more dismal than she'd expected. With exams and everything, it brought out a grand total of nineteen students and three French teachers.

Won't even get two paragraphs, Lainey thought disgustedly.

But she was wrong.

Mr. Boomer, somehow sympathetic without saying a



word, asked her for an M-head. So she had to swallow her disgust and concentrate on digging something worth quoting out of her thin sheaf of notes.

Working doggedly, she felt rather than saw that someone had approached her desk. An upward glance, and she gasped.

It was Wentworth himself!

Could it be that he was coming to gloat over taking her story away from her? That would really be mean. Maybe—it was possible—he might want to apologize or something.

And it was a less forbidding Wentworth than she remembered, frowning down at her like a little boy who'd been caught playing with somebody else's bicycle. From the look in his serious dark eyes, you'd think he expected to be spanked.

"Yes?" she said, unconsciously trying to help him.

"Er, Mr. Peters said you might have something on that bookstore robbery," he muttered. "You don't have to give it to me, though. I wouldn't blame you if you didn't."

Back of the boyish bluster, she thought she detected something quite different. Uncertainty? Yes, that's just what it seemed like.

A tangle of thoughts went racing through her mind. Was it just that he didn't like to face her after the things

he'd said? Or was he begging for more than her pardon? Could it be that he hadn't been able to get to that bookstore girl?

Well, her mother always told her it never hurt to try to be nice to somebody.

Drawing a deep, deep breath, she managed a smile.

"It is a kind of funny twist, the book those boys were interested in," she said, friendly but guarded.

Wentworth started.

"*What* book?" Then he flushed.

"Why, the text on juvenile delinquency." She smiled up at him innocently.

His dark eyes were pleading with her. Suddenly he shrugged, and the last trace of bluster disappeared.

"I wouldn't blame you for telling me to go cry on someone else's shoulder," he said quietly. "I've really been pretty unpleasant to you—I know I should have apologized a while ago, but I just didn't have the guts.

"Now here I am, begging favors. To tell the truth, by the time I got over to Roswell, the police had told that bookstore girl not to talk about it to anyone, and the dean's office had absolutely nothing to say.

"So I have a routine little two paragraphs from the police: 'about \$190 stolen from Roswell bookstore, police seeking two unknown youths.' That's all."

He shrugged and half smiled at her.

Lainey's heart was beating fast, but she acted slowly and deliberately. She leaned over and picked up her pad with her notes for the story.

"I don't know if you can read my handwriting," she said softly, not daring to look up for fear she'd betray her emotion. "But I'd be glad to translate for you."

A benign smile lighted Mr. Boomer's friendly red face as he spied the scene across the city room, two heads bent intently over a small pad of notes.



§ XIX §

*OVER SODAS AT BRINK'S*

LAINNEY tried hard not to make too much of the new state of affairs, even in her own mind.

It had happened swiftly, after the robbery story. The very next day, Ted dropped into the publicity office when she was there—to thank her again.

"And how about a soda in Brink's?" he said a little hesitantly.

"Delighted," she murmured.

The look on Jonas's face was something to see, and

even Mr. Simmons raised a well-bred eyebrow as Lainey and Ted strolled out together.

That was how it started.

Two days later, the story of the arrest of the two boys was in the paper. Lainey felt a strange excitement all morning, and then as she was hurrying over to the publicity office after lunch, she suddenly realized why.

Would Ted be there again?

After all, she had so much to do with the story already, she'd be interested in more than just the bare details in the paper; two engineering freshmen, practically flunking out, had been picked up by the police—that was all the D-head said.

He did come.

And over sodas in Brink's, he told her about how the boys had smuggled a bag full of beer cans into their dorm room, then bragged up and down the corridor about how rich they were. Somebody who didn't like them very much must have called the police. Fingerprints were checked, and that was all there was to it; a quite different kind of school was now in store for both of them.

"Peters was pretty decent about the beer business," Ted said. "Didn't see it would add much to the story, and why give the university a bad name for nothing?"

That sort of reasoning. Old Simmons was delighted, I can tell you."

"But wouldn't it have made a better story if you explained how they'd been caught?" Lainey asked.

"Well, maybe. But those kids are in enough trouble anyway. Why make their parents feel worse?"

"Well," said Lainey, "my mother always told me it doesn't hurt to try to be nice to people."

"I'm certainly glad she did," said Ted, and he gave her a big, broad grin.

Now, with exams in the distant past already and the second semester well under way (despite all of her outside work, she had done better than ever before—three B's and two A's), she and Ted were spending an awful lot of time together.

These days, they both stopped in at the publicity office after lunch, and then, if neither of them had anything terribly important, they'd drop in at Brink's for a few minutes.

When Lainey did have a story, somehow it seemed to take her longer to finish. So, fairly often, Ted had arrived in the city room before she had departed. Three times, already, they'd stayed downtown for a quick dinner together before returning to the campus.

It wasn't a real date, of course, just that they'd both

missed dinner in their dorms, and there were so many nice, cheap French places near the *Express*. Ted did pay the check, though.

"After all," he'd grin, "I do make more money than you. How much was the great Stinson stipend last week?"

"If you mean, how much did I make, \$6.24. But you know very well I got \$14.10 once."

"The week of the Great Slacks Scandal, no doubt."

"No doubt."

And they both laughed.

They could laugh about it now, and about the days of their feuding.

They could even swap tips on stories every once in a while. Ted, for instance, told her about Miss Honeyfeather's paintings being in an art gallery downtown, he'd noticed them while wandering through an exhibit. So Lainey got a good long feature, with pictures, on the first page of the second section.

Then Lainey dug out all of the Roswell statistics for Ted when he did the round-up story on student employment prospects.

But close as they were getting, they never went out on a real date.

From Stevie she'd heard that he had taken out a senior in Horton a few times.

"Want to know more?" Stevie asked with a grin. "My spies can find out for you."

Lainey shook her head indignantly, face flushing.

"Well, well," said Stevie, "so that's the way it is!"

Lainey didn't say a word to anyone, but when Spring Formal was coming up, she thought and thought about maybe asking Ted. Once in Brink's, she was almost at the point of doing it.

"Say, Ted, would you be interested—"

He looked up from his monster dish of vanilla-fudge ice cream, smiling, friendly, impersonal.

No! she thought angrily. It wouldn't occur to him to ask you to a dance.

"Would you be interested," she went on, looking down at her plate, "in a piece about the alterations they're doing on Roswell buildings? They're doing lots of work on other university buildings, too, it seems."

"Sure!" he said promptly. "Sounds like a good thing for Sunday. Thanks a lot, Lainey."

And she invited Mel to the dance.

Of course she could have asked Earl. He was always so sweet and friendly and helpful, and so anxious to tag along on the daily excursions to Brink's, she had an idea he was just dying to ask her out. Still, she couldn't see him as a date.

And Ted, it appeared, felt the same way toward her.

Sweet, friendly, helpful Lainey. It was awfully pleasant, though, spending all that time with him.

What if he never noticed a new dress or the color of her eyes? There was plenty else to chat about. University gossip, the big story from Washington or London or Paris. And their jobs. Specifically, as spring drew closer, the prospect of real jobs in June.

"You try first," said Lainey. "It's only fair."

"Gee, that's nice of you. After the way I acted—"

Ted told her, of course, how he'd been after Mr. Peters a dozen times a year ago, while he was still a senior in the undergraduate school. The answer, then: "Nothing now. But try me again."

But not an outright "No."

With this thin thread of hope, Ted had decided it'd be worth his while to spend another year in school, taking graduate courses in journalism, and continuing as *Express* correspondent. So instead of looking for a newspaper job somewhere else, he'd worked in an auto factory back home in Detroit in the summer, to earn some money for the additional tuition.

"Folks didn't mind, as long as I could pay for it myself," he told her. "They thought it was kind of queer, though, I suppose."

So far, he hadn't tried again this year.



But he was planning to, now that March was well under way.

Late one afternoon, as Lainey sat over her office typewriter, trying to look busy, she watched him walk over to Mr. Peters's side of the big city desk. To see him, she thought fondly, you'd never think he was the slightest bit nervous; bet I'll stumble all over the place.

Intently as she watched, she still could not tell how things were going. Ted talked earnestly a few seconds, his thin, handsome face serious. Mr. Peters looked down from the ceiling briefly. Said a few words. Then Ted came walking back.

Even from his face, Lainey wasn't sure how it had gone. He didn't look black and gloomy, but he wasn't wearing one of his wonderful big grins, either.

"Well," he said, rolling an empty chair over close to her desk and folding his big frame on it, "well, it could be worse. But, gosh, I wish we'd get it settled, one way or the other."

"But what happened?"

"Looks as if there might be something in a couple of months," he said, mimicking the Peters grumble. "But don't count on it too much."

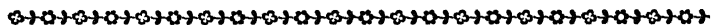
"Oh, Ted!" she said. "But, you know, that really isn't bad. Of course, he wouldn't come right out and say: 'I

promise you a job in June.' But I'll bet that's as close to it as he ever gets."

"Well, maybe." Ted sounded willing to be convinced.

"Of course," she said. Then a shadow flickered over her face. Now it would be her turn. And how could she expect anything, if that was all that Ted had managed?

"Come on," he said, suddenly brisk. "Finish your story, then I'll buy you a cup of tea upstairs."



## § XX §

### *NO REPORTERS ALLOWED*

AFTER one of the coldest winters on record, they were having a perfect spring. Pale-green haze softened the gaunt campus trees as the leaf buds began to swell. The grass turned a lush, deep green beneath a bright-blue sky. Day after day the sun shone down, and it was punishment to have to stay indoors.

But with spring vacation less than a week away, there was plenty of studying to do. As usual, Lainey had three papers under way. And a new set of charts for as-

tronomy. Luckily, no meetings to cover till after vacation!

Should she skip stopping in at the publicity office this afternoon?

Ted, she knew, had a tedious foreign-trade conference over in the International Relations Center, so he wouldn't be there today. And, as for picking up a story of her own, by now she knew that if anything special came up, Mr. Simmons would page her in class.

Still, you never could tell, maybe there'd be some small item, good for two or three paragraphs. And what if there was?

Now, that's really a fine attitude, she scolded herself fiercely as she dawdled across a sweet-smelling lawn. Step on it, Stinson, or you'll never get there. You're not going to quit, yet.

What if she had been barked at yesterday afternoon by Mr. Peters? He'd barked at lots of people, and they didn't give up.

"Nothing now," he'd told her grumpily. "Might try again next month, but can't promise a thing."

Well, what had she expected? To be handed a job on the world-famous *Express* the first time she asked for it? Of course not. She knew better than that.

Why, it had taken Ted an extra year of school to get on the staff, and he was really a good reporter. For a mo-

ment, a rush of something she didn't want to give a name to softened her.

Yes, Ted was as good as on the staff. Mr. Boomer had told him so the other day. It was wonderful for him! And he really deserved it; they wouldn't be sorry. Well, at least she hadn't hurt his chances, even if she hadn't accomplished much for herself.

But after all, it had taken him an extra year. Should she try journalism school, too? Maybe somehow she'd be able to convince her parents.

She couldn't continue as Roswell correspondent, though. Little blonde Janie had already put in for the job, and even if she didn't get it, it would be out of the question for Lainey to rear up suddenly and say "I'm staying on." If the *Express* would have her, that is.

Of course, she might make a try for the job of correspondent for the whole university—Ted's job. But she knew two boys had been up to see Peters about it already. Fat chance that he'd break a rule—no girl had ever had it—and give it to her.

Anyhow, she'd had enough of school. Maybe she just didn't want a staff job on the *Express* badly enough, but instead of more school she'd rather take her chances with Stevie's father. Stevie told her he'd written that he'd be glad to talk to her young friend. No promises, but it was worth a try.

And, if not Mr. Carr, why then she'd even try old Mr. Wilson in Brookline. Her folks would like that best, of course . . .

Then why was she being so diligent about doing dull M-heads these last few weeks? By now, it was old stuff, seeing what she'd written get in the paper, and she had plenty else to do. In fact, right now it would be just lovely to do nothing, to loll on the warm grass back of the dorm with Julie and Sal. She'd seen them there as she strolled past.

No! she told herself. Finish what you start!

Once in the musty publicity office, she felt weighed down with doubt again. Really, why did she bother? Even Mr. Simmons was playing hookey. And Jonas looked at her as if she was a trifle cracked.

"Why don't you go sit out in the sun, kid?" he asked, stifling a yawn. "Nothing's doing, go on, have some fun."

"What's that in your typewriter?"

"Oh, that?" He sounded desperately bored. "It's just the regulation two paragraphs on the Roswell trustees' meeting."

"When did they meet?" Lainey was interested in spite of herself.

"Oh, they're meeting this afternoon. But don't worry, nothing ever comes out of it. We always put out.

a courtesy two paragraphs; here, you can take it down now so you don't have to come back later when we get it mimeographed."

"But suppose something *happens*?"

"Never does at the April meeting." He spoke as if his patience had worn thin. "In August, they sometimes come up with something, but you won't be around then. So relax, we'll take care of everything."

Now she was annoyed, too.

"Where is the meeting?" she snapped.

"In the dean's office," he muttered. "But the meetings are always closed. Absolutely no reporters. Ever. Forget it."

Lainey threw him a nasty look.

"Thanks a lot," she said.

"Hey, don't you want to take down what I have?"

But she was already halfway down the corridor.

Stepping into the dim anteroom of the dean's office, she shivered, remembering the first time she had been there, during the slacks excitement, so long ago now. Instead of the mob of reporters and photographers who'd been milling around then, there was just a pale, wispy secretary.

Why had she bothered? Just to spite Jonas? It was really silly, but now that she was here, she had to say something.

"I'm the Roswell correspondent for the *Express*," she introduced herself to the secretary. "What time will the trustees' meeting be breaking up?"

The secretary eyed her suspiciously.

"No reporters in there, miss," she said.

"I know that," Lainey said. "But I want to be around when the meeting breaks up."

"I don't know about that." The secretary's voice dwindled uncertainly. "It's a private meeting, you see."

"I'll just wait here, if you don't mind."

The secretary's sour look said she definitely did mind as she watched Lainey settle herself on a polished maple bench and open the thick book she'd been carrying. One thing Lainey had learned from working on the *Express* was never to set forth to cover a story without something to read—there was sometimes a good bit of waiting around.

Obviously, she was going to have plenty of time to read this afternoon.

Deeply absorbed in the affairs of Becky Sharp (*Vanity Fair* was required reading for the novel course), Lainey scarcely noted the fading of the afternoon. It was fully an hour and three quarters later when the door from the inner office opened, and a cluster of elderly women emerged.

Now, what did she intend to do?

Shutting her book, she had to admit that she really didn't know. But suddenly she caught the suspicious eye of the wispy secretary, and she knew she had to do something. Quickly.

Approaching the nearest woman, tall, angular, rather mannish-looking, Lainey lightly tapped her arm.

"I beg your pardon," Lainey murmured. "I'm from the *Express*. Can you tell me what happened at the meeting?"

"What did you say? From the *Express*, eh? Well, I don't know if it's ethical or what, but I think it's high time that Edith Atwell got some of the credit that's coming to her."

She turned to the woman with her, a smiling, grandmotherly type:

"Now, what do you think, Tillie? Don't you think Edith deserves something?"

The second woman nodded, then murmured words Lainey did not catch.

"You're right," the first woman said briskly. "Come over here to this bench, young lady."

Under the secretary's disapproving glare, Lainey sat down on the bench between the two elderly women. Two others, gentle, white-haired sisters, drew over chairs. Lainey listened eagerly, jotting a swift phrase now and then, as they took turns talking.



The story was not very complicated, but nice and warm-hearted, the sort of thing that just had to impress even a crusty city editor.

The trustees, it seemed, had decided among themselves that it was high time Edith Atwell was paid a little more nearly what she was worth. Despite a chronic deficit, they voted to give her a \$1,000 increase in her salary.

And she had turned it down.

Roswell needed the money a lot more for remodeling the library, she told them, and adding a new lounge in Horton Hall and, well, dozens of other improvements. She didn't feel she could in good conscience accept.

"I guess you'd better speak to her yourself," the first woman said to Lainey. "She might be rather put out with us for telling you this; mind, I don't want you to tell her who told you. But we do think if she's going to be such a saint, she deserves a little credit for it."

Pulling on her gloves, the first woman rose, and the others did, too. By now, the anteroom was deserted again, except for the suspicious secretary. The woman who'd stayed on drifted out. Lainey was alone again with the secretary.

"I'd like to see Dean Atwell, now," Lainey said firmly.

The secretary frowned. Then without a word, she

rose and hurried through the door to the inner office. In a moment, she was back, tight-lipped.

"Dean wants to see *you*," she said in a menacing tone.

But Lainey felt no fear walking through the door this time. In some mysterious way, Dean Atwell was an old friend now. And at the sight of the dean's sudden warm smile, Lainey knew she felt that way, too.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Stinson," she said heartily. "Of course. That makes it clear. Miss Fripple certainly had things confused. She said some student had been loitering outside all afternoon, and then disturbed the trustees as they were leaving. Now, what is it, my dear?"

Lainey told her briefly, managing, she hoped, to convey the admiration she felt. Miss Atwell listened quietly, a slight frown on her face.

"I appreciate your good intentions," she said finally, "but, really, I don't think it would be good taste to publish anything on the subject, do you? It's rather a personal matter, you know."

"But it's a Roswell matter, too," Lainey urged.

Miss Atwell shook her head gently.

"I don't want to press you," Lainey said, wondering at her boldness, "but if you like, it could all be written from the trustees' point of view, without any statement

from you. And, after all, it might help point up Roswell's need for funds."

Miss Atwell tapped a pencil on her highly polished desk.

"I hadn't thought of that," she said, as if to herself. "If it didn't seem that I was seeking personal publicity . . ."

"Oh, no!" Lainey assured her. "I'm sure it wouldn't seem like that at all."

"In that case," said Miss Atwell, "well, I shall rely on your editor's verdict. If you already have this information, perhaps I should not ask that you suppress it. Indeed, its publication might awaken some of our alumnae to a deeper appreciation of our perilous financial situation."

She smiled at Lainey, and Lainey smiled back.



§ XXI §

*ANOTHER SODA AT BRINK'S*

THE NEXT MORNING, when Lainey picked up the paper at the corner candy store, she gave it a business-

like flip to expose the first page of the second section. Nope, story not there.

But this time she was pretty sure she had a winner. It had been just a superstitious something or other that had made her look there first, instead of on the front page.

Now she turned back, and there at the top of column three was:

## **Roswell Dean Refuses \$1,000 Salary Boost**

### **Miss Atwell Tells Board Money Needed More for College Improvements**

Dean Edith B. Atwell of Roswell College yesterday turned down a \$1,000 raise offered her by the school's Board of Trustees.

She told the stunned board members that the money they had just voted to her should be applied toward remodeling the library, or for some other urgently needed Roswell improvement.

The meeting where all of this took place was a private one, but several of the trustees disclosed what had happened afterward. One of them said: "I do think if Miss Atwell is going to be such a saint, she deserves a little credit for it."

The 57-year-old dean, a familiar figure on the Roswell campus for more than two decades, was unavailable for comment on the matter.

Since her appointment as administrative

head of the college, in 1941—she had joined the faculty as assistant professor of history ten years earlier—she has not had a raise in salary.

The most recent Roswell budget puts her pay at \$11,500, the same sum received by two of her subordinates who have had recent raises.

Miss Atwell, daughter of the late Dr. Horace Atwell, is widely known and respected in the academic world. Although her family has produced many noted New England scholars, it has no tradition of inherited wealth in the material sense.

"For some time now," a trustee said, "the board has recognized the fact that a pay advance for Miss Atwell was long overdue."

However, the imposing, gray-haired dean is a member of the board, and most of the trustees are former students of hers.

"We're still just a little in awe of her, if you must know the truth," one of them said. "Nobody wanted to bring up the subject."

The spring meeting of the board ordinarily confines its business to reviewing past expenditures. Changes in the budget customarily come up in August.

But this year a determined trustee decided to "do something for Edith Atwell" at the spring meeting. This member, who asked that her name not be published, wrote personal letters to all of the members, suggesting an immediate raise.

"We all know this is long overdue," she wrote. "If we get the name for treating so fine an administrator so shabbily, we will find it increasingly difficult to hold onto our outstanding faculty."

The letter prepared the way, and a motion for the \$1,000 raise was made yesterday afternoon at the close of routine board busi-

ness. It won prompt and unanimous approval—except from Miss Atwell.

“The dean blushed all over the place and tried to protest,” a trustee related. “But we just ignored her.”

After the vote, Miss Atwell was given the floor.

In the face of the college’s chronic financial deficit—aggravated this year because of the long overdue remodeling of several residence halls—she could not possibly accept the increase, she told them.

She thanked them for their show of faith in her administration, then quietly said she would prefer to have the sum they wanted to give her put back in the general fund.

*(Continued on Page 43, Column 6)*

Lainey turned to the inside page, and hastily scanned the few more paragraphs she had written, mostly background stuff about Dean Atwell from *Who’s Who* and the envelope of clippings about her in the *Express* morgue.

They had changed hardly a word, she told herself with a sigh of satisfaction.

Then a tiny flicker of discontent.

She turned back to the front page and scanned the other stories, one by one. Of course, the three from Washington had bylines, and the one from Berlin. Likewise the piece from Kansas City about the big spring floods out there. Of the local stories, the one about the Mayor’s press conference had a byline—the man at City

Hall always seemed to get one. And so did the interview with the Chinese United Nations delegate.

Then there was a routine job about a subway tie-up, and that, of course, didn't have a byline. Neither did the weather story. But that wasn't exclusive, either, and hers was.

Suddenly she shook her head.

Just who do you think you are, Elaine Stinson? she asked herself. Just a college correspondent, that's who. A lot of reporters work for years before they get a byline on the front page.

But this is probably the last chance, her other self answered. It would be nice to have one byline in the *Express*, to look back on.

Don't be silly! What's this nonsense about last chance? And so the sensible Lainey took command again.

Classes and lunch were over, but in a way Lainey was afraid to start out for her regular call at the publicity office. Today they'd probably really be sore! Jonas especially, not that he mattered too much. Judging by the chatter she'd heard around the campus, the story had made quite a splash.

It was funny, she mused, walking slowly along one of the gravel paths, idly kicking at pebbles with her moccasins. By now, she didn't feel it was so important to im-

press everyone as a sophisticated career girl, and she wore ordinary school clothes a couple of times a week. It was funny, you didn't hear much ordinarily about Miss Atwell, except, what a boring speech! Or, boy, was she tough on someone.

But already today, Lainey had overheard three different girls saying you had to hand it to Old Atwell, she really was a good egg. Even Julie, colossally uninterested in school these days, mentioned at lunch that Miss Atwell was quite a gal.

The power of the press, indeed!

Well, now, she thought, walking into the sudden gloom of the old building housing the publicity office, now let's see what Simmons'll have to say about it.

What he had to say was a complete and stunning surprise.

She'd kind of expected a crowd again, like after the slacks story, but only Ted and Jonas were with Mr. Simmons when she walked through the door.

"Well, Lain!" Ted called out. "That was really nice going!"

She looked slowly around the room, as if trying to make sure no other reporters and photographers were lurking anywhere. And if not, how come?

"Oh, they were here all right, this morning," Jonas



said sourly. "We gave 'em a statement. Nothing in it you didn't have. Here's a copy."

She reached out for it, smiling a little.

But Jonas would not smile back. Well, she thought, he probably had a bad time this morning.

As for Mr. Simmons, he offered her his courtliest smile.

Now it comes, she thought. Bet he'll be *real* sarcastic.

But she was wrong.

"Lainey," he said, "you are an amazing little girl. I must say 'Thank you' on behalf of the entire university. There hasn't been a more effective bit of fund-raising on the campus since I don't know when."

"But I don't understand—"

"Girl," he drawled, "you have wrought a miracle. Four—count them—four, of the richest women in the country have come through this morning with very handsome donations to the Roswell Alumnae Fund. For years they've given a pittance of what they can afford, but this morning, they sure made up for it.

"And we mustn't forget, either, that Miss Atwell's been doing a quiet good job for years and years, with no thanks from anyone, and now all of a sudden she's a heroine. You did a good day's work, Lainey."

Lainey felt herself relaxing. Now this was really

something! The power of the press indeed! Then suddenly the first part of Mr. Simmons's little speech registered.

"Four big gifts," she said. "Who from, and how much, please?" She reached into her purse for pad and pencil.

"Wait up," said Mr. Simmons, laughing. "We'll give it to you. Make a nice follow story, too. But let us congratulate you, first."

"You know"—she smiled at him—"I thought you might be mad at me."

"Mad?" Mr. Simmons sounded incredulous. "Why in the world should I be mad at you? On the contrary, I feel I must show the university's appreciation in some tangible manner."

Ted cleared his throat loudly.

"Pray forgive me for breaking in," he said. "But I can give you a hint. The lady is very fond of strawberry ice cream sodas."

Lainey flashed a smile at him.

"I suspected as much," said Mr. Simmons. "Now tell me, do they allow old fogies like me in that place over on Seventh Avenue, Brink's, I believe it is?"

"Why, sure they do," said Ted. "They even let my father in once when he came for a weekend."

"In that case," said Mr. Simmons, "Elaine, I hereby

invite you to partake of a soda, any flavor, in Brink's, courtesy of the university. And to make sure that I'm admitted without question, Ted, you'd better come, too."

"Thank you, sir," Ted said. "I'm honored. Come on, Lain."



## § XXII §

### A LETTER HOME

IT WAS a warm evening, too warm for comfort in their cluttered room. But Lainey had put this off long enough. She doggedly rolled a piece of paper into the portable typewriter on her desk and started:

DEAR MOM AND POP:

*I promised during spring vacation that I'd think over what we talked about, and tell you when I'd made up my mind. Well, it's made up now, so here goes.*

*I know you can't look forward with much enthusiasm to the idea of my getting a job in a strange city and living away from home, especially after being away for the better part of four years now.*

*But after thinking it over thoroughly, that's still what I want. Not to be away from you, you know that's not what I mean. But at this point I don't think I'd be very happy unless I was working on a newspaper, and from everything I've heard, the chances of getting a job near home are just about nil.*

*I still haven't given up completely on the Express. This afternoon I talked to Mr. Peters again, and he was almost civil. "Nothing now," of course, but he didn't growl quite so forbiddingly, so maybe there's still a slight chance here.*

*A very slight one, I will admit. You know they've taken on the boy I told you about, the one who covers the whole rest of the university, so the chances of another correspondent getting a job the same June are pretty slim.*

*Still, it would be ideal, as far as I'm concerned. You know there are very few newspapers in the entire world that are more respected than the Express. How many years is it that you've been taking the Sunday edition?*

*Another thing, I already know a lot of the people, so I wouldn't feel like a complete stranger. And Roberta, you know, the girl who's going to go to social-work school, wants to share an apartment with me—if!*

But if it can't be the Express, I'm still not ready yet to settle for Mr. Wilson's little Weekly. I've talked to Stevie Carr again—she's the one whose father owns the string of papers in the midwest—and there might be a chance there.

If you haven't changed your mind about giving your consent for whatever I decide, what I'd like to do—if I don't get a job on the Express, which I probably won't—is to go out to Springville with Jocelyn right after graduation. A sort of vacation, before we both buckle down. She got her appointment as English instructor at Northeast U in Chicago, you know, an even better job than she could have had at the little college right in Springville.

From Springville, then, it won't be very far to take a train down to Houston, where the Carrs live. Mr. Carr knows I'm coming to see him, and he's already seen copies of some of the stories I've done for the Express—Stevie sent them along to him without my even asking, wasn't that sweet of her? Whether he'll give me a job is another question, but he does have seven newspapers, and maybe there'll be an opening on at least one of them.

At this point, I'd be willing to take anything on a decent paper, even society news or fashion. It would be a start at least. It would be nice, wouldn't it, if there was something open on his Chicago

newspaper? I could room with Joselyn then.

Well, if Mr. Carr says No, then I'll come home and see Mr. Wilson. But I can't honestly say I'd be happy about it. If anything else turned up on a big paper anywhere, I'd much, much rather take it. Maybe I'm silly, but that's the way I feel now.

I hope this won't disappoint you too much. I've really been thinking hard about it since I've been back at school, despite the huge amount of work that simply has to be finished before exams.

It doesn't seem possible, of course, that the whole four years are almost over, and actually less than four weeks are left. Can you imagine? Only one more exam week, and then I'm finished forever. Hip, hip, hoo-ray, as Sal would say.

I still have to finish a couple of papers and reports, and there's a fantastic amount of reading to do—some of the exams will take in stuff we haven't had since freshman year, I bet. But don't you worry, I'm not spending too much time at the Express these days, or sitting in the sun, either, like a couple of other characters I could name. I don't promise all A's by any means, but I shouldn't do too badly, I hope, I hope.

I'll try to drop a line now and then during the next couple of hectic weeks—can you picture it, on top of everything else, we have to rehearse graduation, and a whole bunch of singing fests and so

*on. You'll be overwhelmed when you get here at the tremendous entertainment prepared for all the parents of the sweet girl graduates.*

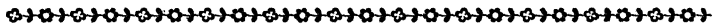
*By the way, tell Aunt Elsie as tactfully as possible that I simply cannot get an extra ticket for her. With all of my huge "influence" I'm getting just two tickets, like everybody else.*

*It'll be wonderful to have you down here, am really looking forward to it. Meanwhile, let me hear from you, and please don't be too unhappy about what I've decided.*

Love,

LAINEX

Hastily folding the closely typed sheets, Lainey stuffed them into an envelope, and tried to tell herself they really wouldn't mind.



§ XXIII §

GRADUATION DAY

WELL, it had been a day to remember.

The gang had been kidding for weeks about how gor-

geous they'd look in those silly caps and gowns, but they hadn't looked silly a bit. It was terribly impressive, watching them march solemnly into the chapel, then all the Latin. . . .

Lainey, of course, had been down front at the narrow press table just under the lectern, almost too busy taking notes to feel a part of the ceremony. By special arrangement with Dean Atwell's office, she had picked up her diploma first thing in the morning, and her mother had it packed away already.

So she'd been an observer, rather than a participant, after all.

And glad to be! Not that she wouldn't have felt a sneaking surge of pride, marching into the chapel with the rest. But this was the last story she would get to cover for the *Express*, and it would have been awful if they'd taken it away from her.

For a couple of days, she'd worried that that was just what they were going to do. Apparently, the office sometimes sent a staff man to cover commencement, on the theory that it was too big a story for a correspondent to handle. But they had given her that much, a final burst of glory with a guaranteed two columns in the paper, her last story and her longest.

Yes, it was definite now, this really was her final day



at the *Express*. And somehow, she didn't even feel too bitter. After all, it had taken Ted an extra year. Maybe she'd get back somehow.

Dawdling over the final page of her copy—page ten, it really was long, thank goodness the publicity office had the text of the Senator's speech for her—she stopped to stare once more at the long, official-looking envelope in her purse. Terence had brought it over just as she had started to write.

Sad, happy, all mixed up inside, she drew the single folded sheet of paper out of the envelope. It was beautiful, creamy paper, engraved with the masthead of the *Express* on top.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, she read again.

*Miss Elaine Stinson has served as the Roswell College correspondent for the Express for the last nine months. In this short period, she has amply proved her outstanding abilities as a reporter.*

*Were it not for an inflexible limit on the size of our staff, we would be more than pleased to invite her to join us now as a full-time staff reporter. If it were possible for us to make an exception for anyone, it would be for her.*

SAMSON K. PETERS,  
City Editor

Refolding the letter, Lainey smiled ruefully.

It was too bad that she had to leave the city room for good in order to get a nice word from Mr. Peters. It really was a wonderful letter, much, much more than she had expected.

Mr. Simmons, of all people, had suggested that she ask for one. So inexperienced in the ways of the job-seeker, she had never thought to get some tangible evidence that she had worked for the *Express*.

"Why, I have all the stories I've written," she told him. "Isn't that proof enough?" Now she was glad she had clipped two copies of every story, even the K-heads, one for the auditing department to use to compute her weekly pay, one for her bottom drawer.

"Of course they're very impressive," Mr. Simmons assured her. "But it doesn't hurt to have something on *Express* stationery. Some editors are mighty suspicious."

So she had stammered out her request, just after reporting on the commencement story to Mr. Boomer. Grumpy Peters never looked down from the ceiling while she talked. Then Terence had brought over—this! It was amazing! He must hear a lot more than you thought he did, that Peters.

"What have you got there, Lainey?"

It was Kalpenfeller, interrupting her reverie. "A love

letter from one of your swains? Goodness me, I wish I wasn't old enough to be your grandpa."

Lainey giggled.

"No love letter," she said. "It's from Mr. Peters. A letter to show off when I go looking for a job." Then fearing she'd been too flippant: "It's really an awfully nice letter."

Kalpenfeller leaned toward her desk.

"Mind if I take a look at it?"

"No, of course not."

He read it, then whistled softly.

"Well!" he said. "I wasn't so wrong in the first place. I've seen letters and letters by Mr. Peters in my time, and this is definitely not one of the usual run."

"It's not?"

"It certainly is not. You should see the stock slap in the face that goes out to all the aspiring young college editors who write in for interviews with him."

"What do you mean?"

Kalpenfeller twisted his meek face into a mask of fury.

"Go write and write and write some more, somewhere else," he growled, imitating the Peters growl. "When you have at least ten years' experience, get in touch with me again."

"Oh!" said Lainey. "Well, then, why doesn't he give me a job?"

"Patience, child." Kalpenfeller spoke in his normally mild tone again. "You've had a rare opportunity, and you've taken good advantage of it. But they've given your friend Wentworth a staff job, I'm sure you know, and one of the copy boys who's put in three years on the night cable desk. The publisher gets pretty sore, I hear, if the payroll goes up too fast. Wish he'd throw a little more of his filthy cash my way, I can tell you that."

Lainey leaned back in her chair.

"Well, I guess I'd better finish this off," she said, gesturing at her pile of copy. "I sort of hate to hand it in, though. Then it's the end and . . ."

"Don't be silly, Lainey." Kalpenfeller's voice was kindly but a trifle sharp. "You've got to work for a job here. Spend a couple of years on a smaller paper somewhere, but keep in touch with Boomer, say. He seems to have a soft spot for you. He'll let you know when the time is ripe.

"So no good-byes, and hurry up with that story. They like to get long jobs like that out of the way as early as possible."

Lainey obediently bent over her typewriter again.

Another two paragraphs, and she was finished. Pen-

cil in hand, she went through the whole ten pages, changing a phrase here, a comma there. Once she hurriedly got up and checked "supersede" in the big dictionary on a stand near the mailboxes.

Then, chin high, she walked over to the city desk and dropped the ten pages into the box for incoming copy. Mr. Peters, as usual, was lolling back in his chair, glowering at the ceiling, and she was sure he hadn't even noticed her. But suddenly the chair shot forward. The cigar came out of his mouth, and he looked straight at her.

"Good luck," he muttered. "Come around and see us again in a couple of years."

Then the chair shot back again, and before she could do more than murmur confused thanks, he had resumed his tireless study of the ceiling.

"Ssst!"

It was Mr. Boomer, his red face serious. But as she looked at him, he winked.

"Come on over," he called.

As she sat down for the last time in the smooth worn chair beside him, he gave her a steady, unsmiling look.

"Now, no tears," he said. "We haven't seen the last of you, or you of us. Pretty nice letter Boss gave you, wasn't it?"

"It certainly was."

"Well, he wouldn't do that for just anybody. He has a mysterious language all his own. After all these years, I'm still not sure I understand him, sometimes, but I would translate your little note to mean: 'Do something to prove you mean business, and we'll have a job for you one of these days.' "

"Do you really think so?" Lainey asked him.

"Wouldn't say it if I didn't. Now you just keep in touch with me. I may be able to let you know when the chances look pretty good. I'm not promising anything, but come on, smile. The world hasn't ended. Now mind you, write to me."

And he waved her off as he leaned to pick up his telephone.

And so it was with something close to a smile that Lainey marched out of the city room of the *Express*—for the last time, she still believed.

But there was one more good-bye before it was all over for good. The good-bye that hurt most. Just as she reached the reception room, she saw an elevator door open, and she spurted to reach it before the door slid closed again. But suddenly a tall, familiar figure blocked her way.

Ted!

She'd wondered when they parted in Brink's the afternoon before whether that was all there was going

to be. Just a routine wave, as if they'd be meeting every day, the way it had been for the last few months. Maybe it was just as well to do it like that, she'd decided. No tears! After all, we've just been casual friends.

But from the look on Ted's face now, there was going to be more to it.

"Lainey!" he said breathlessly. "I was so afraid I'd miss you."

"You had that big alumni lunch, didn't you?" she asked, trying to keep to the same tone they always used. Casual, that was the way to be.

"I sure did have it," he said. "Thought they'd never quit yapping. Gee, I'm glad I caught you."

With an air of knowing exactly what he intended to do, Ted took her arm, and led her gently over to one of the dark-green leather sofas near Young John's reception desk. Young John looked up at them with interest, but he knew better than to do more than nod.

"Look," said Ted as they sat down, "this isn't exactly the most private place in the world, but I'm going to be tied up for a couple of hours writing this story, and by then you'll be off somewhere with your parents. So it'll have to do.

"Now I've been figuring for a couple of days how to say it, but I'm sure I'm still going to make a mess of it. What I mean is, Lain, it'll seem pretty lonesome with-

out you. Here, I've written down the address of the room I'll be living in. I know it's not polite to ask a girl to write to you, but you just send me your address wherever you get settled, and I'll write the first letter, honest I will."

Lainey was smiling, but there were tears in her eyes. She didn't even try to hide them.

"I'll write to you, Ted," she said softly.

Suddenly, he had taken her hand.

"I'll miss you, Lain," he said. And he leaned over and gently kissed her cheek.

Young John coughed delicately as an elevator door slid open and four or five men hurried off.

Lainey stood up, tears streaming from her eyes. She tried to speak, then shook her head and stumbled toward the still-open elevator door.



## § XXIV §

### *BIG WIND IN MISSOURI*

IT HAD BEEN hot for five straight days. Burning, blistering hot, so that stepping outside was like walking into a boiler room.



"That's Springville for you," said Jocelyn, pushing her heavy blonde hair back from her ruddy face. "But don't you worry, Lainey, you have only three more days of it. After this, even Houston will seem like the North Pole."

"I don't know." Lainey fanned herself lazily with the magazine she'd been leafing through. "The radio said it was 103° in Houston yesterday. Maybe there's a decent paper in Nome, Alaska."

Even in the dim parlor of the Johnsons' rambling old clapboard house on East Poplar Street, it was hot. Too hot to move. Too hot to breathe almost.

Luckily, this was the end of Lainey's visit, not the beginning.

For the first ten days, the weather had been fine, drowsily warm in the sun, cool under the trees and on the shady porches of Jocelyn's many friends. The two girls had been on the go all day, sightseeing, visiting, swimming in Spring Lake. And during the pleasant, breezy evenings, a few young men were always dropping in.

What with Mrs. Johnson's luscious meals and the soft, soft bed in the pink-curtained guest room, it was really a perfect vacation. Jocelyn's two little brothers, Tim and Jim, were a trifle noisy at times, but mostly they were off on mysterious treasure hunts, or playing

ball down the street with the Carey kids. As for big, hearty Dr. Johnson—Jocelyn looked a lot like him—he was always so busy they didn't see much of him, but he was a wonderful host.

"Eat up, girl," he'd urge at every meal. "Bet you don't see dumpling stew like that back East. Or anywhere else in the world for that matter. As you may note from my girth, Mrs. Johnson is a mighty fine cook."

And Mrs. Johnson would smile her quiet, pleased smile. They were nice people to be staying with.

All in all, everything was just fine—till the heat wave started.

With the temperature hovering near 100° for the fifth successive day, the girls had scarcely stirred out of the parlor since breakfast. With a stack of old magazines and a pitcher of lemonade, they were trying to make the minutes tick past. Even conversation took too much effort.

Lainey was browsing through a romantic serial, when Jocelyn suddenly sat upright.

"Do you notice anything, Lain?" she asked sharply.

"Why, no." Lainey looked around. Then her eyes came to rest on the wide windows lining the front of the room. Something was different. What?

Now she had it! The curtains were fluttering!

"A breeze," she breathed thankfully.

"It's pretty much of a breeze," said Jocelyn, a serious look on her face. "The windows are all closed, you know. Mom says it keeps cooler that way."

"Oh," Lainey said. "Well, maybe we're in for a thunderstorm. Let's look."

As the two girls ambled over to the windows, Lainey sensed a sort of alarm in Jocelyn's manner. That's funny, she thought, didn't know she was afraid of thunderstorms. Great big Jocelyn. Well, you never can tell.

Jocelyn drew aside the curtains and they peered out across the lawn to the tree-shaded street. It was scarcely three in the afternoon, but it looked like nightfall. They could barely see the houses on the other side of the street.

As they stared through the panes of glass, they became aware of odd, thumping noises outside. Now Jocelyn looked really alarmed.

"It's hail, Lainey. Come on, let's look for Mom."

"But she's taking a nap. Do you really think we should bother her?"

"It's a hailstorm, Lainey, come on. I don't want to worry you, but in these parts hail on top of a bad hot spell is something to pay attention to. Just look above the trees over there—that's the southwest."

"It is?" Lainey still did not have the faintest idea what Jocelyn was driving at.

"It's the southwest." Jocelyn sounded terribly serious. "And there's a dark, funny-shaped cloud, do you see it? Out in these parts, a cloud like that means a tornado is coming—maybe right at us."

Lainey gasped.

"But what do we do? I mean, is there anything we can do except to pray that it goes by?"

"We can get Mom and round up Tim and Jim, and get down to the old icehouse fast. Dad's at the hospital—that's where he'd want to be, anyway."

In very short order, Lainey, Jocelyn, Mrs. Johnson, and two solemn-looking little boys—they'd been gathering egg-sized hailstones in an empty tomato-juice can out in the garden, probably narrowly missing a concussion several times—were all huddled in the damp dug-out near the old stables where years ago they used to keep big chunks of ice all summer.

By then, the cloud had veered off a little to the right.

"Definitely a tornado," said Mrs. Johnson briskly. "Sure hope those farmers out Warren way don't get it. Now, back inside, everybody. Doesn't pay to take any chances."

It seemed terribly long, but it was only about five minutes later when Mrs. Johnson popped her head out

and announced: "Sun is shining, all out now. Land, look at those hailstones in the rose garden!"

With maternal permission this time, the two small boys scampered off to gather stones again in their juice can. The two girls and Mrs. Johnson made for the house. Just as they walked in through the pantry door, the phone began to ring, and Jocelyn scurried to answer it.

"Oh, Dad!" Lainey heard her say. "Yes, we were all out in the icehouse. Yes, the boys, too. *What?*"

There was a pause, while Jocelyn listened intently, biting one finger. Once she started to say something, stopped, then started again: "But if Lainey and I come along," she said, "maybe we can help. Don't forget, we both took first aid at school. And besides, Lainey's a reporter, you know. I'll bet lots of papers would be anxious for the story."

Lainey felt her heart begin to beat rapidly.

There was another long pause while Jocelyn listened, then she nodded and hung up the receiver.

"O.K., Lain," she said. "Let's get into skirts. Fast. The tornado hit in Warren, and we're going over with Dad."



## § XXV §

*LONG DISTANCE, PLEASE*

THE FIRST PART of the drive, the speedometer needle hit seventy. Four other cars with local doctors and nurses were following them, but there was no one else on the narrow concrete road rolling through miles of open fields.

Then they took a left fork marked "To Warren—3 mi." and they began to pick up traffic. From every farm lane jeeps, station wagons, jalopies crowded onto the main road. Pretty soon the needle on the speedometer was down to fifteen. Ten. Then they were stopping, crawling, stopping, as on a city street.

"There's the trouble, right up ahead," Dr. Johnson muttered.

It was an impromptu roadblock, made of three state troopers' cars parked smack in the center of the narrow highway. Suddenly a husky trooper, his black belt complete with gun and holster, poked his head into their car.

"End of the line, folks," he said sharply. "No sight-

seeing today. Turn around in that farm drive and scoot right back where you came from.”

Dr. Johnson took out his wallet and showed the trooper a card.

“Hmmm.” The trooper examined it carefully. “O.K., I guess they can use you, Doc. But what about them?” He pointed to the two wide-eyed girls.

“They’re both trained first-aid workers,” the doctor said.

After eying them suspiciously for a few seconds, the trooper shrugged and waved them on to the narrow shoulder that had been left unblocked for cars with serious business in Warren. Shifting into low gear, the doctor expertly guided the car past the barricade, then back onto the road.

Now there was no more traffic. At first the fields and the empty road looked just like what they had already passed. But suddenly Jocelyn grabbed Lainey’s arm.

“Look!”

She pointed toward a house a couple of hundred feet in from the road on the right. The entire front had been sliced off, so you could see the inside of a parlor and a kitchen, then two bedrooms upstairs.

There was not a sign of life about.

A bright-red rug fluttered grotesquely from the limb of a tree near the deserted barn.

"How do you like that?" Dr. Johnson muttered. "It came down just about in time to hit the main street. Right ahead there."

But a cluster of cars blocked their view.

Carefully maneuvering so that he couldn't be blocked by other cars, the doctor parked, then they all got out and started to edge their way through a swarm of people who had got through the barricade somehow.

"There," the doctor said. "That's Warren. Or rather, that was Warren. It's some kind of fate, it seems. One street of stores in a ten-mile radius, and that's where the tornado hits!"

One wall of a red-brick store was still standing. "Pulvey's Hay and Feed," the battered sign said. Then traces of a food market, a barber shop, a firehouse. Otherwise, nothing but rubble. A children's jungle gym, unharmed, was all that remained of the one-room schoolhouse.

"But all the kids got out all right," a tall, sunburned man in a wide-brimmed straw hat assured them. "That teacher, she deserves a medal. She saw the cloud through the window, and got every last one out, lying in the ditch over there by the time it hit. Not a hair on any of the thirty-two little heads harmed, thanks to that brave little woman."



"What was her name?" Lainey heard herself murmuring.

"Sidonie Green she is, and not a speck over twenty years old, herself. Pretty red-headed gal, too."

"How come school was in session? I mean, isn't it summer vacation?"

"Got another week to go," the man said. "Smack till the end of June it is, chores or not. The little ones have to get their fill of books."

Dr. Johnson was anxious to get on.

"You girls better stay right with me," he said. "Don't want to lose you in this mess. Mind, I said you could come along, but I don't want to have to worry after you."

They walked another few steps, then the doctor quickened his pace.

"There's an ambulance, now," he said. "Remember, you wanted to come. No queasy stomachs, please."

The ambulance had come over from Dade Center, sixteen miles in the other direction. The attendant told the doctor that two from Springville had already come and gone, taking the serious cases back to the hospital. Twelve known dead so far, including two babies who'd been in the grocery store with their mother.

"How old were the children?" Lainey asked quietly.

"Little Elliot must have been going on two," a

woman in the crowd said. "And his sister, Janet, say six months."

"The mother, too?" Lainey's voice was faint.

The woman nodded. Another woman tapped Lainey's shoulder. "She was expecting again, come December, isn't that a sorrowful thing?" she whispered.

While Dr. Johnson hopped into the ambulance to look over what the attendant had done in the way of emergency aid, Jocelyn and Lainey merged into the crowd standing around.

It seemed most everybody had a story to tell. Someone pointed out a tall girl with freckles, the telephone operator who'd been on duty. Lainey talked to her a few minutes, heard how she'd seen the cloud, then deliberately stayed right at her board till she got central in Springville and Dade Center, before racing out and tumbling into the ditch, just in time.

And then the barber, he'd almost cut the throat of Old Tom Slacey, when somebody howled "Tor-nado!" but they'd both made it all right.

The only paper Lainey had was an envelope she'd grabbed as they changed from shorts to skirts. She'd grabbed a stub of a pencil, too. By now, there wasn't room for another comma on the envelope, and she was desperately hoping she'd be able to keep the rest in her head.

But what was it all for? Big agencies like the Associated Press would send out plenty of reporters, she was sure. Who would want what she had? Why was she making all these people talk about the terrible things they'd seen?

But they seemed to enjoy telling it over and over. And something made her keep listening, pricking a memory with an apt question.

Suddenly Dr. Johnson poked his head out of the ambulance.

"There's a woman in here needs a blood transfusion pretty promptly," he told them. "I'm going along with the ambulance to Dade Center. You drive the car home, Jocelyn, and tell Mother I'll be along as soon as I can. Hurry up, now, there's liable to be a real traffic jam, and I don't want you two caught up in it after dark."

"Oh, Dad!" Jocelyn started to protest.

"It's all right," Lainey said. "I have plenty for a story already—if I only had the faintest idea what to do with it."

For a few minutes, just the physical difficulties of getting to the car, turning it around, and getting it back on the road were enough to occupy their minds fully.

Once under way, though, the main road to Springville was clear in the direction they were going. In the other lane cars headed toward Warren were backed up

almost five miles. And as they drove along, Lainey began to think out loud.

"Kalpenfeller, you know, he's the one at the next desk, he was always talking about writing stories in the *Post-Dispatch* office or the *Sun-Times* office, the newspaper office in whatever city he was covering a story in. Maybe I should try to get in to the Kansas City *Star* office—"

"But there's a paper right in Springville," Jocelyn said. "It's no world-shaker, but if it's just a typewriter you need, I'm sure Mr. Alloway would let you use one."

"So I write a story . . ." Lainey was talking half to herself again. "I know you wire them from the nearest Western Union office, but it would cost a fortune, and I wouldn't dare to send it collect. Oh! The whole idea is silly. I'm sure they've got more than they want already at the *Express*, from the Associated Press."

Jocelyn attended to her driving for a moment.

"But did you come across any other reporters there?" she asked after a pause. "I'm sure nobody else has all the details you do, Lainey. It's really an amazing story, the way the tornado came down on just this one street, practically wiping a town off the map, and leaving all those empty fields untouched. Give it a try, Lain!"

Lainey began to think out loud again.

"Well, I suppose I could telephone and ask if they want me to wire a story . . ."

"That sounds very sensible," said Jocelyn.

"But we'd have to go back to your house first," Lainey said dubiously. "I don't have a cent with me . . . but maybe I could call collect. He might remember me."

"Who?" said Jocelyn.

"Man named Gilway, he called one evening to give me a night assignment. O.K.! Let's try it. But we'd better hurry, it's after six now, and that means back East it's after eight. Not much time for the first edition!"

Jocelyn parked the car in front of the one-story brick building housing the Jefferson County *News* and they walked quickly through the door into what looked like an oversized store. But back of the high wood counter you saw from the street was a miniature, bustling version of the *Express* city room. Farther back, out of sight, a press clattered.

"Help you, girls?" a stooping, white-haired man asked.

"Mr. Alloway," said Jocelyn. "This is my friend Lainey Stinson. She worked this winter on a newspaper back East, and she wants to call them about the tornado."

"Why, certainly." Mr. Alloway didn't sound the least

bit surprised. "You can use my desk right here. I've finished my editorial."

"Was it about the tornado?" Lainey asked.

"Of course."

"Would you mind if I looked it over? There might be something I could quote in it."

"Not at all." Mr. Alloway fussed with his spectacles, trying not to seem terribly pleased. Then he hastened off to find a galley proof.

Jocelyn had done her part. Now she sat down and idly glanced through back issues of the *News*. The rest was up to Lainey. And somehow she knew just what to do.

Pounding steadily at Mr. Alloway's typewriter, with a short pause now and then to study the crumpled envelope, she turned out five pages of copy in thirty-five minutes.

"That's enough," she said abruptly to herself. "It's getting late." And she reached for the telephone on Mr. Alloway's desk.

"Long distance, please," she said firmly, and proceeded calmly to put through a call to the *Express*.

A long pause, then: "Hello, Mr. Gilway?" Lainey's voice was loud with just the slightest quaver in it. "It's Lainey Stinson, the Roswell correspondent. I'm visiting out here in Springville, Missouri. . . . Yes, it is only

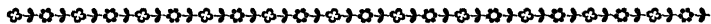
ten miles from Warren, and I've just come back from there, that's what I'm calling about . . .

"*What?* Just *four* paragraphs from the AP? Why, I've just banged out about a column, in case you . . . Sure, I'll hang on."

Lainey whispered excitedly to Jocelyn.

"He's going to put on a rewrite man to take down what I have. They got just *four* paragraphs from the AP, and the *Express* correspondent in Kansas City couldn't even get through to Warren, telephone wires down. . . . Oh, O.K.! I have it all written out. Can you take it on the typewriter?"

"Dateline is Warren, Missouri. Here goes. A tornado swooped down on this tiny village this afternoon, leaving ten miles of open farmland on either side untouched. Period. Paragraph. At least ten adults and two children were killed by the weird storm. . . ."



§ XXVI §

THREE TELEGRAMS

THE NEXT MORNING it was cool and clear and a gentle breeze fluttered the leaves outside the breakfast-room windows.

"I think," said Mrs. Johnson, "I think this is the day for that Kansas City shopping trip. How about it, girls? Like to come along?"

Lainey's hand trembled with excitement as she put down her piece of toast. On any day, a trip to Kansas City would be something. She'd never been there, except for ten minutes at night in the railroad station. But today of all days! She almost ached to get there.

For in Kansas City there just had to be copies of the *Express*. As far west as San Francisco, air-mail editions were delivered during the night, and there was sure to be a stand that still had a copy.

Then she could see if they'd used her story!

"Sure thing, let's go to Kansas City," Jocelyn said. "Then we can get a copy of the *Express* and see if Lainey's story's in."

Lainey flashed her a quick, affectionate look. Trust Jocelyn to read her mind. And really, if it hadn't been for her, there wouldn't be any story to be looking for.

"We can do that by all means," said Mrs. Johnson. "There's a big out-of-town newspaper stand right near Harvey's. They have lovely clothes there, Lainey, just as nice as any place in the East, I'm sure."

Lainey nodded agreeably.

"I'm sure they do," she said.



In her present mood, she would have agreed cheerfully that the earth was really flat.

"Then we can have lunch in the Mark Twain House," Mrs. Johnson went on. "It'll be a real holiday. Come, let's hurry, I'd like to get an early start. It's a two-hour drive, you know."

It was just striking eleven when they parked in a busy downtown lot near Harvey's and started toward the famous department store. But Jocelyn gently steered them on a short detour, to a noisy, dusty corner with a huge open-air newsstand.

Heart pounding furiously, Lainey leaned down and picked up a crisp copy of the *Express*.

There it was, in the lower right-hand corner of the front page!

## **Tornado Levels Missouri Village**

### **14 Killed by Freak Storm that By-passes Miles of Open Farmland**

BY ELAINE STINSON

WARREN, Mo., June 25—A tornado swooped down on this tiny village this afternoon . . .

Lainey looked, and looked again, trembling with excitement. Yes, it really was there! Between the head-

line and the start of the story, in beautiful little capital letters, three words she had never yet seen in print:

BY ELAINE STINSON

Jocelyn literally danced up and down when she saw it.

“Oh, Lainey!” she said. “Can you imagine!”

“Now isn’t that lovely?” said Mrs. Johnson. “I’m sure your parents will be very proud of you. Now we’ll really have to celebrate. I think I will buy both of you new bathing suits. How would you like that?”

And she was as good as her word. She bought them twin yellow bathing suits, swiftly picked out three flowered-silk dresses for herself, and it was time for lunch.

For Lainey, it all passed in a daze. She ate every morsel of the thick grilled steak, but afterward she could scarcely remember eating. Or obediently looking right, then left, as Mrs. Johnson drove them slowly through the center of the city, to the War Memorial, to the stockyards, and the airport.

It wasn’t till they were speeding homeward along the wide cement highway dotted with filling stations and hot-dog stands that she came down to earth.

Well, what does it mean, actually? she asked herself. It’s very nice, wonderful, no question about it. But let’s

not be silly! You're still going to Houston in three days, don't you forget it.

What's more, you're going to be extremely thrilled if Mr. Carr can find just anything for you. Society reporter on the *Omaha Journal*, for instance. So don't go getting delusions of grandeur. This'll be nice to show your grandchildren, but no fancy ideas, please!

She thought that common sense had won the battle. But as soon as they entered the dim hall of the Johnsons' house and spotted three telegrams propped up on the telephone table, Lainey knew that she had been wrong.

Common sense hadn't won at all.

Her stomach flipped more crazily than ever as the wild idea struck her. Suppose one of them was from Mr. Peters!

Now, don't be silly, she pleaded with herself. You don't even know they're for you. *Don't be silly, Elaine!*

But they were for her, all three of them.

Fingers fluttering nervously, she tried to tear open the first envelope. It seemed to take forever, but suddenly, she was scanning the single sheet of yellow paper, a puzzled frown wrinkling her pretty brow.

The telegram had come from Brookline.

But how on earth?

The message explained it.

MR. HAYNES IN DAD'S OFFICE PHONED THERE IS  
STORY ON FRONT PAGE EXPRESS ABOUT TORNADO  
YOUR NAME SIGNED TO IT STOP ARE YOU ALL RIGHT  
STOP PHONE AT ONCE.

LOVE,

MOTHER AND DAD.

Wordlessly, she passed the sheet of paper to Jocelyn and Mrs. Johnson.

"Of course they're worried," said Mrs. Johnson. "You'll have to call home right away."

"Oh, Mother!" said Jocelyn. "Let her open the other telegrams first."

Lainey ripped open the second envelope.

A quick glance, and a rosy flush tinged her face. Then she looked down and read it through again.

"Just from a friend," she murmured.

The friend was Ted!

BEAUTIFUL STORY STOP HOPE YOU DIDN'T GET  
BLOWN AROUND MUCH. TED.

"Now how did he know where to find me?" Lainey said, as if to herself.

"That's easy," said Jocelyn. "He just called the publicity office. You told me you'd left word there where you'd be."

"Wait a minute," said Lainey. "You don't even know who I'm talking about."

"Oh, don't I!" said Jocelyn. "How often do you blush like that? Bet a nickel it's from Wentworth."

Lainey blushed even more deeply.

"All right," said Mrs. Johnson. "Open the third one. Then you call home. It's cruel to have them worry a moment longer than necessary."

Obediently, but with her mind obviously elsewhere, Lainey tore open the third envelope.

"It's probably just from Aunt Elsie," Lainey murmured. "She's a great worrier, too."

Then she looked down at the message and blinked, then read again. Without knowing what she was doing, she felt for the chair beside the telephone table, and sat down.

Jocelyn reached over and took the telegram from her, and read it aloud:

WE'VE DECIDED TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION STOP IF  
YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED COME IN MONDAY  
MORNING. REGARDS.

SAMSON K. PETERS

"He's the city editor of the *Express*," Jocelyn explained to her mother. "Say, look at Lainey, will you!"

"You'd better get her a drink of water," Mrs. Johnson said.

"I'm all right," said Lainey, "just a little giddy. Did I read that right? Or did I just imagine it?"

"You read it right," said Jocelyn. "I'd better go and get that water."

"That's right," said Mrs. Johnson. "You get the water. Now, Lainey, you pick up that telephone. You really have something to tell your parents."

"Yes, I do," she said weakly, reaching for the phone. A job . . . the *Express* . . . and Ted . . .

A happy smile suffused her face.



A NOTE ON THE

## Type

IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

THE TEXT of this book was set on the Linotype in Fairfield, the first type-face from the hand of the distinguished American artist and engraver Rudolph Ruzicka. In its structure Fairfield displays the sober and sane qualities of a master craftsman whose talent has long been dedicated to clarity. It is this trait that accounts for the trim grace and virility, the spirited design and sensitive balance of this original type-face.

Rudolph Ruzicka was born in Bohemia in 1883 and came to America in 1894. He has designed and illustrated many books and has created a considerable list of individual prints—wood-engravings, line-engravings on copper, aquatints.

THE BOOK has been composed, printed, and bound by H. Wolff, New York. Paper manufactured by P. H. Glatfelter Co., Spring Grove, Pa. Typography and binding design by Charles Farrell.









Doris Faber

knows the atmosphere of the city room well, having worked as a reporter on the *New York Times* for eight years. Like the heroine of her book, she started as a college correspondent, then moved on to become a reporter in the Women's News Department, and two years later became a general assignment reporter. She resigned to marry Harold Faber, who occupied the reporter's desk next to hers. They have two young daughters, Alice and Marjorie.

Since acquiring a family, Mr. Faber has gone on to become Day National News Editor on the *Times*.

This is Mrs. Faber's first book. Although she acquired the atmosphere and the authentic detail from actual experience, she insists that it is pure fiction and not autobiographical.

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