

# The Love Dodger

By VIRGINIA SWAIN

## BEGIN HERE TODAY

BARBARA HAWLEY, 25, after teaching school three years, decides to go into newspaper work in order to see life. "We'll see what you can do, Miss Hawley," said Wells, looking keenly at her. "Jeffries will cover the fundamentals of the accident, from the straight news angle. You will pick up heart-throb notes among survivors and wounded. Get us one long human-interest feature and grab all the shorter sidelights you can. Write whatever you would read, if you were on the outside."

He was gone in a streak toward the composing room door, where the foreman was waiting for him.

Barbara took a step toward her desk. Her knees wobbled beneath her. But she went on.

As though from outside her consciousness came two voices. The society editor and a reporter were looking at her from a corner.

"Too bad Jenson is off," said the man. "This story would be pid for him. Golly, what a feature yarn he'd spin out of it. And Dollar and Jones both out on assignments too. Kind-a tough on old Wells."

"Yes," said Miss Badger, not troubling to lower her voice. "That new girl can't get by on it. She looks like a total loss already."

## CHAPTER V

THE Telegraph office sprang into instant activity.

Wells grasped his desk telephone, sent the office boy into the composing room, summoned reporters about his desk.

"Get Jeffries on the wire," he said to somebody, and then his eye fell on Barbara, who was lingering in the outskirts of the crowd. "Tell Jeffries to wait for Miss Hawley, and then shoot straight out to Bar Junction. Give me a call at once, and then work toward a second extra by 11 o'clock."

Barbara could scarcely believe her ears. She found herself walking to-



"Pay this man," said Barbara, leaving an astonished police reporter staring at a suspicious taxi driver.

Barbara stiffened. Miraculously, her knees stopped their queer knocking, and her head felt cooler.

She grasped her hat and coat and a ward of copy paper, such as she had seen other reporters carrying. Then she ran for the elevator. Just before the door of the lift closed on her, Jimmy made a rush for it and thrust something into her hand.

"Wells says, 'Take a taxi!'" he shouted, as the door clanged to.

In the lobby downstairs Barbara looked at the article that he had put

in her hand. It was a taxi book. She picked up a cab at the door.

"The police station," she told the driver, "and hurry."

Ten minutes later she ran into the white marble hall of the police station, to find Bob Jeffries just starting for the door, watch in hand.

He grasped her arm without a word, and they ran out to the sidewalk, where the crazy racing car stood at the curb. In a moment they were flashing through the city streets, over a bridge and out into open country. It was not until they

had settled down to a steady speed that Bob tried to talk.

"Listen, Miss Hawley," he said to Barbara. "Now's your chance. Can you stand blood and things?"

Barbara uncertainly nodded her head.

"Well, you'll have to, because this smash-up is one of the worst in a year. I'll do all I can for you, but if we get separated, you'll have to go ahead, pick up all the names you can, and the stories of families

separated, and so forth. Anything

you see that has a human-interest punch in it, put it down. But get names and initials and stay as cool as you can. If you keep very busy you won't have time to faint, as the other girl did."

Barbara's eyes snapped, "Faint?"

she tossed back. "Of course I won't."

Bar Junction was some fifteen miles from town, and the racer pulled into sight of the wreck just twenty minutes after Bob and Barbara left the station.

The wrecked trains lay just over a hill, and the scene flashed across Bob and Barbara's vision, like a canvas suddenly dropped before them. Barbara had a confused idea about Armageddon, steel and fire and sudden death. She did not stop to unravel it.

Before her eyes lay a mass of twisted machinery, with great jagged fingers of steel thrusting out, as though they pointed an accusation at the skies.

The mammoth engine of the Limited lay on its side, in grips with the smaller engine of the freight train. They looked to Barbara like two bulls dead, with locked horns.

The cars of the two trains lay in long ribbons down the tracks on either side, some overturned, some still on the rails. The last, two Pullmans of the Limited had overturned and slithered down the banks of a creek, where they lay half-submerged.

Barbara caught her breath.

She followed Jeffries over the rough ground to within twenty feet of the engines. A brakeman approached them.

"No sightseers allowed, sir," said the man. "We've got to get rid of this crowd." And then Barbara saw that people were coming up from all sides and numerous automobiles were parked roundabout.

"Bob Jeffries of the Indianapolis Telegraph," said Bob, "and this is Miss Hawley. What can you tell us about the wreck?"

The man did not raise his head.

"Couldn't say, miss," he replied.

Barbara peered fearfully through the windows of the wrecked carriages. Nothing was to be seen save darkness within. She hurried toward the improvised hospital. A brawny nurse blocked her progress, but an explanation of Barbara's mission gained a reluctant permission to enter.

When she emerged, her face white

and her hands gripping a sheaf of scribbled notes, it was 15 minutes after ten.

She hurried up the long line of coaches, turning her head away from the wreckage. Up the line, workmen were still chopping through debris and helpers were carrying stretchers away.

Barbara looked around for Bob.

He was not in sight. At last she

saw the brakeman whom they had talked to first. He could tell her nothing of Bob's whereabouts. The racer was not where they had left it.

She had heard Wells speak of an extra by eleven. There was no time to be lost in looking for Bob. She must find transportation into town, on her own initiative.

At her left a瘦 looking man was sitting in a striped Ford, lazily watching the workers. Barbara ran toward him. "Will you take me into town?" she called. The man looked at her insolently.

"Let's see your money," he said.

Barbara opened her purse and stood transfixed. There was a lone dollar bill inside that she had put in her bag for lunch. There was nothing for it but to tell him the truth and promise money when they arrived at the Telegraph office.

He listened skeptically, but glancing at her clothes and the sheaf of notes in her hand, he decided to take a chance.

The old car belled its appearance. They made even better time back to town than Barbara and Bob had made on the way out.

As they rounded the corner of Meridian and Washington Sts., a clock in a drug store window said 10:45. The driver of the car followed Barbara into the building. In the lobby they met Bob Jeffries waiting for the elevator.

"Pay this man," said Barbara and caught the first car up, leaving an astonished police reporter staring at a suspicious driver.

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ORTY minutes later when she laid her last sheet of copy on the city desk the city editor had a smile for her, the first with which he had as yet favored her.

"Now go and get some coffee," he said.

An errand boy coming in a few moments afterward, announced to the telephone operator, "There's a lady lying out in the corridor. Fainted, I guess. But she must be coming to, 'cause she's saying something about Armageddon—something and Bruce Reynolds."

(To Be Continued)

## Today's Cross-Word Puzzle

