The Old Time Radio Club

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Season's Greetings

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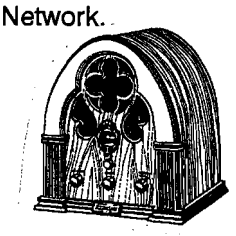

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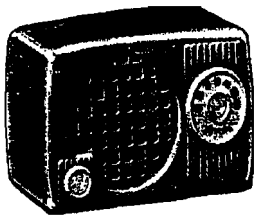


SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by Jim Cox

STELLA DALLAS

Anne Elstner, the actress who portrayed Stella Dallas, was convinced that she won the part over two dozen other Stella aspirants because she sounded more like Barbara Stanwyck than her rivals. Stanwyck played the role of Stella in a 1937 film which was based on a turn-of-the-century novel by Olive Higgins Prouty. While the radio sequel purportedly picked up where the celluloid left off, the indomitable Ms. Prouty found little to her liking in the Frank and Anne Hummert-produced broadcast series.

Prouty's novel focused on a crude but benevolent mother who felt she must suppress her attachment with her daughter for the child to realize fulfillment. Bowing gently before her unkind fate while in print, in radio she became a tough old bird who wouldn't have bowed before the sultan of Siberia. As heard on the air — where sex triangles involving philandering husbands, willing secretaries and aggrieved wives eventually waned. Taking a backseat to more formidable fare such as exposing miscreants of diverse persuasions — Stella Dallas soon became a supersleuth. After the series ended, Elstner confessed that the most notable line she uttered during the long run, to her beloved daughter, Laurel was: "Lolly-Baby, I ain't got no time for nothin' but trouble!"

Ostensibly, Stella — the attractive daughter of an indigent farm hand — earned a living as a seamstress, and never went hungry. Still, in the quarter-hour peeks radio allowed into her world, she depended upon a needle and thread about as often as rancher Sky King drove a herd of cattle to the railroad.

In the soap opera story line, ravishingly gorgeous Lolly-Baby (Stella's pet name for her daughter), while terminally scatterbrained, became the object of lecherous villains. They desperately sought her hand (and, presumably, the rest of her body), and could only be secured by the indefatigable Stella, who — once on their trail — never let go until they were rendered immobile. While Laurel had the good fortune to marry "into wealth and society," according to the drama's epigraph, Stella purportedly, "realizing the difference in their tastes and worlds, went out of Laurel's life." But not very far. Had she done so, as Ms. Prouty obviously might have envisioned, the dialogue would have soon dried up and everybody would have been unemployed.

Instead, Lolly picked a rising young investment banker, Dick Grosvenor, to wed. While he came without prejudice, he didn't arrive without strings, in the form of a snooty, holier-than-thou, aristocratic mother. She vowed to stop at nothing to separate them all from the earthy Stella. Stella's acts of humankindness, while well intended, were diminished — according to Mrs. Grosvenor — by her sheer lack of education, giving any association with "her kind" a bad name.

Into this bad blood among mothers-in-law and outside villains still another diversion existed in the form of yet another woman who was off her rocker. This one, however, had been declared legally insane, so whatever the wealthy Ada Dexter (correctly referred to daily as "Mad Ada") did surprised no one. If she had it in for a character (and she didn't limit her pickings to Stella), life and limb were not sacred under her surveillance. She was a force to be reckoned with, and you didn't do it wearing kid gloves.

What a trio of nonsensical figures! It should really come as no surprise, then, that the best-remembered sequence fans have from the series' long run resulted when Stella trailed a scoundrel posing as the sheik of an unnamed Middle Eastern culture. She pursued him to retrieve a stolen Egyptian mummy, plus her Lolly-Baby who had been — quite believably — installed into his harem with live performances daily. In getting there Stella had to save a crowd stranded in a train wreck, ford the Suez Canal via a submarine, then cross the Sahara, braving sandstorms and surviving nonpassionate attacks by bands of desert nomads. No mother ever went to greater lengths to fetch an offspring who had the misfortune of getting in some half-crazed maniac's way.

Minnie Grady, who owned the Boston rooming house where Stella lived following her break-up with husband Stephen Dallas, became a confidante, sharing her innermost secrets. At infrequent opportune moments, Stephen, an international government agent, resurfaced, seldom more than in some superficial way. He was busy taking care of business, enriching himself on the way up, never seriously caring for Stella or Laurel. That is, until the series was about to leave the air, when he again showed up making noises like he'd like to give matrimony another try. He and Stella became targets of yet another deranged figure who vowed to kill them both. While Raymond Wylie was unable to complete his mission, and Stella and Stephen never got to the alter a second time, listeners were left hoping that the New

England seamstress would have happier days in the years that were to be.

Stella Dallas arrived on NBC Red (forerunner of NBC) June 6, 1938, remaining at NBC in its 4:15 p.m. ET quarter-hour until it was canceled Dec. 30, 1955. For all of those years except the final one, when it was sold to participating sponsors and sustained by the networks, it was carried by Sterling Drugs. Among Sterling's most frequently advertised products were Astring-O-Sol mouthwash, Double Danderine shampoo, Haley's M-O mineral emulsion oil laxative, Lyons toothpaste and Dr. Lyons tooth powder and many other remedies.

Louisiana-born Anne Elstner, who played Stella throughout the run, debuted on radio in 1930 as Cracker Gaddis in an NBC Red Sunday afternoon series, *Moonshine and Honeysuckle.* Soon afterward, roles began to come her way regularly. Her acting credits included parts in *Cindy and Sam, Trouble House, Tish, Wilderness Road, The Gibson Family, Just Plain Bill, Maverick Jim, Brenda Curtis, Heartthrobs of the Hills, The Fat Man, Great Plays, Pages of Romance, The March of Time* and *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons.* At one point she claimed to be appearing on 10 radio shows in a single day.

After *Stella Dallas* left the air, Elstner often guested on celebrity talk shows, once stumping the panel of TV's *To Tell the Truth.* Meanwhile, she and her husband purchased a restaurant at Lambertville, N.J. They obtained permission to call it Stella Dallas' River Edge Restaurant and the proprietress welcomed guests personally, offering some *Dallas* dialogue upon request. Anne Elstner died Jan, 29, 1981 at the age of 82.

The part of Laurel Dallas was originally played by Jane Hathaway, heroine of *Amanda of Honeymoon Hill.* She was succeeded as Laurel by Vivian Smolen, radio's *Our Gal Sunday.*

Seven actors played the part of Dick Grosvenor, Laurel's husband.

While the *Dallas* series was contrived madness, and all of it was too far-fetched to be believed, it may have been such a departure from reality that endeared the late afternoon drama to homemakers for so long. When Stella had "nothin' but trouble," it was the kind that no one had to take very seriously, unlike the emotional trauma swirling about so many of its contemporaries.

Cantor's in the Money Now!

by B. F. Wilson

(Continued from the November IP)

One sad, Autumn day in the year of 1929, he was aroused from a sound sleep by his broker to be tersely informed that his million had gone. Everything was swept away.

Again he found himself unable to sleep at nights. But this time for an entirely opposite reason. In the long weary hours of tossing and worry, suddenly, the thought came to him: "I'm caught short!" That started his natural vein of optimism working again. "That's a swell title for a book! Caught Short! I'll write it!"

He wrote the book, and his name was on every lip in Manhattan. "Have you heard Cantor's latest quip about the stock market crash?" people asked all over the town.

In his first broadcast on the air Eddie decided to use all his comic talent in an effort to cheer the public. The word for hard times had become a national phrase. Depression. Eddie started his famous presidential campaign, and soon millions of people all over the United States were familiar with his self-made political slogan — "We want Cantor." He kidded everybody and everything. Politics. Graft. Governmental fallacies. Prohibition. Public problems. Nothing was sacred. And the country kept laughing. Week after week, despite bank closings. threats of civil revolutions, unemployment, stock exchange scandals, a new hope brought about by laughter and the spreading of the gospel truth of not taking life too seriously, swept over the air.

He made a lot of money in his first Chase & Sanborn broadcasting contract. In the second, he made still more. He returned to Hollywood to make more pictures. His *Kid from Spain* earned well over a million dollars, and brought him new laurels not only in this country, but in Europe.

In November of 1933, Eddie returned after an absence of several months. His new contract with Chase & Sanborn is a honey. He gets six thousand dollars each week for one hour's broadcast every Sunday night. The engagement is for seventeen weeks, and is elastic in that he can cut in and out on time with a two weeks notice to the sponsors. So far, no other radio attraction can equal him in popularity save, President Roosevelt, and Eddie's enthusiasm concerning the President as top man of radio is unbounded. Eddie has had many conferences with

the President and often goes over his own programs and radio efforts with him. One of the interesting phases of Eddie's visits to the White House lies in the story of how absorbed both the President and Mrs. Roosevelt were in his narrative of his early days. They listened and were enthralled with the tales of Eddie's boyhood career.

Eddie told them the story of one night, not many years ago when the Friars, a famous theatrical organization, gave Eddie a banquet. Will Rogers, to the surprise of the members, requested that he be allowed the honor of acting as toastmaster. Will's daily life is hounded by similar organizations with requests of exactly this nature. For him to come forward and volunteer his services, struck the club dumb with astonishment.

Rogers got up to speak, and his first words took everyone by surprise. Will told of the opening night of the Ziegfeld Follies back in 1947. It was Eddie's first big theatrical chance. After the curtain, everyone crowded around him with congratulations. Will followed the little comedian to his dressing-room, and instead of finding him prancing around with glee and happiness at his own success, he discovered him bent double with grief and crying as if his heart would break.

I finally managed to get out of him the real reason why he was crying. All his life he had hoped and prayed for an opportunity to show Grandma Esther the real merit of the boy she had brought up. He had longed for a chance to shower her with material comfort in her old age — to return with everything that money could buy, some of the benefits he had received from her. But it was too late. She died before Eddie became a big name in the profession.

"That's why I wanted to be toastmaster," said Will Rogers and he himself felt the tears streaming down his face at the memory.

There is one sentence which Eddie carries in red-letter figures on his mind. "Remember," Ida cautioned him just once when he had climbed so fast to the top that they were both dizzy. "Remember this, Eddie no matter how swell you get, your hat must always fit the head of the little boy on Henry Street!" And among the thousands and thousands of people Eddie knows from every walk of life, the consensus of opinion is that it still does!

(Reprinted from Radioland - April, 1934)

Two Gems from "QUIET, PLEASE"

by Rex E. Ward

It was, perhaps, the most unique dramatic radio program ever broadcast. I started listening to *Quiet, Please* in the autumn of 1948, and stayed with it every Sunday afternoon thereafter, until it was discontinued in the spring of 1949. It had been on the air for some time before I discovered it, so I missed a lot of good stories, but I fondly remember such titles as, "Adam and the Darkest Day" — with its play on the words "Adam" and "Atom" — "The Venetian Blind Man" — was he a seller of Venetian blinds, or was he a man from Venice, Italy who could not see? — "Where Do You Get Your Ideas?" — about a writer who got his ideas in bars from people who just happened to be Martians — "The Oldest Man in the World" — concerning a Cro-Magnon or Neanderthal man who still lived in a remote cave in the mountains between Spain and France — and the brooding mood-piece, "Dark Rosaleen."

There are no hard and fast limits on the time-periods to which the word "nostalgia" applies. But those of us who read this magazine would probably agree that the heart of OUR nostalgia — whether with regard to pulp magazines, comic books, radio programs, movie serials, or whatever — is to be found somewhere between the early 1930s and the late 1940s or the early 1950s. *Quiet, Please* falls into this period, the latter portion of which I sometimes refer to as "the final phase of the world's last Golden Age." Because it does and because of its own special merits, it deserves to be honored.

Willis Cooper, the writer-director of the program, had, on the one hand, an outlandish sense of humor and a mastery of the grotesque, which served him well in the scripts he had written for Arch Oboler's *Lights Out* — and, on the other hand, a solemn streak which permitted him to express the most profound and finely-felt emotions. Two stories examined in this article will illuminate both sides of Cooper's coin of talent.

Earnest Chappell, the narrator of *Quiet, Please*, sometimes identified by the announcer at the end of the program as the "man who spoke to you," possessed an exceptionally smooth and adaptable voice. He could do wonders with any role Willis Cooper might write for him. "Quiet, please," he would say, to begin each episode, and after several seconds of dead air, during which time some radio listeners could conceivably have slid their dials past the station and thus missed the program, he would repeat the words, "quiet, please."

Then came the famous contemplative theme from the second movement of the Cesar Franck D-minor Symphony, played by the program's musician, Albert Berman, on a piano-organ, or whatever such musical instrument existed at that time.

Most of the stories were plotless, and they followed no pattern — and therein rested much of their charm. Willis Cooper once remarked that he was able to write as he did only because he was his own director. The first-person narrative form, which relied very little on sound or musical effects, was the perfect vehicle for Ernest Chappell, whose role was always dominant, and who used that remarkable voice of his, now restrained, now impassioned, to communicate to the listener the words and thoughts so carefully chosen by Willis Cooper.

When *Quiet, Please* left the air, Cooper announced that he was going to write the scripts for the television version of *FuManchu.* I watched and waited, but never saw *FuManchu* on television — though recently I heard that such a series did exist in the early 1950s. I don't know how I missed it, but considering the nature of television, it is probably just as well that I did.

As for Ernest Chappell, I wondered many times how his physical appearance would correspond to his outstanding voice, but it was not until several years later that I finally saw him, on a television commercial for Pall Mall cigarettes. He was a heavy-set man, whose features did not lend themselves to description. His only line was, "And, they are mild." Yet, even in those four words, there was a trace — just the barest trace, mind you — of his old vocal magic.

"THE THING ON THE FOURBLE BOARD"
This story illustrates perfectly the meaning of the term "the suitable surroundings" (used by Ambrose Bierce as the title of one of his most frightening tales). Could there be a more appropriate setting for a horror story than a deserted oil field, with its derricks thrusting their skeleton shapes against the night sky, and-something-lurking in the darkness?

Porky, a retired oil field worker, begins his narrative by speaking to a silent guest in his home. The guest of course, is "you," or "us," the listener(s). Porky is now living quietly with his wife Maxine, who prefers the name Mike, and who, being a little deaf, does not hear Porky's call to come out and meet his visitor.

The story Porky tells took place some 20 years earlier, or in the late 1920s. Porky gives a little speech about the fascination of oil drilling, and adds that he doubts if an oil man ever lived who didn't wonder, at one time or another, what was down there so deep (three miles was the limit at the time of his speaking) besides rock and gas and oil — oil made out of trees that died 20 million years ago, oil made out of dinosaur bones, or maybe the bones of men who clubbed each other and ate saber-toothed tigers for lunch. Porky's dissertation on the details of oil field work need not concern us here, but it proves that Willis Cooper was either very familiar with such work, or that he put many hours of research to good use.

"We found something once," Porky says, "me and Billy Gruenwold. And — something found us."

Porky is all alone — his story continues — at the oil rig. The rest of the crew has gone into town for the night. As he is roasting pork chops over a forge, a car drives up, and Billy Gruenwold, the geologist, joins him on the derrick floor. Though late, Billy wants to examine the core, or sample, which the drill pipes have brought up from the depths so that he can determine the sort of material the pipes have now reached. Porky talks him into having something to eat first, and when Billy announces he has a bottle in the car, they anticipate a real banquet, while the gloom presses in on them and the derrick's wooden skeleton looms above them. But as they eat, Billy begins to show signs of uneasiness. He thinks he hears a sound close by. Porky assures him they are entirely alone, unless there is a screech owl around somewhere. A little badinage follows. It is agreed that while Porky would like to know what is down there deep in the earth, he is too fat to go sliding down a drill pipe to find out, and as for Billy, he is perfectly content to stay on the surface and look at cores. Billy reveals that he has had a life-long fear of the dark. Instead of shaming him, Porky admits that his own special fear is of spiders. Billy starts to get the core he came to examine, but hesitates when he thinks he has heard another sound. His nervousness increases. He sends Porky out to the car to fetch the bottle, and, alone, he turns the ray of his flashlight up toward the fourble board. (It is explained that the fourble board is the narrow platform which runs around the outside of an oil derrick, about halfway up, and which provides a place for the storage of drill pipes.) The light shows nothing except the usual stand of pipes. But a few moments later, when Porky returns with the bottle, Billy suddenly lets out a shriek. "Yike!"

He has found, in a core, a carved and filigreed ring — a ring from a mile beneath the earth and a million years ago in time. And right alongside the place where Billy had dug out the ring, Porky sees a mud covered, but very recognizable, finger. It is cold, heavy, and feels like solid rock. When they try to scrape the mud off the finger, it disappears from sight. They drop it in horror, and

can't find it again on the derrick floor. So they take the bottle and, between them finish it in a few gulps. As Porky puts it, "It was bathtub gin, and it tasted like so much well water."

After that, they just sit and stare wordlessly at each other, until Porky becomes drowsy. He thinks he hears a sound coming down from the fourble board 80 feet above. He falls asleep, and has nightmares about spiders and about Billy Gruenwold climbing up the ladder on the outside of the derrick to the fourble board. There is a terrible scream, and a thump beside him. He jerks awake, and sees the body of Billy Gruenwold on the derrick floor. The body has a broken neck. Billy had placed the ring on his little finger. Now both the ring and his finger are gone.

Porky runs to Billy's car, gets inside and tries to start it, but can't get it going. So he sits there and shivers till dawn breaks.

The work crew arrives and learns what has happened. Soon a policeman comes. The policeman is suspicious, and thinks Porky has done Billy Gruenwold in. But Ted, the foreman of the crew, insists that Porky is innocent and that the whole thing was an accident. Eventually the policeman leaves. Work resumes. Ted tells Porky to go up on the fourble board. Porky is very hesitant, but Ted informs him that he is getting paid to do what he is told to do, so Porky reluctantly obeys.

On the fourble board, he sees nothing except the stand of pipes. He starts to do his job, moving the traveling block, which weighs two tons, into position. Suddenly, the cable supporting the traveling block snaps before his eyes, and the block falls — and lands right on Ted. "If you have any ideas," Porky says, "about what a man looks like when he's been hit with two tons of metal dropped from 80 feet up, you keep your ideas to yourself."

The crew quits. There will be no more work done here. Ted had been footing the bills, and now there is no more money. Everybody goes away. Alone Porky remembers how the cable had broken before his very eyes, as if invisible fingers had snapped it. He says, "You know what? There WAS something up there on that fourble board with me.

A few days later, Porky comes back. "Is there anything in the world as desolate, as dismal, as dead-looking as an abandoned oil rig?" As he steps onto the derrick floor he hears a clink, and looks down to see the ring Billy Gruenwold had dug out from the core. It had fallen, or been thrown, from the fourble board.

A sound like the whining of a child reaches his ears. It is coming from above him. He takes a revolver and climbs up to the fourble board. He sees nothing, but continues to hear the whining voice, now close by. He fires several shots, but the whining voice is not stilled. Suddenly, whatever it is on the fourble board with him knocks over the stand of drill pipes, and Porky is barely able to jump out of the way. He almost trips on a can of red lead, which he picks up and hurls at the sound of the whining voice. As the red paint runs down over the invisible shape, he stares in horror at a little-girl face, a hand with a finger missing, and a body so hideous it reminds him of a nightmarish fear of spiders. And he knows it came from the bowels of the earth, riding up the drill pipe into an alien world. And it is lost and terrified. As it stands there, dripping wet paint, it reaches out and puts its hand on Porky's arm. The hand is stone — living, moving stone. It's eyes look into Porky's and it continues to mew like a homeless kitten.

"That was 20 years ago," Porky says to his silent guest. "I've learned many things about it since then. That it's deaf, that it's invisible and can't see, unless it's smeared with grease paint, or paint of some sort, so that it can be seen, and then it can see. I don't like to think of its body — I dream about that in my nightmares. But its face — that pathetic little-girl face. I'm afraid maybe I've fallen — it's very beautiful when made up — but oh, making it up, rubbing grease paint on a stone face that looks at you and makes sounds like a lost kitten, yet, I can disguise the body in long dresses. And I found out what she likes to eat — so when she's hungry, I stay out of her way."

Suddenly Porky becomes animated. "Sit still! Sit still, do, or I'll have to shoot you! I want you to meet my wife. Or rather my wife wants to meet you. Mike! Mike!

There is a heavy step, like one made by a stone foot. A whining sound reaches our ears. "There she is," Porky says. "Come on in, dear," And then we hear the theme from the second movement of the Franck Symphony.

Sometimes, when Ernest Chappell would introduce Willis Cooper at the end of the program, so that the writer-director could say a few words, usually about next week's story, there seemed to be a note of surpressed amusement in their voices, as if they were sharing some inside joke they could not reveal on the air — after which, Ernest Chappell would give his usual sign-off, "I am quietly yours, Ernest Chappell."

"AND JEANNIE DREAMS OF ME"

If poetry is read when the mood is not right, it can fall flat, can even seem ridiculous or embarrassing. The

same poetry, read when the mood is right, can be extremely effective and moving. So it was with the writing of Willis Cooper, which sometimes possessed an almost poetic quality. Let Ernest Chappell set the mood for this story:

"Do you dream, friend? I know a man who remembers a road from his dream, a pleasant country road that winds its dusty way past broad smiling fields and along the skirts of a lofty green forest, a road that speaks to him of memories unremembered, a road that promises and beckons on over the next hillside, and wavers and fades and vanishes in the cold darkness as he opens his eyes, and comes again another night to soothe his spirit so that he smiles in his sleep, and wakes to weep silent and alone for his lost dream. Do you dream of long-forgotten friends, or a hillside under the clouds, of an island in a sunlit sea? Do you know the desperate longing to return to the dream-place, the hopeless nostalgia for the world that lies beyond the curtain of sleep? And do you ever return ? Listen to me, for perhaps we are kin."

The narrator, whose first name is Troy. begins his story by telling us that he has always had a recurring dream, in which he sees himself walking up a pathway toward a high house surrounded by trees. "There were always the trees — the tall great oaks and the solemn cypresses, the distant weeping willows and the holly trees beside the pathway spreading their sturdy arms, flaunting their green and red in the twilight." Always as he hurries up the long pathway toward the tall white house, he hears music.

When he is about ten years old, he tells his mother of his dream, and asks her to identify the music. He picks it out on the piano, and recognizes the famous Foster song, "Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair," which she has never played for him. He tells his mother that in the dream he must open the door of the house, because somebody is waiting inside who wants to see him. His mother asks him how he knows this, and he simply says that he knows. "Who wants to see you?" his mother asks, and he replies, "Maybe it's Jeannie." Troy's mother is bewildered by this talk of his dream, and when he asks her if she can give him a key to open the door of the house in his dream, she is rather alarmed. "Of course not," his mother says. "You can't take a key into your dreams." Troy then shows her a piece of holly which he brought back from his dreams with him — an indication that his dream does, indeed, have some kind of reality. The result is that Troy's mother takes him to a doctor. The doctor prescribes plenty of fresh air and wholesome food. After that, the dream does not come for a while, or appears only vaguely. But when Troy sleeps, he hears the Foster melody, and is filled with a sense of despair, because he knows he cannot unlock the door of the house in his dream, the tall white house surrounded by the trees, where Jeannie, his beloved, waits for him.

Years pass. The dream comes and goes. The Second World War arrives. Troy's mother falls ill. Her illness is made worse by her knowledge that just as her husband had been taken from her by the previous war, so, now, will her son have to go fight in this one? A night comes when Troy is sitting by his dying mother's bedside. It seems he has fallen asleep. He hears someone calling his name. "Troy." and he answers, not with the name of his mother, but with another name. "Jeannie."

At this point, Willis Cooper proves that when the occasion demands, he can, indeed, use musical effects with great success. For in the background, very quietly, Albert Berman begins to play, on his piano-organ, the first few notes of the Liebestod, or Love-Death, from Wagner's Tristan and Isolde. The full theme is never heard, only the first few notes played over and over again, while above them Ernest Chappell, in his best impassioned voice, reads Cooper's flowing prose: "And magically, the darkness dissolved, and behind me were the trees of the park, the tall oaks with the mistletoe clutching at their lofty branches, the distant weeping willows, and the glossy holly trees. And I stood on the majestic porch of the white house, before the great door — and there was a key in the lock. I do not think my hand trembled as I turned the key and opened the great door that led beyond my dream. And she was there."

Jeannie speaks to him. "You found the key at last, didn't you Troy? I've been dreaming of you so long darling." And while the Liebestod continues in the background, Jeannie explains. When she was a little girl, she had dreamed of Troy also. She explains that everytime Troy had dreamed of her, she had dreamed of him. She dreamed of him the time he brought the holly branch back to his mother, and all the times he could not open the door because he did not have the key. She tells him she had watched him in her dreams all these years, wanting him to find the key. And at last he has found it. "But now that we are together, what will we do?" Troy asks. "This is a dream." "Is it?" Jeannie says. "Your other life was a dream to me."

She begs him to stay with her, and tells him that they could walk through the woods every day, and that she knows secret places they could have as their own. He says he would like to stay with her but cannot, because his mother is ill and needs him. "Your mother is dead, Troy." Jeannie informs him. "How else do you think you found the key?" The Liebestod comes to a halt on a organ sting. Troy awakens, and gazes at the dead body

of his mother on her bed. As he stands up, an object falls from his lap. It is a great old brass key, the same one he had last seen in the door of Jeannie's house.

(Some historians like to evaluate the artistic production of 40 or 50, or more years ago, by what they regard as the "superior' standards of the present age. In so doing, they are occasionally led to the conclusion that the artists of yesteryear were crude or naive, and almost seem to hold it against them that they did not create works more agreeable to future generations. This of course, is absurd, especially in the field of popular fiction where the writers were trying only to appeal to the tastes of their own time. Historians who are so inclined might criticize Willis Cooper for drawing out on a blackboard, so to speak, the fact that Troy was unable to find love with another woman — even a "dream-girl" — until he was completely free of his mother and her influence over him. Others might consider as a too-obvious trick Cooper's use of the Love-Death music at the time in his story when love and death were intermingling. Yet it remains my firm opinion that in this scene Willis Cooper achieved an emotional impact unequaled in dramatic radio.)

On the day his mother is buried, Troy is drafted into the army, and he doesn't dream of Jeannie again for some time. Then one night, in a training camp in Tennessee, he wonders, as he falls off to sleep if Jeannie is dreaming of him — and suddenly there he is once more in his dream, walking up the curved path to the great house, holding the brass key in his hand. He opens the door and is greeted by Jeannie, who excitedly tells him to go away. He cannot understand, until abruptly he awakens in his tent and rolls to one side just in time to avoid a run-away tank which would have crushed him had he not been warned by Jeannie in the dream.

He does not dream of Jeannie again for a long time. When next he does, he is in North Africa. As he enters the dream-world, Jeannie tells him she has been dreaming of him all the while. She says she has good news for him. He will be able to stay with her from this moment on. He will not have to go back to the other world with its terrible war. If he does go back, she warns, he will suffer an accident the next day which will cost him his leg. But all he needs to do is stay there with her. He wants to return to where his duty lies. But he also wants to stay with Jeannie — and he does stay. And he lives with Jeannie in happiness, and the great lawn is green, and the scent of magnolias is cloying. Sometimes Jeannie tells him her dreams of his lying in a hospital bed, with nurses talking about how he raves and must be given frequent injections of morphine for pain. But his life with Jeannie continues. As he puts it:

And so the long days and peaceful nights went by, while in another world men fought and murdered each other, had no thought of another world that might be a world of dreams — and then might not be. For which is the REAL one? I found myself as the endless days and nights went by wondering, and secretly wishing for the other world I had left behind for my dream of Jeannie. I watched the sun set in magnificence beyond the rolling forest-clad hills, and I thought of another sunset, the sunset at the end of a dusty, grubby city street, with smoke griming the tawdry buildings — and I knew home-sickness. I thought of a sunset past a frozen lake in wintertime, and the long shadows on the snow, and the shouts of gay youngsters, and in my mind's eye I saw a man standing, watching the skaters on the lake, a man with stooped shoulders, a thin beaten man with a crutch instead of a right leg — and my heart turned over within me. I thought of the goodness of pain, and the happy bitterness other men might know, and of work, harsh straining labor, and the good tiredness that comes at night-fall. And again, of a bed in a hospital somewhere, and doctors puzzling over a man who had slept for five years or more, while I pleasured myself in a country of dreams and knew the love of Jeannie. And heartily I wished myself away from the peace and contentment — and love.

Jeannie says she will let him go for as long as he pleases. But she tells him to leave the key in the door, and it will be there whenever he wants to come back. And she assures him that he WILL come back.

Troy awakes to intolerable pain, in a hospital bed with doctors surrounding him. As he looks down, he sees that his right leg is gone. The doctors tell him they will send him to another city, to a great specialist who will make him well. His spirits rise, because now it looks as if he can be his own man forever.

And Jeannie? Yes. he thinks of her as he boards the plane, for his first trip by air, which will take him to the distant city where he will be treated by the specialist. He sits in a front row seat. Soon the drone of the engine makes him sleepy. He dozes off. And again he is in the DREAM.

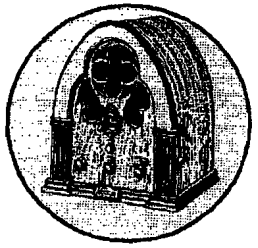
He sees the trees and the tall white house. He goes up the path, and notices that the key is still in the lock. He opens the door and calls, "Jeannie!" He finds her sprawled at the bottom of the staircase, her eyes closed. He hurries to her and takes her into his arms, continuing to call her name. She can hardly speak, but she is trying to warn him. Something about a door, and a man named McClintock. "Don't go near the door," she gasps. "Don't go near McClintock — or I'll never see you again.

The scene wavers before Troy's eyes, and suddenly he awakens when there is a sound like thunder. "And I am here, sitting in the front seat in an airplane full of people. What did she mean? I thought. And as the lighted sign above the door flashes on — FASTEN SEAT BELTS — I glance at the other little signs on the wall in front of me. Stewardess, somebody, Second Officer, Harry somebody, Pilot, William J. McClintock, And the ship is moving strangely now. We're going down fast. Must be coming in for a landing. But the door. That's where the pilots are, where McClintock is. Smoke is coming out from under the door." And then we hear the theme from the second movement from the Franck Symphony.

At the end of this program there was no sense of any inside joke being secretly shared by Willis Cooper and Ernest Chappell. A respectful and subdued note tinged the announcer's words of thanks to "Mr. Chappell." One suspected that all the persons involved in this production realized they had had a hand in a genuine masterpiece. When Willis Cooper came on the air, he said only, "Thank you for listening to *Quiet, Please,*" and named next week's story and there was no suppressed amusement in Ernest Chappell's voice as he gave his usual sign-off, "I am quietly yours, Ernest Chappell."

The future of dramatic radio is, to put it kindly, practically non-existent. Dramatic radio collapsed in the early 1950s, though a few long standing favorites such as the *Lone Ranger* and *One Man's Family,* managed to hang on for several more years. The re-broadcasts of *The Shadow, The Green Hornet* and *Sherlock Holmes,* which began in 1964, and resulted over the next few years, in re-runs of many old time radio shows, did little to stimulate any widespread interest in the return of original dramatic radio, but succeeded only because they represented themselves as being nothing more than what they actually were — namely, relics of the past. The *CBS Mystery Theater,* in spite of its creaking door, and a few good attempts, simply could not recapture the old magic, any more than the present-day comic magazines can recapture, or even reflect, the magic of the Golden Age comic books. The examples of radio drama which I have heard on National Public Radio have not, in my opinion, amounted to much — except for an adaptation of "Frankenstein," notable for its close resemblance to the Shelley novel.

I think it is safe to say, then, that radio will not again present a horror story as terrifying as "The Thing on the Fourble Board," or a romantic fantasy as moving as "And Jeannie Dreams of Me." And I am very sure that there will never be another dramatic radio program as great or as different, as *Quiet, Please.*"



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