

A DR. JANE

ROMANCE

英国文学

# CALLING DR. JANE

ADELINE McELFRESH



*Should Dr. Jane abandon  
her patients to follow the man she  
loved across half the world?*

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# CALLING DR. JANE

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ADELINE McELFRESH



*This low-priced Bantam Book  
has been completely reset in a type face  
designed for easy reading, and was printed  
from new plates. It contains the complete  
text of the original hard-cover edition.  
NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.*



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DOCTOR JANE LANGFORD had won the respect of the tough, seasoned men of her profession in spite of her youth and feminine appeal. She was soon to join her brilliant young fiancé in a new, exciting foreign land.

Jane's future was bright with promise.

And then the blow fell. The town was rocked by a hideous crime. The leading druggist was murdered. Valuable drugs were missing. Dr. Paul Hamlin, Jane's trusted colleague, was implicated.

Jane herself came under suspicion. Her reputation—even her life—was in jeopardy!

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-  DR. JANE, INTERNE
-  DOCTOR JANE
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-  DR. JANE'S MISSION
-  DR. JANE COMES HOME
-  DR. JANE'S CHOICE

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CALLING DOCTOR JANE

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ADELINE McELFRESH has been a newspaperwoman for twenty years. She has served on various newspapers as feature writer, editor of the women's section and correspondent.

Miss McElfresh has always been interested in medicine. She has her own medical library, where she diligently researches material for her novels.

Adeline McElfresh has written twenty-six nurse and doctor stories, including the Dr. Jane series, which comes closest to her heart. Indeed, Miss McElfresh admits that she has always secretly admired and envied the character and career of her creation, Dr. Jane.

Her other interests include early Indian civilizations (especially the Maya), pioneer Americana and the Civil War (she's a dedicated Rebel).

Miss McElfresh lives in a rambly, nineteenth-century house in Vincennes, Indiana with her father and her kennel of thirteen dogs.

## CHAPTER 1

It was cool for September and the woolly bears augured a long, hard winter, a prediction Melvina Mason did not believe. Why, the corn shucks were thin and loose as they could be and that hornet's nest she and Dr. Jane had seen out at the farm last month had been high and dry, a sure sign of mild weather all winter. Granny could count on her fingers the times she'd seen it fail, no matter what Paul Hamlin said.

Moving the rocker into the full sunshine that was forever creeping away from her, she watched the woolly little worm undulating along the white-painted porch railing. Dr. Hamlin didn't believe in woolly bears, either, that was one good thing about him, she was thinking when Sue came out, slamming the door as usual.

"Granny, darling!" Sue let out a delighted squeal. "You look exactly as though you had bitten into a persimmon!"

"A puckery one," Paul Hamlin said. "Today Mrs. Mason isn't liking me."

"Granny doesn't like any man who's in love with Jane except Bill. Do you, darling?" Sue Latham, who was Bill's sister, pecked a kiss at Granny's wrinkled cheek.

The devilish twinkle leaped from Dr. Hamlin's dark eyes to his lips. He didn't quite smile.

"Am I?"

"Of course you are. Don't bother about being gallant, Paul. I'm fully aware I'm invited to dinner simply because Jane was called out of church and goodness knows when she'll be back."

Paul gave them the smile that Sue had said the other day she'd bet made his women patients "all goose pimplly." "Mrs. Mason," he said solemnly, "do you think I'll be safe with her? After all, I'm only a simple g. p."

Laughing, they went down the steps and out to the big, low-slung vanilla-ice-cream-colored convertible that Granny thought she'd like to see splashing through the mud when



he got a call some midnight to come down in the river bottoms. Granny wasn't sure why she didn't like Paul Hamlin, or even if she didn't, she told herself, hitching her rocker into the sunshine that was retreating again. It was just that, sometimes, like today, he aggravated her, being as smart alecky about things a body knowed was true. Land sakes, hadn't she seen 'em prove out enough to know?

Maybe Sue was right and she didn't like Dr. Hamlin because he was in love with Dr. Jane. Or because Dr. Jane might fall in love with him. Granny wasn't sure which. Africa was an awful long ways off and if she had been in Jane Langford's shoes, she would have gone ahead and married Bill Latham and gone right along with him, the way Ed Johnson wanted her to.

Granny could hear him yet, barely whispering because that was all the strength he'd had for a long time after his heart attack. "Go along with Bill, Janie." Dr. Jane would always be Janie to the Old Doctor, Granny reckoned. "Marry the boy and go with him. I'll ask Laird to try to find someone."

"We'll find someone first." Granny could hear Dr. Jane, too. "Bill and I can be married in Africa, Dr. Ed."

Well, they had found someone, finally. Or rather, Paul Hamlin had found them. Some way or some other way, Granny wasn't sure how, he had heard there was a ready-made opportunity for a bright young doctor in Halesville and he had come.

That was two months ago and still Dr. Jane hadn't gone . . .

"She's always been the puny one, Dr. Jane. Rest of the kids big, husky, healthy as young colts, all but Cynthia, poor baby. Feeling better, darling?"

The girl, thin, with a bluish tinge to her paleness, nodded. Jane smiled at her and privately wished Mrs. Peters would keep still. Or at least not run on so in Cynthia's presence. No wonder Granny Mason said, "Myrtle Peters'll talk your arm off, give her half a chance."

"I'm glad you're feeling better, Cynthia."

The girl managed a smile.

Except that the pain was gone, she probably wasn't feeling better, Jane knew. She felt wrung out, so weak it was an effort even to smile. Hearts were like that.

"She's resting easy now, Dr. Jane. Has been ever since.

But she was bad—oh, she was bad! All gaspy and white, and—”

Dr. Jane set her black bag on the big square table beside a nearly full glass of water, a hand fan that had BARNES FUNERAL HOME printed in funereal black beneath its inexpertly copied *Ecco Homo*, and a box of Kleenex. She handed the water glass to Mrs. Peters.

“Will you get Cynthia a fresh drink, please, Mrs. Peters?” Anything to get her out of the room—

“You mustn’t mind Mother, Dr. Jane,” Cynthia said when her mother had gone. “She’s scared.”

“And worried.”

Cynthia Peters nodded. “I think I almost died, Dr. Jane. I—I thought I was going to.” She paused—breathless, Jane noted; then, “I couldn’t breathe. There was this tightness, sort of, here.” She touched her chest, and Jane nodded.

“You don’t feel like that now?” she asked.

“No.”

Cynthia’s mother was returning, and from somewhere came voices, subdued, frightened and trying not to show it, as voices are when someone in a house is dangerously ill. Jane busied herself with the examination.

Temperature. Pulse. Listening to the telltale beat of Cynthia’s heart and wishing she had the girl in the hospital at Martinsburg so that they could X-ray and do an electrocardiogram. Mrs. Peters didn’t hover, and she was silent now, thank goodness for that, but she was standing board-stiff at the foot of the bed, her eyes never leaving the doctor’s face as they sought any change of expression that might tell her the worst.

As she moved the stethoscope to pick up the “drip” that might be the mitral valve not functioning as it should, Jane gave her a reassuring smile.

“She’s—is she going to be all right, Dr. Jane?”

“Of course she is,” Dr. Jane said cheerfully.

But she might not be. Always “puny,” rheumatic fever when she was seven . . .

“I’d like Dr. O’Donnell, in Martinsburg, to see her,” Jane told Mrs. Peters and her husband later, when they walked to the car with her. Dr. O’Donnell was an internist, and a good one. Jane had consulted him before.

Clem Peters nodded. “Anybody you say, Dr. Jane.”

“I’ll ask him to meet us at the hospital.”

For Cynthia was going; Jane had promised to arrange for a room and the ambulance.

She got in the car. Mustn't talk too long, Cynthia's bed was by the window, she might see them and worry—and worry she mustn't . . . "I'll see you in the morning," she promised, and drove off, waving to young Tommy, who was trudging along the lane, fishing pole on his shoulder.

The Peters farm was one of those out-of-the-way places Paul hadn't believed existed any more, miles off the ribbon of concrete that bypassed Halesville on its way to Central City. But he was learning—he was going to have to learn—that country practice was not the same as having a suite of offices in a swank Doctors' Building.

Jane frowned. She shouldn't be critical of Paul. Of course he had to get used to a small town. Even she did, and she had grown up in small towns, Halesville among them.

She slowed for a hairpin turn and then practically stopped as a small covey of quail whirred up from the grass-and-weed-grown fence row along which they had been feeding. She'd bet Paul hadn't seen many sights like that, returning from his calls in the city.

Or the broad sweep of trees and ripening corn with this narrow gravel road winding like a carelessly dropped, pale ribbon, and here and there a swatch of autumn, a red, a yellow that was like sunshine spilled all in one spot . . .

Jane smiled. Dr. Paul Hamlin, she had an idea, would hoot at such thoughts.

Halesville, sprawled in the early-afternoon sunshine that was bright on the river, appeared to be sleeping off its Sunday dinner. Not half a dozen people were astir as Jane drove along Main Street, past the grocery and the Standard station, the post office and Charley Bates's drugstore over which Clara Mae Oley, or her "relief," no doubt was catnapping at the switchboard, to the small white clapboard building that was her office and Paul's, now that Dr. Ed had given up active practice.

Inside, she called the hospital in Martinsburg, made the necessary arrangements for Cynthia Peters' admission and for Dr. O'Donnell to see the girl in the morning, and sat thinking.

How many Sunday afternoons had she spent here, at Dr. Ed's old pigeonhole desk, making out bills that, some of them, weren't paid yet and probably never would be? She had been in high school then, working Saturdays and afternoons



at Mr. Bates's drugstore; the forty cents an hour he'd paid her was just about all she'd had after Dad's funeral expenses were paid.

But she had managed. High school, college, medical school, working at everything from typing theses to coil winding to pay her way. Then interning at big, bustling City Hospital in Central City, and at the end of her internship joining the staff of the plush Randall Convalescent Hospital—because she had thought herself in love with Dr. MacAllen Randall's nephew Lance Hart.

After all these years of no time for love, she had fallen head over heels for Lance and for a few brief months the world was her oyster.

Hers and Lance's.

Then—

It was strange, she had often thought since. She had broken with Lance and yet it was Lance who had brought her happiness. Or rather, had driven her to it.

For he had taunted her into returning to Halesville. She would "bury" herself in "some dump" like the one she came from, he had flung at her . . .

Remembering, Jane rose. Granny couldn't keep dinner hot forever.

"Cynthia," the Old Doctor said thoughtfully. "She the string-bean blonde one?"

Dr. Jane nodded.

"Always thought she had a cardiac insufficiency of some kind. Never heard of any rheumatic fever, though . . . but if she's fourteen now, it would've been before they moved back here. Clem Peters heired the place five, six years ago."

The Old Doctor chewed his cigar for a while. "Didn't I see Paul squiring Sue off to dinner?"

"I expect you did. They had elegant steaks at the Martin House, Sue tells me." Jane laughed. "'Elegant' being her word for them, not mine."

Dr. Johnson chuckled. Since she had come up to stay with Bill last winter, Sue Latham had become one of his favorite people.

They were sitting on the sun porch of the big, square brick house next door to the office, watching the dusk come. It was the time of day Jane liked best; there was a hush, a quietening that she found peaceful, soothing. She leaned back in the comfortably sagging wicker rocker. The spire of



the little church where Bill had preached before he went to Africa, and where he would preach again when he returned, gleamed palely in the gathering darkness. Bill—

I miss you, darling—

“Eh? You say something, Janie?”

She almost had. “Not exactly.”

“Now what kind of an answer is that?” The Old Doctor peered at her over his glasses. “Thought you said something or other about Bill.” And after a pause, “When’re you going out there, Janie?”

“Soon.”

The Old Doctor didn’t say anything.

Jane knew what he was thinking. She should go—she should have gone when Bill went. Dr. Ed was like Granny Mason, who made no bones about it. Jane Langford’s first duty was to herself and to Bill Latham, and besides, now that Paul was here, she was free to go.

Abruptly, Jane rose.

## CHAPTER 2

Dr. Jane snapped wide-awake. The telephone was ringing as only Clara Mae Oley could ring it when someone needed a doctor in the dead of night.

“Dr. Langford,” Jane answered.

“Dave Payton Doctor Jane Mary says it’s time!”

No commas or periods for Dave Payton now. You’d think no woman ever had been about to have a baby before, as Mary had declared laughingly when he had brought her in last week for her checkup.

“I’ll meet you at the hospital, Dave.”

Jane dressed quickly, in the blue flannel suit for it was chilly at this hour, ran a comb through her short dark hair, was touching lipstick to her quick-smiling mouth when Sue came.

“I thought I heard the telephone.”

“They probably heard it next door.” Jane laughed. “I think Clara Mae thinks I’m a heavy sleeper. It’s Mary Payton’s baby. I’ll be at the hospital in Martinsburg, just in case. Tell Granny, will you, Sue?”

Sue nodded yawningly.

Padding barefoot along the hall, the pink chenille robe trailing regally, her hair tousled on end, she looked like a child playing at being grown up, Jane thought. She wasn't much more than a child, really. Going on twenty-one . . .

The hospital at Martinsburg was small compared to City Hospital in Central City where Jane had interned. But there the difference ended. Martinsburg Hospital had operating and delivery rooms that were as efficient and modern as anything at City, and Dr. Jane had developed a healthy respect for Dr. Laird that approached her feeling for her "Chief" at City, Dr. Warren.

Now, hurrying through the peach and frost-blue foyer, she smiled at Jenny Akers, the switchboard operator who at night doubled as admitting clerk.

"Is Mrs. Payton here yet?"

"Just." The girl laughed. "If you've never lost a father yet, you'd better look out for this one."

Jane laughed too. Poor Dave— She punched a button to bring the self-service elevator down to "1" and stood listening to the soft whirrr-rr, louder than usual in the nighttime quiet, as it descended. Behind her Jenny Akers said, "Switchboard!" to a call from within the hospital. And, "Just a minute, Doctor. I'll see."

As the elevator doors whisked open for her, Jane glanced at the Physicians' Call Board to see which other doctors were in the building. Andrews. Laird. Winters.

Apparently it was a busy night—

"Good morning, Dr. Jane." Mrs. Meyer, at the nurses' station on the second floor, completed a notation on somebody's chart and hung it on the rack.

Jane said good morning and hurried along the corridor and around the corner to o. b.

"Et tu, Brute?" Dr. Winters, still in his whites, said as he cradled the telephone on the nurses' station worktable.

Dr. Jane smiled. She liked this big, quiet obstetrician who looked as if he would be more at home on a football field than in a delivery room. It seemed strange that Paul didn't— She set her bag on the table, peeled off her gloves. The thin, very young wail rose again.

"Yours?"

"I wouldn't doubt," Dr. Winters admitted with a grin. "He's a lusty-lunged fellow."

He went off whistling under his breath, and Dr. Jane

washed up at the lavatory in the corner before going into the labor room to see her patient.

"Hello, Mary. Dave."

Dave Payton jumped as if he'd been shot. "Dr. Janel!"

"For goodness' sake, Dr. Jane," the girl on the bed laughed, "tell him to go get a pickle with hamburger on it, or something."

But the laughter was strained and the slender fingers were clenched until white splotched her knuckles. Jane's hand closed over them reassuringly.

"Why don't you, Dave?"

"I couldn't eat a bite."

"Coffee, then?"

Dave Payton shook his head. But he went out, walking like a man in a nightmare, which in that moment, Dr. Jane knew he was.

It was going to be a perfectly normal delivery, there was nothing to be worried about, first babies are stubborn sometimes—

Dave Payton had squinched his eyes shut tight, as if the subdued light in the corridor hurt them, and now, as she went downstairs to look in on Cynthia Peters, Dr. Jane had the fleeting thought that he hadn't heard a word she had said.

She shook her head. Mary was nineteen, Dave was twenty. Younger than Sue, both of them, and already with the responsibility of a family—

Dr. Andrews' light was off when she went through the foyer but Dr. Laird's and Dr. Winters' still were on. Jane paused at the receptionist's desk.

"What goes on?" she asked, indicating the call board.

Freckles marched merrily across Jenny's nose when she wrinkled it. "Confab. Dr. Laird is wearing that 'great-stone-face' look of his."

"At this hour? Gracious."

"I know." The girl sobered. "I think it has something to do with that emergency that came in around midnight. Miss Delman called Dr. Andrews and pretty soon he called Dr. Laird on the double. They've been huddling ever since they came out of Surgery. Dr. Andrews just left."

"Well," Jane said, and after a minute went on down the corridor.

An oxygen tank and tent stood outside Cynthia's door. Ready if they needed it, but thank goodness they hadn't.

"Good morning, Miss Lancaster."

The short, red-haired nurse was tiptoeing to reach the top shelf of the drug cabinet, and three or four of the tiny paper cups in which pills were taken to patients were lined up on the cabinet.

She turned, smiling. "Whew. Being short and dumpy may have its compensations but I don't know what they are. O. b.?"

Dr. Jane nodded and watched the nurse consult an order, drop a tiny white pill into a cup and set it on the note bearing a physician's instructions and the patient's name and room number.

"Is Cynthia Peters having a good night?"

"Not too. She's restless."

"Is she awake now?"

"She was when I looked in a few minutes ago."

More pills, two large pink ones this time. When Dr. Jane went along the hall toward Cynthia's room, Miss Lancaster was stretching to return the bottles to their high perch.

Jane stood for a moment outside Cynthia's door, listening to the not-quite utter stillness that was the hospital at night. Somewhere nearby a patient snored whistlingly. Miss Lancaster's crepe soles whispered to the cork-tiled floor as she passed with her tray of medications. From inside the room came the rustle of sheets.

Dr. Jane stepped inside. "Awake, Cynthia?"

"Yes, Dr. Jane."

It was a tremulous whisper. For all her brave front in front of her family, Cynthia was a little girl now, frightened. Jane squeezed her hand.

"Mary Payton is upstairs to have her baby," she explained, so Cynthia wouldn't add two and two and get sixteen, "and I ran down for a minute. How are you feeling?"

"Better, I guess."

"Good."

Her fingers sought the girl's pulse. Was it stronger than it had been yesterday? She was breathing free and easy now. "I'm going to ask Miss Lancaster to make you some hot cocoa to help you sleep, Cynthia. Would you like that?"

"Yes." A pause; then, "Will you be here when the other—when Dr. O'Donnell comes?"

"Before he comes," Jane promised.



Dr. Jane drove home in the mother-of-pearl, mauve-and-pink dawn. This was starting out to be one of those days, she thought, not even bothering to hide the yawn. She would snatch two or three hours' sleep, then drive back to the hospital to consult with Dr. O'Donnell about Cynthia Peters and to see her other hospital patients. In the afternoon she would keep office hours in Stewart, a village not far from Halesville, in which she and Dr. Ed had opened an office for two afternoons a week just before the Old Doctor's heart attack . . .

"It's an experiment and we may not earn our salt," the Old Doctor had said, and sometimes, at first, Jane had thought he was right. The small waiting room had remained distressingly empty, or very nearly so.

It still wasn't crowded. But it seldom was empty for long—and Paul was wrong, she thought now. Time spent there wasn't wasted.

Frowning, Dr. Jane let the car coast to a silent stop in front of the sprawling old house she had rented cattycornered from Dr. Ed Johnson's big, square brick house and its adjoining rose garden and the white clapboard building with clerestory windows that wooed light into the offices even on the drabbest day.

Not even Paul could criticize the examining rooms and the small, simply equipped operating room in which tonsilectomies and other minor surgery not requiring hospitalization frequently were performed. Dr. Jane sat for moments looking at the clinic and, when a flicker of movement caught the corner of her eye, at the Old Doctor's house.

A very early bird? Or was Dr. Ed aprowl, worrying how things had gone?

Bless his heart, Jane thought warmly. He had delivered both Dave and Mary, as well as Mary's mother, and she knew what it would have meant to him to have been able to deliver Dave's and Mary's baby . . .

Her lashes feeling strangely damp, she hurried into the house.

Dr. O'Donnell waved his sandwich to get her attention and Dr. Jane threaded her way through the crowded small restaurant across the street from the hospital to the table where he sat with Dr. Jancieski, the radiologist.

"O'Donnell on etiquette," Jancieski jeered friendlily. "Hi, Jane."