



# and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

WNU RELEASE



THE STORY THUS FAR: Jim MacTavish admits to Meg that Alicia had led him on and made a fool of him. It had seemed to amuse her. In their misery Jim and Megan are reconciled. It was a relief when neither one was called to the inquest, and they waited anxiously for Larry to return to tell them what had been found. "She was killed with a knife—which we found where old Amos saw a ghost burying it," he explained. Bob Reynolds, the detective, could find no fingerprints due to a heavy rain later. Old Amos was interviewed again to get more information on the size of the ghost, how it acted, and the exact time he saw it. Both Meg and her father were breathing easier.

### CHAPTER XIV

Annie chuckled richly. "Effen y'all had seed him w'en he come bustin' into de house dat night, Mist' Larry, y'all would a'knowed right den he'd seed plenty!" she assured him.

"We still are not quite sure about that eight-foot-high ghost with the glaring yellow eyes," Laurence told Annie, "but Reynolds is talking to Amos now, trying to see if he can't get him to scale the ghost down somewhat, so we can feel that it was human!"

He turned to Megan as Annie padded away. "It was a knife," he answered the look of questioning in her eyes, and Megan caught her breath and went white as the collar of her trim morning frock. "Bob feels sure it is—the knife."

She did not speak, but her eyes pleaded with him and Laurence went on quietly. "There's not much possibility of fingerprints. The knife was buried halfway up the hilt, and it rained later on that night, and of course, the dew is very heavy this time of the year. It was just an ordinary kitchen knife, such as any hardware store sells by the gross every year—probably every kitchen in Pleasant Grove has one or two exactly like it."

Megan was conscious that she was breathing a little more easily. She said hurriedly, lest Laurence should notice that. "Then—you aren't much better off than you were before so far as identification. Have you any suspects?"

Laurence grinned. "You should have heard Ma Stuart at the inquest," he said dryly. "According to her, there wasn't a man, woman or child in Pleasant Grove who didn't have a motive for wanting the Stevenson woman out of the way. She mentioned a few of the reasons. Some of the people mentioned resented it quite a bit, and fisticuffs were barely avoided. The search for alibis became quite intensive, but except for two or three, all were eliminated as suspects. And the evidence against the two or three is slim."

Megan touched dry lips with her tongue and steadied her voice to ask faintly, "Who—are the—ones who couldn't manage an alibi?"

"Well, the Teasley boy and his wife and baby seemed to have excellent reason for disliking Mrs. Stevenson," said Laurence reluctantly. "It seems, according to Ma Stuart, that Mrs. Stevenson made a remark that tended to discredit the legitimacy of the Teasley baby, and that Will Teasley publicly slapped her face in front of the Mercantile a week ago."

"I remember that," said Megan. "Do you?" asked Laurence quickly. "Do you remember how Mrs. Stevenson took it?"

"Well, it was pretty unpleasant, of course—but Will Teasley's a Pleasant Grove boy, and his wife has lived here all her life, except for the year she worked in town, so everybody sided with Will," Megan remembered aloud. "Alicia sort of staggered, and her face got very white, and then she laughed and said, 'What is the old-fashioned crack about a hit dog always howls loudest?' And walked away."

Laurence nodded. "That checks with Ma Stuart's testimony," he admitted.

"And finding the knife doesn't help a bit?" asked Megan. "Afraid not," admitted Laurence frankly. "Though if we can get any sort of description of Amos, about the so-called 'ghost' it might help."

He grinned at her and said, "Notice I said 'we'? I'm sort of unofficial assistant to Bob—because I know the town and the people," he explained.

A little later Bob came in, greeted Megan pleasantly, and lifted his shoulders and spread his hands palm upward in a gesture of discouragement and futility.

"I can't get anything out of that old man to save my life," he admitted. "He goes on saying 'hit wuz 'bout eight feet tall, boss—an' hit wuz all white and jes' floated 'long—and had big glaring yaller eyes like a cat—dat's all I know.'"

"I wonder what Amos had been drinking," Laurence said lightly. "Some of that 'white mule' they brew up over at Frogtown would make a fellow see pink cows and green elephants."

"That's the darndest thing of all—he swears he hadn't had a drink, and Annie backs him up," exploded Bob furiously. "I could understand his telling such a tall tale if he'd had a few shots—"

"But you did find the knife there

right where he said the 'ghost' stood. Doesn't that prove that it isn't entirely a tall tale?" protested Megan, resenting their casual assumption that Amos was a complete stranger to the truth.

"Oh, now, see here, Bob—be reasonable," Larry snapped. "If Amos had hidden the knife there, would he have told about it? Look, fella, I know Amos. He would never voluntarily go near a place like that, at night—especially with a murder on his mind. And if he had—if he had been so frightened by what he had done that that fear overrode any other—wild horses could never have made him tell a living soul about it. Look at it from a sane standpoint. If he had hidden it there, the object would have been to keep anybody from ever finding it. Why, then, would he turn right around and insist on telling me about it, and being perfectly willing to tell you? He even went with us this morning and pointed out the spot where the 'ghost' bent down. Use your head, man."

Bob grinned. "Sure—sure—lay off, pal! I only said that I don't believe



"Now, see here, Miss MacTavish, you're not going to tell me you believe in ghosts?" he protested.

in ghosts, yet I can't picture a human being eight feet tall, wrapped in a white sheet and with glaring yellow eyes doing a murder and then picking that spot to hide the weapon. In fact, I can't picture a human being eight feet tall—period! Maybe you can suggest something?"

Laurence shook his head. "It's got me licked," he admitted.

"Miss MacTavish?" suggested Bob and she had to steady herself and tell herself that she was a fool to be frightened of that question in his eyes.

"I don't believe in ghosts—but I do believe Amos' story," was all she could manage.

Bob sighed, ran his fingers through his hair, leaving it standing on end, and said helplessly. "Well, I think we're licked, too. Though we'll keep slugging away at the case, of course, hoping that something will turn up—"

"You couldn't be persuaded, of course, to accept Ma Stuart's suggestion that you just drop the whole matter, with the thought that whoever did it, did Pleasant Grove a great service?" suggested Laurence wryly.

Megan gasped. "Oh, no, Larry—did she really say that?"

"She did!" said Bob laughing. "Boy, what a character! She gave the department a going over that it hasn't had since they drafted our captain for a job in the Marine Training Camp! I would like to know that lady better—under, of course, pleasanter circumstances."

"She's really a grand person," Megan said eagerly. "Everybody loves her."

Megan hesitated and colored. "Well—Alicia liked to—stir things up," she admitted reluctantly. "I think she was very bored here, and she admitted frankly that she only came here to live because her income had shrunk, and because her money went farther here. And to keep things stirred up gave her—well, something to relieve her boredom, I suppose. She did not lie, that is, not to any great extent. She simply had a way of digging out truths that people wanted hidden and dropped them publicly where they would be most certain to stir up trouble."

"She sounds like a lady who was a self-elected candidate for a murder, at that," Bob commented.

Annie appeared at the door behind him, unobtrusive, yet obviously excited. Her eyes were rolling and her voice was high as she answered Megan's questioning look. "Dey's a lady hyah, Miss Meggie—hit's Mist' Fallon's sisteh."

Megan caught her breath and felt as though every drop of blood in her body had congealed about her heart. Her eyes were wide and frightened, and she was suddenly conscious that Bob Reynolds was watching her narrowly, an odd light in his eyes.

"Of course, Annie, I'll see her," she made herself say swiftly, then steadying her voice with an effort. "If you'll excuse me—"

But Bob Reynolds said casually, with a look in his eyes that was not at all casual, "Why not see her in here, Miss MacTavish?"

Megan looked sharply at him and said instantly, "But why? It's no doubt a personal matter—I mean it can't possibly have any connection—"

And behind Annie, Megan saw, with a feeling of shock, Martha Fallon, short, stocky, commonplace looking. Her next dark percale dress and the smoothness of her hair that was streaked with gray only emphasized the look of barely restrained terror in her eyes; just as the inept daubs of rouge and the powder that was not quite smooth only emphasized the pallor of her drawn face.

She came into the room and Annie faded out of the doorway. But Megan knew subconsciously that Annie had only slipped back a little into the shadows and that she was listening with almost visibly distended ears.

Miss Martha nodded to Megan and addressed herself to Bob, after giving Laurence a steady, straight look.

"You're the detective-fellow?" she asked Bob curtly.

"Yes, Miss Fallon—my name's Reynolds," answered Bob.

Martha nodded and said, "Well, my name's not Fallon. I'm Tom Fallon's sister-in-law, not his sister. My name's Evans—Martha Evans."

Laurence unobtrusively turned a chair towards her and she nodded her thanks and sank into it with a movement that was almost of collapse, as though her knees were shaking violently, and she was very glad of the support the chair gave her.

"So you found it," she said when she had drawn a deep breath and Megan, sick with pity and bewilderment, saw the work-roughened hands gripped so tightly together that the knuckles were small white mounds.

Bob said gently, "Found what, Miss Evans?"

She looked up at him so sharply that the sunlight fell harshly on the round lenses of her old-fashioned spectacles and she made a sound that was half a snort, half a sniff of contempt.

"The knife, of course," she answered curtly.

Bob made a short, swiftly controlled movement, but his face was guarded, so that only if you had been watching him closely could you have noticed that involuntary start of surprise.

"Suppose you tell us about the knife, Miss Evans," Bob said gently.

Miss Martha nodded. "What else do you think I came here for?" she sniffed, and abruptly she added, "Only the Stevenson woman wasn't killed with that knife, young man."

"No?" asked Bob very swiftly, very politely, almost as though his interest had been too casual to make the statement of any importance.

"No!" the word came explosively. "Then why was it necessary to hide it so—er—melodramatically?" wondered Bob aloud.

Miss Martha breathed deeply and with difficulty.

"Because," she told him—and Megan's eyes were thick with tears for the stark agony that shone so clearly in the tired, faded eyes behind those old-fashioned spectacles—"because—my sister is a—mental case," she managed at last.

Bob waited.

Laurence was very still, watching Miss Martha, his arms folded across his chest, leaning against the big old-fashioned roltop desk where Megan kept her accounts and books.

Megan was on the very edge of her chair, her body tense and still, almost rigid, as she watched Miss Martha; and so deep, so intense was her pity and her sympathy that her own body felt some of the suffering that stood forth so starkly in Miss Martha's tired eyes.

"You mean," said Bob, after a moment designed to give Miss Martha a respite so that she could breathe again, "that your sister was not accountable for her actions—"

"I mean, young man, that my sister—had periods of lucidity," she said harshly. "But Tom, her husband, didn't know that those periods were coming less frequently and lasting for shorter periods of time. I couldn't bear to tell him; he thought, poor soul, that she was getting better—that there was hope for her. But I didn't deceive myself. Even if I had wanted to—her attack on me one night—" Her voice broke and her face worked convulsively, but she did not lower her head, nor make any effort to hide her face from them.

Megan said quietly, "That night you fell and hurt your ankle?"

## NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

### MARK-UP OF FOREIGN MONIES COMPLICATES OUR PROBLEMS

WASHINGTON.—The Swedes have made the krona more costly to us. It is worth 27 cents plus, now, instead of 23 cents plus. The Canadians did the same thing. Their dollar has been marked equal to ours, instead of 90 cents, as formerly. To whatever extent the rest of the world follows suit, its money will go up in value and ours will go down. Theoretically it can buy more goods here, but only theoretically, because actually our prices have gone up more than the 10 per cent increased value of the foreign currencies.

An item from South Africa tells the inside tale. It says American goods were being bought there in quantities hitherto unknown—until the OPA price ceilings went off, but since then purchases have been limited. Do we want them to fill their shops with goods (as they report) when we are short? Well, we want to increase our world trade. But can we do this with shortages? Of such considerations is the character of our confusion.

Really it is worse. Today we are proving we can have inflation with a balanced budget.

### BIGGEST PEACETIME BUDGET

The main business of this adjourned congress has been its least widely reported aspect. It was charged with appropriating money for Mr. Truman's unprecedented peacetime budget of nearly \$40,000,000,000. The house trimmed sharply but the senate put most of the money back in the bills, as is the custom. In the end Mr. Truman will get appropriations for this peacetime fiscal year (which began July 1) that are roughly four times and more, greater than what Mr. Roosevelt ever spent. The highest Roosevelt expenditures in prewar was \$9,665,000,000 in 1940, when he took in nearly \$6,000,000,000. In his whole administration he roughly took in half of what he spent, which was thought to be inflationary, although it never got prices up. The spending is largely for army and navy, along with increases in peacetime activities of government.

However, Mr. Truman is approaching a balanced budget at this spending level. Wartime taxes have not been reduced materially, for fear of the big debt, so he will take in this year around or upwards of \$35,000,000,000. (Retiring Budget Director Smith calculated the figure at \$39,500,000,000, which is \$8,000,000,000 more than the January budget estimated.) Agitation thus has begun here for a tax reduction, but some authorities want to retire the debt instead. In the war we roughly took in half what was spent, or about \$46,400,000,000 in 1945, while spending \$100,400,000,000.

### INFLATION IS HERE

In the face of this promised stability for the first time in 16 years, we have inflation. It is a real inflation, due to a shortage of goods in the presence of widespread buying power. The administration has figured it would stop the inflation as soon as it obtained production, but we are not getting production, and business estimates it will be three to five years before it can take care of accumulated demand, not calculating the increase in consumer demand which has developed from the presence of widespread buying power. To add to the deterrents of strikes, slowdowns, governmental mismanagement, famine relief, the absence of a foreign trade policy, cheapening money, sensationally high prices and no real peace, along with pitifully insufficient production—the OPA was sharply modified ahead of time.

Can we get out of it? Yes, but only by shrewd management. By this I mean constructive management of overall policy, as well as detailed affairs.

Obviously we are entering a period in which there will be no "normal." It is a previously uncharted period. We are in inflation. Instead of "fearing inflation," as officialdom verbally does (and then shoots wages up, then prices, and next wages again), it must recognize we are in it. If we get production, and prices start to decline, we will recognize that the era in which we now are was a period of unprecedented inflation. In a word, the government has started the toboggan. The question now is: can it be stopped? Can it be stabilized? It has reached a new level. Can this be kept?

### CLEAR-CUT PURPOSES

Certainly no satisfactory foreign trade agreement can be made loosely on such development as congressional approval of the \$4,000,000,000 British loan (which really cancels nearly \$25,000,000,000 of lend lease although this figure was never mentioned in connection with that action). To make a foreign trade policy, you would have to create full management for it, management over goods and prices, as well as currencies. Such controls would be intoler-



### The Great American Home

Pop—Well, what have we got in the family now, a psychopathic case or a character actress?

Mom—What do you mean, Henry? Pop—I mean our daughter. I just got a gander at her down the street. She's rigged out like a refugee from war-torn Europe!

Mom—Oh, you mean those knock-about clothes!

Pop—I mean she's wearing overalls and a man's shirt . . . and the shirt outside the pants!

Mom—Girls will be girls, my dear.

Pop—Okay by me but they wanna be boys! Why this costume that would indicate she just fled from a fire without time to get her right clothes?

Mom—It's just a new summer fad, darling. The kids like to be comfortable and cool.

Pop—Since when were men's overalls regarded as the symbol of comfort and coolness?

Mom—Jumpers, not overalls, dear.

Pop—They look more like men's overalls than men's overalls do. And why the shirt-tails outside, that's what I wanna know?

Mom—Oh, don't take it so seriously. All the young girls are dressing that way.

Pop—What for? What's wrong with the idea of a girl looking sweet and dainty? What's so awful about her looking a little feminine?

Mom—I think the kids today look rather cute.

Pop—Bah! If Prunella is cute in those slop-ins and man's oversized shirt, so is the Witch of Windsor. She had three kids with her all dressed the same. They look to me as if they were waiting for a broomride. Where do they get these screwball ideas?

Mom—You're being old-fashioned. I don't know why Prunella wears her shirttail outside but it probably is just a reflection of the desire to be unconventional, unfettered, free.

Pop—Bilge water! I say it's just a sloppy custom that makes a girl look like a character out of the dressing room of the Marx Brothers, a sort of belle of the rummage sale, and I'm giving my ultimatum.

Mom—Ultimatum?

Pop—Yeah! Get my daughter back into female attire! And before somebody names her Miss Hobo for 1946.

### VANISHING AMERICANISMS

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### Back Home Stuff

Perry's boat house and clam bar is no more. . . . For over half a century it stood at the old iron bridge across Indian Creek on the winding road along the Connecticut shore, a landmark to young and old. . . . D. B. Perry started it as a young man, built his house on the water's edge and raised his family there, renting boats, selling bait and fish and dishing out clams on the half shell with a flavor of chestnuts. . . . He closed the clam bar in the shack with the quaint iron stove in the center several seasons ago much to the regret of natives and tourists. . . . Only one son, Ernie, remained to run things, and with "D. B." ailing, it was decided last week to sell the boats and wind up the business. . . . Now there isn't a boat at the landing and it seems strangely unreal. . . . No more will the sign that seemed to us to represent the acme of individual enterprise and success be seen there around October 1. "Closed for Business Until Next April."

### 'NIGHT AND DAY'

A new movie "Night and Day" tells the life story of Cole Porter. And we wonder if it includes the episode of his first musical at the Shubert theater in New Haven, "See America First," with Liz Marbury as his discoverer and producer. We can recall Cole, a dapper Eli, nervously listening to the comments in the Taft pharmacy next door between the acts. . . . Incidentally the part of a middle-aged Yale professor in the movie is played by Monty Woolley who, at about the time Porter was at Yale, was also a student there.

Visitors to Saratoga will miss that ancient landmark, the Grand Union hotel, razed since the last racing season there. The coil of rope in the corner of the room, the marble washstand with the open plumbing, the soiled window shades, the massive chandeliers and the beds that Washington slept in (followed by Buffalo Bill and his buffalo herds). Ah, what memories! . . . And those two-mile rambling verandas which were ever a reminder of the days when porches were porches and rockers were rockers!

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