



and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

WNU RELEASE



THE STORY THUS FAR: Martha continued the story of how she had awakened to find Letty standing over her bed with the knife in hand. She and Tom had taken the knife away from Letty, and Martha had gone to the graveyard to bury it while Tom watched over his sick wife. "I hid it—where you found it." A little later Letty suffered a hemorrhage. "She died early this morning," Bob Reynolds pressed her further. "I did it!" Martha screamed. "I killed her. I hated her. She spread stories about Tom and Miss MacTavish." Martha then went into detail of how she went to Alicia's house and waited for her chance, waited until Jim MacTavish left Alicia and then committed the murder.

CHAPTER XVI

"There's a short cut through the woods, and it isn't far. I got my sister to bed and to sleep. As I've already told you, Tom was out of the house. I found Mrs. Stevenson was not alone. I waited—"

"She wasn't alone?" Bob jerked her up sharply.

Miss Martha shook her head.

"Mr. MacTavish was with her," she said, and now Megan held her breath and her teeth were clenched. "He left a few minutes after I got there. They had been quarreling. I could only hear a word or two, but I could tell, just looking in at the window, that Mr. MacTavish was very angry and that Mrs. Stevenson was laughing at him."

Megan could see the picture as though she herself had stood outside that window, and it made her shudder. Yet here was the thing that had worried her father—an alibi. She drew a breath of sharp relief.

"I waited until he had gone," Miss Martha went on wearily. "Then I knocked and she opened the door. She was surprised to see me, and not very pleasant. I tried to tell her why I had come, but she only laughed. She said that there must be a lot of truth in the stories about Tom and Miss MacTavish or he and I would not have been so alarmed—and she added that she knew that Letty was out of her mind—and that she was a menace to the neighborhood. She said she intended to start a movement to have her—committed—" Her voice broke, and after a superhuman effort at control, she said thinly, "And so—I killed her."

It was once more Bob who broke the tense, breathless pause. He still sat on the corner of the desk, and he scrubbed out the glowing tip of his cigarette as he spoke, his eyes on the crushed cigarette in the old glass ashtray, his voice very quiet and gentle. "The truth is, Miss Evans, that you spoke to Mrs. Stevenson, and she answered you about as you have said. You did not kill her—but when you turned to leave the house, you were astounded to see your sister in the doorway behind you, and realized that she had followed you. And it was, in reality, your sister, not you, who killed Mrs. Stevenson."

Bob sighed. He ran his hands through his hair and stood up, white and tired, haggard almost, as though the long scene had been almost as much of an ordeal for him as for the broken, suddenly old woman before them.

"But how could you possibly know—" Megan demanded of Bob.

It was late in the afternoon of an extremely hectic day after all the loose ends and the final details of the tragic story had been cleared up. Miss Martha and Tom had departed on their sad errand of "taking Letty home" to lay beside the little son who had never lived.

Megan had asked Bob and Laurence to stay for supper and they had accepted gratefully. And now they were in the living room, with Jim listening and looking on, withdrawn and pale, but genial and pleasant when spoken to.

"I didn't know, of course," Bob answered frankly. "It was just that—well, call it a hunch, what you will. Only I kept hearing something in Miss Martha's words that didn't quite ring true. What she was saying would be completely sincere and convincing. Then something would creep into the story, nothing I could set my finger on, but it was there and I could sense it. Especially that very elaborate story of hiding the knife. If it had really been a knife out of the kitchen of her own home, she might have hidden it very carefully about the house. But to get herself up like a particularly terrifying ghost and go sneaking out into the night to hide it in the one place she felt sure would never be found—well, that had me puzzled."

"I thought of that, too, of course," Laurence contributed.

"Then when she began to talk about going to Mrs. Stevenson's—remember she mentioned the short cut through the woods? Yet she had been at some pains to assure us that her sister's strength was not sufficient for her to walk to the Stevenson place. But if there was a short cut through the woods, and if her sister, in one of her periods of lucidity, had followed her and overheard her quarrel with the Stevenson woman, and the sister had been frightened, excited, as she most certainly would have been—do you see? The pattern is the sister doing the deed—not Miss Martha. I saw it suddenly, and—well, you know what happened."

Megan slipped away to offer her services to Annie in finishing up supper, but Annie said, "No'm, honey, I's got eve'ything undeh control—y'all go out and git yo'self a lil' bits o' fresh air, fo' suppeh."

And gratefully, Megan obeyed her.

It was already dusk, though not yet dark enough to obscure the vision. She crossed the backyard to a big old rough bench beneath a live oak tree and sat down, her head back, breathing deep of the crisp night air.

The night was very still, save for the faint shouts of children playing somewhere along the highway; behind her in the barn she heard the rustling of the cows as they settled themselves down for the night. The whole scene was quiet and calm and peaceful. So peaceful that it was hard to believe the horror and tragedy and terror that had gripped the place so short a time before.

She couldn't bear to think of Tom any more. She wouldn't let herself.



The glimmer of her light-colored frock through the dusk led him to her.

and she was glad when she saw Laurence coming towards her across the dusky dooryard.

The glimmer of her light-colored frock through the dusk led him to her. He called her name uncertainly, and when she answered him he came on to her, something dark in his hands.

"Your scarf," he said. "Annie felt you might catch cold out here—she said supper would be ready in ten or fifteen minutes."

Megan started to rise, but he put his hand on her shoulder and pressed her back on the bench.

Megan relaxed a little. He lit a cigarette and they sat for a little companionably in silence.

"It's all like a terrible dream," she said huskily, and Laurence nodded.

"But you've waked up now, Megan, and sensible people don't brood over bad dreams or let them affect their future lives!" he reminded her almost sternly. "There is one thing out of the bad dream that you can remember, though—Fallon is free. After a decent interval of time—"

She shivered and said impulsively, "I don't feel I could ever bear to—see him again."

Laurence turned on her sharply, angrily.

"Now you're talking like a fool!" he told her violently. "Just because a man has gone through hell—and a hell that was no fault of his own—no woman with a decent instinct to her name can throw him aside!"

Megan caught her breath and looked at him in surprise.

"I didn't mean that—after all, aren't you taking rather a lot for granted?" she protested heatedly. "Tom Fallon and I were—friends—"

"Tom Fallon was—and is—in love with you, and you know it," Laurence told her bluntly. "Even if I hadn't known it, the way he looked at you when he said good-by—and besides, have you forgotten that you told me yourself you were in love with him?"

"I—I guess I am," she admitted humbly.

"You guess you are!" Laurence was caustic.

"Well, what I meant was—I'm all mixed up and confused—it's been so horrible—" she stammered faintly.

"That's understandable—" Laurence conceded grudgingly. "But after a while, you'll pull yourself together and be able to see clearly—and in a year or so—"

Annie's voice from the kitchen door, that spilled an oblong of golden-amber light into the backyard, was the most welcome sound Megan had ever heard in all her life, and she rose so swiftly that Laurence's mouth tightened a little and his eyes

were cold and hard as he followed her across the yard to the kitchen and into the dining room.

Healthily tired at the end of the day, sleeping soundly at night, Megan discovered, as week followed week, that the memory of those dark, evil days when Alicia Stevenson's malicious tongue had wagged so freely, was growing fainter.

And she realized that Pleasant Grove, as a community, was also recovering from the darkness when Alicia's tongue had set old friends eyeing each other with more or less veiled suspicion. Other farm families were finding release from dark memories in the ever new, yet age-old miracle of the dark earth, the tiny seeds, the new, tender green sprouts that meant life and hope and the future.

She was touched and grateful to Jim for his honest, if bungling, attempts to help her. She tried not to let him know that his hands were clumsy with the delicate, fragile plants that he tried to pack. She knew he was bored, and that he resented the hard, back-breaking labor that it takes to run a farm effectively.

He came back from Meadersville late one afternoon, his eyes shining with excitement, obviously with news that he considered of great importance.

It was already dusk, and the darkness had driven Megan in from the fields. She had shed her earth-stained dungarees, had a shower and was dressed for supper, busy in the kitchen helping Annie with the last duties of getting the meal on the table, when Jim came hurrying in.

"The most marvelous thing has happened, Meggie—I've been offered a splendid opportunity!"

"Tell me," said Megan, eager and interested, loving him for the understanding she had acquired of him since his moment of self-revelation after Alicia's death.

"Well, you know the county newspaper in Meadersville? The Sentinel?" demanded Jim, as eager and excited as a boy. "Dick Morgan publishes it. Well, Dick's been drafted and he wants me to take over until he comes back!"

He beamed at her happily and Megan said quickly, "It is wonderful, Dad—but well, you've never had any newspaper experience—do you think—"

Jim looked a little sulky.

"Oh, I know that, but after all, Dick feels that I have other qualifications," he pointed out. "And Mrs. Morgan will stay on as business manager and write the woman's page and all that. What I'll have to do is write the editorials, and what news I can pick up. Mostly, right now, it comes from a wire service, because about the only two things people are interested in are the war and politics. And there's a fellow in Washington who acts as correspondent for a lot of county newspapers, Dick's paper among them. And Dick's got three weeks before he reports for induction and he feels that in that length of time he can get me settled in, help me to learn the ropes and all that. Of course, the salary is really laughable—but I get a share of the profits and all that."

"It is wonderful, Dad, and of course you can do it!" Megan assured him, sincerely. "I'm terribly proud of you."

Jim looked at her oddly and then he asked, almost curiously:

"Are you, Megan? Funny—I can't remember when anybody ever said they were proud of me."

Megan felt a little quick mist of tears in her eyes, but she knew this was no time for the display of pity that she felt for his humility—his tacit admission that he had always hungered for appreciation, even while he had admitted to himself that he deserved no such appreciation.

"But of course I'm proud of you, Dad—now you'll get to make use of all that study and research you have done these last few years!" she told him happily. "I'll bet there isn't another man in the whole county who has read as much, or studied as much, of current events as you have."

Then he said hesitantly, "Of course, Meggie, I know I promised to help you with the farm this year—but I hate to turn down a chance like this. A chance to—well, to be somebody important, and to have people listen to my views."

"Now don't you worry about the farm, or me," Megan assured him firmly.

Jim beamed at her happily, obviously relieved. He would ride to and from Meadersville each day with three men from Pleasant Grove who "commuted" to Meadersville offices. The paper came off the press every Friday. It might be necessary for him to stay over in town Thursday night, but the hotel wasn't bad and he could stay there. He had his plans made.

Megan, listening to him while she did the mending that always occupied her sizable work basket, thought that he seemed younger and more vividly alive than he had been in a long time, and was deeply and selfishly glad that he had found a job that he felt was worthy of his ability

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD RUSSIA IS DEVELOPING

WASHINGTON. — Some failers have rhetorically rolled me over the barrel for reporting recently it does not make much difference whether or not we have treaties of peace co-operatively with Russia. They also objected to my story about the old politician whose activities worked out about the same for an enemy as for a friend. These whackers did not understand; they interpreted too generously a passing reference. For Russia is neither friend nor enemy. She is something which exists.

To date she has been co-operative with some ventures for a joint world peace, but generally she has been antagonistic. She cannot be converted to our way of life and peace, because she will accept peace only on her own basis. (See Brooks Atkinson in the New York Times, and many others as to why this is so. Atkinson concluded after a long and truly objective experience in reporting from Moscow that "The most we can hope for is an armed peace the next few years"). Treaties can amount to much, little—or nothing. I am reporting on genuine peace, which is what our people want.

New thought is developing inside here on this subject. As a result of our experiences in Paris and in the UNO, the thinkers of the administration are clearing their heads of their war propaganda that made Russia out to be something she was not, and are coming to a factual, truthful, realistic viewpoint sooner than the politicians of the administration.

WILL TRY TO IGNORE RUSSIA.

Their refreshed minds are working along these following lines:

How do we get along peacefully in a world with a powerful antagonistic force? Well, how do you get along with an antagonistic neighbor? Some people fight him. Most people do not. To fight him is to waste the energies of both in conflict which may sap your strength and shorten your life even if you are victorious. Most people just ignore him. They plan their lives for their own purposes. If he wants to come in on some things which the community undertakes, let him come in, and give thanks to God that he sees some things right, at any rate. If he chooses to remain out or is obstructionist of your community purposes, leave him out. Go ahead and plan as you would, and can.

This reasoning is far more sensational than it may appear to you at first glance. It forecasts a whole about-face from the war propaganda, from the time when it was practically treasonous to doubt that Russia was not our friend, did not go to war to save the world for our kind of democracy, and did not believe in all our freedoms, the freedom of religion, the spirit and the press being most important. It projects a notion of us running beyond treaties to our own full understanding of the basis of them, to maintain our part of the victory in our part of the world, and hope that others come to it—in short, it would mean "an armed peace for the next few years."

Now all the politicians may not hasten to this banner. Mr. Truman pointed to the marker at Gettysburg which said: "Peace eternal in a nation united." He moved to amend "nation" to "world." So it should be—but it cannot be. It is idle to lead people to expect this in the face of what we have encountered in UNO and at Paris — and are getting daily from the Moscow press. Politicians may wave some treaties saying so.

The prime minister of Britain waved one such when he got out of his airplane from Munich and announced to the world it meant "Peace in our time" — just before Britain went to war, unprepared. Politicians may pretend the state of the world today is what they intended all along, and realism will have no objection, but if they pretend peace has been established in the face of facts which all the world knows, they are entering upon most dangerous ground. For such claims will lead inevitably to disarmament, and disarmament will lead to defeat. If you want the peace, you will have to keep it.

MUST MAINTAIN ARMAMENTS.

Within this last realm of reality is plenty of room in which politics may safely play without danger or damage, if they wish. But they must not play us into another Pearl Harbor. They must not cut armaments to a point of developing national drowsiness or inability to defend ourselves. They must not give atom bombs loosely, without justification, around the world. They must not scrap armies and navies as they did before. To have peace they must maintain it with constant vigilance.

Veterans' SERVICE BUREAU

EDITOR'S NOTE: This newspaper, through special arrangement with the Washington Bureau of Western News paper Union at 1616 Eye Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., is able to bring readers this weekly column on problems of the veteran and serviceman and his family. Questions may be addressed to the above Bureau and they will be answered in a subsequent column. No replies can be made direct by mail, but only in the column which will appear in this newspaper regularly.

Mental Illness Clinics

In addition to 32 clinics already authorized, the Veterans' administration has directed the establishment of as many such clinics as necessary in the 70 regional offices for the treatment of mental illnesses among war veterans.

According to the announcement, the need for treatment of these emotional and nervous diseases is evident and experience in civilian practice both before and during the war indicates that a majority of such cases can be treated in clinics without hospitalization.

In the mental hygiene program, emphasis will be placed on group therapy which is the simultaneous treatment of a number of veterans suffering from similar mental or emotional disturbances. The neuropsychiatrist, clinical psychologist and social worker will co-operate as a team in these clinics in treating the patient.

Questions and Answers

Q. Can my daughter, who is engaged to a young fellow overseas, book passage on a boat and be married to him while he is still in service in Germany?—S. P., Havre de Grace, Md.

A. The war department says the procedure is for the girl to write the boy telling him to get permission from the commanding general, European theatre, for entrance of the girl into the area for the purpose of his marriage. When he receives this letter of permission from the commanding general, he should mail it to the girl. She will then take the letter along with passport application to the state department and apply for passport and visa to get overseas. She then must arrange for her passage and pay her own way.

Q. My husband was in the army three years, from 1905 to 1908, and was in the Ute Indian campaign. Would he be entitled to a pension? He is not disabled from military service.—Mrs. R. F. J., Mahtowa, Minn.

A. There is provision for both disability and death pensions for Indian wars. I am not sure, however, whether these provisions apply to the period 1905 to 1908. They apparently apply to earlier Indian wars. However, to be sure, you should take it up with your nearest Veterans' administration office.

Q. I am a World War II veteran and would like to start farming. I kept hearing over the radio that I could get a loan from the banks under the G. I. bill of rights. Well, I went to the bank and they said I had to have capital to get a loan but how can I have that when I served three years in the army? Is there any chance of me getting a loan so that I could start farming?—R. L. K., Winslow, Ill.

A. Provisions of this law are that the Veterans' administration will approve a loan up to \$4,000 for an eligible veteran, if the lending institution will make the loan. The bank or other lender is the judge of whether or not the veteran is a good risk and is likely to succeed at his venture.

Q. My son was discharged from the army in February, 1946. He was overseas 25 months and while in the army he had to work so hard he could not rest at night and would wander around in his sleep. Since he is at home the same thing happens when he works hard. He can't get any rest at night. He wasn't this way until he went into the army. Would it be possible that he is eligible for a disability pay?—Mrs. J. L. E., Hickory Flat, Miss.

A. It might be possible. The only way to find out is for your son to apply to your nearest office of the Veterans' administration and ask for an examination and disability rating.

Q. My son was killed in action in World War II. His insurance was made to his mother. We are divorced. I am 55 years old and not able to work. Can I draw a dependent parent's pension? If so, how much and where shall I apply?—D. V. M., Ferguson, W. Va.

A. Yes, although divorced, as a dependent father you should be entitled to \$25 per month. Make application to the Veterans' administration office at Huntington.

Q. My husband is a veteran of World War I, serving overseas 11 months. He has a 50 per cent permanent disability given in 1930. This disability becomes worse. Is he eligible for pension? If so, where can he get help?—Mrs. M. L., Fort Payne, Ala.

A. Your husband evidently had a disability rating from the Veterans' administration which likely was wiped out by the economy act of 1935. Suggest that he contact his nearest office of the Veterans' administration for a new disability rating.

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