



and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

WNU RELEASE



THE STORY THIS FAR: "You are lying, Martha," Bob Reynolds told Martha. "You did not kill her; your sister did." Martha's story was beaten down, and she admitted that Letty, the mental patient, had done it. "It's like a terrible dream," Meg told Larry. Tenderly Larry reminded her that Tom Fallon was a free man and loved her. She was too upset to know. But good came out of it, for Jim MacFavish, now humbled, decided to do something for himself. He announced that he was to become the editor of a nearby newspaper while its publisher was in the armed forces. "Larry asked for you," her father stated. She had not seen him for several days, and there was a tingle sent through her.

CHAPTER XVII

Suddenly he broke off, and after a moment he said, "Oh, yes, I knew there was something I had forgotten. I saw Laurence while I was in town."

Megan was startled to discover that her needle had slipped and pricked her finger, startled at the sudden tingle that ran through her at the mention of Laurence's name. She looked up, feeling her father's eyes upon her, and knew, by the sudden warmth of her face, that she was blushing. Which, she told herself furiously, was pretty silly, anyway you looked at it.

"He asked about you," said Jim when she did not speak. "He sent you his love."

Once more the needle slipped and Megan winced, but her voice was quite steady as she asked, "Are you sure he said his love?"

Jim took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at her as though surprised. "Well, of course I'm sure," he said. "How's Megan? Give her my love and tell her I'll see her soon."

And Megan, a little warm something stirring in her heart, bent her head above her sewing, and a tiny, secret smile touched her mouth for a moment.

The busy, crowded days of early spring melted into the even busier days of late spring. Early summer came and the crops stood lush and green in the fields, but Laurence had not come.

Jim was finding the newspaper business exciting, though he quarreled with Mrs. Morgan and came some occasionally smarting with her at some fancied slight or some contradiction she had given to one of his orders. But his editorials had been well received.

On a late June evening, when the whole world seemed locked in a golden haze of loveliness, Megan came up from the fields, intent on nothing more exciting than a brisk shower and fresh clothes, when she saw a car standing at the gate.

She came on into the kitchen and said, "Have we got company, Annie?"

Annie's lower lip was thrust out, in indication that Annie was angry about something; but her tone was, as usual with Annie under such moods, almost expressionless, when she answered: "Yessum—the waitin' in de settin' room."

Megan stripped the gaily figured scarf from her head, shook out her unbleached curls, and walked into the living room. The man who stood at the window turned to face her—and Megan was still, rigid with shock. Because the man who faced her was—Tom Fallon.

He had aged, and his face was set and grim, his eyes those of the tragically lost. But as he looked at her, some of the haggard look vanished from his face and he said in a tone just above a whisper, "You're lovelier than ever."

"Please sit down," she said. "I've been offered the job of principal at the school again this year," he said.

Megan caught her breath. "But—but surely—you wouldn't want to come back—here?" she gasped.

He studied her for a moment, and then he said quietly, "You can't possibly imagine my being willing ever to return here, to Pleasant Grove, can you, Megan?"

"Well—no, I'm afraid I can't," Megan answered him quite honestly.

"Because so much of tragedy happened to me here?" he asked, and before she could answer he added gently, "But I had a very small and very perfect glimpse of Heaven, too, Megan. Perhaps one could cancel the other—or could it?"

Megan said huskily, "I—don't quite know what you are talking about."

"Let's not beat about the bush and tell polite lies, Megan," he said with a forthrightness that was rather staggering. "I know that it will be a long time before I can—speak to you of love, Megan. It would be the worst possible taste for me to do so now. But there was an evening, Megan, when we spoke our hearts—for the briefest possible moment. I haven't forgotten. Have you?"

Megan felt the color rush to her face and she could not quite meet his eyes.

"So it's like that," he said very quietly, his tone tired and heavy and old. "I should have known that I was just seeing something that didn't really exist. You were emotionally upset and you were sorry for me—that was that, Megan?"

Megan sat very still. Because that was it. She knew it now. She had

imagined herself in love with Tom because she had been caught by pity for his unhappy plight, and she had let herself be deceived into thinking that her pity for him was a stronger, more vital emotion. But now she saw clearly, in the light of the past few months' clarity of vision and peace of mind.

Tom stood up and said quietly, "Well, that's that. I didn't have a great deal of hope, of course. Maybe the reason why I even for a moment considered coming back to Pleasant Grove was because I did not want to face the facts. I wanted to go on believing that what we saw and felt that night was as real for you as for me. But, of course, I see now that I was a fool."

"I'm terribly sorry, truly—" she managed with tremulous lips, her eyes misted by tears.

He turned towards the door. Megan said swiftly, "Will you come back to Pleasant Grove?"

He shook his head. "There is nothing to come back for—ever—now," he told her in that same quiet, almost toneless voice.

On Sunday morning, a glorious June morning with a brilliant sun lying like a benediction on green fields and gardens burgeoning with roses and zinnias and marigolds, Megan went again to the Ridge. She had dreaded this return to the Ridge. She had avoided it all these weeks, pretending to herself that she was too busy, that there were tasks to be performed that made it impossible for her to make her favorite walk. But now she knew that she had lied; she had been afraid.

The sudden barking of Dixie warned her of the approach of some stranger. She turned sharply and looked across the meadow, and her heart stood up on tiptoe. She felt as though it, too, yelped with excitement. For even at this distance, she knew that figure. It was Laurence.

She sat very still and watched him, while a new, sweet warmth spread throughout her body. Her heart shook a little and her hands closed themselves tightly in her lap. The sunlight glistened on Laurence's bare head as he walked with his hands in his pockets, his shoulders drooping a little.

And watching him as he plodded up the meadow slope and across the fence, she knew a contentment so deep, so warm, so sweet, that she was one with the June scene all about her.

And then he was close enough to see Megan, and he said with a little quick, meaningless smile, "Hello! Mind if I intrude?"

"You're not intruding," she told him, and smiled and patted the rock beside her, inviting him to sit down. Looking down at Megan he said quietly, "Annie thought I'd find you up here. Why did you want to see me?"

Megan's eyes widened a little and she asked, "Why did I want to see you? That's a funny question—"

Laurence frowned. "Well, after all, when Annie telephoned me—"

Megan gasped, and the hot color flowed into her face as she stammered, "Annie telephoned you?"

Laurence nodded. "She said you wanted to see me and that it was important, so I hitched a ride over. Why? What's the matter?"

Megan was scarlet. She could not quite meet his eyes.

"Annie—Annie had no right to do anything of the sort. She's really getting beyond herself—" she stammered.

Laurence's tired face hardened a little and his eyes were cool. "I take it, then, that you had nothing to do

with the call? That Annie was mistaken in saying you wanted to see me—"

"I had nothing to do with the call," Megan cut in. "But of course, I always want to see you, Larry. Why wouldn't I? You are my oldest and best friend."

"Thanks a lot," said Laurence dryly. "But that's not good enough, Megan. You know where I stand, where I've always stood, so far as you are concerned. But I made up my mind a good while ago that you were not for me, and I'm not fond of torturing myself, so I've kept away. I thought this morning when Annie telephoned me, that you were in some kind of—well, of a jam, and that you needed me. And of course, that would always be the one thing that would bring me as fast as I could travel. But if Annie was wrong—"

"Look, Larry," said Megan huskily. "I've—well, there's something I have to tell you and it's not very pretty. I'm—ashamed—but you'll have to know it—"

"There's nothing I have to know about you, Meggie, that would be hard for you to tell me," he interrupted her swiftly, his eyes upon her, tired, somber, steady.

Megan caught her breath on a sob and burst out swiftly, "Oh, Larry, don't be humble! I don't deserve it. I've been an awful fool—but now that I can see clearly—now that I know what it's all about, you make me so ashamed!"

Laurence stared at her, puzzled, a little resentful.

"Why should I make you ashamed, Megan? I think I resent that! You'd better explain," he said sharply.

Megan put out her hands in a little gesture of pleading.

"That's what I'm trying to do, Larry," she told him unsteadily. "I'm trying to explain that I was fool enough to believe that I—was in love with Tom Fallon. And now I know that I wasn't—that I never was really—"

Laurence stared at her, his brows drawn together. His hands made a little involuntary movement towards her, but he stopped himself just before he could touch her.

The deep, rich color poured into her face, but her eyes met his steadily. "Because I know now that—it's always been—you, Larry," she told him huskily.

He bent and swept her up into his arms and held her so close and hard against him that she could scarcely breathe.

His cheek was against hers, as he said, "I lost you once, Meggie, and it—well, it just about finished me. I thought everything was fine between us and that we were going to be married, and then you kicked me out of my fool's paradise, by saying it was Fallon. I couldn't quite take it if you changed your mind again. It's got to be—well, final, this time, one way or the other."

There were tears in her eyes, as she stood on tiptoe and framed his face between her hands, and set her mouth on his, her warm, soft mouth that was faintly tremulous and very sweet and that flowered beneath his kiss.

"Oh, Larry—darling Larry—I do love you! I'll always love you. Forgive me?" she whispered unsteadily.

For answer, his arms tightened and his lips found and claimed her own.

And Susie, the cat, was a wise cat and knew there were times when humans were interested only in each other. This, of course, was one of those times.

(THE END)



Murder in Plain Sight

by GERALD BROWN

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BEGINNING NEXT WEEK

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

WAR CONTRACTS INQUIRY COULD GET OUT OF HAND

WASHINGTON. — The politicians are chuckling at the political implication behind the May scandal case.

The inside story is that Mr. May, chairman of the house military affairs committee, walked into the difficulties with the Mead investigating committee, and that the investigation was not inspired otherwise. As May is a conservative Democrat, and Senator Mead of New York has aspirations for the governorship, certain political authorities had circulated the report that the case against May was worked up for purposes of widening the split within Democratic ranks by the liberal side for the purposes of punishing a conservative Southerner. If it did not originate in such purposes, it certainly had that political effect.

However logical this report may sound to some, the inside story is that the Mead committee membership was making a routine check into the complicated financial set-up in the Garsson companies. Some suspicions about the May transaction were uncovered but not made public. Then May brought Dr. Henry Garsson to see Mead to complain about the companies being "persecuted" by a meddling investigation, which, they contended, was holding up reconversion to peacetime activities.

MEAD HAD TO ACT.

The committeemen claim other efforts were made to get them to desist, but they will not identify these efforts beyond the point of saying these came from within the Democratic party.

Despite the imminence of the coming congressional election, the Republicans co-operated with the Democratic members in all ways. The Republican Sen. Homer Ferguson of Michigan (who does not run again until 1949) has been termed the "bird dog" of the committee. Ferguson and his Republican colleagues were in a position to force Mead to act if he tried to cover up. Perhaps they may have been gleeful at the prospect of roasting a Democrat on the eve of departure for home and election.

Another inner political sidelight is that the Garssons hired as their counsel for the inquiry Wayne Johnson, a well-known New York City Democrat.

The evidence carried odors reaching to high heaven, but did not prove conclusively that May ever received any money directly, although it produced testimony indicating money was sent. The committeemen have been authorized to look over the income tax returns of May to supply the missing links, and while these cannot be used as evidence or made public in any way, the committee may get some leads to the links. The law permits President Truman to authorize such looks at the returns.

All in all, the newsmen who sat at the press table throughout the inquiry thought the whole case could be put down as a scandal so plainly marked with evidence that no one could cover it on any side, Democratic, Republican, PAC, or any other.

REP. COFFEE INVOLVED.

But lo and behold, the case produced a political tail larger than the dog. The Coffee case, following immediately thereafter, concerned a left-leaning Democrat, Rep. John M. Coffee, who received \$2,500 from a war contractor for services. He votes mostly on the leftish side.

Thus the scandals came out even in Democratic ranks between the two conflicting factions, and the Republicans gained the most ground from the entire transaction. At least no one showed they claimed to have or were selling any influence. It was Senator Brewster, Republican of Maine, who told the committee of the Coffee matter, which first was mentioned in a mayoralty campaign in Tacoma, Wash., by Republicans.

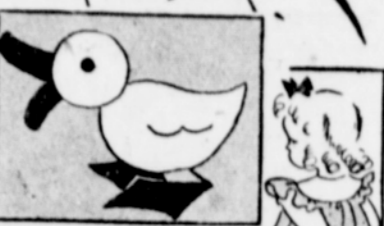
I think the sum total of the scandal matter is this: If anyone started turning over every war contract, at this particular time of world crisis and difficult peace, even to gain ground in an election, the ultimate outcome would be difficult to foretell. At any rate, the Mead committee went to work on some presumably minor cases on the Pacific coast.

CAN'T GUARANTEE FREEDOMS

The Paris gathering of 21 nations to consider the Big Four peace deal started off under unique circumstances. The 170 mimeographed pages comprising the proposed texts are considered by experts to have been very poorly drafted from a technical standpoint of expression. This was charged to the difficulties of translation. As to the meanings of the agreements and guarantees, few thought them any stronger than the governments which would operate them.

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Runners' Heartbeat

Most great distance runners have made their records because their bodies had unique functional powers, one of which was a heartbeat slower than the normal rate. For instance, Glenn Cunningham's heartbeat is usually around 49, under Hagg's 47, Paavo Nurmi's 5 and Leslie MacMitchell's 40.

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