Is it Love? by MARGARETTA BRUCKER

Chapter 24

Wedding Gift

JOHNNY laughed then and they returned to the plans about Belle Acres. He had simplified his figures so that she could understand them. He said that he would be over Sunday and they would drive out together to look over the plantation.

"It's my wedding gift to you," he told her. "We'll have the papers drawn up and everything in order, so that if I have to leave suddenly there'll be no question about your possession." He drew out his wallet and handed her a folded bit of paper. "There's a check to deposit. Take it."

She opened the check and spread it out in front of her. It was for a thousand dollars. She read the name through a mist of tears. "Susan Eleanor Fairhope Harris," written in a strong, vigorous hand.

"I shouldn't take it," she murmured.

"Sue Ellen—"

She looked up. This time both his hands caught her two hands and held them. He said: "I'm staking more than a piece of property and a thousand-dollar check on you. In one way I wish I did not have to help you materially. I don't want a hint of gratitude to color your feeling for me. I want something much more difficult to obtain—and some day I shall ask you for it, and if you cannot give it to me, be honest with me, dear. I'll understand. Now—I'm satisfied that you should adjust yourself and your emotions to this arrangement. A bargain, as you once put it."

"A one-sided bargain," whispered Sue Ellen.

He shook his head. "I'm conservative, but I'm gambling everything on this marriage. I don't don't want to take my happiness because it's offered out of gratitude. I want to have you forget all that for a month or two. There may be some difficult or embarrassing situations which may arise as a result of our understanding, and I shall never take advantage of it for a moment. We are friends—good friends. Agreed?"

She nodded.

They arrived in Tyler Springs and found Uncle Freeman at the station. "Miss Sue Ellen—Mistuh Harris!" He removed his hat and bobbed his grey woolly head repeatedly, his mouth spread in a wide, significant grin. "Miss Ca'olina get youah wuah, Miss Sue Ellen. She say to come right along, the bot' of you. She got a hot suppah ready."

"Lieutenant Harris has to be in Camp Shelby before six in the morning," explained Sue Ellen, aware of Johnny's dancing eyes and more than proud of the way she maneuvered Uncle Freeman out of hearing by telling him to collect her bags. "Goodbye. Thanks for everything."

"Good night. This is Tuesday—I'll see you Sunday morning."

"Aunt Jennie will have a wonderful dinner for you. Aunt Car will be delighted to see you—"

"And you—?"

"I'll be glad."

He stooped and kissed her gently. "Just a friendly kiss," he said. "Besides, kissing has grown to be quite a commonplace gesture."

She caught his sleeve as he started to turn away. "In that case—" She drew his face down to meet her own and kissed him on the mouth. "That was for Uncle Freeman," she said hastily. "He was watching us and would have been so disappointed if I had shown no affection for a new husband."

"Are you sure he's quite convinced you love me?" Even in the dim glow of the little station lights, she could catch the gleam in his grey eyes.

"Quite."

He picked up his bags and prepared to leave. "I shall have to convince Aunt Car and Aunt Pleas—" he hinted.

She shook her head. "I shall explain to them that this is just a business arrangement."

She watched him stalk away, his back straight and unbending. He never looked back once. Why had she reminded him that this was a bargain? Why be ashamed of the impulse which made her kiss him goodbye?

She knew. The old Fairhope pride again influencing her to hide, behind it, to deny her love.

Odd Homecoming

IN THE one taxi Tyler Springs boasted, Uncle Freeman sat in front with the driver, his black face puzzled and disturbed. Uncle Freeman thought this an odd homecoming for a bride and groom.

The taxi drew up at Magnolia House, the door flew open. The aunts stood on the veranda, Aunt Pleas, stout and smiling—Aunt Car running down the steps to meet Sue Ellen and take her in her arms.

Aunt Car was tearful—no one spoke. Then Aunt Pleas said briskly: "Your husband, Sue Ellen?"

"Johnny's a soldier," she explained easily. "He had to report at Camp Sheby at once."

She found herself saying quite matter-of-factly: "He'll be over Sunday—that was his plan when he left me."

"The Colonel and Riv are in Tyler Springs," said Aunt Car breathlessly. "They flew to Memphis and I saw the Colonel yesterday and he told me that Belle Acre was out of his hands entirely."

"That's right." Together they walked into the house and the street door closed behind them. From the kitchen beyond, they could hear Aunt Jennie talking excitedly and Uncle Freeman's important tones as he answered.

"Belle Acres belongs to us again," announced Sue Ellen, and smiled at the two astonished faces. "At least, it will belong to me as soon as the proper papers can be signed. Johnny gave it to me as a wedding present."

"Belle Acres belongs to you!" Aunt Car sank down on a chair in the hall, while Aunt Pleas bustled off toward the kitchen.

"Did Aunt Pleas know?" asked Sue Ellen. "She didn't seem surprised."

"Pleas is never surprised at anything. You're tired. We'll talk over everything in the morning."

A few minutes later Sue Ellen sat alone by the library fire, while Aunt Car went off to join Aunt Pleas. Together they would talk things over, thought Sue Ellen. They would compare ideas about her surprising marriage. She wondered why the Colonel had come, and wished that Riv had remained in Washington until the news of her marriage had spread through the gossip circles of Tyler Springs. There would be much talk about her.

The Gossips Begin

SHE thought of Johnny back in camp and wondered if he was thinking about her. She remembered his kiss as he left and she looked deep into the heart of the fire and saw Johnny's face smiling back at her. The aunts returned with tea and a lunch and she sat and told them about her wedding and the trip back to Memphis.

Aunt Pleas sighed. "I never expected to see the day when a Fairhope would marry a Yankee."

"But, Aunt Pleas, you do like Johnny?"

"He isn't one bit like a northerner," was Aunt Pleas' response. "And if he makes you happy, that's all I could wish for you. You're happy, Sue Ellen?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you don't act like a bride," declared Aunt Pleas.

Sue Ellen blushed. "Why?"

"You might have been off to Memphis on a shopping trip instead of a honeymoon." Aunt Pleas eyed her sharply. "Are you sure you've picked the right one, Susan Eleanor?"

"Quite sure." Sue Ellen arose and kissed her aunt. "And I'm tired and tomorrow we'll have time to talk over everything. Right now I'm going to bed. Good night."

The murmur of their soft voices followed her as she mounted the stairs to her room. They had known her so long and so well, they could sense her every feeling, read every passing emotion in her face. It would be difficult to deceive them if this marriage proved a rash mistake.

The following morning Ginny called. "Congratulations," she bubbled over the telephone. "I didn't think you had the nerve to throw Riv Moore over. There's a lot of gossip about it. Plenty of folks say that you gave him the toss and went right out and married that swell Yankee soldier just to show you didn't care. Right?"

"I married Johnny Harris."

"Of course," said Ginny, "the Colonel's friends say he broke up your marriage to Riv."

"I think Riv will tell you that he was already married."

After she hung up the receiver, Sue Ellen was ashamed of her outburst. Time enough for Ginny to find out for herself the details of her break with Riv. Before she had finished her breakfast, a dozen people called to offer congratulations and satisfy their curiosity that the rumor which had swept Tyler Springs about her marriage to a northerner was correct.

"But, Sue Ellen, honey, you've always hated northerners!"

"I didn't know them. Besides, aren't there exceptions?"

"I understand he's mighty well-to-do."

"I don't know anything about that," said Sue Ellen briefly.

"Aunt Car—" She forced her aunt to drop the tapestry on which she was working and listen as she protested about the part gossip played in one's private affairs. "It might easily destroy one's faith in anyone," she said slowly. "Make you doubt your own judgment. There's something so destructive and subtle about small-town gossip."

Aunt Car put down the skein of green wool she was carefully considering. "Gossip helped ruin my life," she said, "and gossip will try to ruin yours. But my dear—it can't if you're sure of Johnny."

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:

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KALE (MBS) 1330, Portland; KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland; KGA (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1510, Spokane; KGO (NBC-Blue) 810, San Francisco; KGW (NBC-Red) 620, Portland; KJR (NBC-Blue) 1000, Seattle; KNX (CBS) 1070, Los Angeles; KOA (NBC-Red) 850, Denver; KOIN (CBS) 970, Portland; KOMO (NBC-Red) 950, Seattle; KPO (NBC-Red) 680, San Francisco; KSL (CBS) 1160, Salt Lake City.

Time Shown is PST

Monday

5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KEX, KJR; Vox Pop, KSL, KOIN; Stars of Today, KGW; Jane Arden, KOMO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.

5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEX; Cocktail Hour, KGW; Bill Henry, KNX; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Three-Four Time, KPO; Voices of Yesterday, KSL.

6:00 p. m.—Radio Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Dr. I. Q., Jim McClain, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR.

6:30 p. m.—For America We Sing, KGO, KEX; That Brewster Boy, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Tropical Moods, KJR.

7:00 p. m.—Mercury Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Monday Merry-Go-Round, KGO, KEX, KJR; Contented Hour, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

7:30 p. m.—Cavalcade of America, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Blondie, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Modern Music Box, KEX; Amateur Hour, KGO; Greater Washington Hour, KJR.

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Fred Waring, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Herbert Marshall, KGO, KJR, KEX.

8:15 p. m.—Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Lum and Abner, KPO, KOMO, KGW.

8:30 p. m.—I Love a Mystery, KGO, KEX, KJR; Voice of Richard Crooks, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Gay Nineties Revue, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

9:00 p. m.—Telephone Hour, KPO, KGW, KOMO; True or False, KGO, KJR, KEX; Vox Pop, KNX; News, KOIN; Sports, KSL.

9:30 p. m.—Hawthorne House, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Hollywood Showcase, KNX, KOIN; Nat'l Radio Forum, KGO; News, KSL, KJR; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.

10:00 p. m.—Paul Whiteman's Orch., KGO, KEX, KJR; Reporter News, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Masterworks of Music, KSL; News, KNX; Five Star Final, KOIN.

10:30 p. m.—Ed Stoker's Music, KGW, KOMO; Carl Ravazza's Orch., KJR; John Sullivan, KSL; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.

11:00 p. m.—Bob Bradley and Erwin Yeo, KSL, KOIN; String Serenade, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KNX, KGO; Reveries, KOMO.

Tuesday

5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KJR, KEX; Are You a Missing Heir, KSL; News, KOIN; Stars of Today, KGW; Superman, KJR; Adventures of Jane Arden, KOMO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.

5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEX; The Arkansas Traveler, KSL; Eyes of the World, KOIN.

6:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KPO, KGW, KOMO; We, the People, KSL; Anita Carol, KOIN; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Second Husband, KNX.

6:30 p. m.—Symphony Concert, KEX, KJR, KGO; Report to the Nation, KOIN; Fibber McGee and Molly, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Who, What, Where and Why, KNX; World News, KSL.

7:00 p. m.—Bob Hope Variety Show, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Red Cross Roll Call, KSL, KNX, KOIN, KJR, KGO, KEX.

7:30 p. m.—Red Skelton, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Treasury Hour, KGO, KEX, KJR; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Second Husband, KSL.

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

8:15 p. m.—Lum and Abner, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

8:30 p. m.—Johnny Presents, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Information Please, KGO, KEX, KJR; Are You a Missing Heir, KNX, KOIN; News, KSL.

9:00 p. m.—We, the People, KNX, KOIN; Easy Aces, KGO, KJR, KEX; Adventures of the Thin Man, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Sports, KSL.

9:30 p. m.—Battle of the Sexes, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Arkansas Traveler, KNX, KOIN; News, KJR; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.

10:00 p. m.—Ran Wilde's Orch., KGO, KEX; Reporter News, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Masterworks of Music, KSL; News, KNX; Five Star Final, KOIN.

10:30 p. m.—Reid Tanner's Orch., KSL; Carl Ravazza's Orch., KGO, KJR; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.

11:00 p. m.—Happy Gordon Rangers, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; Ken Stevens and Erwin Yeo, KSL, KOIN; News, KNX, KGO; Reveries, KOMO.

Land Good 45 Years

Newport, N. Y.—(UP)—Silage corn 15 feet high waves in the breeze on a field planted in that crop steadily for 45 years by Frank Pierce. The farmer also boasts he has applied no special fertilizer to the soil in that time. Nevertheless, each year he stows away 140 tons of stalks from the seven acres.

Anderson Ranch Dam, to be built by Bureau of Reclamation in Idaho, will be the highest earth-filled dam in the world, 330 feet.

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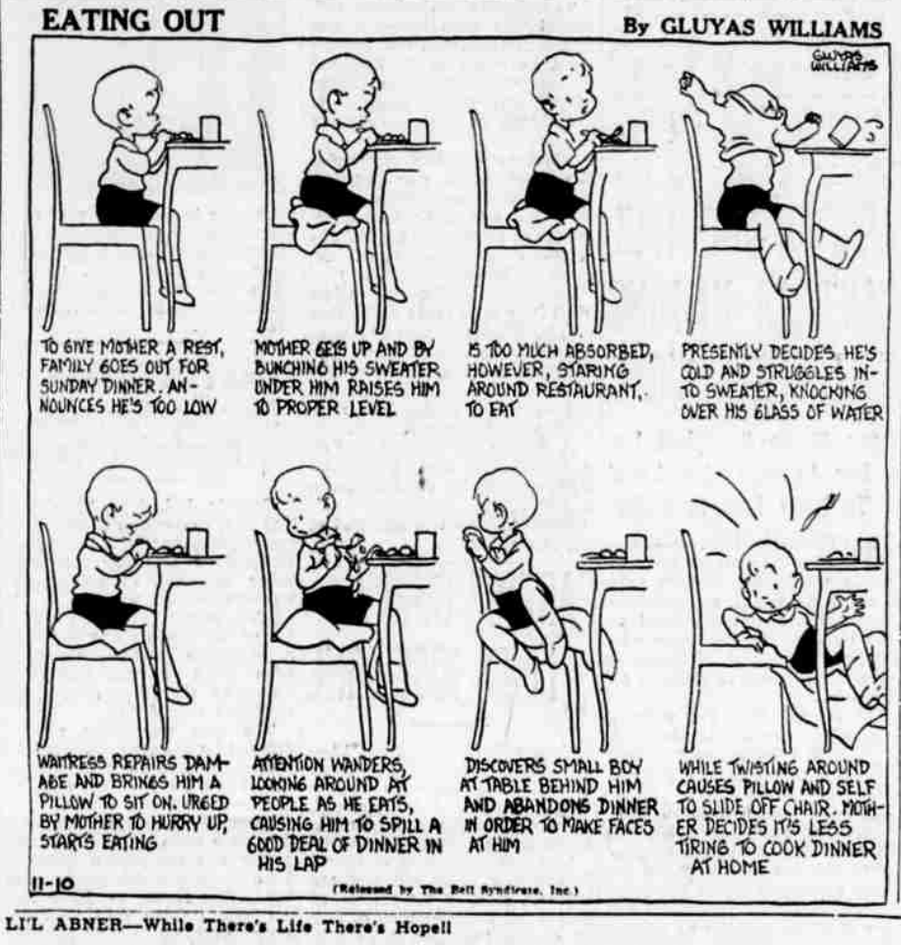
EATING OUT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX

ATHLETE

Nat Holman, as well as being a great basketball player was, in his school years, a remarkable all-around athlete. He was an all-scholastic soccer, football and baseball player in New York in 1919. The Cincinnati Reds ball club offered him a fat contract to play with them, but he preferred to stay with basketball. Last season Holman served as president of the National Basketball Coaches association and his College of the City of New York team won 16 out of 21 games and were crowned champions of New York City. His college record of games won and lost over his 22-year span as coach at C.C.N.Y. is .776.

TOMORROW: Wee Warrior!

LI'L ABNER—While There's Life There's Hope!!

By AL CAPP

TAILSPIN TOMMY—End of the "Q-Boat"!

By HAL FORREST

THE NEBBS—Something Doing

By SOL HESS

ANOTHER ERSATZ JAVA

Bern, Switzerland (AP)—Switzerland, limited by rationing to approximately two cups of coffee a day per person, has joined the rest of Europe in the search for substitutes. Large scale cultivation has been started in two provinces of a shrub that grows to about three feet, bears blue flowers and pods containing brown seeds. The seeds are said to yield an excellent brew when mixed with small portions of real coffee or chicory. And the plants grow on soil too poor for other crops.

Dream Comes True

Berne, Ind.—(UP)—LaVerne Gilliom, member of the Berne high school basketball team, told his coach he dreamed that he broke his right ankle in the season's opening game to be played the next night. He did. During the game he fell and broke both bones in his right leg just above the ankle.

San Marino, in the heart of Italy, claims to be the oldest state in Europe and to have been founded in the fourth century.

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