

and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN
WNU. RELEASE

CHAPTER V

He was freshly shaven, immaculately groomed—and, she told herself, almost a little surprised, he was downright handsome. He looked less than his forty-nine years, holding himself erectly, as though in an effort to disclaim the threat of impending overweight.

to rise to it. "It's only that—well, you have taken me a little by surprise—"

"Oh, come, now, Meggie—not this is so sudden," he protested mockingly.

"I know—I do sound like a fool," she admitted quite honestly.

The rillery was gone from his voice and his eyes when he spoke again. His tone was quiet and steady, his eyes gentle and warm.

"You have known all along, Meggie, that I love you. I think it first started when we were kids. Every man has somewhere in his mind or his heart, or both, a picture of the ideal—and there's never for a moment been anyone but you in that place for me. Everything I've done, every thought I've had for the future, has had you all woven into it and through it. It's been pretty bad these last two or three years watching you struggle to hold on to things here and not being able to help you. But now—well, all that's changed, Meggie. I've got an income that is modest enough in all



Laurence turned sharply, so that he was sitting sideways on the lounge, facing her squarely.

conscience, but it can take care of you, Meggie, and I promise it will be easier for you than it has been in the past. I'll see to that! So—will you let me, Meggie? Because I love you and because I can't visualize any kind of life without you."

There were tears in her eyes, and her heart gave a warm throb as she turned to him and said, "Yes, Larry—if you're sure you want me."

Laurence said huskily, "As if I could ever be as sure of anything else in my life!"

He took her into his arms, awkwardly, as though she had been something so infinitely fragile and precious that the slightest careless touch might destroy her; yet there was a strength and an urgent tenderness in his touch that made her heart stir unaccountably.

She loved his awkwardness, loved the fact that when he bent to kiss her, his lips touched her cheek before finding her lips. She was the one love of his life; his inexperience, his confusion, told her that. And the fact that he had not had enough experience with other girls to be deft and smooth with her endeared him to her.

There were so many things to be considered, so many problems to be settled. But tonight was no time for them. Tonight it was enough just to know one's self deeply loved; to know that she was first in Laurence's thoughts, as she had been for a long, long time.

When he left, with fifteen minutes to catch his bus, she went slowly up the stairs to her own room and sat for a while in the darkness, lit by the silver square of autumn moonlight that spilled through the window. She was ashamed of herself that she should feel, not the exultant, delicious happiness of a girl newly engaged, but only a weariness that seemed to drug her limbs and to slow her heart.

She was still awake when she heard her father come in, and, puzzled, she looked at the little clock on the dressing table. A quarter past twelve! An incredible time for him to come in from a mere walk, when he had left the house at seven. To add to the surprise of his coming in so late, she could not but mark the caution with which he mounted the stairs, the wariness with which he walked, heavily on tip-toe, past her door to his own room. Only by straining her ears could she hear his door close. And then she gave herself a mental shake and got up to prepare for bed.

The explanation of her father's late return was quite simple, after all. He had been playing pinchole with some of his cronies, probably

in the back of the barbershop, which, she knew, was a favorite meeting place for some of the rather raffish citizens who were his particular friends. And with that explanation, she crawled into bed and finally fell asleep.

The news of her engagement to Laurence was accepted without any surprise whatever in Pleasant Grove. Mrs. Stuart summed up the attitude of the town when she said, comfortably, "Well, it ain't no surprise to none of us. 'Course, we're all mighty glad and we know you and Laurence are goin' to be happy. He's a fine boy and you're both lucky to get each other."

Megan, doing the Saturday morning baking, with Annie's assistance, felt her cheeks warm as she managed the conventional reply.

"You all goin' to live in Meadersville, I 'spose?" Mrs. Stuart went on, accepting with relish a slice of the hot gingerbread Annie offered.

Megan paused in her kneading of the smooth white dough that was going to be hot rolls when she had finished with it.

"I suppose so," she admitted almost reluctantly. "It wouldn't be very sensible for Larry to try to go to and fro, on the bus. It's too uncertain."

Mrs. Stuart nodded understandingly.

"I reckon then you'll sell the farm," she contributed wisely.

"Sell the farm?" Megan repeated in astonishment. "We really haven't had time to discuss that," she admitted finally. "We aren't going to be married until the spring, and that will give us plenty of time."

"Well, now, I dunno," Mrs. Stuart countered, licking the last fragrant, spongy crumbs of the gingerbread from her fingertips. "Folks that's going to farm a year always wants to get in and settled by January, or February at the latest. If you're going to sell, you better let folks know right away. Reckin you don't have no trouble gettin' a good price for the place, farmland bein' higher than it ever has been before."

"I suppose so," Megan agreed. She was secretly, if unashamedly, glad when Mrs. Stuart took herself off.

With the last of the baking in the stove, and Annie safely in charge, Megan stripped off her apron, went out of doors, and whistled to the dogs.

Reaching the top of the hill, where the big flat stone lay at the foot of the tallest, most majestic pine, she sat down and drew up her knees and encircled them with her arms. The dogs rushed about, delirious with joy.

Below her to the left she could see the roof and the backyard of the Westbrook place. There was the remnant of an orchard on the slope back of the house; shrubbery that had never been pruned and so grew riotously tall, formed a sort of hedge along the front. The nearest neighbor to the Westbrook place was Stevens, which was around a bend in the road and so out of sight of the shabby little old house.

Behind her, Megan knew the Ridge sloped into a valley that was threaded by the small brook that watered her own meadow, and that widened out a little so that there were rich bottom lands bordering it. It was a peaceful scene in the mild autumn morning. Here in this sheltered coastal country, winter played a mild hand; there was hardly ever any ice, seldom a killing frost. Two crops a year grew from the farms, and life was peaceful and placid. Or it had been until Alicia Stevenson came to live here. Megan jerked her thoughts away from the unpleasant riddle of Alicia Stevenson, because she had something of far more importance, to herself at least, to think about.

Mrs. Stuart had taken it for granted that Megan would sell the farm when she married Laurence. No body who knew Jim MacTavish could visualize him running the farm or even living there after Megan was gone. He'd take the money Megan got from the sale and run through it and be "on" Laurence and Megan's hands for support the rest of his life. Megan was unapologetic for the thoughts; she was not conscious of any disloyalty towards her father in holding such a thought. She was simply facing facts. She knew him so well that she did not make mistaken plans that maybe Jim would look after himself. She didn't even expect it.

She looked out over the beloved acres of the old farm. Not to be here when the early spring broke, not to go out with tractor and harrow and turn back the rich dark earth, to drop the tiny seeds into the ground and witness the age-old, ever-recurring miracle that brought food and sustenance from the dark earth by means of those tiny, hard seeds. She was of the soil; she had been born to it; she had inherited it, not only from her mother but from her mother's people before her, people who had turned their backs on a known and beloved Scotland, who had faced the terrors and hardships of a brand new world, that they might have land that was their own. Land that had been cleared by her forefathers, land that had been fed and watered by the very sweat of their tired bodies; every inch of the place was part of her.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Imaginary Interviews

President Truman and His Mom.

Mom—Well, Harry, you sure do look all frazzled out. What on earth's happened to you?

Harry—What hasn't! Gosh, mom, I sometimes wish I had never left the farm.

Mom—I tried to get you to stay, son. I warned you about those city folks. You could have been a prosperous farmer today with no worries.

Harry—Shucks, mom, a farmer has his worries.

Mom—Yes, but he doesn't have a flock of newspaper editors telling him what to do next. You'd be happy right now with a farm and cows and chickens and turkeys. . . .

Harry—It would be just my luck to have to milk cows, surrounded by radio commentators. As for chickens, mom, I think I'd like 'em. There's never any doubt who's laying the eggs. So far as turkeys are concerned there are more big ones in Washington than in all Missouri.

Mom—I wish I could tell that awful John Lewis what I think of him for the way he's treated you. What did you ever do to make an enemy of him?

Harry—Nothing. Friend or foe are all alike to John.

Mom—And that railroad mess! It's terrible the way they all gang up on you, son. Why don't you tell 'em all to go to thunder and come back to Missouri for keeps while you're still able?

Harry—A President can't walk out.

Mom—It seems that everybody else can. What's all this about you seizing thing to right and left?

Harry—It's just a figure of speech. I seize mines and railroads theoretically, that's all.

Mom—You look as if they had seized you, and I'm NOT theoretically. I hate old Mrs. Gufaston more than ever.

Harry—Who is she?

Mom—When you were a baby she said you might grow up to be President!

Harry—Maybe she didn't know what it meant.

Mom—See here, Harry, what's this stuff in the papers about you refusing a pardon?

Harry—What do you mean, refusing a pardon?

Mom—It says you want a second term. Tell me it ain't so!

Harry—Gosh, mother, you told me to go to Washington and plow a straight furrow, didn't you?

Mom—I didn't say anything about an eight-year furrow. Just be sensible, my boy, and come home to Missouri where people love you, where they know you for the fine man you are and where nobody wants to scalp you every few minutes.

Harry—Think how I'd look if I quit the White House, mom!

Mom—Think how you'll look if you don't, my son!

Household Hints

ACCESSORIES crocheted of this medallion are prize winners. As lovely for scarfs and small pieces as for a cloth or spread.

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INFLATION
All the rest is quickly shot
When you break a fifty-spot.

An optimist's that guy, so strange,
Who, when he shops, expects some change.

Give thanks in torrents, not a trickle
A cup of coffee's still a nickel.
PIER.

Safer Driving Campaign
Remember this
When at the wheel:
You needn't be
A super "heel."

Bear this in mind
By hill and dell;
A car is not
A long-range shell!

A good many men whose wives
are not any too good at baking will
welcome any drive to eliminate
pastries with meals.

FOOD DRIVE CASUALTY
Three-decker sandwich,
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That extra slice covered
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Merman scored as Annie Oakley in
that new musical of Buffalo Bill's
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steaks.

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next month. Some of its arteries
certainly look it.

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ASK ME ANOTHER? A General Quiz

The Questions

- How many states in the Republic of Mexico.
- Two men were vice president under Thomas Jefferson. Who were they?
- To what do the words nimbus, cumulus, and strata refer?
- When an airplane zooms, it ascends at a steep angle? What term is used to describe a steep descent?
- Where is the Golden Rule of the Bible found?

The Answers

- Twenty-eight states.
- George Clinton and Aaron Burr.
- Clouds.
- Dive.
- In Matthew (7:12).



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WATCH THE WAY YOUR MEN FOLKS GO FOR SUGARLESS RAISIN PIE!

GOOCH'S

Ruby's Sugarless SOUR CREAM RAISIN PIE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ cups raisins
- 1½ cups water
- 1½ cups syrup (dark)
- 1 cup slightly soured cream
- 2 eggs
- 1½ tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. cloves
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vinegar

Method: Boil raisins until tender; (10 to 15 minutes). Blend Gooch's Best Flour with cream. To this add syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, vinegar, salt, egg yolks. Add this mixture to raisins, bringing to a boil; cook until thick, stirring constantly. Pour into baking pie shell; when partly cool frost with meringue made from stiffly beaten egg whites and 2 tablespoons of sugar. Brown in slow oven.

PIE CRUST

- 1 cup GOOCH'S BEST Flour
- 2 or 3 tsp. ice water
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ cup lard
- flour to roll

Method: Sift the Gooch's Best Flour, salt and baking powder together and blend in the lard. Mix with water and roll.

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