



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 drawn 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 ruse 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'se'f a li' 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 in the corn 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 spiced 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 lightened 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 to 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 Jim 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."

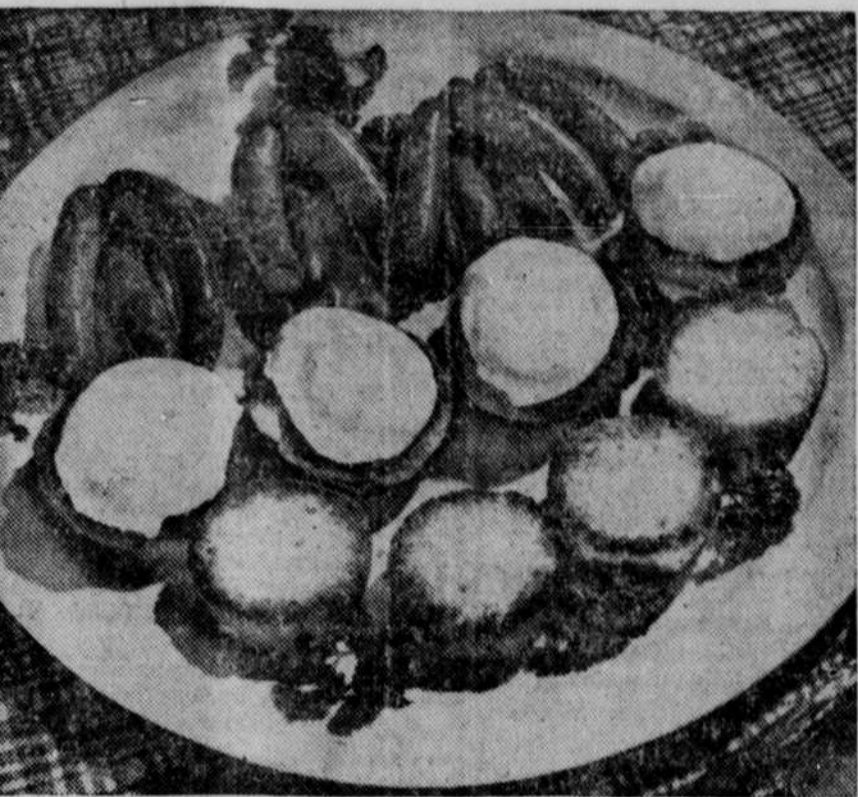
"Now don't you worry about the farm, or me," Megan assured him firmly.

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)

HOUSEHOLD MEMOS... by Lynn Chambers



Eggs Add a Thrifty Note to Menus (See Recipes Below)

Economy Pointers

When you feel that you want to be economical in the midst of rising living costs, a good idea to follow is to serve an inexpensive main dish every other day. In this way, you won't feel that you are working your family, and at the same time, there will be plenty of good eating in the economy dishes.

Eggs are plentiful and economical, so are fresh fruits and vegetables. Fish is also a mighty good food that lends nice variety to the menu.

Vegetables can be combined with other vegetables or with fish and eggs to add color as well as flavor to the food. Consider for example, these egg cutlets that are served with peas:

Egg Cutlets with Creamed Peas. (Serves 6)

- 2 tablespoons fat
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 6 diced, hard-cooked eggs
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup dry bread crumbs
- 2 cups cooked green peas
- 2 cups well-seasoned white sauce

Melt fat, add flour, then milk and seasonings. Cook, stirring constantly until thick and smooth. Add hard-cooked eggs and chill thoroughly. Shape into cutlets or patties, dip in egg, then bread crumbs. Brown on both sides in shallow fat. Heat and top each cutlet with green pea sauce.

Stuffed Baked Potatoes. 6 baked potatoes

- ½ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup deviled ham
- ½ teaspoon salt

Cut a slice from top of each potato, and scoop out the potato carefully. Mash potatoes free from lumps, then heat milk and salt and add to potatoes. Beat until light and fluffy. Add butter and deviled ham. Beat well. Pile lightly in potato shells, place on a shallow pan and bake in a very hot oven (450 degrees) for 10 minutes or until lightly browned.

Here's an easy dish that can be made with an inexpensive meat and a favorite vegetable:

Meat 'n' Corn Cakes. (Serves 6)

- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ cup dry bread crumbs
- ½ cup milk
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon pepper
- 1 egg, slightly beaten

Shape cream or cottage cheese in balls, dust lightly with paprika or roll in finely chopped nuts or olives. Pare a cucumber as you would an apple, in a continuous strip. Chill in ice water. Slice crisp green peppers and Bermuda onions very thin, separate rings and chill in ice water. Toss over vegetable or meat salad.

Cut sweet pickles almost to the stem. Spread apart to look like a fan.

LYNN SAYS:

Garnish Your Salads: Add to their appeal by making them pretty enough to eat, but always use an edible garnish.

Slice carrots paper thin, roll around your finger and chill in ice water.

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LYNN CHAMBER'S MENUS

- *Stuffed Squash Bacon
- Cottage Cheese and Fruit Salad
- Carrot and Celery Strip
- Muffins and Butter
- Chocolate Cake Beverage
- *Recipe given.

- ¾ cup diced onion
- 1 cup canned whole kernel corn
- 1½ cup tomato soup or tomato sauce

Mix ingredients in order given. Form into patties and fry in two tablespoons of fat until golden brown. Place in a greased casserole and top with tomato soup or sauce. Bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees) for 45 minutes.

Sausage and Oyster Loaf. (Serves 6)

- 1 pound bulk pork sausage
- 1 pint oysters ground while raw
- 2 cups soft bread crumbs
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten

Mix all ingredients together and place in an ungreased loaf pan. Bake in a slow (325 degree) oven until loaf leaves edges of the pan. Drain excess fat off occasionally. Serve with hot hollandaise sauce and green vegetables.

Before you start using your newly canned vegetables, make sure all the old ones are gone from the shelf. Here is fine supper dish that will use many home-canned vegetables easily:

Country Style Vegetables. (Serves 6)

- ½ pound bacon or salt pork
- 1½ cups onions, sliced
- 1½ cups canned carrots
- 1½ cups canned string beans
- 1½ cups canned kernel corn
- 1½ cups potatoes, sliced
- 1 cup medium white sauce
- ¾ cup buttered crumbs

Cook bacon or salt pork slightly, then add onion and cook until crisp and brown. Arrange vegetables in layers in a buttered casserole and sprinkle each layer with bacon or salt pork. Pour white sauce over all. Top with buttered crumbs and add a dash of paprika. Bake in a moderate oven 20 to 25 minutes until casserole is browned.

Cream vegetables — any vegetable that will hold its shape, and serve with bits of diced leftover chicken or ham. This makes a nourishing, week-night supper.

The long yellow squash are delicious when properly prepared. You'll not need any meat with this one:

***Stuffed Cymling Squash.** (Serves 6)

- 3 medium sized cymling squash
- ½ cup thick white sauce
- 1 tablespoon grated onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped green pepper
- 3 chopped hard-cooked eggs
- 1 cup grated cheese
- ½ cup buttered crumbs

Boil squash 10 minutes. Drain and scoop out center. Mash pulp, add white sauce, onion, green pepper, cheese and eggs. Fill shells with mixture, sprinkle with crumbs and paprika. Place in a shallow pan containing a little water. Bake in a moderate oven 20 to 25 minutes.

Veal Rice Loaf (Serves 7)

- 2 pounds ground veal shoulder
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 4 eggs, well beaten
- ¾ cup milk
- ¾ cup chopped pimiento
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Salt and pepper

Have meats ground together. Combine with rice. Season with salt and pepper, paprika and pimiento. Moisten with eggs and milk. Pack into a greased loaf pan or ring mold and bake in 350 degree oven for 1½ hours. Serve with mushroom sauce. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

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