

THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER YEAR

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W.N.U. SERVICE

SYNOPSIS

Anna ("Silver") Grenoble, daughter of "Gentleman Jim," formerly of the community, but known as a gambler, news of whose recent murder in Chicago has reached the town, comes to Heron River to live with Sophronia Willard, Jim Grenoble's sister, who is at the depot to meet her husband, and stepsons, Roderick and Jason. The Willards own only half of the farm on which they live, the other half being Anna Grenoble's. On Silver's arrival Duke Melbank, shiftless youth, makes himself obnoxious. Roderick is on the eve of marriage to Corinne Meader, daughter of a failed banker. Silver says she wants to live on the farm, and has no intention of selling her half, which the Willards had feared. She meets Roddy that night. Silver tells Sophronia ("Phronie," by request) something—but by no means all—of her relations with Gerald Lucas, gambler friend of her father. Roddy marries Corinne, and brings his bride home. Corinne has a maid, Paula, who seems to attract Jason. Silver again meets Gerald Lucas, who has established a gambling resort near town. She introduces him to Corinne Willard, much against her will. Friendship between Lucas and Corinne develops, to Silver's dismay.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

In the laughter and confusion, Silver was at first too bewildered to do anything more than gasp for breath in the smothering embrace that held her. It was a moment or two before she recognized the face of the man who had whirled her into his arms. Then she saw that it was Duke Melbank. She struggled to free herself, only to be clutched closer to his swaying body. She was aware now that he was thoroughly drunk.

"Let's get acquainted, Cutie!" Duke Melbank muttered thickly against her cheek. "I've liked you ever since I saw you that night in Chi."

"Let me go!" Silver breathed fiercely.

"Aw—can't you give a guy a break?" he persisted.

Silver turned her head in a frantic effort to make some sign to Roddy, but he was at the other end of the floor.

"Let me go!" she demanded again, and struggled to break away from him.

"Aw, come on," Duke burred in a cajoling voice as he swung her bodily into a dim corner. "Be a sport, kid!"

It had all happened so quickly that probably no one on the crowded floor had taken notice of it. Silver succeeded in freeing one arm to throw all her strength into the blow she struck across his grinning face.

"You got fire, eh?" he chortled. "I like that in a girl. You and me—"

"Roddy!" Silver gasped, flinging herself about just as Roddy Willard appeared, alone.

Duke dropped Silver's wrist as though it had scorched him. "Haw-haw! Can't Silver and me have a little privacy without—"

"Get out of here, Duke," Roddy interrupted quietly. "And get out quietly or I'll have to throw you out."

With a malevolent glare at Roddy, Duke started to shamble away. "You can't get away with this, Willard," he muttered. "And you don't need to think I don't know what I'm doing."

He grinned insinuatingly at Silver and Roddy stepped quickly toward him. Duke drew back, and made his unsteady way down the ladder.

Luckily, Silver reflected, there had been only one or two witnesses to the unpleasant scene.

Roddy looked down at her. "Shall we dance, Silver?" he asked. "I think it would be best—considering everything."

Her eyes half closed, she nodded, and Roddy drew her into his arms.

A fierce, impersonal sort of tenderness toward her came over him as he led her into the dance. She seemed to be without substance—like smoke, or like the blue-gray mist over a meadow just before dawn. Silver did not speak. This tumult enclosed by her passive body, she thought in desperation, had begun at the very instant when Roddy—a very matter-of-fact knight, indeed—had rescued her from the loathsome attentions of Duke Melbank. Horror lest he should discover what she knew now for a certainty—that she loved him as she had never loved anyone before—ran through her veins like ice.

When after an agonizing eternity the intermission came, she stepped back from him and looked up with a dazed smile.

"I'm going to the house," she told

him, her voice running headlong, plunging, she thought, into disaster. "If Phronie asks for me—tell her I have a headache—I want to be alone."

Roddy, with a troubled frown, put out his hand to take her arm, but Silver moved hurriedly away.

A few minutes later, behind the closed door of her own room, she sat down in the darkness and stared out at the crisp autumn tracery of the leaves of the great oak against the stars.

"To think—when the real thing came," she whispered dully to the square pattern of stars and leaves. "It had to be wrong, too!"

The district buzzed with talk of the opening of the Emerald Bay club for the winter season. The fashionable folk who would come out from the cities for week-ends at the club would be free with their money and the tradesmen would benefit.

The hunt dinner and ball celebrated the close of the big-game season in the north. Roddy attended with Corinne, whose radiance filled him with pride and a secret, shamed alarm. Silver sent her regards to Gerald, and spent the evening playing cribbage with old Roderick.

The following day, at twilight, with a pent-up feeling she could no longer endure, Silver saddled Rusty and rode into Heron River to get the evening mail. In the post office she met Freda Michener.

"We missed you last night—at the club," Freda said.

"Have a good time?" Silver asked absently.

"Hasn't Corinne told you? It was gorgeous!"

"I haven't seen Corinne yet. I think she has been sleeping in today. They didn't get home till dawn."

Freda dropped her voice to an embarrassed whisper. "Roddy Willard had better watch his step. I saw Corinne—well, she was only out walking under the trees with Gerald Lucas—but you know how people talk."

Silver laughed nervously. "Nonsense, Freda!" she protested. "Forget about it—and keep it to yourself, please. City people don't think anything of such things."

With the one letter for Roddy which Tillie Fhik thrust out to her through the wicket, Silver rode slowly home, unsaddled Rusty and turned him into his stall. Then she went reluctantly to the big house to give Roddy his letter.

Corinne called to her from the living room in a voice that seemed to Silver to be portentously vivified and gay.

"You missed a swell time last night, my dear!" Corinne cried as Silver stepped into the room.

Roddy looked up a bit wearily. He lifted his hand toward her in greeting.

"It must have been fun," Silver said hurriedly. "Here's a letter for you, Roddy."

He got up and took the letter. Corinne at once sprang up and stood at his shoulder, her eyes upon the unfolded sheet.

Then she uttered a squeal of joy. "Roddy! A position at the University farm! Darling!"

Roddy glanced down again, not without pleasure, at the letter. His patient experimenting with yellow corn . . . his working under difficulties . . . his devotion to an idea . . . the position would be open by January first . . .

Silver, staring at him, felt her brain spin and turn over and then came to a cold, clear pause. "Have you been offered a position, Roddy?" she asked in a voice as calm as she could make it.

"At the University, Silver!" Corinne burst out. "Oh, it's—I can scarcely believe it!"

"Don't get yourself all worked up, Corrie," Roddy begged. "Old Neal Anthony has been trying to lure me into something like this ever since I left college. It seems hard to convince him that I'm a farmer, not a white-collar man."

Corinne looked suddenly dumfounded. "You don't mean—you aren't going to turn it down, are you?" she gasped.

"I've turned Neal Anthony down before," Roddy replied quietly. "I see no reason why I should change my mind now."

Silver felt that she had frozen into her chair. It was only with a supreme effort that she got up and fled from the room. Corinne's voice following her, piercing and furious with outrage at Roddy.

For two hours after supper, Roddy sat with his father and Sopro-

nia and Jason in the kitchen of the stone house while they discussed Anthony's offer. Jason was quick to sympathize with Roddy's contempt for a job where he would become a mere hireling at the beck and call of others, though he was forced to recognize the narrowly calculated means by which the family would have to manage throughout the winter.

"I could take the place over, Rod," he said slowly. "With just the rest of us here—we wouldn't need so much. Perhaps we ought to sell those six heirs, instead of—"

"Of course," Roddy interrupted patiently. "I know you could swing it, Jase. But the point is that I want to be in on it."

"After we marry, my boy," Old Roderick remarked thoughtfully, "we travel in pairs. You must remember that."

"I've thought rings around that, dad," Roddy said tersely. "But I always come around to the fact that down in Iowa they are having farmers' strikes and picketings and bloodshed. I'm one of those guys, too. If we were in that territory we'd be in the mess—we wouldn't be protected by a fancy job."

It was Sophronia who came out boldly with her opinion that Corinne would never take to life on the farm.

"I feel sorry for the poor girl," Phronie declared vehemently. "She married you because you were good-looking and smart, Roddy, and she liked you. But she saw you had something more to you than just slavin' day and night for a living! It's up you, Roddy—"

"Yes," Roddy said crisply. "It's up to me. I'm d-d glad it is. Corinne will know that she married me. Not an idea she had about me."

"Well, that may be," his father reminded him. "But one bad year is enough to put a blight on a marriage, my boy, as well as on a crop."

"There's always another year!" Roddy retorted with a short laugh. In the end Roddy found himself battling alone against all three members of his family. Silver had taken no part in the discussion. As she listened, however, a conviction

grew within her. Roddy Willard must accept the position that had been offered him. There was, as he had said, always another year for the farmer, but that had nothing to do with the problem. She knew—as the others knew, indeed—what was in his heart when he had said that. But she knew what none of them knew. Had she not heard Freda Michener talk that afternoon in the post office? Had she not seen enough herself?

At last Jason got up and left. Sophronia banked the fire, and old Roderick went off to bed.

"Well, I'll see you all tomorrow," Roddy said heavily and started for the door.

"Wait a minute, Roddy," Silver called out.

He turned and looked at her curiously.

"What's on your mind?" Roddy asked Silver, as soon as Sophronia had gone.

Silver laughed up at him with disarming naivete as she stood before him.

"I thought I'd just wait until everybody else got through talking," she said. Her glance fell for an instant from his. Then, summoning all her fortitude, she spoke. "You've got to take this position, Roddy. You are a fool to stay on here—starvation staring you in the face—with a respectable living offered you."

"My dear child!" Roddy exclaimed. "You look almost motherly just now. You want me to take the job—for my own good, eh?"

"That's part of it," she admitted lightly. "But—I agree with Phronie. Corinne hates the farm."

"Corinne will be all right when she gets to understand it a little better."

Suddenly, Silver's body stiffened. "There's something more, too," she said, her chin rising coldly, indifferently. "When your lease is up next summer, I'm going to sell my section."

She saw him blink for a moment as though he had not heard aright. Then he took a step toward her. "I don't believe you," he said. "What has changed your mind about this place all of a sudden? There's something else back of this."

"There isn't!" she burst out passionately. "For God's sake, get out before—before you're ruined!"

Her words seemed to be scurrying over each other now, she thought in panic. But he should not wring the truth from her—he should not!

Roddy's voice came in a hoarse whisper from his clenched teeth. "You, too! My G—d, I thought you had more fight in you than that."

He turned away from her and moved toward the door, then looked back quickly. "All right—go ahead! I might have known what to expect when I began dealing with a woman. Well—sell it tomorrow if you want to. But I'm going to stay until I'm kicked off."

"You are being a fool!" she told him, starting to keep back the hot tears. "What will that bring you?"

"It won't bring me the kind of treachery you've handed me, by G—d!" he barked, and plunged into the darkness, slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THANKSGIVING day the first snow fell in Heron River. Jason and Paula and Steve had come down to the old house for turkey dinner in the early afternoon. After the feast, Silver dressed warmly and set out alone for a walk across the fields to the Flathe place.

The brooding melancholy of the day filled her with a sweet, aching nostalgia, a yearning too profound to name. To run away from Roddy Willard would mean that she would run away from these fields—from her very birthright. And there would never be any real escape in such a flight, as there had been in her flight from Gerald Lucas. Gerald had not been real, anyway; the hard ground beneath her foot seemed to tell her that now.

She had been too selfishly absorbed during the past few days to give any thought to what Sophronia might feel about her going away. Poor old Phronie—how little she knew of what was going on about her. The more she thought of it the more convinced Silver became that Roddy Willard would remain on this land until he was forced to leave it. Her threat to sell the land had done nothing except to make him more stubborn in his determination to remain. She was made desolate by the knowledge that he was as passionately devoted to this land as she was herself.

She thought vehemently, tears dimming her eyes now, not for any unhappy, outrageous love of Roddy Willard would she give up her life here!

The Flathe children greeted her with their usual uproarious good humor. These Norwegian youngsters lived in a merry cosmos of their own where even poverty was something to laugh at. Six of them there were, ranging from seven years of age to nineteen, with enough boisterous enthusiasm to turn the little farmhouse into a babel. Silver played the decrepit little organ, and sang with the children until the gathering darkness warned her that it was time to leave.

On the way home, she came upon Jason and Paula beside a thicket of hazelnut bushes. Paula looked at Silver without surprise or embarrassment, and Jason's dark eyes smiled at her.

The three began their walk home together. When they came before the big house, Jason paused. "Come in, Silver," he invited. "I have something to show you. I've been making a picture of Paula," he confessed. "And I thought maybe you'd like to look at it."

"Oh—why, Jase—I'd love to see it!" Silver replied eagerly, going toward the door.

They entered the house and Jason led the way to the attic and lighted the lamp. In the "studio," on a birchwood easel reclined a florid but far from unrecognizable portrait of Paula Gobel.

For some time Silver had suspected that there was more between Jason and Paula than they were willing to reveal to their little world. Whatever ultimate expression it achieved mattered not at all. It was there and they shared it.

"Jason, I'm amazed!" she burst forth at last. "Why—it's really—really great!"

"Gosh!" Jason sighed with relief. "I was scared to show it to you. I thought maybe I'd worked it over too much. But do you think it's good enough to give to Phronie for a Christmas present? That was my idea. She likes pictures, you know."

"She'd love it, Jase!" Silver assured him. "I know she will. But why don't you ask me to sit for you some time?"

Jason smiled a bit sheepishly. "I'm not so good as all that. You've got—I don't know what it is." He shrugged apologetically.

"Well—you're not as pretty as Corinne, for instance. But there's something about your face—I don't know—but it would take a real artist to catch it. I'd like to give you one of my new pictures, though, if you want one."

"I'd love to have one, Jase," she said slowly. "I'd be very proud of it."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Great Stone Blocks Are Island of Guam Mystery

The great blocks of stone which, by some unknown process, were hoisted in place to build the Egyptian pyramids have caused many to marvel, yet on the island of Guam there are stones larger than those used in the pyramids, evidently marking the burial place of an ancient native chief.

The huge stone blocks weigh ap-

proximately 2,500 pounds each, and when found one rested on the other. Both are of coral formation. The finding of many such burial places on Guam indicates that this island once had a big population. Little is known about its early inhabitants.

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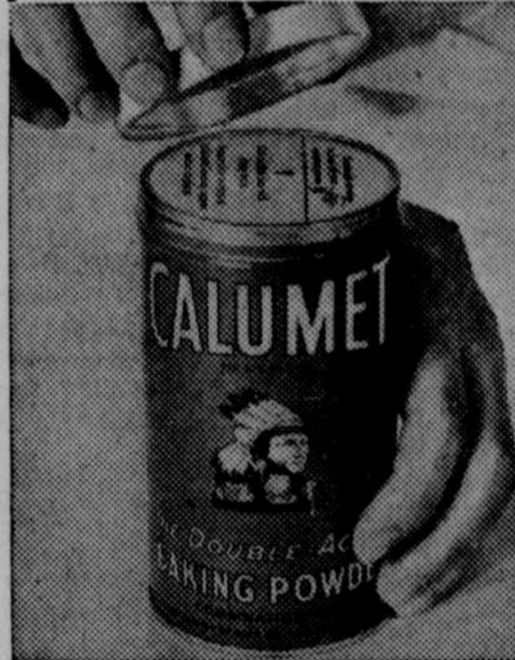
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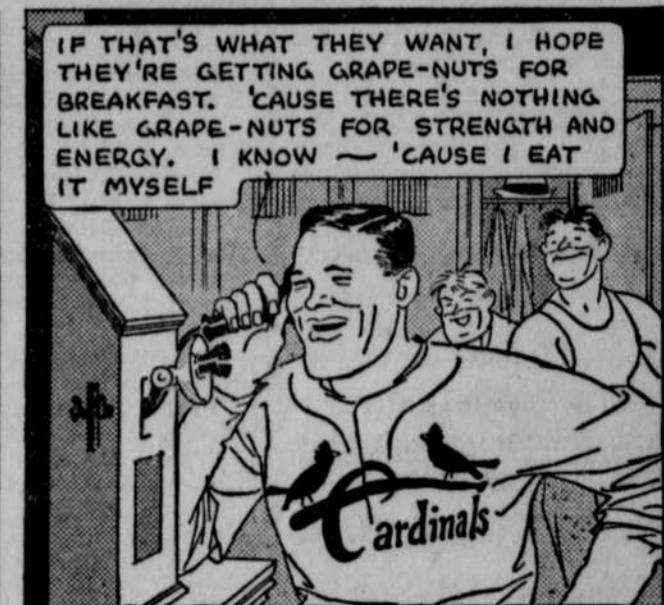
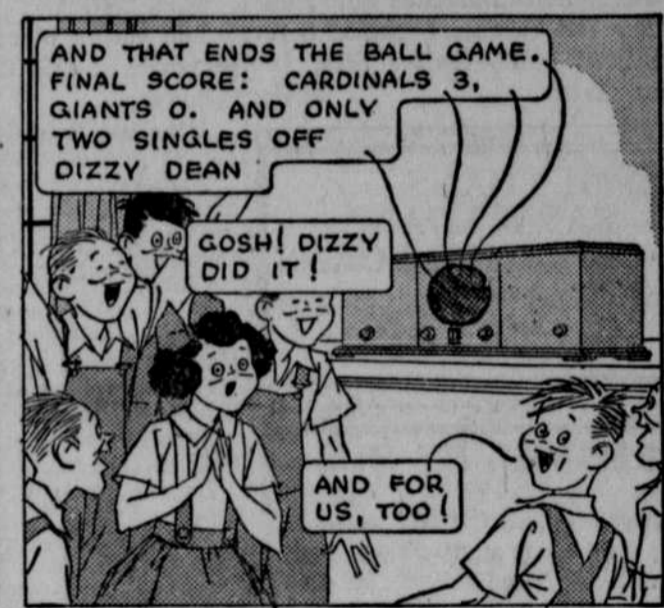
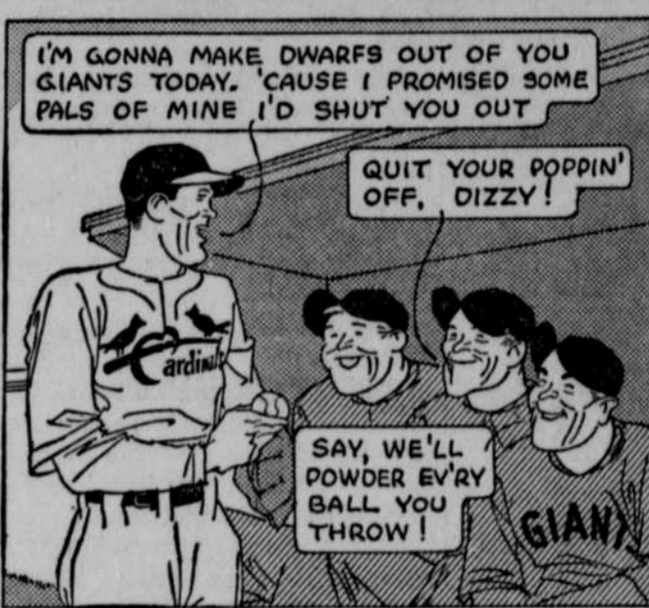


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