

THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER YEAR

MARtha OSTENSO



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. Sophronia's household consists of 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.

CHAPTER V—Continued

The man was Gerald Lucas. For an instant, as Gerald climbed down from his car and stepped toward her, Silver contemplated flight. Instead, when the impulse had passed, she thrust her hands into her pockets and looked coolly up at him.

Gerald seized her hands. "Silver—what's the matter with you?" he demanded. "Get in and we'll take a drive and talk things over."

"No," Silver said firmly, "I don't want to go driving—and I have nothing to talk over, Gerald."

He put his hand lightly on her arm and drew her toward the car. "Listen to me, Silver," he urged. "What's got into you? I didn't come out here to kidnap you, though I'd like to. You've grown even more luscious—if that's possible. Sit in the car and let's talk."

For a moment she hesitated, then with a shrug she got into the car. She surveyed him with detachment, and wondered what had happened to her since she had last seen him. He was as rakishly good-looking as ever, his eyes as full of confidence and meaningful laughter as ever. But it was as though she looked at him now through an obscuring film.

Gerald looked critically down at her. "You should have known better than to try running away from me, sweetheart. You didn't even give me a chance to tell you how sorry I was—about your father."

"I'm trying to forget that," Silver said briefly. "How did you find out where I had gone?"

He pinched her chin lightly and smiled. "Little Gerald finds out just about everything he wants to know. Old Ben Hubbard is a friend of mine. So I came out here and snooped before I looked you up. And lo and behold! I've got the very thing I've wanted for some time. A resort on Emerald bay, my love! You see, I had a few grand salted away—"

"You had to get out of Chicago, didn't you, Gerald?" Silver asked, and looked at him levelly.

"Well, now, my dear," he protested, "do we have to go into that? I'll admit—things were getting warmish. But this—or these—are the wide open spaces. And here I am with a peach of a lay-out up on that lake. It's right on the highway so I can keep it open for the winter trade. All I need now is a kiss from you, Silver."

She drew back deliberately. "No."

He looked at her narrowly, then leaned toward her with a darkened face. "I don't quite follow you, Silver. I thought it was all fixed between us. I've been on the level with you, haven't I? We've been everything to each other, haven't we? Now, what's it all about? I thought you ran away because of your father's death. I couldn't believe it was because of me, Silver. Honestly, I thought you expected me to follow you. Well—I think you ought to do some of the talking."

She had been staring vacantly past him at the darkening west. Some of the old fire was stirring within her at the sound of his voice and the nearness of him. But it was, she told herself with the deeper part of her consciousness, only the quick and vanishing fire of a will-o-the-wisp. In some way she had changed. She was no longer swayed completely by Gerald Lucas.

"Yes, I ought to talk, Gerald. I know that," she said. "But I don't know how to tell you." She brought her eyes even with his own. "It's just that—I've got over all the—"

She hesitated.

"Are you trying to tell me that you don't love me any more?" he prompted.

"Oh, Gerald!" she cried in desperation. "Do you believe I ever loved you? Could you call that love

—in that feverish atmosphere? You—you appealed to me in a certain way, that's all. I know that now, Gerald. And I don't want to go back to what I left behind me. I don't want that kind of life—yours and—Dad's."

He looked at her hard, and she saw an almost wistful disappointment enter his eyes.

"Well—of course—that lets me out," he said slowly. "But you happen to be the only girl I've ever wanted to marry, Silver. And I'm thirty-two now." He was thoughtful for a moment. "Are you sure you won't want to go back after you have had a taste of this life? I can't see Silver Grenoble living in a place like this. It's all right for you to like it—but the place has to like you, remember, or it's going to raise h—l with you. Did you ever see a prize pup trying to make up to a pack of mongrels? It's a lot of fun—if you don't happen to care for the prize pup."

"I'm taking that chance," she retorted. "Anyhow—I don't consider myself a prize pup. I have a good deal to live down, Gerald."

He patted her interlocked fingers. "I'm sorry you feel that way about it, darling," he said softly. "Guess I'm to blame."

Silver's free laugh rang out. "I should say you were not! If I do anything, it's because I want to, whether it's right or wrong!"

Gerald gave a low whistle. "There speaks Jim Grenoble!" he said soberly. "But I'll believe you, Silver. And I wish you luck. If it doesn't work out, I won't be far away. At least not for awhile. Do you want me to drive you up to the house? I'll promise not to set foot on one little bit of your sacred—"

"Gerald!" Silver interrupted sharply. She thought quickly for a moment. "All right—drive me up."

Quite abruptly and mysteriously, her relationship with Gerald Lucas had changed—had changed so that it seemed it had never existed. Less than a month ago, his very presence would have thrown her into a panic of wild emotion. Was it her father's death that had made her a different person, or was it this uncompromising landscape, in which Gerald and his kind seemed a little absurd? Both, perhaps. But there was something else, too—something which she could not pull up to the light and analyze.

Gerald was turning the car in at the Willard gate. And there, between poplar trees that were defined vaguely against a moon that was like a rising red world, stood Corinne in her white dress.

Silver got out of the car. Gerald swung it about to leave immediately, but Corinne came toward it and



The Man Was Gerald Lucas.

stood for a moment in the glare of the lights. Silver looked at Corinne and then at Gerald. Suddenly, as she saw Gerald's eyes dwelling upon that white figure standing in the light, there came an instant's conviction, lucid and electrifying, that nothing would ever be the same again.

"This is Gerald Lucas," Silver said quickly, and hesitated.

Gerald smiled and put forth a hand. "And what's the other half of it?" he asked.

"I'm Corinne Willard," Corinne replied as she took Gerald's hand.

He gave her a little half-amused, searching look that Silver understood only too well.

"Corinne Willard?" Gerald re-

peated. "And where have you been all my life?"

"Where nice girls always are," Corinne replied archly. "Living at home with mother."

"Just a nice, old-fashioned girl," Gerald bantered amiably. "Well, come along out to Emerald bay some night when mother isn't around. Bring her out with you, Silver."

Silver stepped to the side of the car.

"Gerald," she said, "you're going to be late for your appointment. And besides—"

"Right-o, Silver!" Gerald put in immediately. "I was forgetting. See you both later."

The car shot into the road and vanished beyond the thicket where the highway turned to the south.

"Well—I must say—you have a way of dismissing people—" Corinne observed.

"I just happen to know Gerald," Silver said quietly.

"So I have heard," Corinne remarked. "He's not at all what I imagined him. And he is awfully good looking, isn't he?"

Silver was thoughtful for a moment.

"Corinne," she said at last, "I don't want Gerald around here at all."

"Well, it's no affair of mine, my dear," Corinne said lazily, and began calling to her dog, who was exploring the underbrush on the hill.

Something deep within Silver trembled. She saw Corinne turn away and go toward the house. From among the shadows under the great oak came the sound of Jason playing a quaint old lullaby. The music, mingling with the unbroken churring of the frogs, seemed to come from far away, from a past of half-remembered, half-forgotten things.

CHAPTER VI

JUST before sundown, Silver rode out to bring the cattle in from the pasture. On the way home she paused beside a stripped field of barley, where the men were at work. A couple of them waved to her. Roddy waved to her and Silver, waving back, remembered irrelevantly that Corinne had not been present at the midday meal. She had gone to luncheon at the Richters', in their cottage on Twin Deer lake.

Silver shook her bridle rein and was about to turn away when she heard a scream from the field. She swung around quickly and saw Roddy jump toward a tow-headed youth who was standing near him. The engine stopped instantly and the men hurried to where Roddy was leaning over the boy. Silver slipped down from her horse and in a moment had crept under the fence and was beside Roddy. The boy had stumbled and caught two fingers of one hand in a cog-wheel of the thrasher. The fingers were two bloody tatters hanging from the hand. The boy was lying on the ground now, his face a deathlike pallor under the sunburn, his lips writhing back from his clenched teeth.

Roddy looked up. "Has anyone a clean handkerchief?"

Nobody responded. Silver had knelt beside Roddy, who was keeping a vise-like grip on the bleeding hand.

"Use this, Roddy," she said quickly, and whipped off her clean white linen blouse. With her shoulders bared to the rosy light of the low sun, she tore the material into strips and gave them to Roddy while he made a bandage and a tourniquet for the boy's mangled hand.

"All right, Jimmie!" Roddy said at last, and lifted the boy gently by his feet. "Start the truck, Jason. You'd better go down to Maynard and let Doc Woodward attend to it."

In a minute the truck had rattled away. It had all happened so quickly, it seemed to Silver that she had scarcely drawn a breath. Roddy was coming back to her from the wagon that stood off a short distance from the threshing machine. He was carrying his own grimy jacket. She permitted him to button it up to her breast, while she thrust her hands down into the pockets in an effort to control their trembling.

"That wasn't very pleasant, was it?" he said with a grim smile. "But those things happen now and then." When she did not reply, he laid his hand on her shoulder. "You were a brick, Silver—to do what you did. But you're pretty unstrung. Perhaps you'd better ride home in the wagon with me. Rusty will find his way back alone."

In another moment, she knew, she would burst into nervous tears. Without looking at him she said hurriedly, "No, thanks, Roddy. I'm—all right."

She turned away abruptly and rushed back to the fence, crawled under it and called to the horse, who had wandered off a short distance.

All the way home, beneath Silver's shuddering memory of the ragged clots of the boy's fingers, dwelt the thought of Roddy's dark face and his kindling changed eyes.

While Roddy was washing in the tin basin on the bench outside the house—placed there for the use of the crew—Phronie came out of the kitchen.

"What's this I hear about the Healy boy?" she asked. "What happened?"

Roddy told her.

"Well, I declare it just seems

something has to happen every year," Phronie said. "And he's such a nice boy, too. Well, hurry up and get washed. Supper is ready."

"Is Corinne home yet?" Roddy asked.

"She's upstairs changin' her clothes. Have you seen Silver anywhere? She went to fetch the cows, but I haven't seen her since."

Roddy told her then of the part Silver had played in getting the boy ready to go to Maynard with Jason.

"Well—that girl beats me!" Phronie declared. "But then—she's just like her mother. I remember—"

"You'd better go in and look after things, ma," Roddy interrupted.

Roddy hastened upstairs to put on clean clothing before he sat down



"I Don't Know at All," She Objected. "I Should Think—"

to supper. On the landing he met Corinne. She was dressed in a clinging green chiffon gown that came almost to her beautifully shod feet.

"Hello, lovely!" he greeted her in a low voice.

She laughed and ruffled his hair. "There's a corn roast and a dance over at the lake tonight, darling," she told him. "I thought I might as well dress now. Aren't you going to kiss me?"

Roddy grinned, then drew her to him and kissed her throat.

"You've washed already?" she asked, surprised. "Don't tell me you washed in that tin basin outside."

"Certainly. Why not? I've done it for years."

"You have a bathroom upstairs, haven't you?"

"Listen, kid," he protested. "You don't know it, but the men are funny about such things. I don't want them to feel—well, you know what I mean."

"I don't know at all," she objected. "I should think—"

He swung her to him and held her close for a moment. "You're much too pretty to talk to me in that tone," he remonstrated. "Go on down—I'll be with you in a jiffy."

But as soon as he had left her, his mood grew sober again. He could not forget young Jim Healy and his poor crushed hand. Then, curiously, with no obscure lightening of his spirit, there came to him the vision of Silver Grenoble, in her riding breeches, kneeling there on the field in the sunset, her shoulders bare above the plain silk bodice. Perhaps he had been all wrong about her. Perhaps she belonged here as essentially as he did himself.

Roddy entered the dining room. Before he took his place at the table, he glanced over at Corinne, faintly presiding at his head and smiling graciously upon her over-alled and plaid-shirted guests. Phronie and Paula stood, one on either side of the table, serving the men when necessary, or replenishing some dish or other from the kitchen. Silver had remained at the stone house, to make supper for old Roderick, who had not been feeling well for the past week.

It was Corinne's first appearance at table with the threshing crew. Roddy winced, in spite of himself, as he saw her draw back quickly when a brawny arm reached across her bosom in a lunge toward the butter dish. Finally someone made a too graphic comment on the day's accident, and Corinne covered her eyes. It was the last time she sat at the table with the men.

An evening or two later, Roddy returned from visiting the Healy boy to find Corinne impatiently awaiting him.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"The Richters called up this afternoon and I promised we'd be over tonight. It's their last party before they go back to town."

"Corrie," Roddy said in a voice that was slow with weariness, "I've been out to parties till I'm ready to drop. I'm fed up with it. How do you expect a man to do his work and go out to some d—n fool party four or five times a week?"

For a moment there was silence. Then Corinne said, "But I promised them we'd be there."

"I can't help it," Roddy protested. "If you want to go, take the car and run over for an hour or so. I'm so doggone tired I could—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Hamburg Steak Is Good Choice

Easiest Way to Cook It Is to Season Meat and Form Into Flat Cake.

Hamburg steak is a good choice for the meat at a quick meal. The easiest and quickest way to cook it is to season the meat and form it into one flat cake. Place this under the broiler or in a hot oven. When it has browned take it out and sprinkle with finely minced raw onion. If it is baked in the oven the onion may be put on top before cooking and browned.

Another way of seasoning Hamburg steak is to make it "white with salt, black with pepper, yellow with mustard" before cooking. I am suggesting rice instead of potatoes to serve with the meat.

Rice can be cooked in about twenty minutes. After it is drained it may be stirred into a frying pan containing about two tablespoonsful of melted bacon fat and a quarter of a cup of minced green pepper. It should be stirred with a fork over the fire until heated through.

New cabbage, shredded, will cook in boiling water in about ten minutes. Be sure not to cover it while cooking. It is good dressed with a little cream or top milk after it has been drained.

Grape conserve is a favorite winter jam, and if you get an opportunity to buy a basket of grapes at a reasonable price you will get full value for your money, for grape conserve and buttered toast are an unbeatable combination.

The ever-popular dill pickle is one which is usually made in large quantities, but there is really no reason why they cannot be made in smaller lots, if desired.

Dill Pickles.

- Grape leaves
- Bunch of dill
- Cabbage leaves
- 1 1/2 gallons water
- 1 lb. coarse salt
- 1 peck 6-inch cucumbers

Add salt to water, bring to boiling point, skim. Scrub cucumbers, dry, put layer in bottom of crock, add layer of grape leaves, then bunch of dills. Repeat until all cucumbers are used, and cover top with cabbage

leaves. Put ten-pound weight on and fill with brine. Cover and let stand until cucumbers are transparent and light in color—two to three weeks.

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What Next?

Municipal Judge Cyrus of Charleston, W. Va., ordered a truck driver to get on his truck and keep going. Now the judge has a letter from the truck driver, posted at Clifton Forge, Va.: "The truck burned up this morning. What do I do now?"



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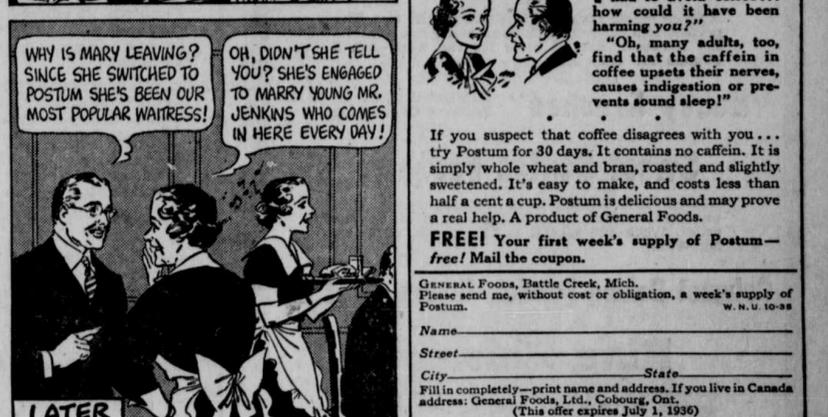
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