

THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER YEAR

MARTHA OSTENSO



W.N.U. SERVICE

SYNOPSIS

The little town of Heron River is eagerly awaiting the arrival of 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. Sophronia Willard, Jim Grenoble's sister, with whom the girl is to live, 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 declares her eagerness to live on the farm, and says she has no intention of selling her half, which the Willards had feared. She meets Roddy, by chance, that night. He is somewhat distant. Silver tells Sophronia ("Phronie," by request) something—but by no means all—of her relations with Gerald Lucas, gambler friend of her father.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"They're all in there, too. That corn he grew last year was two weeks earlier than anything else in the district. Now he's crossin' it with a good yielder to bring it up to where it'll grow as much to the acre as the other stuff. Oh, I don't pretend to know half of what he's talkin' about, let alone what he's doin'."

Jason came down the slope from the barn, and Silver slipped out to fetch Roddy.

She stood hesitantly for a moment in the open doorway of his workshop, and watched him where he bent over a long plank table. On each of a half dozen white pasteboard cards on the table there was a sprinkling of what seemed to be corn kernels, and so intent was Roddy on the specimens before him that he was unaware of her until she spoke.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Roddy," Silver said, "but supper's ready."

"Oh!" He glanced up absently. Then his gaze seemed to become arrested upon her; but she knew that it was the concentrated stare of a person whose thoughts are hard on something else. "That ought to work!" he exclaimed under his breath, and she saw him go to a filing cabinet in a corner, remove a sheaf of papers and jot down some memorandum.

Silver was about to turn away when he called her.

"Why don't you come in and look this place over?" he inquired. "Girls are usually bored with it—but since you have an interest in it—" He laughed in an odd way and came toward her.

"I'd love to know all about it," she said as she glanced around the room. "But Phronie is waiting for us. Couldn't we come in later?"

"Well," he replied apologetically, "I've got to go to town for a haircut—and I have my packing to do yet tonight. But Jason can show you around," he went on hastily.

They had come to the screen door of the kitchen, and Jason opened it for them.

"You don't seem to be in any hurry to come to the 'last supper,'" Jason remarked drily.

"None of your irreverence, young man!" Roddy cried, and prodded his brother jovially in the ribs. "You have a serious job on your hands tonight. You've got to show this child my hair—and your own. Her mind has a scientific as well as an artistic turn—eh, what, Silver?"

He grasped the soft coil of hair at the nape of her neck and gave it a playful tug.

A misty sensation of gratitude, of deep, quivering happiness pervaded Silver as she partook of the simple meal with these people who were, through Sophronia, closer to her than anyone else on earth. But far down, underneath, there was a stirring of something uncertain, something winged and light and strange. She found herself wondering, time after time, what kind of person Roddy Willard would bring home as his wife.

"My G—d!" Jason said, peering out through the muslin curtains of the sitting room in the old house. "They have a retinoo!"

Silver, standing at his elbow, looked at the people getting out of Roddy's car. She clasped Jason's arms.

"The big girl must be a servant, Jason," she said. "Phronie told me Corinne was small."

"Sure," he replied. "That's Corinne with the fox fur on. Kind o' warm for it, but I guess it's the style. She's pretty, isn't she? But that other one—say! She looks like a Mackintosh Red!"

"—you don't dislike him, do you?" Her small hands gathered over the brush on her knees.

"No," she said softly. "No—of course not."

Roddy got up impulsively, knelt beside her and drew her toward him. "Corrie!" he pleaded. "I can see how you feel about him. But I tell you, darling, he's the finest soul in the world. And he's an artist. Corrie. He really is. You ought to see his work. If we only had enough money, I'd send him out to study. He has his studio all fixed up in the attic. It would be impossible for me to suggest that he should move. My G—d, Corrie—I couldn't! Please, sweetheart, try to like him!"

A trembling little smile passed over her lips. Closing her eyes, she leaned her head back against Roddy's shoulder.

"I'm sorry, Roddy," she murmured. "Of course, I'll like him."

In anguish, Roddy kissed her. Then he kissed her again, and she drew a lock of her scented hair across his lowered eyes.

CHAPTER V

OLD Roderick pointed with his pipe up at the big house, where young Roddy lived with his wife Corinne.

"You know," he said whimsically, "maybe I'm gettin' on, but I swear that house ain't sitting right on the ground. It's up in the air a little more every night I look at it—and farther east, too."

Silver laughed with Jason and Steve.

"It ain't likely to go much higher with that big hired girl they have in it," Steve, the hired man, observed drily.

Jason cleared his throat. "Oh, I don't know that she's so big," he said. "She has better ankles and feet than most girls in Heron River."

Phronie opened the door and called to them. "I wish one of you youngsters would run up and borrow some cinnamon for me. I've started to make cookies—"

"Can't you ever rest, Ma?" Jason said, getting to his feet.

"I'll go, Jase," Silver said quickly. "You stay here and play."

While she went lightly up the slope she thought again, as she had countless times during the past week, of Corinne's baffling attitude toward Roddy's brother. She appeared to be cordially itself toward him; was, in fact, almost glib with sincere solicitude. Perhaps that was the trouble, Silver reflected. For through it all, Silver had had the distinct feeling that Corinne was deliberately shutting poor Jason out of her consciousness. She feared, too, that Jason sensed this, and



"They Have a Retinoo!"

often wondered how long his pride or perverse humor would sustain him under the same roof with his brother's wife.

Then there was Paula. But Jason was different and Paula too shy for the development, as yet, of any friendship between them which might be embarrassing to Corinne. Only yesterday, however, Corinne had called Paula sharply away from the yard where she was watching Jason repair a corn-crib, and had set her to some trivial and unnecessary task.

When Silver entered Roddy's house, she found Corinne writing letters in the living room. Roddy, at the dining room table, was at work over his ledger.

"Phronie wants to borrow some cinnamon, Corinne," Silver explained when Roddy's wife inquiringly turned her head. "I can find it myself in the kitchen."

"Oh," Corinne said inattentively. "Paula will be down in a minute. She's upstairs—tidying her hair, I suppose. She'll find the cinnamon for you. I'm sure I don't know where she keeps it. Sit down, Silver. I must get these letters finished."

Silver picked up a copy of Vanity Fair and seated herself in the dining room. Roddy gave her an odd, vaguely troubled look, then dropped his eyes again to his ledger.

But immediately there was the sound of a car entering the driveway, and Corinne went to answer the doorbell.

"I'd better go home," Silver said quickly to Roddy.

A gleam of anger lit Roddy's eyes. "You stay where you are," he com-

manded. "Didn't you tell me people round here had to get used to you?" Silver had no time to make a reply.

A tall, granite-faced woman with a mottled red nose and a hat that bore a stiff little feather, entered the living room. In her wake, not unlike the trailing ruffle of a great ship, came a simpering miss of seventeen or eighteen, much befuddled, and wearing a flowered leghorn hat.

It was Mrs. Leander Folds, the school superintendent's wife of Heron River, and her daughter, Ethelwyn.

"My dear," Mrs. Folds was saying loquaciously, "I suppose I should have telephoned. But I am a woman of impulse, you know! We just got back yesterday from our holiday in the Black Hills, and heard about Roddy's marriage. We were out driving, and I thought this would be a good time to catch you in. We must—we just must have you in our reading club. Ethelwyn here is secretary of it, and it's so instructive for the young people—"

Mrs. Folds had advanced farther into the room, and now her eye fell upon Silver. A curious, tight look appeared on her face as though she were holding her breath. Silver stood up.

"Have you met Silver Grenoble, Mrs. Folds? Corinne asked hastily. "My husband's cousin."

"How do you do?" Silver said, but made no move toward the two visitors.

"Oh—" Mrs. Folds surveyed her thoroughly. "How do you do? Roddy's cousin by—by marriage? Of course. Yes, yes. And how do you do, Roddy? Oh, dear. I just thought of something." She turned abruptly and patted Ethelwyn's arm. "Run and see if I brought that book I wanted Mrs. Willard to read. It ought to be in the car. If it isn't, wait for me there, my dear."

Ethelwyn vanished docilely, although her eyes a moment before had been frankly devouring Silver. Silver could feel the hot blood pounding in her throat, her temples. Mrs. Folds' strategy had been so brutally obvious. Yet she was powerless to move.

"Now," said Mrs. Folds, "I can't stay a minute—but you must promise to come to our meeting on Tuesday, Mrs. Willard. We are studying Hardy at the moment—with one of the moderns thrown in, just for relief, so to speak." She smiled apologetically.

Roddy gave a sardonic bark of a laugh. "Hardy? You don't consider him a modern, eh?"

Mrs. Folds looked bewildered. Corinne agitatedly stepped closer to her and said, "I thank you so much, Mrs. Folds. I shall be glad to come, indeed."

"By the way, Mrs. Folds," Roddy said coldly, his face curiously white beneath his tan, his eyes two grayly burning slits, "has this club of yours a limited membership?"

Mrs. Folds reddened unbecomingly. "Er—yes, it has," she plunged.

"You see—our house is small—"

Silver stood with her hands clenched about the table's edge, back of her.

"That's fortunate," Roddy interrupted Mrs. Folds, and laughed aloud. With that he slammed shut the covers of the ledger, flung it with a sharp report down upon the table and strode through the dining room into the kitchen.

Mrs. Folds smiled feebly and extended two fingers to Corinne. As though across waves of heat, Silver saw Mrs. Folds sail out of the house, Corinne accompanying her.

Paula had come down the back stairs. She entered the dining room now and handed Silver the can of cinnamon. Silver was suddenly aware of Roddy standing before her with crossed arms.

"You'll find this place isn't worth the trouble, kid," he said somberly. "The women will knife you—every chance they get."

She gave him a steady look. "Mrs. Folds can't hurt me—really," she said with a proud lift of her head.

Roddy's lips moved in a hard way. "That isn't all of it," he continued. "I meant to tell you when you first came in, but I didn't get a chance. That man Gerald Lucas was enquiring about you today in Heron River."

For a moment Silver leaned heavily against the table. Her eyes were fixed wide upon Roddy's face, as though she expected to hear him repeat his words.

Corinne came bithely in through the front of the house.

"What an ogre of a woman!" she cried, laughing. "I'm glad you snubbed her, Roddy. I couldn't very well, because I thought she meant to invite—"

"Phronie is waiting for the cinnamon, Corinne," Silver said dully. "I must go."

But it was Jason who took the spice into the house to Sophronia. Silver felt that she could not, right now, bear the interior of the stone house, even for a moment.

"I'm going for a walk," she told Jason.

"A walk?" he asked, and frowned. "But Silver broke away and started for the road. She thrust her hands into the pockets of her sweater and walked blindly into the last sinking glow of the sunset.

Presently a long, graceful roadster turned the corner and came toward her. As it slowed down and stopped beside her, the man at the wheel laughed with pleased surprise and leaned over the door. Silver glanced up at him.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

FORTUNES IN GEMS CHANGE OWNERSHIP OVER CUPS OF TEA

When it was stated the other day that a scientist had discovered a process which enabled him to make synthetic diamonds, indistinguishable from the real ones, but very much cheaper, a great many people were alarmed.

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