

Tomorrow is Forever

by GWEN BRISTOW

THE STORY THUS FAR: Spratt Herlong, motion picture producer, had married Elizabeth after her first husband, Arthur Kittredge, had been reported killed in World War I. Elizabeth had been orphaned when a baby and had been raised by her aunt and uncle in Tulsa, where she met Arthur. Within a year after their marriage he enlisted and soon afterwards was reported killed. Elizabeth moved to Los Angeles, where she met Spratt. When he asked her to marry him, Elizabeth told Spratt all about Arthur—also stating that part of her died when Arthur died. Spratt, thinking her for her honesty, still insisted and they were married.

CHAPTER VIII

But she had waked from it. Like its predecessors, this period of recollection had gone as abruptly as it had come. Elizabeth pushed a lock of hair off her forehead and reached for a cigarette. "What a fool I am," she said, her eyes on the picture of Spratt that was standing on her desk. She had a picture of Arthur packed away somewhere in the back of a closet, but it had been years since she had looked at it. She wanted Spratt there, Spratt whom she loved, her children's father. Spratt and her children were what she lived for. They filled up her thoughts—except for these rare minutes of agony, minutes that were more cruel because they had to be borne in silence. She could tell Spratt anything on earth but this. She could mention Arthur to him without self-consciousness, as she did sometimes—"There was a man like Mr. So-and-so in the company Arthur worked for in Tulsa, one of those pseudo-intellectuals who bought first editions for no reason but to show them off. I remember one day Arthur said he . . . Just as simply as that. And they would chuckle over Arthur's wisecrack and go on talking. But no matter how seldom they occurred, she could not tell Spratt that there ever did occur such experiences of black anguish as the one she had just passed through.

And why in the world should she, Elizabeth asked herself now. It was over, gone completely until the next time, if there ever should be a next time. By tomorrow she would have forgotten it. Already the fact that she had been powerless to escape it was making her ashamed of herself, and glad to ignore such absurdity. The air was growing chilly. The children should have come in from the pool by now, and she hoped they had hung up their suits properly. It was about time she went downstairs and got out the cocktail tray to have it ready when Spratt came in.

The telephone rang again, and when she answered it she felt pleasure at the normal steadiness of her voice. Her caller greeted her cheerfully. "This is Irene Stern, Elizabeth. How are you?"

"Fine, never better."
"And Spratt?"
"Working himself to death and flourishing on it."

"Any news on the picture, or do I dare ask?"
"Good news, I hope. Anyway, a new writer who seems to have ideas."

"Anybody I know?"
"I don't think so. He's just off the boat."

"Oh dear. Spikka da Inglis?"
"Fairly well, I believe. They're better at languages than we are."

"They should be, can't go a hundred miles over there without needing a new one. Elizabeth, I called to ask if it's all right for Brian to stay for dinner with Peter."

"Irene, you're an angel about that child, but are you sure it's no trouble? Brian takes half his meals with you as it is."

"It's no trouble and I wish you'd let him stay. He and Peter are upstairs getting starry-eyed over a new collection of bugs—Elizabeth, is it really necessary for the Scouts to encourage such a fearful interest in natural history? Peter does nothing these days but mount insects."

"I know, Brian's room looks like all I've ever heard about delirium tremens. There's nothing we can do about it."

"It must be a recent craze," said Irene Stern. "I remember Jimmy—"

She was referring to her older son—Jimmy was an enthusiastic Scout, but he never had this passion for creeping things."

Elizabeth began to laugh. "You'd better send Brian home, Irene. He'll be a distressing influence on Peter."

"But when they're mounting bugs together they're so happy. I can't bear to separate them. So let him stay for dinner, Elizabeth. We'll bring him home by nine."

"All right then, and thank you for being so good to him. It's been ages since I've seen you—I'm going to ring you one day this week for lunch."

"Do. I'd love it."
They said goodby and Elizabeth put back the phone. She laughed to herself as she did so. Everything was back where it ought to be. Her friends, her children, the warm security of her life. Going over to the desk, she took up Spratt's picture and kissed him through the glass.

As she went downstairs she heard a babble of young voices and a sound of laughter. Dick and Cherry had evidently come indoors with their friends, and the four of them were making quite as much noise as might have been expected if they

had been greeting one another after years of separation. "Doesn't their energy ever give out?" Elizabeth asked herself with fond wonder as she heard them. She glanced into the dining room to make sure the table had been set with two extra places, made ready the cocktail tray in the living room, and then went to the balcony that ran along the back of the house, to observe the state of affairs around the pool.

The children had hung their suits and towels on the line provided, leaving the place quite tidy after their swim. They were really very good about that, except now and then when they had something important on their minds and forgot to clear up. What a good time they were having now! They had gone into the back den, the windows of which opened on the balcony where she was standing, and she could hear them as they discussed something that must be excruciatingly funny.



What a lucky woman she was, she reflected.

for the conversation seemed to consist less of words than of laughter. Not wanting to interrupt whatever it was they were enjoying so much, Elizabeth sat down in a deck-chair on the balcony to wait for the appearance of Spratt's car in the driveway.

The shadows of the lemon trees were like dark lace shawls lying on the grass. A little wind ruffled the surface of the pool and moved gently past her, bringing odors of damp grass, lemon blossoms, torn geranium leaves. The air was full of the twittering of birds making farewell to the sun as joyfully as the children were laughing within.

Elizabeth leaned back, wrapped in a warm glow of pleasure. What a lucky woman she was, she reflected, and how much she had—a beautiful home, a husband who loved her, such charming, happy children. In the midst of all this, how foolish it was ever to remember anything else. It was good to have a few minutes alone, like this, to look at all of it and know she had a right to be proud because she had created it; good to take pleasure in her children's laughter and know they were so happy because of the love and security she had given them. No matter what might happen to them in the coming years they would have this to remember.

She found herself laughing too, in echo of the four mirthful youngsters in the den. They were reading something, for she could hear the rustle of pages—no doubt those dusty old magazines they had brought in from Julia's mother's attic—and their voices came through the window to her, breathless with merriment.

"What were Liberty Bonds?" asked Julia.

"Government bonds to pay for the war, like the War Bonds we buy now. Here's a question-and-answer department, and somebody writes in to ask if it's quite fair to sell long-term bonds to be paid for by future taxpayers. He asks, 'Isn't that making future generations pay for this generation's war?' and the editor answers—this'll kill you—he answers, 'Exactly so, and this is one of the best reasons for buying Liberty Bonds today. For the fruits of this war will be enjoyed by the generations yet unborn.'"

"Jumping Jupiter!" Pudge exclaimed as the four of them went off into another paroxysm of mirth. "Generations yet unborn!" Cherry repeated. "That's us."

"And aren't we enjoying the fruits of that war?" said Julia. "Let me see, that one, Dick. I wonder if this editor is still alive."

"If he is," said Cherry. "I bet his face is red. Oh do look, here's a beauty. A picture of a lot of babies, and the title is, 'The America of tomorrow, for whom the world is being made safe today.'"

"I bet every one of 'em's in the army now," said Dick. "Take a

peek at this. A picture of a lot of soldiers ready to go abroad, and the line under it says, 'A payment on our debt to France.'"

"Any time France feels like making a payment on their debt to us," said Cherry. "I'm agreeable." There was another sound of rustling pages, and she burst out laughing again. "Listen, everybody. One of our greatest aims in this war is the reconstruction of Europe on such a basis that future holocausts like this one will be impossible. Out of the world's anguish must be born a new Germany, a nation in which democracy shall rule, where no tyrant and no group of bloodthirsty lunatics shall ever again have the power to plunge a whole continent—"

The rest of her words were lost in a confusion of laughter.

"For the love of Pete," murmured Pudge, incredulously.

"It's right here in print, only you didn't let me finish and the last sentence is the funniest of all. 'Germany will be defeated, but their defeat will bring the German people one tremendous gain: it will mean for them the complete and final overthrow of autocratic government.' How do you like that?"

"I get it," said Pudge. "We were just fighting the Germans for their own good, were we? Gee, when they look around they must be so grateful."

"I see by this paper," said Julia, "that the International Sunday School convention planned for 1916 has just been called off because the delegates are too busy shooting each other to attend this year."

"Where were they going to hold it?" asked Cherry.

"Don't look now, dear. In Japan." They began to laugh again. Pudge exclaimed, "Be quiet and let me read you something funnier than that. These editorials about the first air raid on an open city. It seems the Germans had things called Zeppelins—that's a kind of blimp—and they sent some of these Zeppelins over Antwerp and dropped a few bombs, and here's what the American papers were saying about it. 'The attack upon Antwerp, made without warning to its innocent population, is completely contrary to all rules of civilized warfare.'"

"Rules?" Dick interrupted mirthfully. "You'd have thought it was a football game."

"Zeppelins have dropped bombs on an undefended city!" Pudge continued reading with mock horror. "This is not only contrary to the laws of war, but can serve no legitimate military purpose—"

"What is a legitimate military purpose," Dick inquired, "unless it is to kill everybody you can?"

"Shut up and let me read this. 'As those who were killed or injured by the bombs were women and male non-combatants, the airship attack was nothing but a plain act of savagery. This is not war, but murder!'"

"Did you ever hear anything so naive?" asked Cherry.

"Was that first attack a bad one?" asked Dick.

"I was saying that for the last," answered Pudge. "If you can believe it, that first air raid, that dastardly, bloodthirsty, savage raid that made everybody sit back and yell with horror—that raid killed ten people and wounded eleven."

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Dick, and the others joined in his derision.

They chuckled joyfully. Cherry exclaimed, "I wish you'd look at these recipes for war-meals. 'Freedom Meat Loaf,' made out of peanuts and cornmeal."

"Peanuts do have Vitamin B in them," suggested Julia.

"They'd never heard of Vitamin B," Dick said scornfully. "They had to eat peanuts and call 'em meat because our brave allies were buying up all the meat with the money they borrowed and didn't pay back and never did intend to pay back. Do look at that headline—'Every housewife who saves meat and flour in her home is bringing nearer the day of universal democracy.'"

"Do you suppose they really believed all that?" Cherry asked in wonder.

Outside, on the balcony, Elizabeth lifted her hands from the arms of the chair and saw that each of the bright blue cushions was stained with a round spot of dampness where she had gripped them. On the other side of the window the child-dream made some fresh discovery and went off into another peal of laughter, gay, mocking, and terrible because it was so utterly innocent. Elizabeth stood up, her muscles tense with impulse. Then she stopped, standing motionless because she did not know what the impulse was. To do something to them—but what? She could not walk in upon them white with anger and cry out, "Yes, we believed it! You inhuman young wretches, we believed it!"

She could not say that because they were not inhuman, and they were not wretches; they were young and well-bred and intelligent, and they would hear her with a pained bewilderment, and answer with the cool logic of their years, "Aren't you ashamed that you did, when you look at the world we're living in?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)



McGOOFEY'S FIRST READER

I
1.—Oh, see the egg! Is it a fresh egg?

2.—Yes, but you mustn't be too particular these days.

3.—Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

4.—That no longer matters. The point to bear in mind today is that the customer comes last.

II
1.—Who is this?

2.—It is Jennie. Penny is a housewife. Jennie is carrying a basket.

3.—What is that in Jennie's basket?

4.—A revolver, a letter from her senator, some credentials from her minister, a coil of rope, a map, a megaphone and a large bundle of money.

5.—Where is Jennie going?

6.—Jennie is going to try to get some eggs.

7.—Will she get some bacon, too?

8.—Don't be redick.

III
1.—Oh, see the egg! It is not like the egg in Chapter I.

2.—No. The egg has been polished, taken to market, card indexed, graded, stamped and given wound stripes.

3.—How does an egg get wound stripes?

4.—If you had to go through the wars that an egg has to go through in getting from the farm to the consumer you would have wound stripes.

IV
1.—Jennie is looking at the egg, isn't she?

2.—There are 67 people ahead of her, though.

3.—Will Jennie get the egg?

4.—No.

V
1.—Where is Jennie going now?

2.—She has left the store. She is going to a bingo party.

3.—Why?

4.—The door prize is one egg.

5.—Will she have a better chance to get the egg there?

6.—It won't be any worse.

VI
1.—Who is this?

2.—This is a maker of adages. He is author of the adage 'Never place all your eggs in one basket.'

3.—What is he doing?

4.—He is changing the adage to read: 'Never use a basket to get negative answers.'

IN THE FOG
Ernie and Erbie and Clement A.—
A Big Three of their own are they;
John Bull with dripping, furrowed brow,
He hardly knows the old place now!

"Truman in Frankfurt Review."—
Headline.

Is this the first formal recognition of the hot dog in the global setup?

To a Jap his old position balanced on top of a high ladder in a circus must today seem a position of comparative security.

Robert S. Wilson has been named the new United States rubber administrator. He's reported to have plenty of bounce.

The Pullman company announces that after the war the old fashioned diner will largely disappear, to be replaced by a hot and cold buffet, or "Smorgasbord" car. Huge platters of "tempting dishes"—foods will be piled on a center table, from which the passengers will take their choice. The old cry "Last call for dinner" will disappear. This is okay with us, although we doubt that the railroads have even a remote idea what constitutes "tempting dishes."

Nothing in the general record to date so indicates. If anything on the diners today is tempting, we will eat the flagman's lantern, without mustard. Of course the war is largely responsible, but in peace days we never once heard anybody leave a dining car exclaiming "Boy, wasn't that dinner a knockout!"

A Harvard board has decided that the present educational system there, in most colleges and in high schools is pretty defective. It must make a university blush to find that it has been teaching the wrong stuff for over 100 years.

The board says Harvard has been educating the boys in specialties and neglecting the all-around general education necessary to develop the intelligent and sound citizens.

Howard Hughes is completing a giant airplane that will have eight motors, carry 750 passengers and be big enough to support a super-fortress on each wing. The general idea is to assure airplane tourists every discomfort they can find on the ground.

Joe Stalin is now the only survivor of the original Big Three. He must have moments when he wonders whether he is conferring with some team mates or just helping break in a junior membership.

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"Certainly," said the lawyer. "What is your wife's name?"

After thinking for some minutes the farmer had to admit he couldn't remember it.

"Well, go to the door and shout upstairs as if you were calling her down," suggested the lawyer.

Hobbling to the door, the farmer opened it and roared up the stairs: "Missus! Missus! Missus!"

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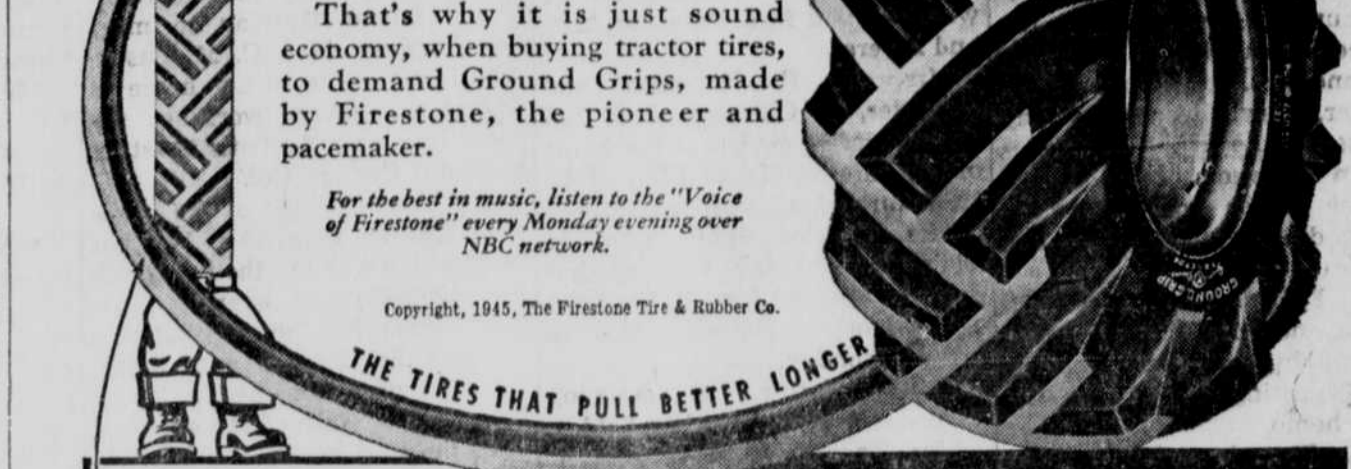
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