

and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

W.N.U. RELEASE

THE STORY THUS FAR: Alicia starts a rumor that there "is something mighty peculiar" about Mrs. Fallon's sickness. It is discussed in the neighborhood and Megan hears it. She learns that a "Miss Martha," a sister of Mrs. Fallon, lives with the principal and his wife. Megan felt sorry for Tom Fallon, and she thought a great deal about the gossip about him and his wife when she started to hunt his favorite resting place on the top of a low hill beyond the meadow. Tom Fallon was sitting on the rock she used as a bench when she arrived. When she inquired about his wife's health, he replied: "She is mentally ill." When Meg went to a quilting party at Mrs. Stuart's, Alicia pricks her about Tom.

CHAPTER III

"I dunno as any of us think the fessor's exactly hidin'," she said curly. "An' I dunno's any of us think Pleasant Grove is such a hick place, come to think of it. Some folks seem to like it. If they didn't I reckon they could go somewhere's else."

Alicia colored darkly and shrugged. "I'm sorry I even mentioned the fact that I saw you," she said ungraciously. "But after all, the Ridge is public property. It's not posted or anything. I had as much right to be there as you and Mr. Fallon! I was merely gathering a few Autumn leaves and some bittersweet berries to put in the blue pottery bowl in my front window."

Megan was trembling a little, though she knew she was being silly. The little scene with Tom Fallon had been so absurdly innocent; yet there was something in the sly, furtive manner of Alicia's mentioning it that had made it seem evil and scheming.

Megan, still furious with Alicia and her nasty tongue, got away from the quilting party as early as she decently could. At least Mrs. Stuart understood, when, at the door she drew Megan aside and said forthrightly, "Now look here, Megan, don't pay no attention to that woman. Someone ought to take a gun to her and blow her to Kingdom Come, and that's a fact!"

Halfway down the road, she heard a cheerful voice and turned as a pretty girl of seventeen, her arms laden with schoolbooks, came running towards her.

"Hi, Meggie," said the girl, flushed and smiling, and very pretty in a childish, round-faced, bright-eyed way.

"Hello, Susie—you're late getting home from school!" said Megan lightly.

"Had to stay after school and write a composition. Like a fool, I thought I could get away with not doing one—according to the law of averages, I shouldn't have been called on today, but the darned law let me down. Miss Pound's a holy terror—seems to look at you and know without asking a question whether you've done your homework," answered Susie bitterly.

They walked together in companionable silence down the wide, unpaved road, until suddenly Susie said bitterly, "I hear the Alicia dame dug her little stiletto into you and Professor Fallon today! That makes you a member, in good standing, of my own club."

Megan caught her breath and stopped still.

"How on earth did you hear—" she began in amazement.

Susie's little chuckle was dry and quite without mirth.

"Oh, it's all over the place," she said. "By supper time, there won't be a man, woman or child within a mile of the place that won't know you've been meeting the professor secretly in the woods—"

"Susie!" Megan wailed. "That's not true—"

"Of course not—but d'you think for a minute that's going to stop the story? Don't be a twerp, Meggie—you know it won't!" said Susie.

"It wasn't true that I was sneaking off to meet Bill Esmond either—but you'd have a hard time convincing anybody in this town that it isn't! Just because one afternoon I happened to run into him at the county seat and had a soda with him. My mother hit the roof, on account of because Bill's folks are not—well, not quite as high hat as mother thinks we ought to be—"

Her young voice trembled a little and she blinked hard to clear her eyes of threatened tears.

Megan asked curiously, "Is that all there is to that story, Susie?"

Susie flushed and her eyes were stormy.

"Absolutely! Up to then," she added. "Oh, sure, I liked Bill—we all did! He was an honor student, and the kids were crazy about him and he played football like nobody's business—but I'd never had a date with him in my life. How could I, when dad and mother practically lock me up nights? But that afternoon, mother was sick with a headache, and she wanted some stuff from the county seat that Burns didn't have, and I took the car and drove over. And I ran into Bill. He'd just had his physical and was all but ready to be taken into the Cadet Air Corps, and we celebrated by having a soda."

Susie drew a deep breath and said quietly, "Bill's—quite a fellow!" She laughed and said, "May-

be I ought to be grateful to the Stevenson wench—if she hadn't raised such a row about my having a soda with him, and behaving as though she'd seen me coming out of some foul dive with him—I'd never have noticed what a grand guy he is! Oh, well—"

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Susie—what a foul story!"

Susie nodded wretchedly.

They walked on in silence and at the gate to the MacTavish place, they stopped and Susie said suddenly, "Meggie, is there any truth in what Stevenson says about—Mary Rogers?"

"Mary Rogers?" Megan repeated puzzled.

"You know she got expelled last month and she's gone to stay with her sister and learn to be a war worker—a riveter or something—"

Susie explained, and after a moment blurted out, "The Stevenson—er—witch—says Mary is going to have a baby, and has dropped a hint that Bill may have some part in the matter—"

Megan said explosively, disgust in her voice, "Goodness, Sus