

and be my Love

By **PEGGY DERN** WNU RELEASE

THE STORY THUS FAR: Amos, Annie's husband, revealed that when he was coming home late at night he saw a ghostly figure in a graveyard. Also, Amos revealed that he had seen Meg with Tom Fallon that night. Laurence enlisted the aid of Bob Reynolds, a detective, and they set to work to solve the mystery of Alicia's murder. After careful checking, they were inclined to believe Amos' story. Jim MacTavish came in as Larry, Reynolds and Megan were ready to eat. He was tired, his shoulders drooping. Reynolds announced abruptly that it was an open and shut case, and Jim almost dropped the carrying knife. Later Meg tells Larry that she and Tom had met accidentally.

CHAPTER XIII

"Not as to the identity, no," admitted Bob. "But I'm convinced that it was some prowler—a would-be burglar who was frightened off before he had a chance to steal anything. Though, of course, it's not usual for a burglar to be supplied with a knife as a weapon—I don't believe he brought the weapon with him. I believe that he used one of the victim's own knives—a large kitchen knife." He broke off, scarlet and embarrassed as he saw Megan's white, twisted face. He apologized hastily. "Good grief, Miss MacTavish—I ought to be kicked! Please forgive me—I'm thoroughly ashamed—Larry, you ought to have better sense than to allow me out with your friends. I'm sorry, Miss MacTavish—I do apologize."

Megan managed a faint smile and said huskily, "Please don't—I am a bit squeamish, I suppose. You see—I knew her well."

Bob nodded soberly. "I know—everybody says you are the only real friend she had. Everybody else seemed to dislike her and distrust her. I guess that's the reason I was speaking so frankly. Let's forget it. After all, a meal like this deserves more cheerful and appreciative conversation!"

When the meal was over, and the men were settled in the living room, Megan stayed to help Annie clear the table. And while she was thus engaged, Laurence came back into the dining room, and stood at her shoulder and said very low, "I just wanted you to know, Meggie, that—everything is quite all right. There's nothing at all for you to worry about."

Megan looked up at him, tears thick in her eyes, her mouth tremulous, "I—met him by accident, Larry. I didn't plan it—truly."

He looked down at her, frowning. "But—good heavens, Meggie, don't you suppose I know that?" he protested, almost as though he resented her feeling that she should offer such an explanation.

She caught her breath and a wave of relief swept over her. She smiled through her tears and said huskily, "Thanks, Larry."

"For what?" The frown still drew his eyebrows together. "For knowing that you couldn't possibly do anything wrong? For knowing that you couldn't make, or keep a tryst with a man tied up as Fallon is? For Heaven's sake, Meggie—I've known you since you were a baby—don't you suppose I know you well enough to know that if you met Tom Fallon on the Ridge at midnight, it was an accidental meeting?"

Laurence hesitated a moment and then he said quietly, "I'd like to ask you something, Meggie—mind?"

"No, of course not."

"Then—are you in love with Fallon?"

The words were quietly spoken, but they took her breath so that she could only look up at him, unable to speak. But the way the color flowed into her face, the look in her eyes gave him all the answer he needed.

"So that's why you—couldn't get excited about marrying me," he said after a moment, very quietly.

She set her teeth hard in her lower lip, not daring to trust her voice to answer him, and after a little he said in a tone of the greatest gentleness, "Poor little Meggie! Always doing things the hard way!"

By now she had steadied her voice, and she faced him straightly. "If—you'll j-j-just give me a little time, Larry—" she managed.

His brows were drawn deep now in a frown and his look was puzzled. "A little time, Meggie?" he repeated. "For what?"

"To pull myself together and get over this—this—craziness about Tom," she said. "Because I will, you know. I'll—I'll get over it and—maybe if you haven't got disgusted with me before that—"

"Oh, I'll be around, Meggie. Is that what you mean?" asked Larry, and now there was a grimace in his voice, a coldness in his eyes that chilled her a little. "You are the only girl for me. You've always been. I'm a slow and plodding cuss, but once I get my mind—and my heart—made up, I hold on. Like the good old snapping turtle that gets a grip and swings on until you have to kill him to make him let go. But what makes you so sure that you can get over what you feel for Fallon?"

"Because I'm going to!" she told him with determination.

He turned away from her then as Bob called to him from the hall, and a little later they were gone.

Megan and her father sat in the

living room for a little in silence after they had gone. It was Jim who finally broke the silence.

"Did you know that she—was married?" he asked heavily.

"Yes," Megan nodded. "Laurence told me."

Jim's face twisted. "What a laugh she must have got out of me—wanting to marry her. And she told me she would—she never for a moment even hinted that she was not a widow!"

Megan waited, knowing a little of the release that would come to him if he could rid his mind of these revelations.

"It began, at first, as a sort of—well, joke," he admitted. "It seemed to amuse her to give the Pleasant Grove folks something to talk about. I was lonely, and I suppose she got a kick out of making a fool of me—"

He broke off and passed a hand across his eyes and looked straight at Megan. "But I didn't kill her," he finished quietly, with a simple



"Then—are you in love with Fallon?"

dignity that was somehow oddly touching.

"I know you didn't, dear," Megan assured him swiftly.

He studied her for a moment and then he asked in a puzzled tone, "Meggie, how did you and I start disliking each other? I've been doing a good deal of thinking lately. I admire you very much. You're a fine girl and a brave girl, and—well, I can't quite understand why it is that we seem to rub each other the wrong way all the time. I'll probably be just as hard to get along with tomorrow, as I was yesterday—only tonight, I'm—well, I'm lonely, Meggie, and tired, and maybe—just a little afraid. Could we sort of—be friends, do you suppose?"

"Of course, Dad!" She bent swiftly and kissed his cheek.

Jim looked at her for a moment and then nodded as though he had reached some sort of decision.

Both Jim and Megan were silent for a bit, each with his own thoughts of their new-found relationship.

He cocked an eye at her humorously. "Of course, you understand that I'm just as lazy and shiftless and generally no 'count as ever, for all that I'm suffering a change of heart tonight. But, you know, Meggie, the whole thing boils down to the fact that I've been jealous of you since the day you were born."

"Jealous, Dad?" the astonished Megan repeated.

He nodded. "I adored your mother, Meggie. I know now that it was a jealous, possessive love, the sort of thing that makes a spoiled little boy say, 'If we can't play my way, then I won't play at all.' We were happy at first. I was first with her; her every thought was for me, for my comfort, my happiness, my well-being. And then—you came along, and took up a lot of your mother's tenderness and thought, and I had to take second place. And like the no-good that I was, I resented it."

"Oh but, Dad—that's—why, that's wicked! Poor Mother!" she said just above her breath. "It wasn't that she loved me more than she loved you; it was that I needed her more."

"And I resented that, too!" said her father.

Megan could say nothing. She could only wait, her hands linked tightly together, her eyes clinging to his face.

"Odd, what a chastening effect it has on a man, when he realizes that he has made a complete and unmitigated fool of himself!" he said at last. "I feel as though I'd been kicked—almost as much as I deserve to be! And that is quite some, incidentally!"

"But it's all over and done with, Dad—we can have a lot of fun together—"

Megan began eagerly.

"Over and done with, Meggie?"

"Don't kid yourself, my dear—we haven't seen the last of this! Nor heard it, either," he corrected her swiftly. "Had you realized that if Amos was on the Ridge that night, as he must have been to tell Larry the story he did, the chances are excellent that he saw you—as well as the eight-foot-tall ghost?"

Megan nodded, her face white but her outward composure commendable. "I know that he did, Dad," she said quietly. "He told Larry."

Her father's body jerked like a marionette on a string manipulated by an expert puppeteer.

"Told Larry—that you were on the Ridge with Fallon?" he repeated sharply.

Megan nodded.

For a moment Jim was very still, like a man suddenly paralyzed. And then very carefully he asked, "Did you tell that fellow Reynolds?"

Megan shook her head, her hands cold in her lap.

"He—didn't seem to think it was necessary," she managed the words with difficulty. "He seemed to think that the fact that I was there gave me an alibi. If I was there at that time, I couldn't possibly have been across the road—even if I had had a motive."

Her father nodded. "Which, of course, means that Larry doesn't know I intended to try to marry her and bring her here," he finished the thought for her. Then he smiled, a mirthless smile that made him look suddenly very old and very tired. "Now if only somebody had seen me going for my walk—"

"Perhaps somebody did," said Megan eagerly.

He shook his head. "I saw no one—after I left Alicia," he said quietly and distinctly.

She stiffened a little and her eyes were wide.

"You—saw her—that night?" she whispered, her lips pallid.

"At eleven-thirty," said Jim and heaved a sigh as he ran his fingers through his magnificent crop of silvery-gray hair. "The way I figure it, she couldn't have been alone, after I left her, more than ten or fifteen minutes."

His fingers trembled a little as he filled his handsome pipe and tamped the tobacco carefully into the melon bowl, but his eyes did not leave Megan's white, frightened face.

"We quarreled," said Jim quietly, distinctly, "when she admitted that she had not the slightest idea of marrying me. She called me a pompous old fool, and a no-count stuffed shirt and a lot of equally uncomplimentary things. But I did not kill her, Megan, I swear it."

Suddenly Megan was on her knees beside him, her arms close about him, her cheek hard against his, all the ugliness and the animosity that had colored their relations for years wiped out between them in this moment when she ached with pity for him, and when for the first time in her adult life she had begun to have some glimmering of understanding him.

"Of course you didn't, dear—no one could believe for a moment that you did," she told him, her voice shaken with emotion.

Jim put his arm about her and seemed to welcome her nearness, the sheer creature comfort of her warm presence and her sympathy.

"Thank you, my dear—but I'm afraid a great many people could be persuaded to believe that I did," he pointed out to her at last. "The circumstantial evidence against me is pretty strong. We did quarrel. Undoubtedly I am the last person—save one!—to see her alive. And when I left her, in a fury of injured pride and bruised self-esteem, I went for a long walk alone, and saw no one. I returned home here well after one o'clock—by which time she had been dead, according to the doctor, for at least an hour. So you see—"

"But you didn't—you couldn't—have done it, Dad! Nobody could ever make me believe you did!" she comforted him, as though he had been the child, she the parent.

It was long before she slept that night, but in spite of the unpleasant turmoil and excitement of the last forty-eight hours, she was more at peace than she had been in a long time. She could begin to understand her father a little; and to understand is to forgive.

She was conscious only of the fact that she and her father might hope to live together now with less friction, less animosity than before. And the thought had healing and comfort in it. She was able to fall asleep at last, emotionally and physically exhausted, and when she awoke in the morning, she felt stronger and more refreshed than in many months, in spite of the horror of the last twenty-four hours, and in spite of knowing that the next few days were going to be far from pleasant.

She had finished her morning chores, and was busy with a seed catalog and an order blank when Laurence arrived.

Annie, big-eyed with excitement, showed him into the small den where Megan worked, and hovered anxiously.

"It's all right, Annie—we found something that proves that Amos was telling us the truth—that is, that he did see something at the old burying ground that night," said Laurence quickly.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for October 6

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PAUL'S BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE

LESSON TEXT: Acts 21:39; 22:3, 27, 28; 26:4, 5; Philippians 3:5, 6.

MEMORY SELECTION: Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

God works through men. When we study his work we study the lives of men—all types of men—but all yielded to him, and used by him.

Paul stands out as one of the most influential characters in all history. His life and letters, which we are to study the next three months, have had a tremendous effect on the human race. Especially is this true of his position and influence in the Christian church.

Under God he was the one who carried the gospel to the Gentile world, and then began the great missionary program of the church, which goes on to this very day. His writings are the steady and extensive foundation of much of our study and teaching of Christian doctrine.

I. Birthplace (Acts 21:39).

The place of a man's birth has a definite influence on his personality and usefulness. Tarsus, where Paul was born, was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world of that day. It was a Roman province, where men proudly held their citizenship in the great empire. Greek, the language of world culture, was spoken there.

Tarsus was a great educational and university center. It was in a rich and fertile area. It was at the head of navigation on the river Cydnus and on a great Roman highway. It was the capital of the province.

II. Education (Acts 22:3).

After his early training in the home and under rabbis in Tarsus, he went to Jerusalem to study in what was probably the best-equipped Hebrew college of that day, under one of the greatest teachers, Gamaliel.

Somewhere in his rearing he was taught a trade, for every Jewish boy learned to support himself with his own hands (see Acts 18:3).

He was instructed in the Word of God, and had a consuming zeal for religious things. Until he was converted, it counted against Christianity, but afterward it became a flaming fire to spread the truth in all the world.

His combined zeal and knowledge made him a man of truly broad mind and tolerant spirit (Acts 5:35-39).

III. Citizenship (Acts 22:27, 28).

The mighty power and prestige of Rome stood behind every Roman citizen. Paul used his citizenship for protection. It helped him in his service for the Lord. Its prestige was used for God's glory.

It is a good sign when a man is proud of his national background, and it speaks well for the nation to which he belongs. But Paul came (as every Christian does) to know and appreciate a higher citizenship.

IV. Religion (Acts 26:4, 5).

Though a free-born Roman citizen, Paul was a Jew, and loyal to the religion of his people. He was a member of the strictest sect, the Pharisees, in which his family had held membership for generations.

He lived consistently in the observance of the laws and customs of his religious faith, and none could point to any flaw in his doctrine or failure in his life.

When he became a follower of Christ, there was no ground on which anyone could dismiss his conversion and his witness as the outbreak of a new viewpoint on the part of a renegade Jew.

It is to a man's credit that he faithfully lives up to the beliefs of the religion he professes. The result of such sincerity will be conversion, if he, like Paul, meets Christ and honestly faces the question of loyalty to him.

V. Race (Phil. 3:5, 6).

Paul counted it to be an honor to be known as a Hebrew and gloried in the fact that he was born, trained and lived within that racial as well as religious circle.

No one need ever be ashamed of his race, although he may be ashamed of things which members of his race have done. But there are even more things of which to be proud, and a man may add to the standing of his race by living his own life in cleanness of character and nobility of purpose. It is never a commendable thing to be ashamed of the race of one's fathers.

We must remember, however, that all the things in which Paul gloried, he found to be but refuse when he compared them with Christ (see Phil. 3:7, 8).

Everything worthwhile in a man's life God can glorify and use. But none of them, no matter how precious they may seem to be, compares with fellowship with and service for the Lord.

The Home Town Reporter

In WASHINGTON By Walter Sheed WNU Correspondent

WNU Washington Bureau 1616 Eye St., N. W.

Producers Who Refuse To Sell Are 'Strikers'

"PRODUCERS Hold Meat From 'Stockyards'; 'Butter Scarce as Processors Divert Butter Fats'; 'Farm Leader Deplores Labor Strikes'; 'OPA Girds to Fight Black Market.'"

Headlines such as these in the newspapers have set official Washington to thinking, as they should set every citizen to thinking. What is the underlying cause of black markets? And the simple answer is, scarcity. What is the underlying cause of high prices? The answer is also scarcity. If there were plenty of meat for sale, plenty of butter on the markets, plenty of automobiles in hands of dealers, or plenty of any other commodity on retail shelves, there would be no black market. Neither would there be high prices. It's that simple.

The next question is, "What is the underlying cause of scarcity?" There may be several answers to that question, but certainly one answer, insofar as manufactured products are concerned, is underproduction. As for foodstuffs, one answer is that farmers and ranchers are not marketing their produce, or that processors are holding their products off the wholesale and retail markets.

So the laboring man who strikes and the farmer who withholds his produce from market are by their very acts helping to build up scarcity and the black market, the very conditions against which they rail.

Why should the stockyards be teeming with beef and pork and mutton one week and the next be virtually empty? Because farmers and meat producers are holding their livestock for a higher price. That, in the opinion of this reporter, is a strike. It's a strike for higher price, identically the same as when the laborer walks off his job in a strike for a higher wage. The farmer gains nothing and neither does the laborer, for both are helping to build up the spiral of increasing cost of living for everything they buy.

Buying Power Counts

It doesn't make a bit of difference how many dollars the farmer or the laborer has in his pocket, if that dollar won't buy what he wants to buy. And it can't buy an automobile or a corn husker or a tractor if they are not being produced.

On the farms of the nation the unparalleled rise in living standards during the past 10 years is the direct result of rising productivity, in record crops with less work, less men working and on about the same acreage. On the labor front, increased production has brought higher wages, and shorter hours and better working conditions.

High wages for workers and high prices for farmers are good for the national economy if they are paid out of increased production . . . certainly not out of black market operations or through inflated prices due to scarcity.

That old law of supply and demand simply will not be regulated by legislation, either by union rules, by farm marketing agreements or by any governmental agency, because the fact is simply that what counts in a man's pocketbook is what his money will buy and not the number of dollars he jingles.

Congress has set our national policy throughout the establishment of governmental agencies which seek to hold-the-line on prices and wages by establishing wage ceilings and price ceilings until supply has reached demand. Whether these established ceilings are fair and equitable, this reporter has no way of knowing. We do know, however, that we have seen during the past few weeks certain labor unions defy the rulings of the Wage Stabilization board, declare they wouldn't work at the wage set by the board and strike. They struck against the government and the public. We have seen farmers and cattle and hog raisers defy the rulings of the OPA, declare they can't sell at that price, and strike. They struck against the government and the public. We have seen packers, food processors and manufacturers do the same thing.

Under such conditions, no policy, no formula, no legislation, however just and equitable, will work. One thing congress did not do and that was to give these agencies police power to enforce their rulings.

Stabilization Will Fail

If one group can get away with it, then so can others and the whole machinery of stabilization to prevent an inflation spiral falls down.

One thing is certain, the great mass of the American public is in the middle, the folks in the home towns of the country, in the cities, who work for a living.

There is plenty of food in this country . . . plenty of meat. We have proved that we can produce plenty of any commodity the American people want.

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Joe and Bill, two steeplejacks, had been commissioned to cover a job in the town. Joe climbed to the top of the stack, and Bill got to work at the bottom. "Hey, Bill," shouted Joe, "come up here a minute." After half an hour's laborious climbing, Bill reached the top. "What do you want?" he asked breathlessly. "Sh-h-h! Listen!" replied Joe. "But can't hear anything," said Bill, breaking the silence. "No. Ain't it nice and quiet up 'ere?" came the reply.

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Complete Obedience

Johnny on his ninth birthday had had a party. It was all over and he was now gazing wistfully at the remains of the cake. "Mother," he said, "may I have a piece of cake—only a small piece, please?" "No," replied his mother. "You've had quite enough." "Well, may I sleep with a bit under my pillow?" asked the boy. "Very well, here you are, and remember to keep it under your pillow. Now run along to bed and go to sleep." On going up to Johnnie's room some time later his mother was amazed to see Johnnie sleeping peacefully with the pillow over his stomach.

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At heart, he's still that farm boy. His laughter sounds the same—when he can laugh. He still goes for cokes and cakes—when he can get them. And he still gets mighty homesick—when he has nothing else to do but think of home.

Your USO has one more row to hoe. Another round of laughs to plant. Another crop of cheer.

Your USO needs your help, as much as ever. For millions of American boys still need the USO. They need the camp shows and clubhouses—the hours of relaxation and entertainment—a place to hang their hats and loosen their belts.

They need to know that the folks back home are still thinking of them—are still willing to pitch in and make their task a lighter one.

Tell the farm boy you're with him—every step of the way. Say it through the USO. Say it with dollars!

Keep it up... **USO** Don't let them down!