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AND

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Long as I Live

By
EMILIE LORING

As Joan folded the letter she felt as if she had been bodily transported from the exciting shimmering world of snow-capped hills, blue Pacific, motion picture lots, smart restaurants and glamorous shops to the cool fragrance, shade of the blue spruces near the Country Club swimming pool.

Suppose the bandit had shot Vivian and Joan suppressed a shiver. She looked at the date of the letter. The first part had been written more than a week ago. Why get excited now that the danger was over? Viv had screamed, the man had run, she was safe and probably already had had the test she was after, not one, but several. From now on Viv's life would be full of color, adventure and achievement. She was bound to make good. In contrast, how adventuresome seemed the life she, herself had chosen. To be sure, she had her work. Philip Bard was giving her the Bus Line, which she considered the best thing she had ever done. It remained in her files. He had been furious at Janvers' temperamental hop from one agency to another and back again.

"What a hide-out!" The exclamation whirled her thoughts back to her surroundings. She glanced up at Craig Lamont, who in white tennis clothes with a racket under his arm, was looking down at her. What was it about him that poked her heart up? Whatever it was, she wouldn't allow it to get her. She felt her face stiffen. He protested quickly. Just a minute before you congeal, Joan. Hunting you up wasn't my idea. Barb and Tony want us to take them on at tennis. Come on. Why advertise to the Country Club at large you and I?

Not the slightest reason in the world, she responded gaily. I'll play. She thrust the letter into the pocket of her pink linen skirt and sprang to her feet.

As they crossed the lawn toward the tennis court, a black-haired girl in a green linen frock with her arms full of gorgeous pink tulips halted them.

Know where these flowers came from, Craig? Your enterprising niece is selling them at a roadside stand outside the gate at Silver Birch. She's doing a handsome business, scantily attired in yellow shorts with a halter-neck top. Follows a nice sense of humor and theater. Three cars stopped while I was buying. Poor kid. Do you keep her short of pocket money? Or mean! she mocked gaily and passed on.

Craig Lamont's incredulous eyes followed her and came back to Joan.

Was she telling the truth or was she kidding? he demanded.

Joan remembered the bobbing dark head in the tulip border, Peggy's crumpled blue frock, her air of infantile innocence. I have a horrible conviction that she was telling the truth, she answered.

The moment seized her hand. Come on! We'll beat it to Silver Birch. Keep your fingers crossed, Joan. I wish you'd that we get there before Angus the Scot charges that roadside stand.

Ten minutes later, as his low-slung black roadster was in a stop before the great iron-grille gate at Silver Birch, Lamont exclaimed, "Too late! Here comes Angus on the run."

A short, squat man in blue overalls and a shirt opened at the neck thumped toward them frantically brandishing pruning shears. His face was purple. His heavy jaw wobbled as he tried to shout to the blue girl who at his approach, shrank behind a wooden packing box on the top of which were a small black and white dog, a gray kitten, a dozen empty tin cans and one full of brilliant red tulips whose heavy blossoms drooped on their green stems like the heads of sleepy children.

As Lamont humped from his roadster, Peggy dodged behind the box and grabbed his hand. The black and white dog leaped to the ground and barked furiously at the gardener. The gray kitten indignantly gave herself a facial massage with a silvery paw.

Hello, Uncle Craig! Hello, Joan, Peggy called in a voice slightly breathless.

Mr. Craig! Mr. Craig! Angus the Scot had found his voice. You know what that base of life's done now? He swallowed a sob. She's - she's cut me tulips - me prize tulips. Mr. Brant's and the Rossellas and - look at her - h-h dressed, with that bare back and those naked legs. She - Just a minute, Angus. Let's get this straight. Did you cut the tulips, Peggy?

She twisted on one foot in incriminating hesitation, looked down at her uncle's hand which gripped her then at Joan leaning forward in the roadster. She stuck out her tongue.

Tattle-tale! she accused. Stop that, Peg! Lamont caught her shoulder and turned her to face the gardener. Did you cut the tulips?

Yes, I did. I don't see what Angus is making such a fuss about. They're not his tulips.

Not my tulips! Lamont interrupted the Scot's furious splutter.

What did you do with them, Peg? Sold 'em.

She pointed at a tin can on top of the packing box. Bring it to me.

She pouted, swung her bare shoulders and arms to register indifference, plucked up the can and brought it to Lamont. He turned the money into the palm of his hand. Fifty cents! He that all, Peg? Of course it's all I sold ten dozen tulips for five cents a dozen and -

Do you hear that, Mister Craig? Me prize tulips - that cost the madam one to five dollars the bulb - Tears welled in the Scot's blue eyes. He Adam's apple worked furiously, he brandished the pruning shears at the child.

Wasn't it your grandmother gets hold of yer, he warned. He gulped down a sob seized the drooping red tulips from the tin can and plodded up the driveway shaking his head and muttering to himself.

I guess it's lucky he went. I guess he'd have blown up if he'd stayed around much longer, he was so mad, observed Peggy unfeelingly.

Lamont caught her under the arms and swung her toward the roadster. You're going to the house now. Your grandmother will know what to do to you, he warned.

I won't sit there. I'm not going. I won't sit beside Joan, and if you marry her, as my mother said you would I'll run away from you.

I did not, Peggy. Joan denied. She stepped from the roadster. You won't have to sit beside me. I don't care to ride beside a little girl who steals. I'm walking home. She was aware that Peggy and her uncle stood for an instant looking after her. She could feel their eyes boring into the back of her head. Then she heard the grind of gears and the dimming purr of the roadster's engine.

That is that she told herself. Good riddance! Why had Peggy accused her of telling tales? The girl in green with the bunch of pink tulips at the Country Club had told Craig about the roadside stand. Because Peg knew that I had seen her in the tulip border. Joan answered her own question.

Had she lost the child's friendship, she wondered, as she walked on only subconsciously aware of passing cars and blossoming fruit trees and twittering birds. She hated to lose a friend, even a little girl friend. Perhaps it was just as well. Thanks to Drucilla Dodd and

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By The Canadian Press
JULY 29, 1940—Hundreds of planes fought over widely separated parts of British Isles; 20 German planes shot down; Chinese unconditionally turned down Japanese peace overtures; Germany gave Romania until Sept. 29 to settle territorial differences with Hungary and Bulgaria.

JULY 30, 1940—Britain imposed sea power around Spain and Portugal to keep transatlantic supplies from reaching the Axis. U. S. government took position that if France became Fascist dependency of Germany, the American nation would have to take over French possessions in western hemisphere.

The Great Smoky Mountains are so called because of an ever-present blue haze.

This War—Four Years Ago

By The Canadian Press
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Where'd you learn to read a map? Surely, this ain't Naples!

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