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Young April

by Dorothy Chadwick

CHAPTER XXV

The tree stood in one corner of the living room, green and spiky, its top reaching into the shadows near the ceiling. It was four o'clock on Christmas Eve. A dark four o'clock, for the snow which had fallen for two days and a night was still coming down outside the windows. Phoebe in a red wool dress watched her mother and Aunt Bea while John fixed the tree. They told him to hurry up, or they'd move get in trimmings. Ropes of silver tinsel spilled over the seat of the couch; colored bubbles of glass as light as air were waiting for Ben Phoebe to tussle branches; the tinsel star that went on the very top trembled on its wire in Phoebe's hand.

Happiness blew suddenly over Phoebe in a little gust, blotting out everything else. Tomorrow was Christmas. Tomorrow she would see Ben.

Yesterday when she came back from a call on Ben, she had gone to her own room to think things over. Poor Ruth! She had felt miserable for her. Her father and Phoebe knew Ruth loved Ben. But even while she had been feeling sorry for Ben, Phoebe could tell that happiness was rising up inside her, creeping up, bubbling and light. And suddenly she had jumped down off the bed and run down stairs to the telephone.

With pounding heart she had asked the operator for the number of Ben's office.

"Mr. Prentice is out. He went down to Cape Cod yesterday and in case he calls the office?"

So Phoebe had asked him to tell Ben that she had called. And this morning Ben had telephoned himself.

"Phoebe, Phoebe, is that you? I can't hear you... that's better... Did you call me? You mean you want to see me?"

"Yes, I'm up here on the Cape. I'm in Provincetown, of all places in the world. Yes, the storm is terrible. I don't know if I can go. This connection is fierce."

And Phoebe had pressed her lips close to the mouthpiece of the telephone, feeling as if she were calling Ben through miles of snowy space, across the land, across the sea.

"But, Phoebe," he was saying, "listen. Storm or no, I'll be back on Christmas Day. I'll see you on Christmas Day—in the morning."

On Christmas Day in the morning Phoebe sighed and looked dazedly at her father. "What father? Oh, wait a minute. I'll go and look."

She ran to the door and opened it to see if it was still snowing. It had snowed quite a bit, but it hadn't stopped yet, she said, going back to the living room.

Her father shook his head. He looked worried as he tied the pink belt on the one with the tinkle inside to a branch. "I hope it will be able to get through that road. It's the worst snow we had in years."

Caroline brought in an armload of packages wrapped in holly paper. Phoebe stood back to get the effect of a tinsel garland, and laughed at Ben. "Ben! Ben! Ben! Look out, Aunt Bea." Phoebe shouted suddenly. "One of the chair legs is on the hammer, the chair teetered. Miss Palmer gave a little shriek and jumped, and all would have been well, but for the tinsel on the chifton panel in the front of her caught a twig. The tree came tottering over with Aunt Bea's head on it. Caroline called John Overton to Caroline who was just reaching up to lay a package in the fork of two branches.

Caroline grabbed the trunk of the tree and tried to hold it. It was heavy, and so tall that it kept twisting and turning. She put a spring hand out toward John and he caught it and held it tightly. "Caroline, what's the matter? Tell me, sweetheart. Where are you hurt?"

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Dr. Cross. He rushed into the hall to the telephone. John began struggling into his rain coat. "I'm going to warn them," he said. "If I meet them at the highway I can let them know what they're getting into. It may help."

When she heard footsteps outside she rushed headlong to the door. Her father came in, a strange young man at his heels. The faces of both were red and wet, both were breathing hard. And her father's eyes were wild. "The ambulance can't get through," he said. "It's stuck fast in the drifts halfway up the hill. The driver here says it'll take an hour to dig it out. What'll we do?" "Operate here," snapped the doctor. "He was pacing nervously up and down. We'll have to carry Caroline to the ambulance—it'd be fatal."

The doctor saw Phoebe half turn in the chair to hear his answer. "Why, of course," he said in a hearty voice. "Every chance in the world." Phoebe didn't see him spread his hands, expressing his doubt silently to Aunt Bea. "If the twenty minutes they had waited for the doctor had seemed long, the half hour that dragged by now was an eternity. Phoebe unable to be still, tiptoed from the window to her mother and back again. And the half hour doubled itself and still the ambulance had not come. At the end of the creeping hour Phoebe was standing rigidly by the couch, her hands locked together, her lips and forehead cold.

(To Be Continued)

By J. R. Williams

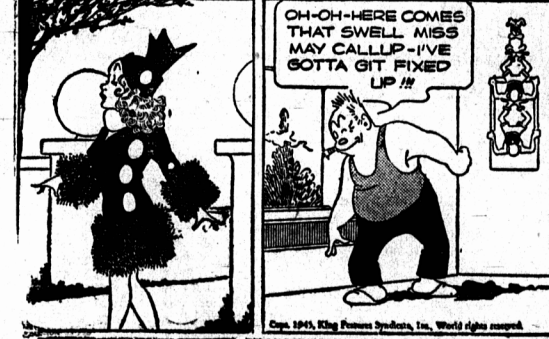
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OUR BOARDING HOUSE



BLIND ALLEY



BY GEORGE McMANUS



BY EDWINA



BY WEBSTER



LONDON, Nov. 15 — (CP) — Denis Kendall, engineer and independent member of Parliament for Grantham, plans to shake the British motor industry with a new "people's car" costing only £100

(£450). With purchase tax, however, the total price to British buyers will be £125 (£70). Within three months of the start of production, Kendall says he will have 50 cars a week rolling off the line. This number will be trebled in six months and multiplied four-fold in nine months.

Peak production will be 10,000 cars a year. At present, however, Kendall is uncertain when production will start. He said the Board of Trade has refused to allow him to manufacture cars in the factories where he formerly produced arms and munitions.

NOTICE

Attention of the Public is drawn to the following Regulations, approved by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, under the provisions of "The Fire Prevention Act," being Chapter 28 of the Statutes of the Year 1940:

INTERPRETATION

In these Regulations the word "Person" includes any owner, attendant, employee or individual who may or may not have paid admission fee.

GENERAL REGULATIONS

(1) No person shall smoke in any Moving Picture Theatre or in any building where moving pictures are being shown.

C. J. STEWART,

Acting Clerk of the Executive Council.

11-14-45

MCA

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