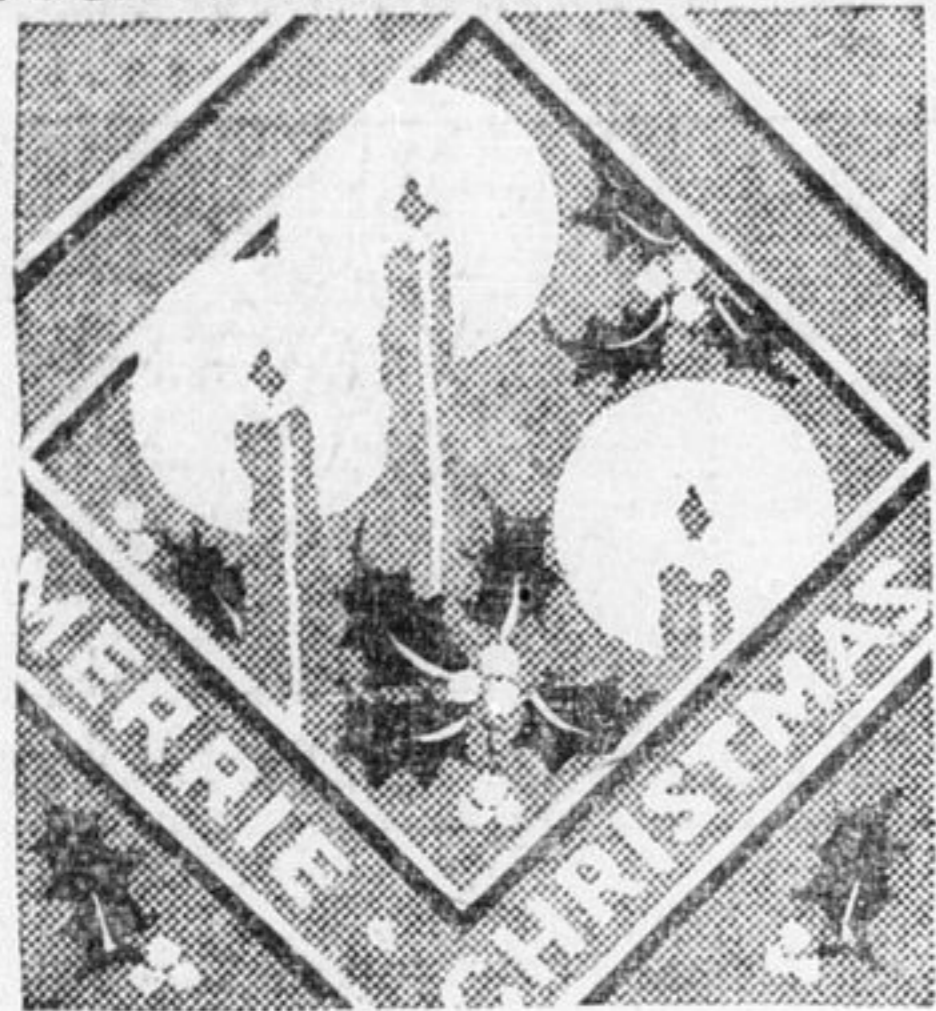




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RIVERSIDE PAVILION

Wish to thank their many friends for their patronage during the past year, and to extend to them best wishes for

A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR



Sincere wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for all, and may our pleasant dealings with customers and friends alike continue as in the past.

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Merry Christmas to All



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**Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year**

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By WILLIAM TREMON
EVERY day for a week old Oliver had been passing their house in his wagon loaded with pine and cedar trees.

"Christmas trees cheap!" he shouted. "Christmas trees—two dollars. On-l-y two dollars. . ."

He was passing now, and Marge, washing the few dishes she and Denny had soiled at their noonday meal, wished she couldn't hear the sound of his shouting voice.

Joe always bought old Oliver's trees. "Old Oliver needs the money," he'd say. "And our old car just wouldn't take the bumps of a hunt for a tree in the country around here."

Old Oliver hesitated in front of the little house, repeating his chant until Marge through she must go to the door and tell him to stop. She



"Denny, dear," she said thickly, "we're not going to have a tree this Christmas. Daddy isn't here to help decorate it, and besides—Santa will come without a Christmas tree."

and Joe had explained to him the first time they'd bought a tree just the kind they liked. It had to be so tall and so big around. It had to be cedar with clusters of blue berries on it. Old Oliver always had the kind of tree they wanted.

Little Denny ran into the kitchen from the front room.

"Mommy, there's ol' Oliver," he said. "Mommy, he has our tree. . ."

Marge dried her hands and knelt to gather little Denny in her arms.

"I know he has, dear," she said, making herself look at him. Since last January when the horrible car accident had taken Joe away from her, she'd had difficulty in looking at Denny. Denny had Joe's rumpled dark hair, his dark eyes, the deep cleft in his chin. A sob caught in Marge's throat. "Denny, dear," she said thickly, "we're not going to have a tree this Christmas. Daddy isn't here to help decorate it, and besides—Santa will come without a Christmas tree."

"I'll help decorate it," Denny said. "I did last year."

Marge pressed Denny close. "I know, dear," she said. Poignant memories of last Christmas crowded her so that she couldn't talk for a moment. She could see Joe teetering on the ladder to put the star in the top of the tree.

"I can help, Mommy. . . ." Denny insisted.

"You could, dear, but we don't want a tree with Daddy gone. Someday, dear,—oh, I hope it never comes to you—you'll understand why Mommy didn't want a Christmas tree!" She rose to her feet hurriedly feeling a rush of tears.

"I'll get your wraps, Denny, and you can play outside in the snow for awhile."

Shadows lengthened in the little house before it came to Marge with frightening realization that it had been all of three hours since Denny'd left the house.

"Denny—DENNY!" She ran out on the porch and down the steps, her slim unprotected feet and legs sinking into the deep snow that had banked there. "DENNY—!" The echo of her voice came back to her in mocking horror across the white stillness of the little yard.

A cold wind swept against her as she stood at the gate looking up and down the street and calling Denny's name. It was a horrible moment, one in which she knew she must have aged twenty years, and one in which she saw in heart wrenching clarity her unfairness to Denny in harboring a self-centered grief over her loss of Joe to the extent of his safety, his protection, his veritable happiness.

A familiar wagon made the turn at the end of the street, and Marge recognized old Oliver and his load of Christmas trees. His chant rang out again. "Buy your Christmas tree now! On-l-y two dollars. . ."

Marge shrieked against the wind, "Oh, don't—please don't!" Then she saw Denny—little brown garbed Denny sitting up in the seat by old Oliver!

The wagon stopped by the gate, and old Oliver grinned as Denny climbed down into Marge's reaching arms. "He likka th' ride. He. . ."

Marge didn't give him a chance to talk. "Do you have our tree, Oliver?" she asked.

Old Oliver chuckled and jumped down from the wagon. "All'a week I've had your tree," he said.

"Just put it in the yard," Marge told him. "Why, Denny and I couldn't do without our tree!"



By JESSIE WEST
AMY looked out at the bright day and was about to decide it was the loveliest New Year's Eve she'd seen in years when she saw Clarabelle Carter crossing the street; and then she thought the day wasn't lovely at all.

She could hear Clarabelle talking to Mille as she had that day in the store when she'd been standing behind shelves lined with groceries deliberately eavesdropping.

"I do declare, it does look like Amy Wells could get someone," Clarabelle had said. "I suppose she'll die an old maid."

Clarabelle hadn't said anything degrading of course. But from that moment forward, Amy had wondered if people generally didn't assume that old maids just couldn't find any takers.

She took her eyes from the window and Clarabelle going down the street to look at her reflection in the dresser mirror. At almost forty-five, she didn't think she was being egotistical in appraising herself as actually looking thirty-five. She had very little gray in her dark hair, and the faint lines on her face were unnoticeable against the startling blue of her eyes and general prettiness of her features.

There'd been a time when she reigned as the most popular girl at Obane; she'd been pictured in the college year-book as "the girl all men want but only one can have."

Of course Clarabelle and the populace of Donovan, a little town of three thousand, didn't know these things.

Amy looked out the window again, and not seeing Clarabelle on the street now, the day resumed some

of the brightness that Clarabelle's presence had blighted, and she got to thinking about a trip that 20 years ago had been scheduled for tomorrow. Memory of the tryst had come to her with the approach of another New Year, but she had not planned to enact a promise that years of separation had cast into youth's frivolous dreaming, disappointments and temperamental pride. Yet, seeing Clarabelle and remembering what she'd said about her somehow filled her with unexpected sentiment.

She had nowhere to go on New Year's day, and thought of the trip suddenly became entrancing. It would be emotionally uplifting to go back to the old haunts, and no one would know of her foolish living just for a day among memories of a past that through her own foolhardy pride, had led her into her present state of lonely maidenhood.

"If anything ever separates us," Lance had said that night long ago, "it'd be fun just to meet again, sort of a tryst affair, 20 years hence. Maybe in Park Rendezvous where we first met. . ."

They'd talked like that often, then laughed—because they knew they'd never separate. Someday they'd marry. But they didn't marry. Too soon a trivial misunderstanding had risen between them, and she'd had too much pride to admit that she'd been a little wrong, too.

It was almost noon when Amy reached the Park Rendezvous at Obane on New Year's day. She'd have lunch, she decided, then visit about town. But already she was sensing regret for having made the trip. You couldn't live in the past even for a day without returning to the present with greater pain. How well she knew it now!

She was startled when someone stood at her shoulder suddenly.

"Hello," he said.

Amy's heart fluttered in recognizing his voice. She looked up.

"Why, Lance—!" It was all she could manage.

He sat by her at the table and covered her hand with his.

"Looks like we both remembered," he said, chuckling happily.

"But, you married, Lance, I heard." She couldn't help saying it.

"That was false news, dear," he said. "Do you think—but you surely know now! I tried to find you, Amy, but I lost all trace of you."

Amy laughed and her cheeks colored. "I wouldn't have come today," she said wistfully, "but for a person named Clarabelle. . ."

"Clarabelle?"

Amy nodded. "It's a queer little story, Lance," she said, and then she wondered with a little gloating, what Clarabelle, and all of Donovan for that matter, would think when they heard!



Best wishes for a Joyous
Christmas, a Bright and
Prosperous New Year

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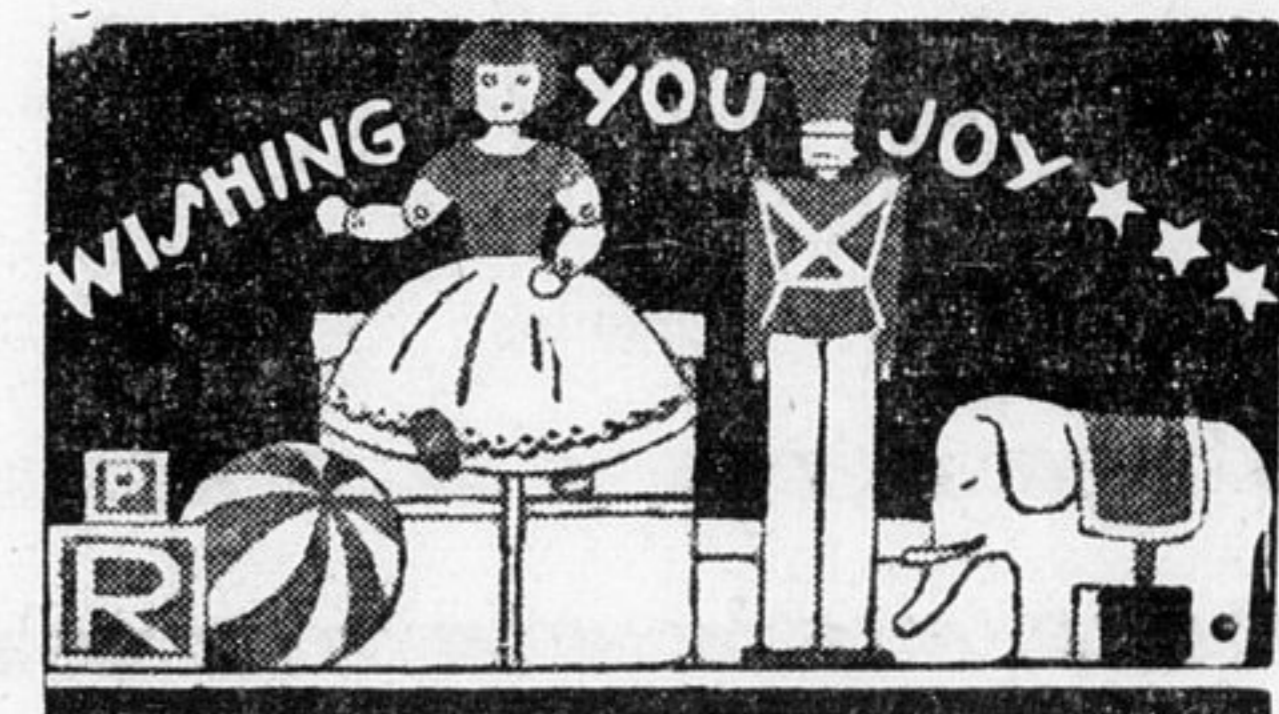
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New Year

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