

# u Belong to Me

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lessness? She flung herself down full length upon the young grass and pressed her fingers into the turf. The blades were rough and cool beneath her cheek. Not his faithlessness! He was never untrue to me in his heart!

Sobs shook her. She wept until the bewilderment and the shame and the anger had spent themselves, then she lay inertly upon the ground. When she heard steps in the pathway near her she sat up quickly, smoothing her hair. Dan said, "Ellen?"

"I'm here." He groped forward in the dimness and sat beside her.

"You oughtn't to be on this grass—it's wet." His voice was awkward and hurt. For a little they were silent, the warm night pressing about them. She could remember another spring night and a young voice saying:

"They have doctors for human bodies and minds. For animals and trees. Why not a land doctor? I'm keen to get at it—I'm going to learn all I can about what makes land sick and what cures it—and then I'm going home and show them all that I've learned."

AND she had listened and commented vaguely, and within her she had thought, not with words but with her desire: He's mine. I must have him—but I can't go to that awful country. We have the farm Father left me—what more do we need? Dan is a land man; he can be happy here with me—

When she had forced him to the choice, he had chosen her and they had stayed. And now she knew that he had never been happy.

Contrition moved her and her hand groped for his. "I've been a fool, Dan—" She listened with amazement to her own words. This was what she had planned for Dan to say! "I've been selfish—"

"It was no more your fault than mine. A man has to have the backbone to live his life the way he thinks he should live it. Else he hasn't much respect for himself. In the beginning—" She felt his hand stir as if to tighten on hers and then relax. "In the beginning, Ellen, if I had said I wouldn't stay here, would you have come with me?"

She wanted to be no less honest than he. "I don't think that I would, Dan. I was young and selfish and I suppose that I wanted you on my own terms or not at all. But a woman learns. I'd—go with you now."

The hand tightened then. "Kay University is in the middle of no-man's-land, Ellen. It's desert country and dreary until you get to know the people."

She said steadily, "I know where Kay University is."

"What about your farm?"  
Not our farm, not his, but mine. He never wanted any part of it! "We could lease it. The rent would come in handy. I don't suppose they pay assistant professors very lively salaries out there—"

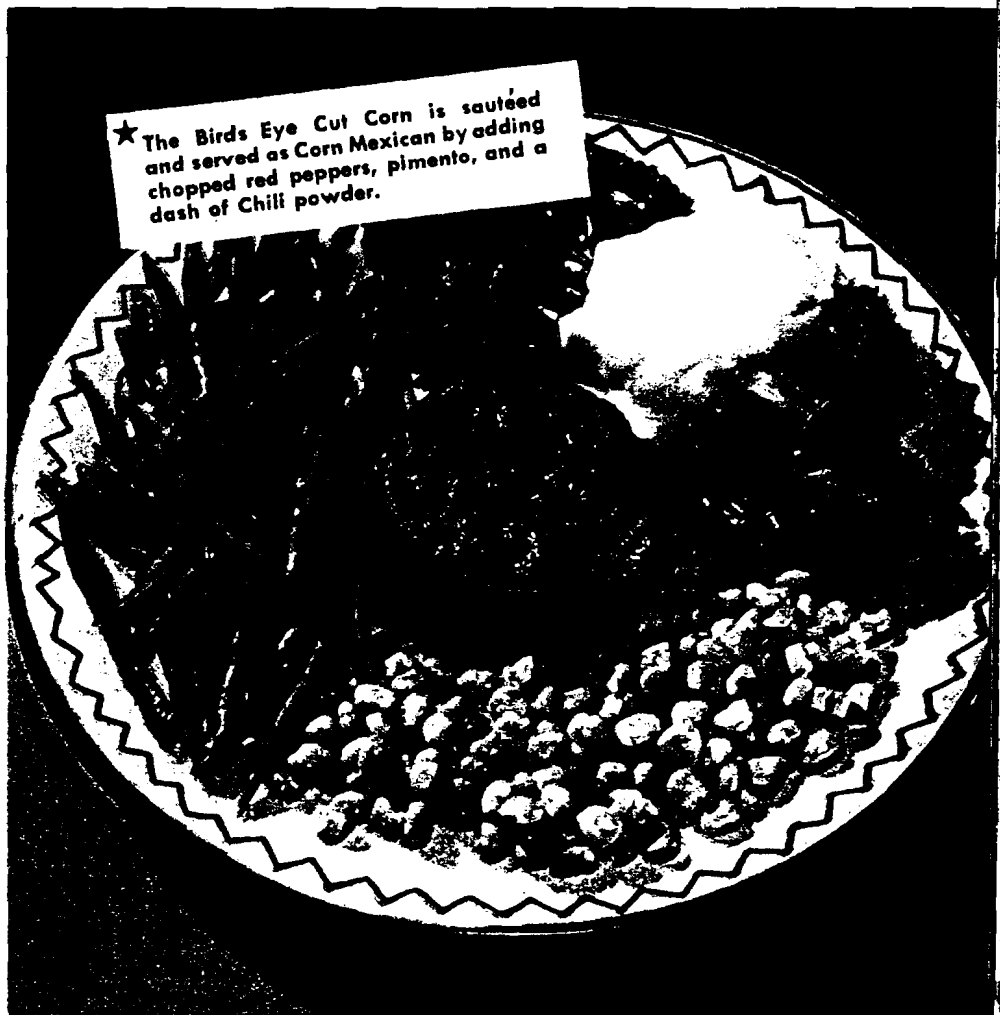
As she felt his arms reach out for her she moved forward to meet them. She was still confused in her thoughts and unhappy. I've got him back but nothing will ever be the same again. Because I failed him once and a little of the shadow

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