

Judith Lane

by JEANNE HOWMAN



SYNOPSIS: Big Tom Bevin's death breaks up Judith and Norman Lane's marriage. Judith was formerly the town secretary, and has become a stenographer. She is now married to a man who is a stenographer. She is now married to a man who is a stenographer.

Chapter 14

"RIGHTFUL HEIRS"

Norman sat down on the couch, but this time instead of drawing Judith into the circle of his arm, he faced her.

"What did you mean about a millionaire stenographer?" she asked, with serious intent.

"A reporter just telephoned and asked me how it felt to be married to one, Judge E. C. Morgan has 'Tom Bevin' will, he filed it in probate court this morning. And—"

"Norman... go on."

"He left you the bulk of his estate, several million dollars and the controlling interest in the Bevin Construction Company. His wife and daughter will be cared for through a trust fund."

He paused and waited for Judith to say something but she sat mute, staring into the flames.

"Judith, there was a note of irritation in his voice, 'haven't you anything at all to say?'"

Judith looked up, her cheeks chalk white, her eyes limpid with unshed tears—"What can I say?" she asked.

"Aren't you surprised... Judith?" and now she heard suspicion in his voice.

"SUNDOWN STORIES"

MOANS AND GROANS

By Mary Graham Bonner

However, the man in charge of the postbox was quite empty, and another was only half-filled.

"It's probably just my imagination," he said, and had a fine night's rest.

In the morning he walked outside his tent and there sat Jelly Bear, covered with paste, moaning and groaning.

One pill which had been filled with paste was quite empty, and another was only half-filled.

"Oh, I feel so sick," moaned Jelly Bear. "I won't be able to be on the job today."

The man called the Signor.

"That bear has eaten most of my paste," he shouted.

"Well, he looks miserable enough," said the Signor. "I've let him lick the tin and old paste we've had to throw away, and I suppose he thought this was for him to lick, too. It certainly was a pretty good lick."

"Oh, I feel so sick," moaned Jelly Bear.

"Willy Nilly," called the Signor. "I'll get him," cried Christopher Crow who was lying by.

Soon Willy Nilly came and saw what had happened. Not only was poor Jelly Bear feeling ill, but Willy Nilly feared the circus people would be angry, and that there would be trouble.

"I won't be able to be on the job today," moaned Jelly Bear. Willy Nilly told the Signor what the bear had said, and at least the Signor wasn't angry.

"And I'm ashamed that I couldn't finish it all, but I couldn't. I simply couldn't," groaned Jelly Bear.

Tomorrow: The Recovery.

ACROSS

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"Honey, I'm sorry, I know you can't help what has happened. Even if it is irregular for a man to leave his fortune to a stenographer, I don't know what made me talk like that to you."

Judith stretched peach clad arms toward her husband and pulled him down beside her — "probably because I was a stenographer... but more probably Norm, because you haven't had any sleep. It must have been a strain at the Bevin, then having him send for both you and Doctor Kelly."

Norman gave a wan chuckle — "Mathie was actually angry. Said one might think he was your father instead of hers."

"He was almost that, Norman. He'd have taken me into his home if Mrs. Bevin hadn't balked him, not that I wanted to live within a hundred miles of her, but he was a darling. You had to work with him day after day to really appreciate him. Wait until his funeral and you'll understand his 'poorings'. The people he quietly helped, will be there."

The funeral was an ordeal. Mathie had insisted Norman be seated with the mourners. Norman had quietly refused unless Judith were invited and Mathie had yielded with characteristic ungraciousness.

"I'm sorry, Judy," he apologized when asking her to overlook Mathie's attitude. "I wouldn't ask you to do it, but considering how close our two families have been, and that I'm the only man left in the family, I could hardly desert them at a time like this. You won't mind, will you?"

Judith didn't mind where she sat. Numb with sincere grief she scarcely realized Mathie was only kept from edging her away from Norman by his firm grip on her arm and his mother's, leaving the two Bevin women to Morton Lampere, who had graciously offered his services.

Judith surveyed the great floral display with awe. She had known Tom Bevin admired, beloved... but this, and then her quick eyes took note of nosegays of wild flowers, withered, tied with shabby bits of ribbon. An understanding attendant had tucked these in among the gorgeous blossoms which blanketed the rest. Big Tom would have preferred these gifts of his poorings.

There were photographers present as the imposing cortege made its way through the city streets, kindly for the most part, gracious and thoughtful with the exception of one. The following day Judith found the Union with a blurred picture of herself, Mathie and a tiny Norman, under a caption —

"Millionaire Stenographer and Bereaved Daughter Mourning Together as Prelude to Will Fight."

Judith wondered where they had obtained information that there was to be a fight or quarrel of any kind. Norman had not mentioned any... but then he had scarcely spoken to her since the morning following Mr. Bevin's death.

He had gone to his office and returned saying Mrs. Bevin had retained his firm to represent her interests and that Lampere would handle everything.

That afternoon, accompanied by Judge Morgan, she entered his conference chambers and there confronted those who were interested in the reading of the will.