

BOY CRAZY

by GRACE PERKINS

SYNOPSIS: Determined to separate Hope Ross Dale and her young husband, Dickey, Hope's father banks Dickey unconscious and tells Hope that her husband hasn't tried to communicate with her. Mr. Ross dislikes "Hickey," Dickey's father, and considers the marriage socially wrong. Hope has determined to stick to Dickey.

Chapter 19

LAUGHING-STOCK OF THE TOWN

"HASN'T—been here? Haven't you heard from him?" Hope asked.

"No."

"Then he's hurt! Something's happened!" Papa Ross thought quickly.

"No, he's perfectly whole and sound," he lied gruffly. "His father has talked to me on the phone."

"What did Hickey say?"

Papa Ross cleared his throat, and sought in his pocket for a cigarette.

"Hickey, as you call him, tried to be very placating at first," Papa Ross told her quietly. "But when he found out—"

"Yes? Yes? What, Daddy?"

"Really, Hope, I hate to tell you, I knew about them all along. I'm a better judge of people than you are, child. I was right in the first place—"

"Tell me!" stamped Hope stormily. "When he found out what?"

"When he learned that both your mother and I intended to cut you off entirely, your friend Hickey had a rather different tune to sing."

Hope stared at him. Brushed her hand against her eyes and stared again. For one brain moment came a stinging memory. . . . Dickey asking her to sign a pledge, that turned out to be her wedding license. . . . Dickey drawing as he asked her to sign, "Sign it, cricket, will you, so I can sue you for breach of promise if you don't make good. . . ." Hope drew in her breath sharply and shook the thought from her, remembering it was a joke—a loving joke. . . .

She flung back her head and looked calmly into her father's eyes.

"I don't believe it," she mumbled. "No, it isn't true. Hickey had offered to back us—give us an allowance, set us up in Har—"

"Talk—all talk!" snapped Mr. Ross, flicking his match out the window. "Widow. Just putting on a face! When it came to a showdown, he was perfectly willing to listen to reason. The minute he heard I would disinherit and disown you—"

"You would do that to me?"

Her blank disbelief was punishment enough to Papa Ross for the sins he was committing.

"Yes, daughter, I would. Rather than see you ruin your life."

Two blue eyes studied him narrowly, and then up went the yellow head with a defiant toss.

"I wouldn't care! I'd still want Dickey!"

Mr. Ross drew his lips in between his teeth, and held on to his temper.

"I'm sorry to see you like that, Hope. It cuts me deeply that the boy got such a hold on you. Even if it is only in your imagination—"

"It isn't my imagination. I love him."

"Don't talk utter nonsense! Cracker-barrel love! Puppy love! Idiot! The mere discovery at seventeen that you have emotions! Good God, Hope, use your head! Does it mean nothing to you that he'd been drinking? That he's laid Rusty Crandall up with a broken eardrum? That instead of being able to talk to me like a man, he nearly threw me over and sprained my arm in an effort to show me my word meant nothing?"

"He didn't mean to hurt you. He was probably trying to get to me. You shouldn't have separated us like that! Why wouldn't you listen to us?"

Papa Ross treated her to the kind of foggy superior stare he often used at directors' meetings.

"Oh, I'm sorry you're hurt," she mumbled thickly, "but—"

"Certainly you're sorry," Papa Ross seized on the phrase. "The boy is sorry too. That doesn't make my arm pain any the less. Nor does any of it make the pain in my heart less acute. You know I've loved you, Hope. . . ."

Hope reddened and turned with a restless shrug toward the window.

"I know you've loved me," she agreed thickly. "You know I've loved you, Dad. But you don't seem to think I have sense enough to love anyone else. Well, you're wrong. I know what I'm talking about. I'm married to Dickey, and I love him, and I'll go to him the moment he comes. And he will come!"

The break in her voice caused Papa Ross to wince.

She turned, as soon as she had conquered the desire to weep.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she flared. "What are you waiting for? What did you mean—there is no Dickey?"

"I explained it to you."

"You mean—because of the money? Is that it? You think because Hickey backed water when he heard I wasn't to have any inheritance, that Dickey will desert me too? Well, you're fit for an asylum!"

Papa Ross crossed his knee and pinched out the crease of his dark gray trousers.

"I'm afraid," his voice was thin as a wire, "I will be fit for an asylum before you get through with your nonsense. Now, look here, Hope, I'm trying to be very patient with you. You're going to find yourself the laughing stock of the town. And so is your family. Every one of us is going to feel cheap over this whole affair. I shall try to keep things as quiet as I can. But the long and short of it is that your bull-headed half-baked head has already deserted you."

"What do you mean? Why don't you tell me what he said?"

"I told you I haven't talked with Dickey," Papa Ross stuck to his lie. "I don't know what he said. Certainly he hasn't been man enough to come to me or get in touch with me, or attempt to see you. Since the moment he brought you home there hasn't been a murmur out of that young man. If that doesn't chafe up as a cad to you, then I don't know what you're made of."

"You're wrong, Dad. Dickey isn't like that!"

"Well, he and his father have skipped town very neatly. They've—gone!"

"Gone. . . ."

"They're on their way to Virginia. To somebody's hunting-lodge down there. I found out that much, anyway. So if you have any idea that somebody's coming to rescue you, you might as well get right over it."

"You're crazy! You're lying to me! Trickling me! It isn't true!"

"Well, see for yourself. Go and try to phone him."

Hope regarded him for one frightful second, considering his challenge. Then, without a word she marched out of her room. Walked unseeing past Groody who had obviously been caught in the act of eavesdropping, crossed into her father's study and sat down by the phone.

She called Hickey's hotel-apartment. Talked to Rogers, the man-servant, and listened to him explain that Mr. Dale and his son were on their way to Virginia and that he himself was to join them as soon as he could pack a few things.

"Any message, miss?" demanded Rogers politely.

Hope tried desperately to say "no." The word wouldn't come. She hung up and buried her head in her arms on the desk.

A hand on her shoulder startled her.

"Please!" she cried, pulling her shoulder away pettishly and getting to her feet. "Please. I want to be alone."

Carefully she made her way to the door of his study. At the threshold she looked back and gathered breath.

"I want you to know," she gasped brokenly, "that there's some awful mistake somewhere. He wouldn't desert me like that. We'll hear from him soon, I'm sure. And I'm going to wait before I judge!"

Papa Ross leaned back in his huge desk chair and looked out his casement-window.

He was not sorry. But ashamed! Ashamed, miserably, as a man old You shouldn't have separated us like that! Why wouldn't you listen to us?"

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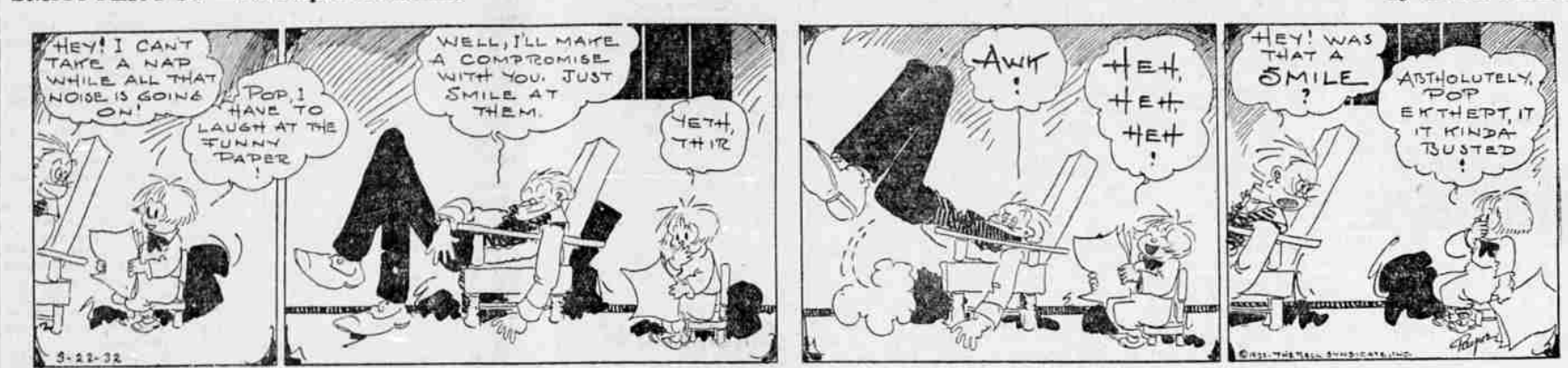
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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Noise In The Dark!



'SMATTER POP—An Exploded Smile

By C. M. PAYNE



BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Strategy!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Cheer Up

By SOL HESS



MUTT AND JEFF—Threatened With An Invitation

By BUD FISHER



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



GIRL BEATEN BY PORTLAND MAN

SALEM, March 22.—(AP)—William A. Webber of Portland, who is said to be a lino-type operator on the Oregonian, is charged with assaulting a Salem woman, Miss May Beeley, with intent to kill in a complaint filed here today with Justice of the Peace Miller B. Hayden. Webber is held in jail in lieu of a \$3000 bond fixed by the justice of the peace. Shortly after the alleged attack Webber was arrested by State Police Officer Lewis on a charge of driving while drunk. It was said a drunken driving charge also will be filed against him.

KLAMATH INDIAN BILLS IN HOPPER

WASHINGTON, March 22.—(AP)—Bills incorporating two different methods of organizing the Indians of the Klamath reservation, Oregon, were introduced today by Representative Butler (R., Ore.) at the request of representatives of the tribe. One would provide for establishment of the Klamath tribal council, with a business committee of 11 members. The other would establish a "Klamath Indian corporation" to which all property, real and personal held in trust for the tribe by the United States would be transferred.