

Judith Lane

by JEANNE HOWMAN



SYNOPSIS: Big Tom Bevins, Judith Dale's employer, has died and left her a fortune to complete for him a dam and reclamation project on the Rio Grande in West Texas. At the reading of the will she is handed a letter from Big Tom; arranged against her are Mrs. Bevins and Mathie, her daughter, and Morton Lampere, Lampere is Judith's husband's law partner. To complete matters still more, Mathie is determined to get Judith's husband away from her.

Chapter 15 THE WILL

JUDITH Dale dried her eyes on a whisp of a handkerchief after reading the first lines written her by her former friend and employer, and then she looked about the room.

It was a queer drama, this in which she was playing an unwilling leading role. Mrs. Bevins and Mathie, in heavy mourning, sat on one side and close beside them was Norman Dale, her husband, representing his friends' interests against those of his wife.

Judge Morgan, to whom Big Tom had turned when he found Morton Lampere not trustworthy, motioned Judith to continue reading, and she bent her head again, above the letter.

Your reading this note, said the ink scrawled letter, will mean that I have passed on the reason to believe they will rush the reading of my will in order to attempt to gain control of the money I have left to you. Lampere will see to that. He will see to other things. You will find your part in this is thoroughly misrepresented. He may even attempt to cause a separation between you and your husband.

"Judith, I have thought of all of these things and what they will mean to you, during these sleepless nights, and in spite of them, I am going on with the writing of this note because I do believe that you will have the vision to see my vision, and the strength to carry out my plans.

You are a daughter of Emil Lane. You lived and worked with him for sixteen years, the years during which your character was formed. I believe he built that character on the same firm foundation he built his bridges.

Emil never built for personal glory and always his first consideration was for the greatest good to the greatest number of people.

When they will understand shortly why I sold those bonds and placed the seemingly large sum of cash in the bank in your name. I told you it was to be held in trust for me. It was, but I wanted you to have complete use of it without interference, legal or otherwise.

The will I am leaving will be bitterly contested. I have prepared for that. But the money left for you to use in constructing the dam will be tied up. The company funds may be depleted through forced liquidation, and the cash you have, Judith, will be needed to carry on the work at the dam, so the men on the ground will not suffer and so the natives who trust me will not have to wait too long for their hopes to materialize.

Remember you are only a girl, but upon you rest the destinies of hundreds of laboring men. And now to your first business. If there is a way for those beyond to stand by and strengthen the case left behind, I will be with you.

Carry on, Judy-girl,

BIG TOM

Judith looked up. The room was silent as though those there had felt the presence of the other man, and Judith, eyes wide with sadness as she realized what lay ahead, spoke to the Judge.

"I have finished reading the instructions my former employer left for me, Judge Morgan. I am ready now to hear his will."

THE document was lengthy and filled with legal phrases which meant nothing to Judith. Filled with grief and forebodings, she looked out of the window. There were bushy oaks clustering the line of the bayou, and beyond were the book-like roofs of the little homes she had seen on that first trip with Norman. Tiptilted bindings of red and green and tan covering their simple stories.

Judith envied the women who lived beneath them. She envied the ones in their postage-stamp yards, hanging out billowing sheets, the ones in the match-box houses bending over hot ovens, testing fragrant loaves with expert fingers.

That night their husbands would come in, rolling trim gingham with hand grimed bear-hugs, but Judith would willingly have had the golden lasso tea gown of the previous night ruined, had Norman wanted to give her more than a frigid kiss of greeting.

Only half comprehending, she caught through the maze of legal phraseology words which meant that she had been bequeathed "stocks, bonds and other assets listed herewith and aggregating the sum of five million dollars, to be liquidated as needed."

And, "fifty-one percent of the stock of the Bevins Construction Company, heretofore held in my name." There was also a phrase

which said that this money was to be used in the manner outlined to Judith Lane, on the night of August 25th and in compliance with detailed plans which she had filed in her safety deposit box.

There was more, much more. Mrs. Bevins asked certain clauses be repeated and Judith, listening, felt relayed to learn her former employer's wife would receive the rentals from the Bevins Building, averaging one thousand dollars a month, and the property on which the family home was located.

Mathie, received a like allowance from other sources, both Mrs. Bevins' and Mathie's bequests to be controlled and held to one thousand dollars a month each by Judge Morgan.

The will and the various documents pertaining to it were replaced on the desk. Judge Morgan had announced that was all, and had arisen as though expecting the others to leave, when Morton Lampere held up a restraining hand.

"A word with Mrs. Dale, please. Mrs. Dale you have heard the reading of the will and with your intelligence I know you have felt the injustice done the widow of our late friend. Now Mrs. Dale, I wonder if you haven't something to say to us here before Judge Morgan?"

Judith regarded the man a long moment. She had been seeing him around the offices for years but never before had she sought to find the man beneath strikingly handsome features. Pleasant, suave, too pleasant she decided.

"Mr. Lampere, I have my instructions from Mr. Bevins and I shall respect and obey them to the best of my ability."

JUDITH'S voice was clear as she spoke and her eyes rested on her husband, rather than the man she was addressing, as though she hoped he would understand.

"I'm afraid we've pressed you a little too early," Lampere countered suddenly. "You go home, take time to get over this... or grief at your former employer's death and I am sure that such a competent little business woman you've always proven to be, you'll find something different to tell us."

"Oh come now," he spoke to her as though she were a child to be cajoled, "you're just overwrought. You know that the Big Tom was ill or he would never have gone outside his own office to have the will drawn up. Mrs. Dale you know very well that Big Tom never had a better friend than I—"

"Mr. Lampere," Judith's grey eyes were blue-black with anger, "before you commit yourself further I'd like to let you know that the reason Mr. Bevins went to Judge Morgan instead of to you was because he found he couldn't trust you; he found that while representing him you tried to use your political power to coerce a superior court judge into using his judicial influence to obtain an injunction against Big Tom's purchase of dam—"

"Judith!" Norman Dale was on his feet and across the room facing his wife—"Judith, apologize to Lampere for that insult—"

"It is an insult, isn't it Norman," she conceded sadly. She felt that in some way she was not rising to the courage demanded of the moment. She wanted to press her face into his coat lapel and cry like a child.

"Then apologize," Judith Dale stood facing her husband, realizing that when she had told Morton Lampere what she knew about him, Norman hadn't stopped to consider the possibility that she told the truth, but had demanded she apologize.

"I can't apologize, Norman, because it is true."

"You can't prove it," said Lampere suddenly.

"I can if it's necessary," countered Judith, "the date was August 22, the place the sit room of the county court house, the man—"

"Just a minute, Mrs. Dale," Lampere spoke hurriedly, "remember this. Whatever action you take because of your mistaken version of what took place at the time and place mentioned would be an attack against your husband's firm."

"I don't believe all of this is necessary," interrupted Judge Morgan. "Mrs. Dale, you look worn out with this trial, let us take up other things at other times."

"Thank you," Judith turned towards the corridor door, wondering if Norman would follow, but just before it closed behind her she heard Mathie say—"Don't be a fool, that's what she wants."

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Tomorrow, Judith meets Norman under different circumstances.

"It was a long time ago," she said. "It was crowded and I was tired. People couldn't see me, so I sat up on the piano. It got to be sort of a habit."

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FORMER DISCIPLE OF GANDHI WEDS 'STARLIGHT' MAN

NEW YORK, March 28.—(UP)—Standing beneath two dusty palm trees in the municipal marriage chapel, Nila Cram Cook, banished from India by the British government after she disappointed the Mahatma Gandhi as a disciple, was married today to William Hutchinson of Chicago. The groom was a mess boy on the boat which returned Nila to this country Saturday.

Hutchinson, called "Eternal Starlight" by Miss Cook, appeared a trifle upset by the rapidity of developments since he first met his bride aboard the freighter, City of Elwood. It was the first time he had been seen in public since he disappeared shortly after the boat docked.

"He is the perfect man," Nila said as she appeared to apply for a license.

"He is the ultimate and infinite ideal. He is wonderful. He is my eternal starlight. We want a marriage license, please."

She identified herself as the daughter of the late poet, George Cram Cook, founder of the Provincetown Players; the stepdaughter of Susan Glaspell, novelist, and the divorced wife of Nikos Proestos, and handsome young Greek she married after a romantic courtship on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus.

Proestos, she said, is the father of her six-year-old son, also banished from Greece and in temporary custody here of Nila's brother.

Primary Council Meets Saturday

The primary council of Jackson county will hold a meeting at the court house auditorium Saturday afternoon, March 31, at 1:30. The topic for the meeting is to be Primary Number Work.

Miss Emma May and Miss Laura York will have charge of the program. All primary teachers are invited to attend.

Dessert bridge luncheon, 1 o'clock Monday, April 2, Catholic Parish hall. Price 25c. All are invited.

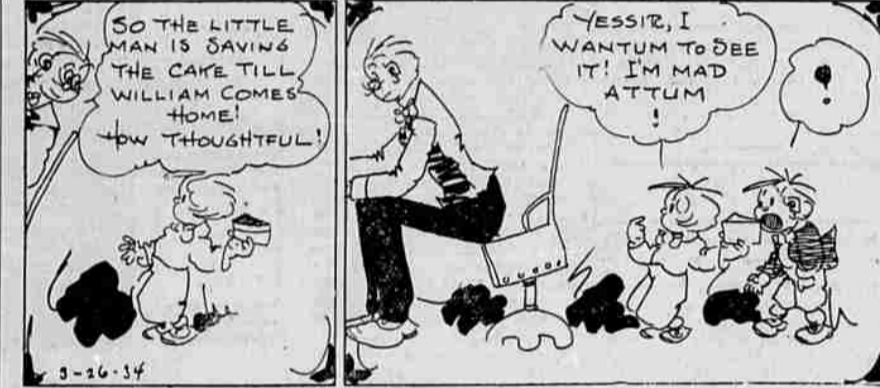
GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatio



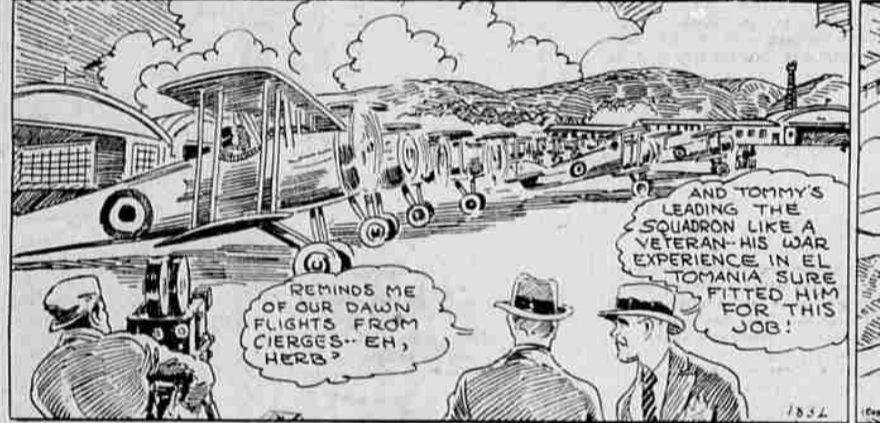
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TAILSPIN TOMMY—A fledgling Leads the war Birds!



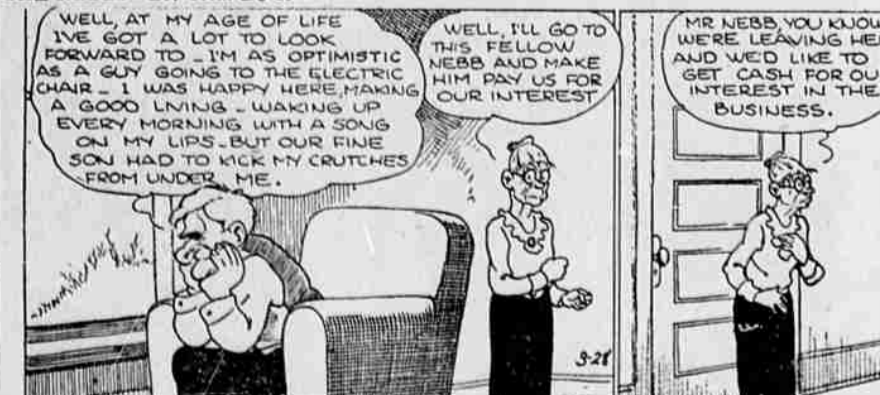
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