

Judith Lane

by JEANNE BOWMAN

SYNOPSIS: Judith Lane knows that her husband's law partner, Morton Lamper, plans to wreck her old employer's plans for the Rio Diablo dam, which were put into Judith's hands for execution upon the death of Big Tom Bevin, whose pet project it was. Judith has been left the Bevin fortune in trust, to be spent on the dam. But Norman, her husband, is torn by the belief that Judith should step out of the picture; they have quarreled, and now, reconciled, have written back to talk.

CHAPTER 17 NEW RIFT

THE meal over, dishes back in the kitchen, Norman found an old scarlet dressing gown, dug in its pockets for pipe and pouch, then filling and lighting the pipe sank into the divan.

Judith, at a gestured invitation, curled into the circle of his free arm, wide eyes on the flames shooting up through the oak logs. Outside, twilight was moving in, a cold spring wind in its wake. The leafless arms of the nearest tree rubbed fretfully against the house, the fire crackled—"Happy?" inquired Norman, contentedly.

"Perfectly."

"Wish this could go on forever," he mused, "no more outside influence, sounds archaic, maybe, but I believe there's a primitive need in every man for a home of his own; you know, the kind of a need that forces him to go out and make good in business like—"

"Like the cavemen in the forest made good with his billy club?" inquired Judith.

"Judy, you're laughing at me."

"No I'm not. I'm just thinking how nice it is to be your particular woman, to say nothing of living in such a cave."

"I like this cave too," he said, boyishly possessive.

She knew he had had but little home life; as Celia had said, "Plenty of house and nobody in it."

He settled back again, and then into their peaceful moment came the whirr of the telephone. Judith, not wanting to listen, couldn't help hearing a few words and was ready for something unpleasant by the time he returned.

"Judy—under the brave scarlet coat his shoulders were sagging. "I forgot to tell you, Lamper has called a meeting of stockholders and the board of directors for the company, tomorrow at three. He wants you there."

She nodded. She remembered dimly that Poppy Neville was giving a one o'clock luncheon and she had promised to help. Would she have time to change? She shouldn't go to such a meeting in a ruffled silk suit and Dolly Var-Jan hat.

"Judith," Norman interrupted her thoughts, "I'd promised myself I wouldn't discuss this Bevin matter with you, but you're my wife and I can't let you go to that meeting unprepared. I want you to know what other people know."

"Judy-girl, I wonder if you realized that Big Tom had been losing his mind during the last few months of his life; in fact that he had a serious brain affliction at the time he drew up that new will?"

JUDITH jumped from the encircling haven of her husband's arm.

"Norman," she cried.

"There, Judy, don't take it like that. It was bound to be a shock to you, I know, but I thought it was better for me to tell you than someone else."

"Norman," she repeated, this time brokenly.

"Yes dear, it probably came from sort of a belated sun-stroke. You remember how we suffered on that trip? Why, healthy as I am, there were times when I nearly went under. It seems Big Tom stood up while he was actually on the job, but the moment he got back home where he could relax, the whole thing came down on him like a ton of brick."

"What do you mean?"

"If you'll remember, Judy, he had a slight stroke the day after his return. From then on he began to grow queer. Everybody in the legal department noticed... what's the matter?"

Judith stood before him, eyes narrowed, body rigid with emotion.

"So that's what they're saying!" she began in the low voice Norman had come to recognize as one of anger "the... the cads. Listen, Norman Dale, you go to Lamper and tell him he's the lowest kind of a liar there is; the kind who will try to destroy the reputation of a man who can't defend himself."

"Judith, will you listen to reason?"

body of her mother was found last night and about a quarter mile upstream from where the father's body was recovered. All were killed in the same automobile accident.

"The Heavens" car burst off the highway north of here and rolled down a 180-foot grade into the stream.

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"To reason, gladly, where is it?" Norman's dark eyes were glowing in the firelight, his chin had jutted forward with Scotch stubbornness—"you'll admit he kept you working all night the night after his stroke. Was that an evidence of sanity?"

"After what you've just said, Norman, it was evidence of more than sanity... it was sheer genius. Only a man facing death could have had the foresight to do what Big Tom Bevin did that night."

"I suppose that you, a twenty-four-year-old—"

"Ma'teel calls me an office girl," supplied Judith bitterly.

"Leave Ma'teel out of this," snapped Norman.

"Try to leave her out," laughed Judith. "You were saying, that a twenty-four-year-old office girl 'presumes' is the next word isn't it?"

"Alright... presumes to know more than brilliant, tried and proven engineers and lawyers."

"That's what you really believe," she said with sudden conviction, then, "Norman, do you see what this is doing to us?"

"It needn't," he replied, arose and walked to the door, "as long as Lige is taking the week off, instead of the day I'll have to go down and look at that furnace."

Judith walked slowly upstairs, undressed mechanically and slid into bed. She felt exhausted. The quick exhilaration of anger had burned out, leaving her numb.

Down to the west full moon began its ascent blocked by the oak tree before the window. Slowly it eased into view, seemingly climbing from limb to limb.

NORMAN would come up, they would talk it over and regret their furry of temper. He would come up before the moon reached the limb with the queer hump. But it flattened its silver surface against the filigree of topmost boughs and sailed on into the clear blue, with no sound from below.

Judith was asleep when Norman, hair rumpled, eyes blinking even in the soft glow of the bed lamp, did appear. She didn't see him stand and stare down at her, a baffled, troubled look on his face. Even had she seen the look, she couldn't have known how much like a child she appeared to the man.

In deference to her new dignity as a matron she had let her hair grow and it lay spread in becoming disorder on her pillow. Her eyes were tear stained.

Her body, fuller now and healthily pink, due to Delphy's untiring care, lay clad in maize yellow pajamas, one foot and one arm hanging over the edge of the bed. Carefully Norman moved them back, pulled the covers high, then went to the chair before the window.

They spoke quietly at breakfast, the apprehensive Delphy and Lige hovering around like two solicitous black birds.

"Shall I call at Neville's for you?" Norman asked as he was leaving.

"No," Judith answered, "as long as you belong to the firm retained by the Bevins women, it would be less embarrassing for you if I come as Big Tom's biographer, rather than your wife."

"Just as you say." He kissed her and left, and Judith felt an unreasonable desire to weep because he hadn't insisted upon standing by her through the coming ordeal.

Judith was afterwards to wonder how she managed to live through Poppy's luncheon. Her bemuddled frock of dark bluish green, and pert, small hat, won the hearty approval of Poppy's guests.

"Look as though you'd been clipped from the top of a candy box," one guest remarked.

She thought of this later, for she hadn't had time to rush home and change and was forced to attend the board meeting in her party frock, and there was small comfort in the smartness of her ensemble as she saw universal disapproval in the faces of the men gathered there.

Even the courage inspired by Judge Morgan, who accompanied her, was dimmed by the sight of Mathile Bevin in deep mourning at one end of the table, flanked by Morton Lamper on one side and by her husband, Norman Dale.

Preliminaries over, a meeting of the stockholders was called and Lamper, their elected chairman arose.

"Mrs. Dale," he began, "prior to your coming, the board of directors held a closed meeting. They came to a conclusion about a very vital matter and wish to lay it before you for a decision, are you ready to hear it?"

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Tomorrow, Norton Lamper begins the attack.

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HEAVY AIR TRAVEL TO FORTHCOMING JUBILEE UNITED'S EXPECTATION

The fastest multi-motored air transport schedules in the world, placing Medford only a hop, skip and jump from virtually any point in the country, will make possible speedy travel to Oregon's Diamond Jubilee celebration at Medford June 3 to 9, it was pointed out today by local officials of United Air Lines.

As United's fleet of three-mile-a-minute Boeing transports now operate, it is only one business day from points as distant as New York to Medford.

Air travel time examples, as furnished by United, follow: From New York, twenty-four and a half hours; Chicago, forty-eight hours; Portland, one and a half hours; Seattle, three hours; San Francisco, three hours; Los Angeles, five hours, and San Diego, eight hours.

Considerable coast travel to the jubilee celebration is expected to result because of the speedy schedules operated between Washington, Oregon and California. Two daily round trips are flown by United Air Lines, with travelers able to fly the entire length of the coast without loss of business hours.

DENVER, March 30.—Struck by lightning today while he was at work, Edward Clark, 37 1/2 city highway department employee, was killed almost instantly.

Brownwood, Texas, has a natural gas well in an unwanted spot—under one corner of its Memorial hall.

STEEL COMPANIES INCREASE WAGES

LORAIN, O., March 30.—(AP)—The National Tube company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation, today announced a 10 per cent wage increase for the 7,000 employees in the Lorain plant, effective April 1.

YOUNGSTOWN, O., March 30.—

(AP)—The Republic Steel Corporation, third largest in the industry, today added its name to the list of steel companies announcing 10 per cent wage increases for employees effective April 1.

Increases of 10 per cent also was announced today by Youngstown Sheet & Tube company, employing about 15,000 men in the Youngstown and Chicago districts, with about 22,000 employees in Youngstown, Chicago, Buffalo, Birmingham, Massillon and Canton, Ohio.

Fifty-three blood tests were necessary to find the correct type of blood for a recent transfusion.

GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatlo



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



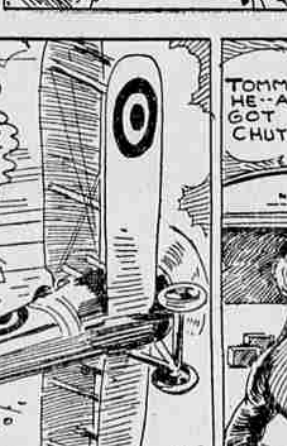
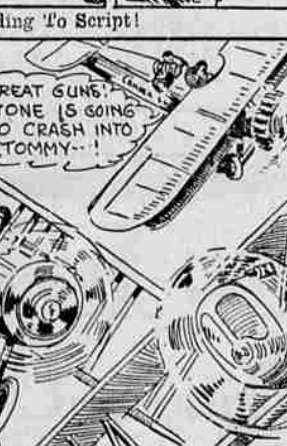
IT WAS PRETTY EMBARRASSING FOR FRED PERLEY AT A RECENT BRIDGE PARTY WHEN AFTER RECEIVING CONGRATULATIONS ON WINNING THE FIRST PRIZE, MISS GILLESPIE DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD ADDED UP HIS SCORE WRONG

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S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Not According To Script!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Another Surprise!



THE NEBBS—In A Big Town



BRINGING UP FATHER



THE FLAVOR L-A-S-T-S

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT
THE PERFECT GUM

5¢ EVERYWHERE