

Judith Lane

by JEANNE BOWMAN



SYNOPSIS: The test well Judith Dale is sinking to prove to the Scoggins family that there is oil on a piece of ground Scoggins holds that is necessary to the Rio Diablo dam. Has been blown up in a storm. Judith is building the dam with money left her by Big Tom Bevins for the purpose. And she has seen her husband, Norman Dale, in the camp of Morton Lamper, who is trying to obstruct Judith's work, and to recover the Bevins money for Mrs. Bevins and her daughter.

Chapter 39 CALLERS COME

THE storm was over, the clean cool air that followed in its wake blew through Judith's house. Delphy sniffed it gratefully as she stood at the kitchen door, then sniffed back towards the kitchen and waddled rapidly across the floor towards the stove.

"Didn't burn," she said with a sigh of relief, and drew a golden-brown up-side down cake from the oven. Carefully then she went over her menu for the evening meal.

She went to the front door and looked down the hill. Judith Dale was coming up alone. Her clothing, dripping wet from the still falling rain, clung to her slim figure, her hair hung in bedraggled wisps, even her shoulders seemed slouched under some sudden weight.

As she came close she looked up and Delphy wondered if the wet drops glistening on her cheeks were rain drops or tears.

"Look at cha," she growled, like a mother bear, "Just look. Like a drowned rat, hair a hangin'. What you suspect to do, take yo' death a cold? Come long in here and git in your tub. Take those wet clothes off—"

She started peeling the garments from the unprotesting girl as she scolded, handed her a flannel robe and went to fill the canvas tub. Still Judith said nothing. Obediently she went to the tub, bathed, dressed in dry clothing and came back to the main room to sit down in a chair and stare stupidly at the door.

Delphy carried in a small tray with a cup of strong, black coffee and Judith sipped it dutifully.

"Miss Judy," Delphy could stand her silence no longer, "what you all givin' for. What's happenin'?" "I'm not givin', Delphy, I'm just... just sunk, that's all."

"You mean cause that well done blew up?"

"It didn't blow up, Delphy. Lightin' struck the derrick. There was a leak in a drum of fuel oil that blew up and caused the other drums to go."

"Laws a-me," confided Delphy, "I done thought Judgment Day were here sure-nuff. I could just hear Gabriel a blowin' his ho'n an. Miss Judith," Delphy giggled a little, "I most made up my mind to send Lige back his money, what's left of it, 'cause I didn't play honest. I was so scared a losin' and not gettin' to come long with you."

"IT DID make an awful noise; thank Heavens everyone was over here on the hill. The debris flew for hundreds of yards, and one piece went right through one of the motor truck houses. From the way Mamie Scoggins is acting you'd think I'd ordered the lightning in."

"You mean she say you have to build another one?"

"Yes Delphy, and I haven't the money." She didn't know why she was confiding in the old woman, but she had to talk to someone and goodness knew that no one had been more faithful, "you see, in our contract, I agreed to see my dog or drilled to the five thousand foot level. They are only down three. Delphy... why does everything have to go wrong?"

"Reckon it's the Devil's Dam, Miss Judy, but everything ain't a goin' wrong. That there lightnin' was thrown down there by Mister Tom's ghost. He done see what misery them Scoggins were bringin' you. But don't you worry none. Ma's Norman, he'll come long back. Some a these days that bad boy. I knows him, and then everything will be all right."

Judith started to eat to please Delphy, then found she was really hungry, the food delicious.

"Delphy," she said, as the old woman appeared with a triangle of cake, topped with a cloud of whipped cream, "what did you mean when you said Mr. Norman would be coming back? You know I left Hillendale, he didn't leave me."

"Miss Judy, Ma's No'm, he left you, afore you left Hill and fell."

"What do you mean Delphy?"

"If Ma's Norman had been united to you in solemn matrimony, he wouldn't a acted like he done."

"But Delphy we were... united—"

"I know by the preachers, but you didn't think alike, and 'cause you wouldn't think united solemn-like with Ma's Norman he done set about doin' things his way. I raised him, Miss Judy, I knows."

"Delicious cake," said Judith, a new note of confidence in her voice, then looked up. Delphy's back had straightened like a ramrod.

"He's comin' them white trash now," she said and Judith, leaning forward, saw the Scoggins family approaching.

Judith left the table, told Delphy to clear it quickly, and met the trio at the front door. She glanced in astonishment at the shimmer of sequins as Mrs. Scoggins removed a rain sodden coat, and noticed in a second glance that her pretty, rapid face had been thickly coated with powder to hide tear stains.

Tommy, in long trousers and his first white collar, was very serious. Judith couldn't tell whether it was an expression worn for the solemnity of the occasion or the dignity of his new clothes.

And then she turned to Scoggins, senior. He wore the shabby town suit he had probably bought for his big adventure when he left Arkansas years before, and had saved for momentous occasions. From his inner pocket he was drawing his copy of the contract she had made with him, three months before.

Judith winced. He had come, as Clia would have said, "To put the screws on the torture chair." He was going to prove that she had promised—

"Mrs. Dale."

She realized he was using his oratorical voice reserved for important occasions—"we have gathered here this evening to tell you—"

"Please sit down," Judith interrupted. She felt her knees were going to buckle under her.

"MRS. DALE," Scoggins repeated the opening salutation of the speech he was intent upon making. He alone of the trio had remained standing, "we have gathered here this evening to tell you that we have seen a great light."

"In deepest hum—hum—hum—"

"Humiliation," prompted Tommy in a stage whisper.

"Humiliation we have come to tell you that the sword of the Lord has cut the blindness from our eyes."

Judith had interrupted one of Mr. Scoggins' declamations, she didn't intend to interrupt another, but she did wish he would get to the point. Word after word rolled in sonorous tones from his tongue. Occasionally whole sentences would remain in Judith's mind, such as—

"Big Tom Bevins found us on the banks of the Rio Diablo, destitute, beggars, starving. He shared his food with us and then he lifted us up and gave us a chance to be human beings again."

There was more of this extolling Big Tom and Big Tom's unselfish generosity.

"And what did I do for him?" barked the little man suddenly, "I listened to the serpent's voice. The woman tempted me with riches and I fell."

Judith was glad Clia Sanford wasn't present.

"Miss Judith, that is, Mrs. Dale, have you a match?" came suddenly at the end of a wordy declamation.

Judith motioned Delphy, who brought in a box of matches, admiration for the "white trash" who could use words like he could, shining in her black eyes.

Scoggins struck a match, let the flame burn to gold, then holding the contract in one hand, the match in the other he said—"The sword of the Lord burned the altar of Mammon. So will I burn this contract."

There was a flash of fire, and Scoggins suddenly human, dropped the burning contract on the floor while Delphy shuffled away for a pan of water.

Judith was hysterical. An overwhelming desire to laugh, an overwhelming desire to cry and an overwhelming sense of relief each fought for supremacy. Scoggins saw the tears in her eyes and nodded with satisfaction, then lapsing into his natural tone of voice said—

"Land sakes, Miss Judy, didn't you think the Mexicans had crossed the border with big guns when them three drums started explodin'?"

Judith was relieved at his normal tone and started talking with animation. She could see Delphy standing by the kitchen table, eyeing the remains of her up-side-down cake as if trying to decide whether or not the Scoggins family were worthy of it.

The oratory of Thomas, Senior, evidently won for her put on the coffee pot and started clicking cake plates together.

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Judith takes a trip, tomorrow.

ABRAMS PROMISES CORRECT SYSTEM DRIVER LICENSING

Abolishment of the compulsory drivers license examination now required by law of all motorists, consolidation of the drivers license department with the motor vehicle division, abandonment of biennial renewal of drivers licenses and consequent fees, and transfer to the state police department of all enforcement duties in connection with the drivers license department were reforms advocated by Carl Abrams, candidate for secretary of state, in a speech at Bend today.

Abrams scored the present drivers license department declaring, "that the expensive set-up of this department was originally organized as a part of an experimental safety campaign, yet when statistics revealed its failure to curb the number of accidents, as a result of which the last legislature virtually transformed it into a revenue raising department. It still continued its expensive administrative program at a cost of about \$75,000 per year."

Abrams further declared, "That any revenue gathering agency that absorbed nearly half of the money it collected to administer its own expenses was fundamentally wrong and should be done away with. He further asserted, "That details of law enforcement, such as checking drivers licenses, eliminating the unfit, and allied functions are natural duties of the state police and I propose to put them there. Maintenance of a

force by the secretary of state to perform such duties is unnecessary and expensive duplication of services, and I intend to eliminate it."

In closing Abrams characterized the whole drivers examination program as a "nuisance," and as an "unwarranted expense and bother to the motorist."

Agricultural economists of North Carolina are urging farmers of that state to develop roadside markets to dispose of their surplus products.

Ethylene gas is being used experimentally to remove husks from walnuts when removal is otherwise difficult.

Five courses were given in Kentucky recently to teach instructors in state agricultural institutions how to grade tobacco according to standards of the department of agriculture.

Flue-cured tobacco growers of North Carolina have been promised rental payments totaling more than \$5,000,000 from the federal government for reducing their production 30 per cent this year.

When Mrs. Clifford Braly of Pampa, Tex., went to Dalhart to sell a garage she owned, she found everything except the cement floor had been removed.

GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatlo



THE FAMILY ALBUM—THE MORNING SHAVE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Instructions



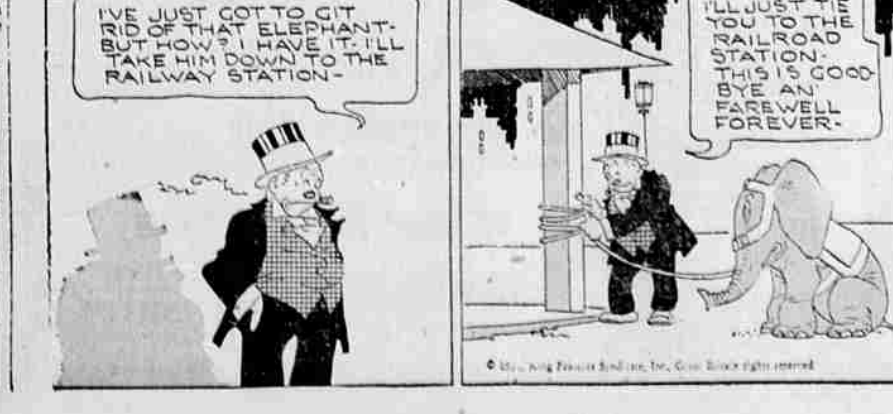
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Okaying Daves Jones!



THE NEBBS—You're Right, Kid



BRINGING UP FATHER



BIG SIGN ADVERTISES FORTHCOMING JUBILEE

Through the courtesy of the Tri-State Neon company of Medford, a large diamond jubilee celebration Neon sign was placed across South

Riverside Avenue yesterday. The California Oregon Power company cooperated in hanging the large piece. The sign is attractive and will attract the attention of many travelers between now and next June 3 to 9 when Oregon will celebrate its 75th anniversary in Medford, Jacksonville and southern Oregon.

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM
THE PERFECT GUM
SWEETENS THE BREATH

keeps the taste in tune

By George McManus

