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A Fortune In Borneo

The Story of an Eccentric
Will.

By EDNA D. BARTOW

The three heirs at law were grouped about the table in the library. At the head of the table, seated in the favorite chair of the late William Lane, was his lawyer, who looked sharply over his spectacles at the girl and the two men and then glanced down at a document in his hand.

"You all know," he began gravely, "that your late uncle was a man of eccentric habits. He was fond of travel, especially in the remote quarters of the globe. His departures and his homecomings were startlingly unexpected, and when he was at home he occupied this residence with his only niece, Miss Lane—he bowed toward the black-gowned girl and resumed—"as his companion and his devoted and disinterested nephews as constant visitors.

"Your uncle's marked eccentricity of habit may explain in a measure the strange disposition he has made of his property. I will now proceed to read the will."

Stripped of legal forms and phrases and omitting the preamble, the document was as follows:

"I hereby give and bequeath all of my property, real and personal, which is represented by various securities, a list of which is attached hereto, solely and absolutely to the one of the following named persons who discovers the hiding place of these securities. These documents are buried in the island of Borneo in a spot situated ten miles in a northeasterly direction from the town Dakar, in the province of Sarawak. I recommend that my nephews, Allen Lane and Burton Lane, and my niece, Cynthia Lane, begin this search immediately after my death, and to the one of the three who discovers this hiding place I give and bequeath all of the property of which I may die possessed."

"Here are a few general directions that may assist you in discovering the securities," said Mr. Phillips blandly as he gave to each one a slip of typewritten paper.

"Well," said Allen Lane, moving toward the door and followed closely by his brother, "it is evident that Uncle William intended that we should invest a large sum of money in order to acquire possession of his fortune, but in my opinion it will be worth the expenditure. I have no doubt that surveyors can locate the spot, and the sooner the venture is made the quicker we will achieve results."

"Is it your intention to go to Borneo at once?" inquired the lawyer.

"Yes, as soon as I can arrange my affairs. I hope my brother will go with me."

"Oh, I shall do that—never fear," interpolated Burton hastily.

"I would suggest, gentlemen, that your cousin, Miss Cynthia, be left in charge of the residence until the estate is settled. The small income that will suffice to support her during your absence would take the place of money paid to a caretaker. She is quite penniless, as you know, and depended entirely upon the generosity of your uncle."

"Very well," they agreed rather grudgingly.

Cynthia Lane turned to the lawyer with a puzzled look on her fair face. "I cannot understand," she said reflectively, "how Uncle William could expect me to enter the contest, for he knew that I did not have the means to go to Borneo."

"In spite of your poverty, Miss Cynthia, I firmly believe that you will be the one to discover the Lane millions," encouraged Mr. Phillips, with an enigmatic smile. "Use your wits! Use your wits!"

"But uncle said he never had been in Borneo, and so I cannot see—"

"Use your wits!" snapped the lawyer as he bowed himself away.

After that Cynthia did use her wits, but apparently to no definite purpose, and so the long year dragged to its close. Then one day, eighteen months after the conference in the library, the lawyer appeared, accompanied by the Lane brothers.

Both Allen and Burton were surprisingly changed. They were bronzed by exposure to tropical suns and winds, and the free open air life had evidently restored them to a full measure of the health they lacked, for they stood before Cynthia with stalwart, straight figures and clear eyes, yet there was a dogged grimness in their expressions that denoted failure in their undertaking.

When the greetings were over and they were seated about the library table Cynthia asked quietly, "What luck, cousins?"

"None," replied Burton bitterly. "As far as I can learn at this late day Uncle William had never been in Borneo."

"For my part I cannot understand why he should send us on a wild goose chase. Under the circumstances a compromise must be made or I shall contest the will," protested Allen.

"You signed an agreement," remarked the lawyer calmly. "If the money is not found by the first of the year, when the two years have expired, why, the entire sum goes to create scholarships in the Conservatory of Music."

Cynthia arose and, her face turning from white to red, said slowly, "No one has asked what success I have had."

"You! What do you mean?" inquired Allen Lane in manifest alarm.

"I mean," said Cynthia, "that I have dug for and discovered the treasure buried under the island of Borneo."

Mr. Phillips rubbed his hands excitedly, and his kind eyes twinkled merrily. "Now, now, my dear Miss Cynthia, this is a surprise! Pray, tell us about it."

Cynthia, still standing, rested her slender finger tips on the table and spoke: "After your departure, cousins, I naturally thought much of the matter. The result of this was that I concluded that my uncle would never have included me among the contestants for his money if he had not intended I should have an equal chance with yourselves. Wealth I had not. Means were not offered to pay my expenses to Borneo, so in the seclusion of the library here I followed you, my cousins, around the world to the island of Borneo." She drew the huge globe of the world toward her as she spoke and whirled it slowly around.

"I traced your course from Singapore to Kuching and thence to Dakar. Then by studying the scale of miles on the map and making proper deductions I believed I could put my pencil on the very point in the island where you were to dig for the treasure."

Cynthia paused, quite pale now, while the brothers stared at her with strained eyes. Mr. Phillips wore his perpetual smile.

"Then," she continued, "I pressed the point of my pencil firmly into the globe on the exact spot, saying to myself in my foolish play as treasure seeker, 'I will dig here,' when to my amazement this happened." As she spoke the words she pressed her pencil point firmly upon the globe, and the great ball dropped in hinged halves before them. In the aluminum cavities thus exposed were stuffed many documents tightly wedged together.

The brothers leaped to their feet. Allen turned passionately to the lawyer. "You knew this all the time!" he shouted.

"Give me the papers," said Mr. Phillips calmly, and when Cynthia had complied with the request he sorted them deftly and threw an envelope across the table to Allen. "Read that aloud," he commanded brusquely.

Allen Lane read in his very harsh accents:

"Dear Nephews—I trust that by this time is ended the long journey combined with hard work, which, my lads, is the greatest treasure in the world. If you had listened to the maunderings of your poor old uncle you would have remembered that he has repeatedly told you that the island of Borneo is the only country in the world he had never visited. To the one who had the patience to listen to an old man and who proves it by his recollection of the above facts I have given my fortune. Which one of you three have remembered the dull tales of your tedious old uncle? I'll wager it is my quiet little Cynthia."

The brothers looked sheepishly at each other and then at Cynthia, who was weeping softly. As by one accord their harsh faces softened and they stretched their hands across the table toward her, while the little lawyer smiled beneficently over all.

A Curious Windstorm.

A peculiar freak of weather is the storm called the "williwaw." This form of storm is confined to that faroff island Tierra del Fuego. The coast is indented with deep fiords crowned with high mountains. Down from their gorges drops the williwaw. A low, hoarse muttering is heard in the distance. Suddenly, without the least preliminary puff, a fearful blast of wind drops upon the sea. The water is not raised into waves, but driven into fine dust. Fortunately the shock lasts but ten or twelve seconds, and calm follows at once, for no vessel could stand such a wind for even half a minute.

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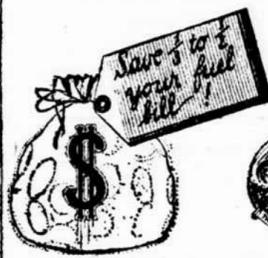
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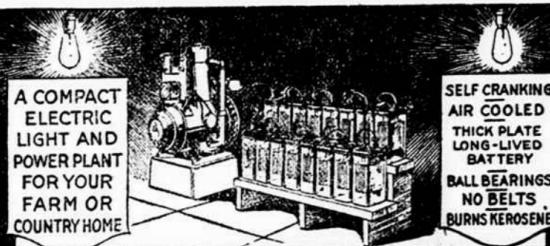


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