

NEWS

'LOVE TAKES WING'

SYNOPSIS

As children play in the backyard of a Sikeston, Missouri orphanage run by Miss Hattie Clarence, 10-year-old Lillian and Katie are playing when Lillian suddenly collapses. A month later, a stagecoach carries Dr. Belinda Simpson and Dr. Annie Nelson (both 20s), who have recently finished medical school in the northeast. Annie tries to reassure Belinda, who is worried she will not be able to help the children she is headed to treat. Upon arriving in Sikeston, Annie's wealthy upbringing becomes clearer when her reaction to the desolate town is one of horror, as opposed to Belinda, who finds the town quaint.

In the mayor's office, Mayor Evans listens to the concerns of Ray Russell, whose brother has recently died from an illness Ray believes to have been spread by the orphans. When Belinda and Annie enter Evans' office, he is surprised to see two women, as he had only expected Belinda, but Annie is only there for a few weeks until her job in the Kansas territory opens up.

As Annie browses in Gus' general store, where Ray is still preaching his aversion to the orphans and his desire to get rid of them, the mayor takes Belinda to the Christian Friends Orphanage, where Miss Clarence takes Belinda to the sick ward to see the numerous stricken children. Belinda takes Katie's temperature – an alarming 103 degrees – and is even more alarmed to hear that none of the children have recovered.

Miss Clarence explains that those who contract the illness initially show signs of confusion; hours later, they suffer nausea, fatigue, dizziness, high fever, and they can't keep down food or water. Miss Clarence tells Belinda about Ray and how, since Carl's death, he has been spearheading the efforts to shut down the orphanage.

On her way home, Belinda is stopped by Ray, who threatens her not to help the orphans. In the heat of their argument, blacksmith Lee Owens intervenes. Ray leaves, and Lee introduces himself to Belinda. She wants to visit the Pine family, who has also fallen ill, and Lee tells her he will take her there first thing in the morning.

Belinda returns to her apartment, where she explains to Annie that she believes the illness is cholera. Belinda eyes the crucifix on the wall and removes it, telling her friend she has no interest in religion, which she explains is just "made up stories and useless rituals."

The next morning, Belinda finds Mayor Evans, who is appalled when she suggests the illness is cholera. He refuses to believe that an illness known to hit the poor and unclean could hit Sikeston. He's concerned that the town will panic and demands she find a cure.

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Meanwhile, Annie tries to gather more information about the illness, but many people are reluctant to talk. Lee, on the other hand, tells Annie to stop by his shop later to discuss it.

Later, Lee takes Belinda to see the Pines, where Ella Pine shows them to the bedroom where her husband John and 12-year-old daughter Meredith lie in separate beds, both very ill. John resists Belinda's help, telling her to send a 'real doctor.' In another room, she tells Mrs. Pine her diagnosis, and promises to return the next day.

Belinda is helping at the orphanage, but Lillian doesn't want help from a 'rich person.' But Belinda surprises her by admitting she grew up in an orphanage as well. At the water pump, Belinda and Miss Clarence discuss the existence of God.

Annie visits Lee's blacksmith shop, where he answers her questions about the illness. She also picks up on his feelings for Belinda, which she later shares with her friend. Belinda, however, is still not ready to let go of her husband Drew, who died a year before from tuberculosis.

The next day, Lillian, one of the orphans, is helping out in the sick ward; she even teaches Belinda how to feed water to the kids. Belinda warns her not to use the same cup for all the kids, and tells Miss Clarence to make sure dishes are washed thoroughly every night. Lee comes by to help with the gutters, and asks Belinda to lunch, but she declines. Regardless, he brings lunch by the medical clinic for her and offers to help research, an offer she accepts. She continues to check on the orphans and the Pines.

The next morning, Belinda thinks of a way to help hydrate the sick: intravenous therapy. She leaves for the post office to telegraph Johns Hopkins, but outside the clinic is an angry mob surrounding the mayor. Mrs. Pine tells everyone of Belinda's diagnosis, only causing more of an uproar. Mayor Evans announces a town meeting for eight o'clock the next evening to discuss whether or not the orphanage will be shut down.

At the orphanage, Annie and Belinda talk with Miss Clarence about the intravenous therapy. They realize they will need to pay for the supplies as well as build each IV machine on their own. On their way home, Annie bothers Belinda again about Lee, but she refuses to make her love life a priority while the children are still sick.

But Annie won't give up, so she visits Lee. She tells him about Drew, and encourages him not to give up on Belinda. At the clinic, Belinda shows Lillian her books and tells her about how she was so lucky to be adopted. Lillian wants to be part of Belinda's family, but the thought of adopting Lillian both astounds and frightens Belinda.

At the town meeting, while plenty of people want to shut down the orphanage, a majority vote agrees to give Belinda one more week to implement her new treatment. After the meeting, Gus tells Belinda that Ray found out about the shipment of IV supplies coming in and he's worried

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he might try to intercept it. Belinda plans to personally pick up the shipment, and although Annie tries to accompany her, she insists on going alone.

That night, Belinda goes to meet the shipment, where Ray is waiting. He threatens her not to take the supplies, but Lee – and the threat of his rifle – comes to the rescue. The next day, Lee helps Belinda put together the IV contraption, and she tells him how lucky the orphans are to have him on their side. He tries to kiss her, but she pulls away, trying not to cry.

Belinda and Lillian are working in the sick ward, and Belinda tells her Lee could use her help at his shop, saying how much she trusts Lillian with the important jobs. Ray is walking by when he spots Lillian, but Lee comes out before he is able to say much at all. Later on, Belinda stops by Lee's shop to see his progress on the IVs. He tells her he knows about Drew and that he will wait for her to be ready; his feelings for her won't change.

With only three days before the town meeting, Belinda and Annie get the IVs hooked up. Before they know it, it's time for Annie to get on to her job in Kansas. Lee invites Belinda to attend the town meeting with him the next night, and to his surprise, she accepts. In a letter, Belinda tells her mother about her feelings for Lee.

The next day Mrs. Pine arrives at the clinic, desperate. The two women return to the Pine house to find John dead, regardless of the IV treatment. Belinda hurries to the orphanage, only to find Lillian wailing in the infirmary. One of her friends has died overnight as well.

Belinda realizes that while she was replacing the water in the patients' bodies, she was not giving them the nutrients they need. She and Lee make a new solution for the IV treatment. They beg Mayor Evans to postpone the meeting, and he tells them he will do what he can. That night, Belinda and Lee are about to kiss when they smell smoke; Ray has set fire to the orphanage. Luckily, Gus sees the smoke and the three of them are able to put out the flames. The sheriff arrests Ray.

Late that night, Belinda is in the infirmary, tending to Miss Clarence, who has also fallen ill. Belinda once again questions her belief in God, and Miss Clarence assures her that God will answer her if she speaks to Him. Miss Clarence falls asleep, and Belinda, looking around the infirmary, attempts to talk to God; believing she has done all she can do to help Sikeston, she asks him for help for the children and for herself.

The next morning, many of the children have already started getting better. Belinda tries to use the water pump, but Lillian tells her it hasn't been working correctly for years. Instead, she takes Belinda to get water at the well. When they arrive at the well, Belinda is shocked at what she sees: It is run-down, falling apart, and has rotten wood and rusty metal sticking out of it. Lee arrives behind her and tells her that people have been dumping into the well ever since they got the pumps working. Belinda realizes that the polluted well has been the source of the

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cholera epidemic. She and Lee rush to tell Mayor Evans, who agrees reluctantly to tell his town to find another source of water.

Back at the orphanage, Belinda tends to a recovering Miss Clarence, who suggests that Belinda adopt Lillian. Belinda goes outside, where children are playing and Lillian is off by herself. Lillian is upset because she won't be seeing Belinda as much anymore. She decides at that moment to adopt Lillian, who ecstatically accepts the offer.

Belinda tells Lee of her decision, but he isn't very surprised. That night, Lee asks Belinda to marry him. To his great surprise, she accepts and tells him she loves him. Soon enough, Belinda and Lee are at the altar, saying their vows. In attendance at the wedding is most of the town, including Miss Clarence and Meredith Pine, who are both much healthier.

In the clinic, Belinda reads a letter from her mother to Lillian, who is still getting used to, but very much enjoying, the idea of having a family. In her letter, Belinda's mother assures her that, while she may face struggles in the future, she will also enjoy many adventures as well.

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