

TEXT

### **Will of the Wind**

*by William Brandon*

Mrs. Hackett found her in her bedroom crying. She stood in doorway and said seriously, "I came in to borrow some sugar, Sylvia. The door was open so I just walk in. Now what's on earth 's wrong with you?"

Sylvia sat up and dried her eyes. Her skirt was wrinkled and her black hair hung in disorder over her forehead. A pin had come out of her imitation lace collar and it had fallen down to catch in the little red buckle at her waist. She said shakily, "Hello, Mrs. Hackett. Nothing."

Mrs. Hackett drew down the corners of her mouth. "Nothing, indeed. It's because of Chip wanting leave here and go to Canton. Isn't it? Of course it is."

Sylvia pushed her hair aside out of her eyes. "I won't do it," she said angrily. "I won't."

"Mm," Mrs. Hackett said sourly. "A boy's will is the wind's will. That's a poem. It's the truest thing in the world. It doesn't do any good to fight against it. Remember that and you'll have it easier"

"I won't do it.

I won't move around to one mill after another all my life, and never have anything, no home, and no-nothing! I won't!"

"Well it's his job if he wants to give it up." "It isn't! It's just as much mine as it is his. I don't believe in that old idea that a woman's just a-a slave, to follow a man around whatever he happens to want to do!"

"Oh, you don't," Mrs. Hackett said. "And just what can you do about it?"

Sylvia bowed her head and dried her cheeks with her handkerchief. "I don't know," she said.

"Of course you don't. You're nothing but a child," Mrs. Hackett said. "You'll be twenty years finding out what to do and by that time it'll be too late to do you any good. Unless there's somebody around to tell you to begin with. Somebody who knows."

Sylvia was not impressed. "What could you tell me Mrs. Hackett? What could anyone do? I've argued with him until I'm almost crazy but he – doesn't even listen any more. He's got his mind set on moving on, to something different that won't be any different at all, and he'll want to go again, and —"

"A boy's will is the wind's will, " said Mrs. Hackett, "That's what the poem says. It's just as true of a man or an old man, for that matter. The older they get the truer it gets, I guess. Only they give up trying to do anything about it after so long a time. " She pushed up her lower lip and looked down her nose at Sylvia. "Like Mr. Hackett."

Sylvia looked up, surprised. "You mean Mr. Hackett used to – want to — "

"He was the hardest man to hold down in this town. He got tired of everything, that was his trouble. It's sort of laziness, that's all it is. But he stuck here. He stuck, all right."

"Why?" Sylvia asked. "What did you do?"

"Well," Mrs. Hackett said, "you can take it for what it's worth, Sylvia. It worked with Mrs. Hackett, I know that."

"But what was it?"

"Whenever he got all excited about leaving here and going away some place to look for something he thought was better, I simply gave him his way. didn't oppose him in the least."

Sylvia looked disappointed and confused. "Oh."

"But," Mrs. Hackett said profoundly, "he didn't know it. I always took him on a trip.

Just a week or so. And I kept him on the jump every minute of it. I always liked little trips around, anyway. Well, by the time that man would get home again he'd be so tired of

jumping around that he wouldn't have left for a thousand dollars. "That," Mrs. Hackett said, "is something you find about men, Sylvia. They like to start but they like to get back home a whole lot more."

Sylvia said doubtfully. "It doesn't seem that Chip would — "

"Maybe he wouldn't. I'm the last person in the world to try to give other people advice, Sylvia. Nobody wants it and I guess everyone has to live his own life, anyway. But Mr. Hackett says that they're shutting down the mill for a week, and if Chip was to spend that week in a car traveling along fast from one place to another, without even a chance to catch his breath.... Well, a boy's will is the wind's will' — the idea of that is that the wind can change in a minute."

"But what if he wouldn't want to go?"

"Mm. You tell him you want a little vacation before you move to Canton. If he thinks that you've given in to him about moving to Canton, he'll take you. You try it and see."

They went up into Michigan, west to Wisconsin, down through Minnesota and Iowa and St. Louis to Memphis, east to Knoxville and up through Louisville to come to home. They were gone six days. Each day Sylvia arranged it so that they got up very early and were on the highway by daylight and she kept on the job, planning the things to visit at the next stop, until late at night. She called upon Chip to stop often at roadside stands and she filled him with hot dogs, soft drinks and bad coffee. She was surprised and delighted at the dull look that appeared in his eyes on the third day.

Mrs. Hackett came over the day after they returned to bring back the cup of sugar she had borrowed. She said, "Well!" and paused expectantly, holding the cup of sugar in both hands.

"He went back to work today," Sylvia said. There was a tired note in her voice. "He hasn't said a thing about going to Canton for several days."

"Mm! And what did he say when he got home?" She asked. "That he never thought home would look so good to him?"

Sylvia nodded. She sat down on a kitchen chair and for a moment seemed lost in thought. "He said exactly that," she said at last.

"You won't even be able to get him to move out of the house to go to a movie for a month. I told you. "Wind's will," that's the poem. They're all alike, all men." She put the cup of sugar on the kitchen cabinet and looked at Sylvia. "But I wouldn't say that you look so happy about it, Sylvia. You're tired."

Sylvia rested her chin on her hand. She sighed and said, "I'm a little tired of this town, I guess. I was just thinking, when we came back yesterday, and it looked so ...so old and so dirty and dull and tiresome...and I thought that we'll spend all our lives here, with nothing to do except the same old ... oh, I was just thinking."

Mrs. Hackett drew back and looked at Sylvia seriously and then said. "You're just tired, Sylvia. My goodness. That long trip — "

Sylvia looked up and her eyes were shining.

"But I'm not tired," she said. "I had a wonderful time."