BARGAIN BRIDE

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

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CHAPTER X

nglish muffins?" He frowned at ard.

o, they're horrible here."

e waitress sniffed at this drawl- omment. Lida continued, "And re a bit heavy, too. It's rather you know."

ell, how about thin, dry toast guava jelly?"

e haven't any guava jelly," the ess put in wearily.

h—!" Vance scanned the card heavily lidded eyes moving ly up and down. His emotional ation was taking from him any to deal with foods. And this room, which Lida had selected ause none of their set ever came was a sadly mismanaged place inefficient service, no selection oods and mediocre cooking. All was distasteful to Vance. And Lida was beside him, his arm so slightly touching hers. Vance eeth on his lower lip.

* * *

little later the order was given the waitress, on twisted high made her way toward the en. Lida had deliberately asked every variety of tea that she she would not find in the place, ring the waitress' discomfiture. always found satisfaction in ncerting others, no matter how portant the others might be.

Sorry it's such a loathesome ," Vance said as the waitress rned and put the food down be- them. Again the girl sniffed, ly indicating her disapproval.

Lida," Vance went on, "about Miami trip—I don't want to nag you will, won't you?"

don't know, Vance!"

lease, dearest!"

ut you see, Vance—"

Darling, I'd have some chance to you there! I can't stand much of this sort of thing. I mean

ssie Thrope who had come puff- into the tea room with a string full of purchases, including tooth e, hard water soap, a bag of mels, handkerchiefs for Jim and 0-cent vase for the dining room, ed herself at a table and looked nd.

e was glad she had come in, ough she knew she shouldn't d even the few pennies her re- ment would cost. She was go- to be short again at the end of month. And she simply couldn't Aunt Ella to help her out again. Ella had a fixed idea that Bes- didn't manage well.

e scanned the menu, then looked s the room to see her cousin. Stafford, with "that Carter

* * *

ssie, usually so gentle, hated for her slender elegance and her n of the things Bessie felt every an should do to help her husband along. Yes, it was Lida and the she was acting was shameless. wonder Bentwell drank! Bessie ded to move so that Lida and escort would not see her. Aunt ought to know about this but ain by tale-bearing was so un- kably low! Neither Bessie nor husband, Jim, despite their real , wanted their sons to have mon- ained in that way.

e stooped wearily to pick up string bag and moved. No, Lida not seen her.

ssie knew Lida had told Aunt about Bessie's throwing away mushrooms that had been half when delivered. Lida had fol- d Bessie to her kitchen, raising beautifully arched brows after ok at Maggie. Maggie never did quite neat. And the next time at Aunt Ella's Bessie heard, "Mush- rooms for a large family, Bessie, are a very expensive form of food. The idea of throwing them out, quite frankly, amazes me!"

She would take hot chocolate with whipped cream and try not to brood upon things, Bessie decided. It didn't do any good but just the same things weren't always fair.

Meantime, in another part of the city, Barrett Colvin had returned home from Miss Ella Sexton's to telephone to Marcia.

"I have only a few moments to talk," Marcia said with nervous haste. "I don't know when Dick will come in. I didn't go to meet him. I've felt miserable all day, Barry—?"

"Yes, dear?"

"That Dexter person called again!"

"For what purpose?" Barrett al- most barked the question.

"I don't know. I wasn't here. He left his card and wrote on it—wait, I have it here somewhere. Here it is. Barry—?"

"Yes, dear."

"He wrote, 'I have a matter of im- portance to discuss with you. I will come back and wish to see you.' I thought, Barry, that if you knew where he was you could talk to him. Do you know where he is?"

"I don't," Barrett admitted, "but you mustn't worry. I'll find him somewhere and, Marcia, don't have him admitted again. Tell him to come to see me."

"Oh, thank you, darling!"

"Never mind about that. I hope you'll feel better soon."

"I will—I do already! All this has worried me so."

"But you're not to worry!" he told her grimly.

* * *

He left the telephone to stride down the floor, smoking determined- ly. When he had a chance to deal with young Dexter he would end this persecution of Marcia. It was outrageous! Dick Radnor, Barrett thought, was the sort who could care deeply enough to forgive a lot. He had seen Dick to chat with him for a short half hour in Dick's office. On the other hand, he knew Dick's family and their reputation for al- most brutal honesty. Whatever hap- pened, Marcia must not be subject- ed to any more of these disagreeable situations, Barrett decided, until she was in completely good health again.

He ran his hands through his sandy hair. Life could be so damn- ably difficult!

And what had Lida Stafford meant by saying that her daughter, Elinor, liked the wrong sort of young men? He would have been willing to wager his last cent on that girl. Barrett wished Elinor's mother hadn't said that. The whole day had been a suc- cession of irritations. First the vis- it to Gerald and the problem of get- ting the youngster a new and better sort of home. Then Miss Ella and her miserable suggestion that Bar- rett should spy on her relatives. Well, he'd quelled that, he felt sure. And now Dexter!

"You're dining in, sir?" Higgins asked from the doorway after his usual hesitant cough.

Of course he was dining in, Bar- rett realized, but the thought for some reason was irksome. He didn't want to talk with men this evening and he knew no woman who would be agreeable company either. He had a quick flash of Elinor Staf- ford's face and knew that if he could he would have hurried eagerly to fetch her and settle her across a table from him.

"Yes, Higgins," Barrett answered wearily, "I'm dining in—"

(To Be Continued)

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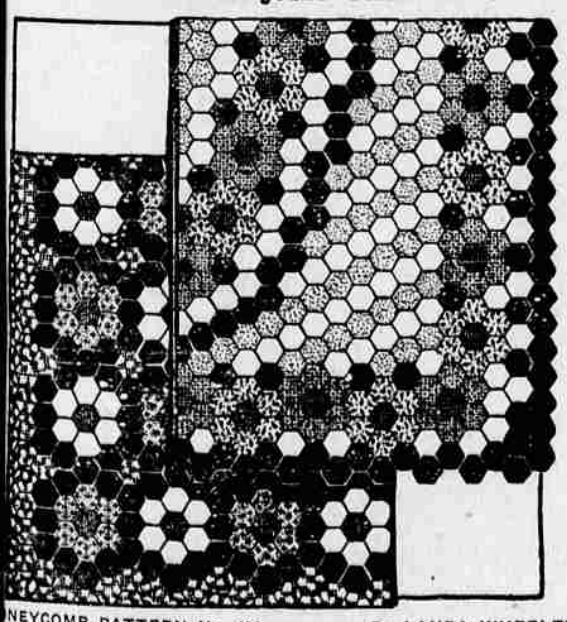

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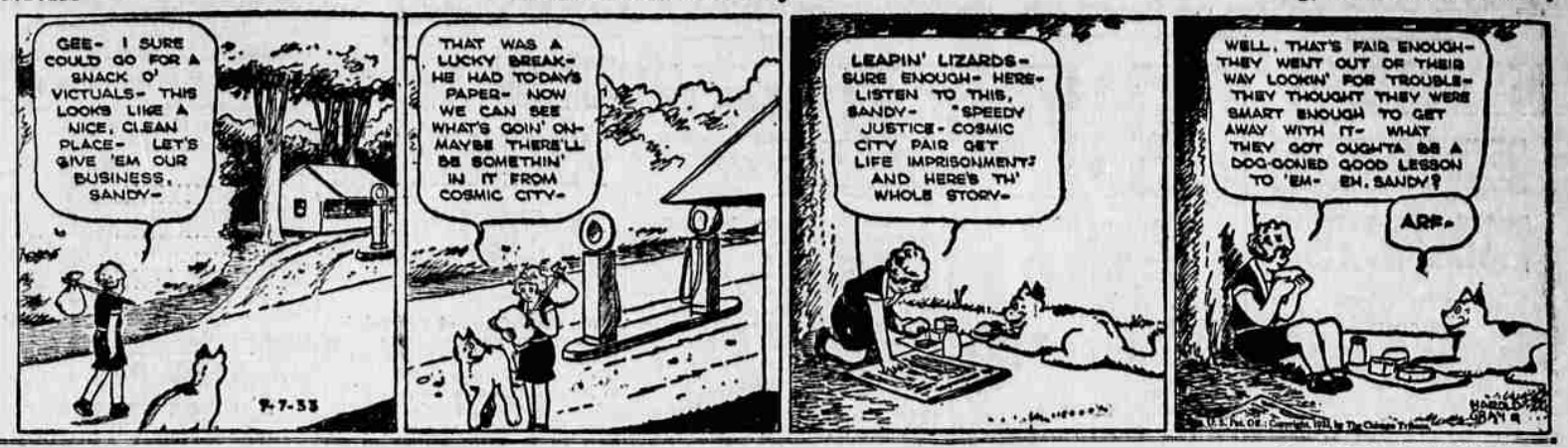

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