

ARGAIN BRIDE

KATHARINE HAYLAND-TAYLOR © 1935 NEA SERVICE, INC.

CHAPTER XXIX
"Well!" murmured Jim. He was so very young, he realized with a rise of tenderness. Dimly he heard the good wishes that were theirs. With stolid stiffening he suffered Lida's dramatically delivered kiss. And at last they were alone in his car, piloted by Hutten.

"Well!" Barrett murmured after a sigh, turning toward her. "Feeling better?"
"Yes," shyly. "Are you?"
"I'm a new man. Will you smoke?"
"Yes."

He found cigarettes and held his lighter to hers, laughing suddenly to see how her hand shook. "Still badly knocked," he said. "You're trembling."

She nodded. "But I'm not uncomfortable," she stated. "I'm—absurdly at ease—considering."
He also was at ease, he realized. He said slowly, "Odd, isn't it? I feel the same way."

"They were silent for a space. Then Barrett asked, 'Your bags were sent to my—our home?'
"Yes. There are a few trunks on the way, too. I hope I won't be a great bother."
"Oh, no! And you'll remember my promise to make it as easy for you as possible?"
"Yes, thank you."

The car came to a standstill. They were at home. Barrett opened the door before Hutten could reach it. Higgins admitted them, bowing low and trembling from excitement. Elinor smiled and, rather shyly, spoke a few words to the butler. His eyes brimmed as he murmured, "Thank you, Mrs. Colvin."
He was going to be able to love her, he saw, as he had hoped he might.

"We're home," said Barrett. "Oh, I like it!" A sudden sweep of consciousness made Elinor speak in an undertone.
"Even that hat rack?"
"Yes," she insisted. "It makes me think of New Year's calls and people getting ready to go to Saratoga."

"That's exactly the reason I've kept it," he said, wondering at her understanding and warmed by it. "But anything," he added quickly, "that you don't like can be changed."
"But I think everything looks so pleasant," she stated. Some day she would tell him that it was a relief to get away from Lida's self-conscious "modern" furnishings into the solidness of the old and the feeling that a family had lived happily among things they knew.

"I think," Barrett said now, "that Higgins has had your bags taken upstairs. May I show you the way?"
"I think you'd better, don't you?" she answered as she looked after Higgins, who was well down the long hall.

"There's a landing and an extra step at the head of the stairs. I want you to be careful to remember it. I can't have my baggage all chipped up by your falling around!"
He couldn't remember when he had felt so young, so inclined to foolish jest, so happy.

She laughed. He had the power, she was learning, to take from her all feeling of restraint.
"I do like your house," she said over her shoulder, mounting upward.
"It's your house also," he reminded her. "Your room opens into mine as well as into the hall," he told her stiffly as they reached the upper hall. "The door has a key on your side—but during the day I think it would be best to keep it open. I don't want even the servants—"

"I understand. I—I don't need the key—"
"Thank you," he answered low. He pushed the door open and she stepped into the room—the prettiest room, she thought, that she had ever seen. It was gay with soft, rose chintzes and comfortable with deep chairs. There were two capacious empty bookshelves on either side of a fireplace, a paddle-topped English fire upard around the hearth, small tables, a desk, a telephone guarded by a Florentine cabinet, long mirrors, soft net at the windows, a chaise longue.

"When did you do this?" she asked wonderingly. "Or have it done?" It was obviously new, entrancingly fresh. The rug was so soft beneath her feet. There were pillows, many pillows and all so pretty.

(To Be Continued)

He whispered, with a catch of his breath, "Did you ever see anyone so lovely?" as she mopped her face with an already moist handkerchief.

He remembered her own marriage to Barrett, and how she had reminded herself not to show signs of him. She had thought, sure, that Miss Ella Sexton immediately settled "something" on Barrett, her nephew, and Lida knew, been a fool, the years of lying to the old man had gone for naught. But of how things would be different—

Elinor whispered, head down, "I came strongly, if not steadily, from Barrett. Then I met Arthur Palmer gave me a real party for you all some time we can celebrate." Barrett put his hand over Elinor's

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