

You Can't Marry

by Julia Cleft-Addams

SYNOPSIS: A suspicious doctor threatens George Townsend's plan to hold her job by telling her employer that her cousin Jenny married him — his married Eddie Townsend. Jenny finds the doctor, who has attended Eddie after a nervous breakdown, trying to question the superintendent of George's apartment house.

Chapter 15 "YOU MARRIED MY PILOT?"

"H"ES upstairs, yes," the doctor said. "Miss Revell has told you, of course, what his trouble is?"

"Yes," said Jenny. "That is, she told me there was bad news about him. She didn't give me details."

"Odd!" sneered the doctor. "And neither of you at home to take charge of the poor chap. Or perhaps he doesn't live here, really? Though I remember Miss Revell mentioned she was getting the apartment ready for you and your husband?"

"I don't think," said Jenny very quietly, "that I know your name."

"Tallas, Dr. Leslie Tallas."

"Thank you. Are there any instructions I should be given, Dr. Tallas, about Mr. Townsend before you go?"

"Well, he's suffering from profound nervous shock. The doctor was not flushed, now, he was pale. His eyes were hostile as they came to rest upon Jenny's hands. "They gave him a sedative at the hospital before they got him into the ambulance—they didn't want to let him go at all, at first, but I offered to take charge of him and he was rapidly running a temperature at the idea of being kept in that place. A lot of planes go over, you see, and he has the fixed idea that one will drop on him and crush him. But you'd better consult your doctor about him. He'll give what advice he can and probably recommend a specialist."

"I see. Thank you. Then I needn't detain you any longer."

Miss Georgina Revell bowed slightly. Dr. Tallas scowled, shrugged his shoulders, saluted perfunctorily and strode out to the ambulance.

Gill gave a loud, short laugh.

"You helped him get Mr. Townsend up to the apartment, Gill? Did he seem—excited? Ill?"

Gill reflected.

"Seemed glad to get there," he vouchsafed at last. He added irrelevantly—"Your wearing no ring, Miss Jenny, that's what started that doctor chap nose-poking. Most married ladies wear rings."

The hot color flooded Jenny's face.

"I don't want to—I scold!" she said vehemently. Then, as though something pursued her, she turned and fled up the stairs.

By the time she reached the door of the apartment she was composed again, at any rate outwardly; only her mind and her heart were still rebellious. She whispered "I won't wear a ring and I won't speak of Eddie as 'my husband.'" Then she unlocked the door and went in, ready to face George's stinging reproaches.

But there were none. George was not there. The few rooms lay compactly round the little square hall and, with all doors open, Jenny could see at a glance that George had not yet returned from Rochester Gate. But where, then, was Eddie Townsend?

She looked into the room that had been prepared for him; his luggage was there—it had arrived, she remembered, twenty-four hours ago—but it had not been unpacked. And she noticed, too, that his curtains were not up after all—she was rainer glad of that, they would give her something practical and immediate to see to. In George's room there was work waiting as well; the bed was unmade and the chairs were heaped and littered with clothes, all now, all dreadfully expensive-looking. And in the sitting-room the flowers needed attention.

She turned into the kitchen and, as she pushed open the door, there was the sound of a quick stumble behind it and then a crash.

"Eddie!"

He was pressed back against the dresser, an empty kettle at his feet. On the stove a gas-flame flared high, and the lid of the kettle was spinning merrily in the recess under the sink. His head was bandaged and plastered so that very little of his face could be seen; but what was visible looked startlingly pale. His eyes were frightened.

"Oh, it's only you, Jenn!" he croaked, tried to laugh and then collapsed heavily into a chair and held his head in his hands.

Jenny picked up the kettle, filled it, retrieved the lid and set the water on to boil. She was so afraid of saying an incautious thing that she kept silence. She found her duster and went back to George's room.

Her lips as well as her hands were trembling. Bad news about Ed, George had hinted. Bad news indeed! What could be worse than a complete nervous collapse to a man whose only capital was his courage, his coolness of judgment, his quickness of hand and eye?

Jenny flicked the peach satin elderdown into place on George's bed and gazed in dismay at the wisps of lovely, fragile hair hanging over the rail at the end. "Oh, George, what crazy extravagance!" Not for the first time, she was amazed that Miss Revell of Matchless—methodical, balanced, economical of effort—was also this prodigal, clothes-mad, laughter-loving George!

A hesitating step in the hall and Eddie hovered, filling the doorway. "The kettle's boiling, I say, when will George be back?"

"Any minute," Jenny assured him cheerfully. "Mr. Matching often has some extra work for her on Sunday morning. What were you going to make, tea or coffee?"

"I—well, I thought of a cup of strong coffee." There was a shamed note in his voice that she found pathetic. "My nerves seem a bit shaky after that bang up yesterday. I suppose it was yesterday." He leaned against the door-post and she saw he was shuddering.

"Yesterday, yes. Come and help me make the coffee."

He followed her back to the kitchen.

"Has that Tallas chap gone yet? He brought me along, y'know. I was half asleep by the time we got here but I remember Gill let us in and after a bit Tallas said he'd go down and find out where—my wife was."

His voice stumbled over the words.

"She'll be here any minute," Jenny repeated gently. "Take the old easy-chair, Eddie. You always used to declare it was the only really comfortable one in the apartment."

The wicker creaked and groaned as he dropped into it. She glanced at him anxiously. He was so pale and his bandage looked so uncomfortable. Perhaps she ought to phone for a doctor before she did anything else? But neither she nor George were ever ill and she did not know where to find one.

"When I've had that coffee, I think I'll dose off again for a bit," he remarked, watching her busy hands. "You won't let anyone in except George, will you?"

"No one shall worry you," she promised, distressed by his hunted glance at the door. "Black coffee, you said, didn't you? Sugar?"

She passed him a brimming cup. His fingers were uncertain as they took it from her—and the next second they had loosened their grip altogether and the cup and saucer were in pieces on the floor, lapped by a tide of coffee.

"There's a plane going over," he gasped. "If it crashes—oh, Jenn, don't let it crash!"

He threw up his hands and clapped them upon his head, covering down into the old chair so that his face was hidden in its cushion. Jenny looked helplessly towards the window. The throb of engines came to her when she listened intently.

Eddie gave a groaning sigh and slid more deeply into the cushions. At the same moment there was a sound of a latchkey in the door of the apartment.

Headless of the spilt coffee and broken china, Jenny dashed out of the kitchen. She did not know whether Eddie had fainted or not, but it was plain that he had completely broken down. George must come to him at once!

"George!" she began.

She checked herself.

George was there but she was not alone. She was ushering into the little hall someone whom Jenny at once recognized as Gratton Matching. This upright, short old man, shuffling along in his gray clothes, his long gray face pushed arrogantly forward, his slate-colored eyes dull and blank, could be no one else.

"My cousin, sir," said George nervously, looking at Jenny.

"Cousin, eh?" (What a rasping voice the Old Man had!) "You married my pilot, Townsend, eh? . . . Townsend's wife, are you? Eh?"

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If Jenny says "no," she will betray George; if she says "yes," Matching may catch her in the net of her own snare. What does she answer, Monday?

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Plot and Counter Plot!



S'MATTER POP—Reassuring



By C. M. PAYNE

BOUND TO WIN—The Beachcomber



By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—Advice



By SOL HESS

MUTT AND JEFF—Rational



LEGION SUSPENDS BONUS OPPOSERS

NEW YORK, June 16--(AP)--The World Telegram said today that the Willard Straight post of the American Legion has been suspended for opposing the Legion's bonus lobby activities in Washington.

Several months ago the post sent a telegram to National Commander Henry L. Stevens demanding discontinuance of "all attempts" to "coerce congress."

Maurice Stember, New York state adjutant, refused to confirm or deny the reported suspension.

DOUKHOBORS TO ISLAND PRISON

OTTAWA, June 16--(AP)--Piers Island, 40 miles from Victoria, B. C., in Haro Straits, has been selected as the place where Doukhobors of the Sons of Freedom sect, arrested for nude parading will be banished. It was officially announced today.

An equal number of men and women will be sent there, including most of the several hundred arrested recently in western Canada and sentenced to prison terms of three years each.

VOTE TO CONSIDER VETS' COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, June 16--(AP)--The senate today voted, 49 to 20, to take up the Brookhart resolution for creating a standing committee on veterans' legislation.

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus