

You Can't Marry

by Julia Cleft-Addams

SYNOPSIS: The courage of Jenny Bevel, when she finally lies to George and tells him she has married Eddie Townsend, catches Matching's interest. The marriage of Jenny's cousin George to Townsend were admitted to Matching, openly, he would discharge George, his secretary. Townsend has had a nervous smash-up.

Chapter 20 BLUFFING?

I'm just remembering that I am supposed to have got married yesterday—that's what Mr. Matching meant, of course," Jenny said. "That's what he did when he was 24 and a day."

"Doesn't matter," answered George. "I'm not being jealous now, honestly—but I don't think he believes you married Ed at all. He thinks—he knows, somehow, it was me."

"But then—"

"He knows it was I. (Think I'll have to take a special grammar course again. Remind me, will you, when I get back?) But he's content to accept our statement that it was you, provided the statement is sufficiently water-tight. When he used to say to me—'Don't let me hear of your getting married!' he meant it quite literally. And we won't let him hear it. That's flat."

George's old energy had returned to her. She swept Jenny out of the way and began to burrow in the huge wardrobe for her suitcase.

"It's only for a few days, this trip, though I expect it'll be longer than Wednesday. None of that lingerie, it's all new. It oughtn't to be, but it is." She laughed without merriment. "My trousseau, Jen. Wasn't I a fool? I haven't even tried it on yet. Haven't had the heart."

Jenny could not find anything to say. She watched the quick hands folding and packing. They shook suddenly and stopped.

"You think I don't really care much for Eddie, don't you, Jen?"

"I think you love him but—in your own way," Jenny said.

"But you think I love my job more. Well, that isn't so. I'd choose Ed, now, before my job; I realized it when I was being married to him. I know it wasn't a solemn ceremony, exactly, but—it was solemn to me. I wish now that it had been in a church instead of in that dusty office. I felt that I needed a blessing. I should have liked someone—sounds sloppy, doesn't it?—to bless us both."

Jenny's mind went back to the dry words that had declared George to be Eddie's wife. She tried to remember them—and all she remembered was that from where she stood in the dingy room she had seen a little quiet sardan and a bed of snapdragon and a green bench; empty under the trees.

"I blessed you both in my heart, George."

"I know it, lamble; I can always reckon on you." But again George paused in her task and sat back to peer up at her cousin, perched upon the gorgeous new bed. "Except this morning at the hotel, Jenny. What happened? Where were you? They couldn't find you anywhere and you know how desperately important it was that you should see the Old Man at ten. I told him that you were the sort of dreamy child who probably thought he meant ten at night; but I'm pretty sure he didn't believe that either. Anyway, he insisted on coming here and seeing you for himself. But what happened that you weren't at the hotel?"

"I was selfish. I wanted a day to myself." Jenny gripped the lace of the coverlet and tried to say that she had wanted to spend the day—had hoped and dreamed that she was going to spend the day—with the man who loved George and who meant nothing to George at all. But the words lay like blither aloes upon her lips and would not be uttered. "I'm terribly sorry. I can't explain."

George pressed down the lid of the suitcase and clicked the locks shut. She seemed to be satisfied with the halting words.

"Well, all's serene for the moment. You won't let me down again. I'm confident of that; not now that you've tackled the most difficult part of the scheme, the Old Man himself." She returned to the guessing-table, powdered hastily, and combed her hair. "It's most extraordinarily fortunate that he should have taken a liking to you. Perhaps you remind him of his long dead wife or something!"

Jenny was jarred by the laugh. "Perhaps he likes me because I like him," she said. "Yes, I like him very much. Why shouldn't I?"

"Only because everyone has always found him absolutely unendurable!"

"Then it's no wonder he is lonely."

Amazed, George dropped the comb, picked it up, bumped her head on the corner of the table and knocked over a chair.

"George, truly Eddie can't stand any noise. You'll see for yourself in a minute how appallingly nervous he is."

George righted the chair and sat down on it.

"What did you say, Jen?"

At a loss, Jenny repeated it.

"Are you telling me that Eddie is actually in this apartment? Actually in the kitchen? That he was really there when you told the Old Man—"

"Of course, he was really there! Of course, he is in there now! What in the world makes you think he shouldn't be?"

"Because late last night I rang up the hospital and said I would take a car down and fetch him during the morning." But she spoke mechanically, her attention concentrated on Jenny. "Then—then—you see, I thought you were just bluffing the Old Man, just posing as an anxious wife. And all the while you weren't acting at all? You were really anxious, really angry?"

Jenny slipped off the bed. She felt, faintly, that contraction of the heart that she had endured outside in the hall; the desolating fear that George was changed towards her. No, not that!

"Go in and see him now," she urged. She took the key from her pocket and laid it on George's knee. "He has been longing for you, longing and longing. All the more because the idea of seeing anyone else simply terrifies him. I'm hoping he's asleep. But if you wake him and say you're only going away for a little while and that you'll never leave him, once you're home again, you'll begin to cure him, as no one else can. You'll see, dearest, that it is so."

George smiled faintly. The strangeness went from her eyes; she leaned to Jenny and kissed her lightly on the cheek. And again Jenny felt that they had come close in spite of something.

"You're a quaint, solemn little creature and I'm a fool. No, I won't wake him; it's far better that I should slip away and that you should tell him I couldn't stop."

George jumped up and, as though her movement were a signal, there was a knock on the outer door. "That's the Old Man's valet, Mace. Sent to tell me to hurry up. I can't stand the man, he's like a mole; but he's rather a power in his own way. Let me pass, honey—what's the matter?"

Jenny could not clearly say what was the matter. She found herself with her back to the door, barring George's way out.

"You simply can't go without seeing Eddie. You can't. Perhaps you don't understand what you mean to him. He needs you. He's been counting the minutes. Because he's asleep it doesn't mean that he isn't waiting for you—he's only sleepy because they had to give him something to get him here quietly. Even Gill will tell you that Eddie was so thankful to get home."

George's face was set. She hurled words back at Jenny as though they were stones to hurt her.

"And you object to being called childish! You silly child, you talk about my never leaving Eddie again—will you tell me, please, who is to keep him and me in this charming little home if I lose my job? What do you think Eddie's savings are? Enough for a year, perhaps. What do you think mine are? Nothing at all. Actually, I'm heavily overdrawn at the bank and I've more bills to meet than I've ever had before!"

"Don't—don't look like that, Jenny! Don't look so shocked!" She tried to laugh. "I'm going to turn over a new leaf, I swear it. But in the meantime, get out of my way and let me do the only thing I can and earn, earn, earn!"

The summons at the door was repeated and George pushed her way out.

Jenny, gazing after her, saw that outside the front door stood a short, slightly stooped man with close-set eyes. He took the suitcase and the street below, came the sound of a big car sliding into speed.

Jenny picked up the key from where it had fallen to the floor and went slowly to the kitchen. At any rate, she thought irrelevantly, Eddie need not be locked in any longer.

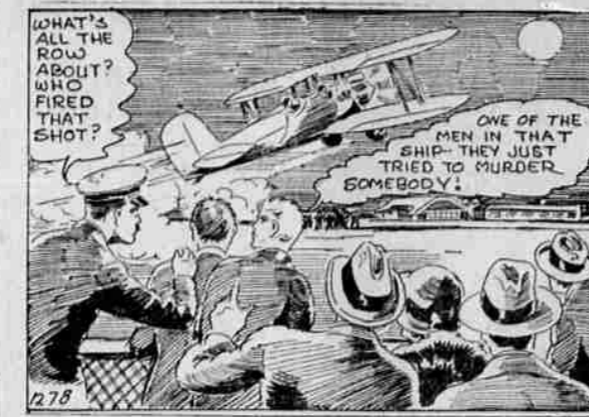
The next moment she heard his voice.

"George? Girl, darling, is it you?"

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When Eddie finds that George is gone, tomorrow he will make a surprising proposal to Jenny.

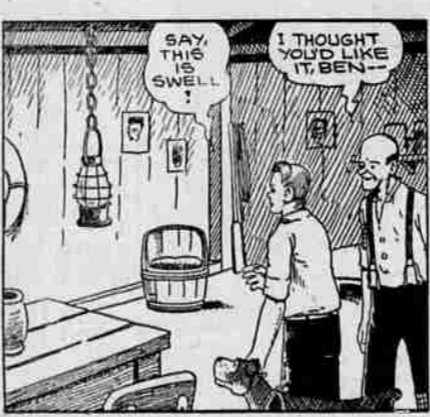
TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Padmini Gains Its "Victory!"



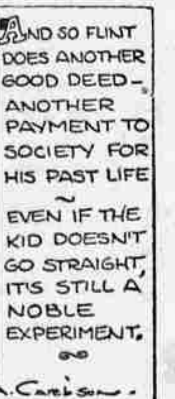
S'MATTER POP—You Can't Postpone Cake



BOUND TO WIN—"Ryder Castle"



THE NEBBS—Opportunity



MUTT AND JEFF—A Lot Of People Feel That Way These Days



MUTT AND JEFF—Who's Looney Now?



BLACKSHIRTS KILL PAIR OF PLOTTERS

ROME, Italy, June 18.—(AP)—The retribution of Premier Mussolini's fascist government was visited at dawn this morning on two Italian terrorists who were convicted of having plotted against Di Duce's life. The two were Domenico Bovone and his assistant, Angelo Sbardelotto. Bound astride a chair, they were shot to death from the back. Five hundred black-shirt militiamen, with daggers upraised, gave the fascist war cry, "A noi," (to us) as the shots of the firing squad rang out and each bullet-riddled body sagged limply in the bonds that held it.

RUNNER SHOT IN DENVER RUM WAR

DENVER, June 18.—(AP)—Denver's sporadic liquor war flared anew last night, leaving one man dead, another beaten while a third was sought for questioning. Morris Cohn, 32, was the victim. He was shot in a battle over a huge liquor cache and died several hours later. Benjamin Orenstein, found beaten by police investigating the shooting, was being held for questioning. Max Wine, police character, was the man sought. Mrs. Cohn said her husband had been employed by Max Wine as a liquor runner. Wine, she said, was fearful Cohn would testify against him in a pending prohibition case.

By C. M. PAYNE

By EDWIN ALGER

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By George McManus