

# You Can't Marry

by Julia Cleft-Addams

Chapter 22  
BY SPECIAL MESSENGER

DO YOU know, Eddie, that there have been a number of hangings and crashings and thrummings going on down in the streets while we've been talking and they didn't worry you a scrap because your ears were closed to them?

"Now if you'll promise me that every time you get panicky you'll close your ears against everything except what I'm saying to you—I'll have you all right in no time!"

Eddie was enormously amused. She was glad of it—his laughter could never hurt her. Besides, she knew she was right. She let him enjoy the joke and then suggested he should inspect his bedroom and let her unpack for him.

But Eddie, thrusting his hands deeply into his pockets, became stubborn.

"I don't come here to live until I come openly as George's husband," he announced. "Not as things are now. You may be right or wrong about her job—and I may be right or wrong about it—and after a lengthy pause—and she may be right or wrong. But I'm not going to be kept here like a darn bird in a cage until my wings are grown again!"

"You'll find me a room somewhere, Jen, there's a good kid. Gave up my rooms. Any old back street will do. No use throwing money about in a swanky hotel."

"No use at all," agreed Jenny. She stood considering, her hands in her pockets, her brows bent.

Into the silence came the sound of someone at the door.

Eddie's face lost every vestige of color. He jumped back against the window as though he had some wild plan of climbing out to the leads.

Jenny realized that this first test of her power would be the last. She followed him, forcing him to look her in the eyes, cutting through his mutter of—"Don't let them send me up! Don't let them, Jenny!"

"Listen to me, Ed! No, you're not really listening, not as you can listen. Close your ears to everything except what I'm saying now. Nobody is going to send you up until you want to go and nobody is going to crash down on to you."

"Honest, Jen?"

"Honest. So what have you to worry about?"

"Nothing," admitted Eddie, almost unwillingly.

"Then you go on listening in your mind to what I've just said. I'll see who it is at the door."

As Jenny had expected, it was Gill who was at the door. He said nothing at all, but jerked an enquiring thumb at the interior of the apartment.

"Mr. Townsend is feeling better," said Jenny, answering the thumb, "but I'm glad you came up, Gill. I wonder if you know of some cheap, quiet room for him? He doesn't want to stay here."

She had expected a long, long period of ruminating, and it startled her when he suggested without a moment's hesitation, "Mrs. Bigger."

"Would she take a boarder? In her house clean? And quiet? And would she look after him a little if I weren't with him?"

To each question in turn Gill gave his weighty nod. Then he jerked his thumb again at the little hall and said, "Luggage?"

Jenny produced Eddie's solitary suitcase and the big-shouldered superintendent swung it easily from the right hand to the left. Then he demanded: "Mr. Townsend?" He seemed to expect to carry Eddie, too.

"I'll bring him along. If you will go first, Gill, and explain, I'll look after Mr. Townsend."

As long as she lived Jenny never forgot that first dreadful walk with Eddie. Last night, under her third feet, Eyle Street had seemed long, but with Eddie clutched at her shoulder, swaying and jibbing like a terrified horse at every sudden sound—it seemed like a road in a nightmare that goes on and on until at last one wakes. By the time she had installed him in Mrs. Bigger's upper rooms, she felt as though she, too, would avert and jib and finally run tall and run away.

But she did not let him guess it. She talked to him, brightly and steadily all the way there, while people stared and children pointed at his bandages and his uncertain steps; and she went on talking now while she unpacked his belongings.

"Isn't Mrs. Bigger a good sport! She's so ugly you think first she must be thoroughly bad-tempered but she is one of the most amiable people I've ever met. Do you think you'll find your handkerchiefs if I put them in this drawer?"

"Only a girl would fuss with a lot of handkerchiefs at all," said Eddie drowsily. "Much simpler never to unpack anything, then you can always find it."

He was lying on the narrow bed, his hands behind his head, his eyes closed. He had been pushed and persuaded into Mrs. Bigger's shop in a pitiful state of nerves, but the sight of his future landlady had so delighted him that he had thrown aside his fears and followed her quite naturally up the stairs to the room he was to occupy. Mrs. Bigger had sense enough not to catechize him about his accident; she promised to come up later, when he had had "a nice snatch of sleep" and read to him from the Sunday papers; and rather to Jenny's surprise he had grinned and agreed.

"I like that old horror," he remarked when she had gone. "She doesn't get me all fussed up like those doctors and nurses did. I never could stand hospitals. Mrs. Bigger will suit me down to the ground indoors and you'll be there, won't you?—when I have to go. Between the two of you I shall do fine."

"I'll come back this afternoon or this evening," she promised. She noticed that he had not mentioned George again. It was perhaps a pity that she must be mentioned at all. But there was no choice.

"If George stays on with Mr. Matching," she began reluctantly, "she will have to take care that he doesn't hear that she is married. We shall all have to take care to keep it secret. . . . You'll take care, too, won't you, Eddie?"

"Personally I'm going to let people say and think anything rather than tell them the truth," she added firmly. "You must back me up, because we can never know what may not come to Mr. Matching's ears. At any rate—as he still made no kind of response—until George comes home, and you can discuss things with her."

She waited for a moment but there was neither word nor sign. She was really asleep? No, she was sure he could hear her. She sighed and quietly opened the door. She had a great longing to get out of the bare, poor little room with its coarse lace curtains—out into the air.

"Jenny!" The call came just as she was over the threshold.

"I hate to bother you about anything," she protested, returning to his side. "But George made me see that it's most frightfully important that—"

"All right, kid. I'll remember. I'll talk any darn nonsense anybody likes. I'll begin by telling Mrs. Beauty Bigger that I've got three wives already. Go on, you buzz off. I'm sleepy again. Anyway, I've got plenty to think about."

She left him to it. In spite of his nonchalance she knew he was hurt; hurt and bewildered and lonely. So often she had herself been all those things that she knew how he longed to be alone.

She had a final word with Mrs. Bigger, then crossed the road to the hotel and there paid her bill and collected her few possessions. As she was leaving, the clerk called her attention to a note which had, he said, arrived for her by special messenger shortly after she had left that morning.

She opened it. She did not need to look at the signature to read that it was from Garth Aveney. He had just the writing she would have imagined for him, big, sprawling and yet orderly.

"I feel sure you didn't really expect me to keep our appointment this morning. Fortunately for me, I heard that you were expected elsewhere. And so, to tell you the truth, was I."

She stared at it, read it again, then tore it into small pieces. "Expected elsewhere?" The words conveyed nothing to her; perhaps they were not meant to. When a man cut an appointment with a girl simply because he could not stand being in her company, it hardly mattered what excuse he sent!

She took her way laughingly back to the apartment. Personally she seemed to journey to and fro along these hot streets! Was it only yesterday evening that she had left rather than heard his car draw up at the curb and had taken her place at his side?

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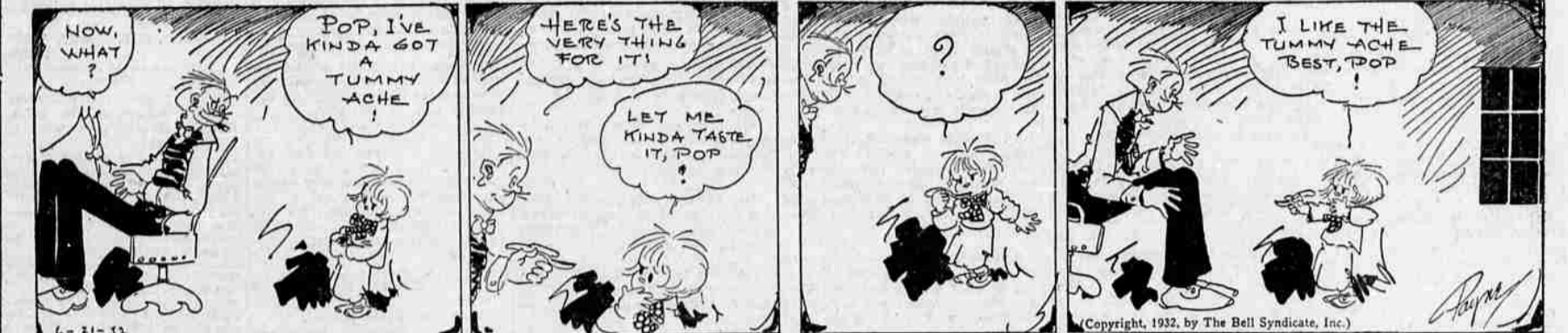
The doctor shows himself still interested in the marriage, tomorrow, and Jenny sees Garth Aveney.

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Mystery Ship Opens Fire!



## S'MATTER POP—Well, Anyone Might Have A Preference

By C. M. PAYNE



## BOUND TO WIN—Ben Departs

By EDWIN ALGER



## THE NEBBS—Confidence

By SOL HESS



## MUTT AND JEFF—Easy Come—Easy Go

By BUD FISHER



## BONUS 'MOTHER' WILL BE BRIDE

NEW YORK, June 21.—(AP)—Mrs. Marie Ewing of Portland, Ore., self-styled "mother of the bonus expeditionary forces" turned up at the city hall today with enough nickels and dimes to purchase a marriage license for herself and her "color guard" Adnan Landis, 40.

## COPCO FILMING TOMATO INDUSTRY

Moving pictures of the tomato industry in the Rogue River valley are being taken by the California Oregon Power company in cooperation with the advertising committee of the Medford Chamber of Commerce.

## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

