You Can't Marry

by Julia Cleft-Addams

SYNOPSIS: After Garth Aveney mysteriously breaks an engagement with Jenny Revell, she sees him while she is having tea with Vale Ryder. Jenny is involved in her cousin Georgie's secret marriage, for Georgie has told her employer Gratton Matching, that Jenny married Eddie Townsend instead of herself.

Chapter 24

SPILLING A FEW BEANS

GARTH AVENEY was bending towards a woman in a lovely large hat and the floweriest of chiffons. He was amused, intent, baffling, challenging, elusive as the river.

Jenny moved her chair so that it faced the window. She wondered if he had planned to bring her here, when he had thought that perhaps she would help him to forget Georgie for a day? She closed her eyes and for a magic second she was opposite to him in chiffons and lace.

And then Vale joined her and it was time to sit up and stop being a silly, sentimental little fool.

"Hullo, there's Brigitta and Aveney," he exclaimed, nodding over Jenny's shoulder to the couple by the far window. "Bit of a coincidence, what?" He laughed somewhat boisterously and waved a finger.

"Brigitta Deering?" Jenny would not turn but she was curious in spite of herself. Brigitta Deering, both on the stage and off it, was so exceptionally lovely. Had been—was it cattish to remember?—so exceptionally lovely for so many, many years!

"That's her stage name," assented Vale. He appeared about to add something when there was a stir of chiffons and a waft of scent. Brigitta Deering was on her way to the door.

Still Jenny would not turn. No need to look up until Garth Aveney was level with her. No need then, unless he stopped and spoke.

He did not stop. He went quickly past with a curt, mocking little bow for her and a word to Vale. It was Brigitta who stopped. She laid a brightly-nailed hand on Vale's shoulder and murmured: "Oh, I say, darling, what a sleuth you'd make!"

"Pure chance, I swear it," protested Vale. "All I know was, you'd gone somewhere along the river. By the way, have you met—"

But the exquisite Brigitta had trailed off. Vale, Jenny thought, was more than a little embarrassed by the encounter; and she was inclined to agree with Brigitta that it had not been entirely one of chance.

She stared across the big room while he ordered tea—and saw Garth Aveney again; this time in a mirror that reflected the courtyard. In a mirror such as she had seen him when Georgie had sat, gorgeous and velvety in apricot and gold, at his side; as now that lovely, painted woman was sitting in his car. Always, always someone beautiful and confident and successful in the place where Jenny Revell longed to be. . . .

"Not much of the Matching look about him," commented Vale.

Jenny could not follow the remark.

"About Mr. Aveney? Why should there be?"

"Well, relations do sometimes resemble each other. You'll pour out, won't you? I never can get my own tea right; poor look-out for anyone else's."

Jenny lifted the tea-pot and put it down again.

"Do you mean that Mr. Aveney is related to old Mr. Matching?"

"Nephew. Only one he's got. But surely you knew? Aveney himself told me yesterday that both you and Georgie knew all about him and his little stunt. He let me in on it as well, because he said he felt he'd made use of me, not that I minded it, but he's a sensitive sort of a fellow. He cares how he stands with people. And in any case, Georgie came out with flying colors, so there was no secret left."

Jenny poured tea and yet more tea. In fact, she filled all the cups on the table and had to tip all but two away again.

"Have I spilt any beans?" asked Vale, in a rush of anxiety. "Aveney said that Georgie had put you wise what all the manoeuvring was about, last Friday night. She did put you wise, didn't she?"

Jenny frowned in perplexity. She faltered out—

"In a way I guessed. I think she promised to tell me the whole of it one day. But she didn't say that Mr. Aveney was Mr. Matching's nephew."

"Well, but that was the great point of the stunt," protested Vale. He cast a glance into the courtyard and his grin re-folded itself when he observed that Aveney's car and its bundle of chiffon and lace had left. "However, all's well that begins well, as the poet hath it. Georgie and Aveney will respect each other in future, if nothing else.

"Have one of those pink castellated cakes with the chocolate drawbridges all over them. Even the tea is old-world in this place. Nevertheless, since you are so insistent, I will have another cup."

This one Jenny poured without mishap. After all, Vale could only mean that Garth had manœuvred to met Georgie in order to tell her that he loved her; in order to ask her to send Eddie away and marry him instead.

What possible meaning could there be but that?

"Fine!" applauded Eddie. "Oh, jolly fine! That's one of those old-fashioned skirt dances, isn't it? Go on, kid, gives us another!"

Breathless and laughing, Jenny shook her head. Her long skirts fell again into their frosty shimmer; they had whirled round her slipping, arching feet, they had billowed and tossed, but now it was time for them to sober down and take her to dine with an ogre.

Not that Jenny felt in the least alarmed. She was much more concerned about Eddie, whom she was leaving to sit by himself for the first time since his accident.

"Now you'll promise me faithfully," she said, as she wrapped the jade and silver shawl round her shoulders, "that you won't get fussed if you hear anyone at the door. Because it will only be Gill. He's coming up every now and then to see if you want anything."

"I have an idea he came in and went out again a moment ago, when you were cavorting around. I heard the door close."

"I didn't hear anything," dissented Jenny. She looked at the clock. "I must hurry—Georgie always says Mr. Matching likes people to be punctual so that he can keep them waiting longer."

He accompanied her to the door of the apartment—and there his cheerful air vanished. "How would it be if I were to come down with you?" he suggested wistfully. "I could wait in the hall while Gill gets you a taxi and then I could sit with him a bit."

"Do, if you'd rather," agreed Jenny at once. But she stifled a sigh. She had hoped that he could take this first step towards recovery; it would have heartened him as much as her. She met his gaze, however, with a determined smile. His cuts and bruises had healed with exceptional quickness; except for one long strip of sticking-plaster he bore now no trace—no external trace—of the accident. He looked so big, so healthy; only his eyes betrayed him—they were frightened, the eyes of a man who slept badly, who could not any longer distinguish between sleep and waking.

"No, I'll stay up here," he decided unexpectedly. "I've got to make a start, haven't I? Why, Georgie might be back tomorrow! If I get along all right by myself this evening, I shan't be so much of a wreck."

"You won't be a wreck at all," Jenny encouraged him. "You'll just be having a holiday from your job—and that might happen to anybody, even to Georgie! I'll run off then. I shan't be late."

She waved her hand and left him watching her until she turned the band in the staircase. Her spirits were soaring at his sudden new strength. She knew, because for three long days she had companioned and guarded him, what an effort it had cost him to face the empty apartment of his own free will.

Poor, dear old Eddie! He was only such a short way on the road to health and there was so little time if he were to be able to pass muster with Georgie!

"Jen!"

She pulled up, staring. There on the staircase below her was Georgie. Jenny cried out in surprise and dashed down towards her.

"Georgie! How splendid! You said you couldn't be back until later in the week, so he isn't expecting you yet." She looked with a rush of timidity into her cousin's face—Georgie, who hadn't seen Eddie at his worst, might not realize how improved he was. "He's not himself yet, of course, but I think he has done wonders—"

"There didn't seem very much wrong with him when he was watching you dance just now," said Georgie.

Jenny clutched at the fringe of the jade shawl. She could not find any words, she could only stand dumbly and wait for what this strange, frowning, strident Georgie might choose to say.

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Instead of Matching, Jenny finds Garth Aveney waiting for her on Monday.

JOBLESS PROTEST $1.50 DAY WAGE

SALEM, Ore., June 23—(AP)—Governor Julius L. Meier here today will have for consideration a letter protesting against a proposed wage of $1.50 a day for persons employed in road construction under the emergency employment plan.

The letter was written by Ben T. Osborne, president of the federation of labor, and signed by other officials of the organization as well. Osborne charged the wage proposed by Leslie Scott, chairman of the state highway commission, was ridiculously low.

The executive department indicated the letter would be referred to the highway commission.

DOUBT SANITY OF FORMER KLEAGLE

CHICAGO, June 23.—(AP)—Edward Young Clarke of Atlanta, Ga., former kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan, submitted to observation as to his mental condition today in the psychopathic hospital, to which he was committed last night by a court order.

Dr. Francis J. Gerty, superintendent of the hospital, said Clarke "appears to be suffering from paranoi, illusions of grandeur, for instance the idea of leading the country back to prosperity."

Dr. Gerty said he would be unable to determine Clarke's condition accurately until Saturday.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Speed's Lower Than Low!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

S'MATTER POP—Ambrose's Pop Will Have To Guess At It

By C. M. PAYNE

BOUND TO WIN—Ben Reports To Jonathan

By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—The Kid

By SOL HESS

MUTT AND JEFF—Business Is Good—They're Biting

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BRINGING UP FATHER

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