

You Can't Marry

by Julia Cleft-Addams

SYNOPSIS: "The cleverest little vamp I ever met," Garth Avenue calls Jenny Reel, because she has encouraged him, and now her cousin, George, announces Jenny's marriage to Eddie Townsend. Jenny has promised not to tell that George really is married to Eddie, because Grattan Matching, George's employer, discharges all married women.

Chapter 27

COMPLIMENT TO THE QUEEN

BEFORE Jenny could tell him, a man's form came round the curtain of the four-poster. She saw that he was short to the shoulder and neck, and that he had a soft, quick way of walking. He looked deferentially at Grattan Matching and murmured: "I thought perhaps you required me, sir?"

"Why should I require you? Eh?" His employer's voice rose into a rasping squeak that startled Jenny still further. "Get out! Go away! I'm capable of ringing for you, I hope, when I want you."

The soft, sliding walk took the valet over the expanse of carpet to a door in the panelling of the wall. A moment later it closed behind him. Jenny found that her eccentric host was watching her again.

"Have you seen that fellow before?" "Yes. Just for a second, when he carried my cousin's bag down, on the day that she went away with you."

"Ha! You've a memory for faces. And you're a judge of character, too, by the set of your lips and the breadth between your eyes. No need to blush—I'm old enough to pay a compliment to the queen herself without offense. . . . What do you think of him?"

"I don't want," said Jenny firmly, "to discuss your nephew."

"But I was speaking of that fellow, my valet," the old man pointed out; and the sly grimace that was his smile, made her blush anew.

"It doesn't seem fair to come to conclusions about a man I've only seen twice for a minute or so. But—"

"You don't like the look of him? Don't trust him?" "It might be better," said Jenny, unwillingly, "not to trust him in a matter of great importance. But that's only my opinion."

The strange old man lay back upon his pillows, wriggled twice—whether with satisfaction or annoyance Jenny could not tell—and remained flat upon the bed. She could barely see him and when he spoke she had the greatest difficulty in following his words; for he was not using his dreadful, nerve-racking squeak but a monotonous thread of sound that blended with the rustle of brocade at his opened windows and the sound of the satin coverlet under his hands.

"My wife was so very like you, little Miss Jenny. You've got her same tricks and graces and her same sound judgment under all that pale gold hair. Only, I wouldn't listen to her, 'd'ye see? Shut her up, laughed at her, cowed her; and then, when she was gone, found that she had had the right of most things. People she warned me against and people she believed in, she was right about them all and I was wrong. But you're not so timid as she was. You speak up—you stand up to me—I couldn't cove you without—without meaning to. Eh?"

"Well, I had the advantage of a very bullying old grandfather," explained Jenny grandly. And they laughed together—Jenny Reel and the old man who, people said, hadn't got a heart. On impulse, she put out a hand to cover his as it plucked at the coverlet.

"Please about at me, if you'd rather, I shan't care a scrap."

"How thin and cold old people's hands were!" she remembered Grandfather's being like that, and on nights as hot as this. She slipped her other hand under it and cradled it gently, trying to give out her own thrilling warmth.

"Old bones, cold bones," muttered Grattan Matching, as though he read her thought. "What's between you and my great-nephew Aveney?"

She began to draw her hands away but he retained them with surprising strength. All her vitality seemed to flow out from her and into that strange, compelling old creature whom one could love and detest all in one breath.

"There's nothing. That is—we dislike each other."

dragged her hands away, crying out: "I shall make him apologize and then I shall forget—" Her voice broke and she had to stop.

"Who's shouting now?" enquired Grattan Matching and wriggled flatter in the enormous bed.

I spite of her misery, Jenny laughed. He really was like a mischievous old wizard, lying there half-hidden, baiting her, drawing her out! It was a pity that George should hate him and fear him and so lightly deceive him. It wasn't dignified, all this secrecy and intrigue about Eddie. . . .

"All this nonsense about you marrying my pilot, Townsend," said the Old Man and, gasping, Jenny shrank in her chair. Magic, this—or else he really could read her mind!

"That's what has come between you and Garth Avenue, all this nonsense about Townsend," concluded Grattan Matching. "Do you like butter-scotch?"

"No, I hate it," Jenny answered, too bewildered to be polite. "I don't really eat any sweets."

"Nor do half the people I give them to, but they're such sheep they aren't say so. All the same, little Miss Jenny, I know what you like and I'll have them next time you come and see me. Tomorrow. You'll come tomorrow, I dare say. You might come every day."

She could not decide whether it was a request or an order or a prophecy. But she forgot that he had bewildered her and angered her and teased her and, bending down, she put her lips to his trail, cold hands.

"Yes, I'll come as often as you want me to," she promised him. "And now I must go and look after—after Eddie. Good-night."

She believed that he was laughing as she left the room. At her at Eddie? George would maintain that the Old Man knew well enough which of them had married his pilot. Perhaps she was right and the mocking old laugh was a sign of it.

But why should he have spoken of Garth Avenue? He had talked as though it were she and not George whom Garth had loved at first sight. And—and at dinner, Garth had talked like that, too.

She had barely a glance for the butler who proffered her shawl and put her into the big car that, he assured her, waited her pleasure. She knew only that she must get home to the apartment and ask George—many things.

George stood on the stairs and watched Jenny go on her way to dine with Grattan Matching. A shimmer of silvery green and a flash of jade and she had vanished from sight. George was left face to face with something that she had never admitted to herself before—that her little cousin was not a child, but an enchanting little plaything, not a woman grown. A very lovely woman.

George took out her powder and lipstick and lavishly repaired her complexion. She wished that she had not lost her temper with Jenny; not only because there was after all no reason for her jealousy, but because she had planned to come home cool and competent and to be a tower of strength to Eddie and Jenny as well. And now she was actually crying!

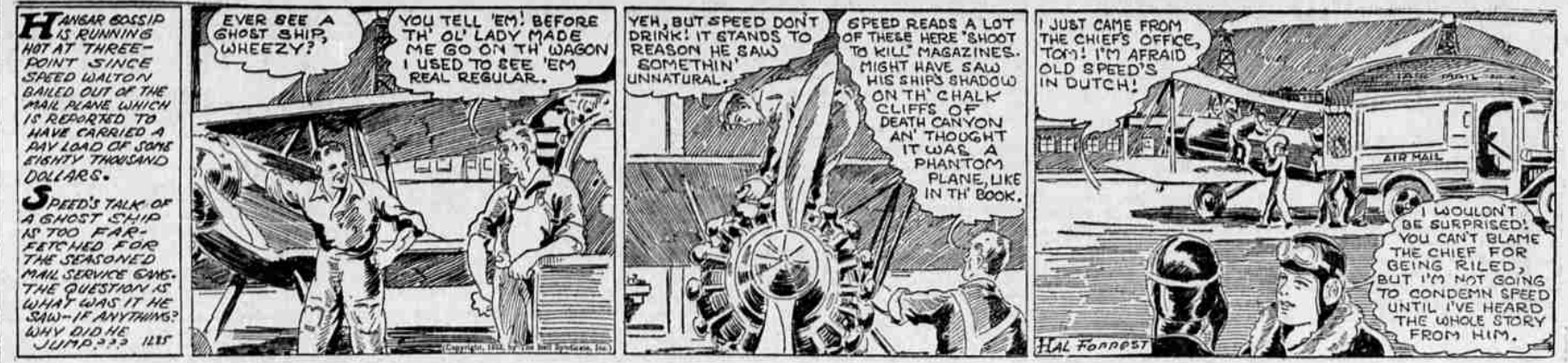
It is useless to dust powder over cheeks that are wet with tears and so she sat down on the stairs for a moment and waited for the old control over her nerves to return. She could hear Gill downstairs in his office, moving heavily about, and she could hear the muffled noises of the street outside, the hootings and grindings of the cars and the cries of the children on the pavement. For some odd reason, she remembered that at this hour Eyle Street was on the very edge of twilight and that Jenny, funny kid, loved watching the dusk.

She shivered but got up, and turned resolutely up the stairs. Face things, face things!—cried her courage. Face the fact that Jenny isn't a child and that Eddie always really wanted a home-loving little wife who would leave all the adventuring to him. Face the fact that Eddie can't go adventuring at all, for a bit, and that, being a man and illogical, he will want a home-loving wife all the more!

She faced all these truths and, with her head up and her reddened lips smiling, she ran up the flight that led to her apartment. Nevertheless, as she laid her hand on the door and heard a step on the inner side of it, she darted away and up the next flight, and stood there panting while Eddie opened the door and came out on to the landing.

"You'll choose between me and your job, and you'll choose now," Eddie tells George in the next installment.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Ghost Talk—And Pilot Loyalty



'SMATTER POP—A New Wind Up Story



BOUND TO WIN—Ben Charters The Boat



THE NEBBS—Wanderlust



MUTT AND JEFF—Words and Action By Augustus Mutt



ZORN IN ANSWER TO MERGER OPPOSITION

PORTLAND, Ore., June 27.—(AP)—Henry Zorn, president of the Taxpayers' Equalization league of Marion county, took issue with Governor Julius L. Meier Saturday in reply to a letter the governor had written him and in which the executive expressed himself as opposed to the physical consolidation of the University of Oregon and Oregon State colleges.

"Any business man understands that two great business institutions cannot be operated as cheaply as one," he stated in his reply.

Sold at the Jumbo lemon—delicious home-made fudge. Made by Mrs. Frank Rodgers.

JOSEPHINE JOBLESS FORM ORGANIZATION

GRANTS PASS, Ore., June 27.—(AP)—The unemployed of Josephine county were organized here Saturday night. A crowd of 200 gathered at the courthouse, and adopted a constitution specifying that only men who have lived in the county for six months or more and who have dependents will be eligible to the organization.

Members of the organization will take the initiative to relieve their own wants this coming winter in an orderly way.

Auto glass installed while you wait. Prices right. Brill Sheet Metal Works. Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

BRINGING UP FATHER

