

Buying Barbara

By Julia Cleff-Addams • Author of "YOU CAN'T MARRY"

Chapter 21
TRUTHS FOR BARBARA

MECHANICALLY Barbara went on collecting the documents that still bestowed the title. Judy had said that of her, that she was jealous of anyone else's power to help Mark. And she had denied that the accusation was just. She still denied it!

If all the millionaires in the world banded together to help him, for whatever reason, she would bless them and praise them. But when a girl, her rival for Mark's favor, had to buy him off with a sum of money—

"I must pay you back," she said, "I have been saving hard lately but now that I'm not to be married for at least a year, I can afford to let some of it go. Don't let's argue about this at least."

Lella suddenly began to shout at her again.

"You call everything 'argument' that you want to close your mind to. Any discussion, any contradiction is 'argument' and you won't listen. Probably you're not listening now, you're telling yourself that I'm trying to stop your marrying Mark because I want him."

"That's quite true, I do want him, or I think I do. Or perhaps you're telling yourself that I like him so much. That's true, too; when he told me he'd fallen in love with you, I said I'd help him get you."

"You had no right to promise. You know—"

"Know! I know you and Mark were engaged and planned to marry! But what of that? Engagements are broken sometimes. Marriages don't take place. Businesses are sold or just neglected. Interior decorators drop Toxeter whether Toxeter likes it or not and dash up to do jobs for famous actresses and millionaires."

"Life is a hazard and a risk, Barbara, as well as looking ahead and saving and working. It's funny—I'm no manner of use compared with you, but I can see that you're losing such a lot. You plod and wait and feel quite sure you love Mark and don't love Farrell and it's your duty not to listen to any argument about either—and all the while real life is riding by!"

The room was full of the smell of the lamp and the mustiness of an old house, Barbara thought irrelevantly how she had always hated Kings Barn. Well, at any rate, whatever happened, Mark would never have to live here again.

"Go and find paper and string," suggested Lella in her normal tones, "and we'll pack up this litter."

Barbara went obediently. Paper and string should be in a kitchen drawer, but she was not surprised when she could not find them.

While she rummaged she remembered, in a miserable confusion, that the emerald pendant was now in Armitage's possession. Her face scoured. She would have to ask him for it and, somehow, without explanation, let Mark have it back.

"There's a piece of paper here," called Lella.

Barbara gathered up all she had been able to find and returned to the sitting room. Lella was busy with a wrapping of her own contrivance.

"It's a newspaper from the bottom of a drawer," she said. "Messy, isn't it? And not too strong. We'd better use what you found for an outer covering."

"It makes a smaller parcel than I thought," remarked Barbara, preoccupied.

Lella folded and turned and fastened diligently.

"How are you getting back to Toxeter? The last bus will have gone by now."

"There'll be a train later. Or I can walk. It's only my head that is so tired. Exercise will clear it."

"I'll drive you," said Lella, overriding all this. "My car's just down the road. And look here, could you possibly put me up for the night at Toxeter? I never felt less like South-the-Water."

"I could, but I think you'd hate it. A camp bed; and bread and cocoa for supper. Besides—"

"What?"

"I've got to see your mother tomorrow about some panelling and I don't much like deceiving her."

Lella turned out the lamps and marched Barbara out of the house. She seemed determined that no sentimental farewells should be taken of the place. She piloted Barbara out to the car, threw the parcel of papers into her lap and still in silence drove down the road and began to skirt the town.

"You always make me sound such a prig," said Barbara, to her own surprise. There were tears in her eyes. "And I'm not, really."

"You don't sound like a prig. You sound steady and steadiness is out of date. And you sound beautiful, and it's not fashionable to have a beautiful voice. I don't wonder Farrell Armitage—"

"I wish you'd drive more carefully," protested Barbara in desperation. "You very nearly ran over that old woman!"

"I've very nearly run over so many old women. Sit tight, now, when we're over Upper Mallard hill I shall let her rip."

Barbara sat tight. She was not frightened; she loved speed. She remembered how Farrell had let her drive his big car and, later, how he himself had driven, his hands sure and steady on the wheel, his eyes sure and steady on this very road.

Lella was letting the little scarlet car rip but this was not speed. This was just going too fast. It didn't give one the same sense of power, the same absolute confidence.

She was just beginning to realize that she would like to be driven by Farrell Armitage again, when Lella shot into Toxeter, and drew up at the gate of the new house.

Barbara jumped out. As though she had only now received the gift of sight, she eyed her house, her unmade garden, the Lodely luggage on the front path (not on the back porch as the garage man had been directed), the ugly wooden shed in which she worked. Oh, it was all so raw—and she had been so proud of it!

"You can't put your car anywhere, I'm afraid, Lella."

"I'll leave it out, this once. It's going to be a mild night. . . . I say, Barbara, you needn't worry your good little head about my deceiving ways. I want to dodge seeing mother tonight, but I shall very probably want a chat with father tomorrow. Now let's battle with Judy's junk."

In spite of Barbara's protests, Lella insisted on taking the larger share of the task. Heartily cursing their weight and complexity, she hauled and hoisted the Lodely things into Mark's quarters.

Then she helped to prepare a room for herself. By the time supper was ready they could partake of it in an almost intimate silence. The lost comradeship of childhood hovered. Lella, thought Barbara, was nice, she was honest, deep down. It was amazing that, when Farrell could have married her, he should ever have preferred anyone else.

"I'll turn in, Barbara. I'm frightfully grateful to you for letting me be here."

"I'm frightfully grateful to you for not calling me Babs. Judy always does and—"

"Judy! She makes me sick!" She swung off and Barbara, too tired even to put away the supper things, went to bed also.

But she was not too tired to dream. Again and again she dreamed it—that she stood in a darkened room and listened to the voices of people she could not see. But she knew who they were.

Mark's voice she heard and Judy's, Lella's and Sugar Cane's. Some telling her this, some that; and when she put her hands to her ears, they spoke louder. Only Farrell Armitage was not there in that heavy, unhappy darkness. And when she woke, at dawn, the tears were on her face. Was it possible, she asked herself almost in fear, that they were tears connected in any way with Farrell?

Lella got up, tiptoed to the partition between her own and Barbara's room, and listened a long time. There could be no doubt that Barbara was sleeping, although it was not a quiet sleep. Then she returned to the bed (there was no chair), took a bulging envelope full of Mrs. Lodely's var-colored assortment of papers from her handbag, and began going through them carefully and systematically.

"That damn well finishes father," she muttered, as at last she turned out the light. "Whatever else may or may not be true, father's goose is cooked."

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Mark's personality is dissected, tomorrow, by a capable "surgeon."

RUTH JUDD YELLS CHARGES IN COURT

PHOENIX, Ariz., Jan. 18. — (AP) — Winnie Ruth Judd broke down on the witness chair she screamed accusations across a counsel table at the wealthy lumberman.

Judge J. C. Niles, presiding, called a recess to allow Mrs. Judd to compose herself.

She left the witness chair sobbing, and with tears streaming down her face. Immediately she dashed to the counsel table at which Halloran sat with his attorneys.

She leaned across the table and screamed in his face: "I hope you suffer everything Halloran, who is accused as 'accessory to the crime of murder,' and leaving the witness chair she screamed accusations across a counsel table at the wealthy lumberman."

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Sammy's mother have suffered."

Before leaving the witness stand Mrs. Judd had shouted:

"He don't care that Anne is dead and Sammy is dead and that I am going to die—he just sits there and laughs about it. He don't care so long as he can play around."

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Stillman Sued For Heart Balm

NEW YORK, Jan. 19.—(AP)—A suit for \$1,000,000 for alleged alienation of affections, brought by Luc Rochefort, former investment banker of Montreal, against James A. Stillman, former president of the National City bank, was disclosed in Brooklyn supreme court today.

Fishwheels For Columbia Aim

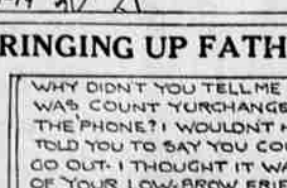
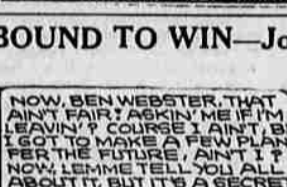
PORTLAND, Jan. 19.—(AP)—A bill by commercial fishing interests to put fishwheels back on the Columbia river will be introduced in the state legislature next week. It was revealed at a meeting of the state game commission here Tuesday.

Budget Balance Hope Abandoned

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19.—(AP)—Congressional Democrats Wednesday abandoned hope for enactment of budget balancing legislation at this session, and acknowledged plans are set for a special session of the new congress to tackle the task.

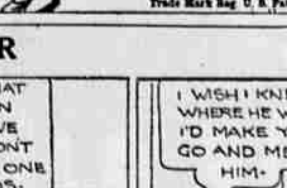
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



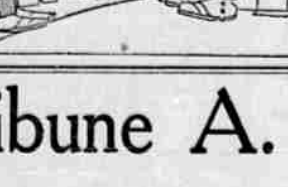
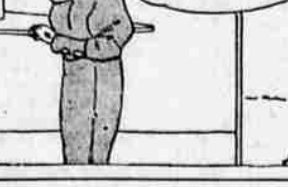
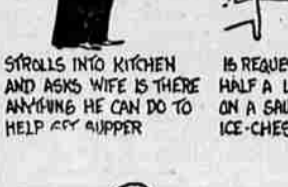
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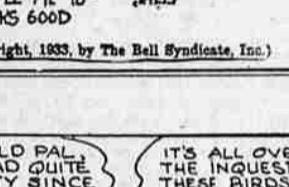
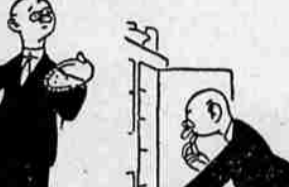
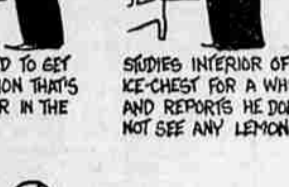
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By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



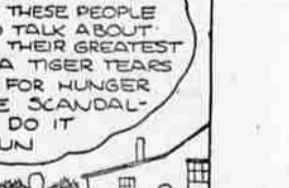
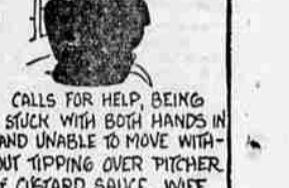
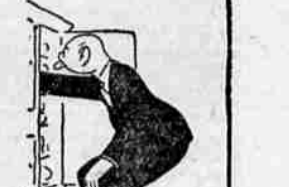
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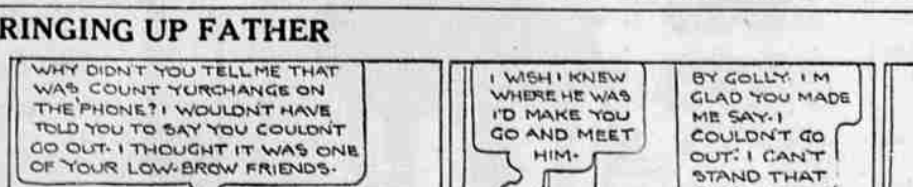
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By C. M. PAYNE



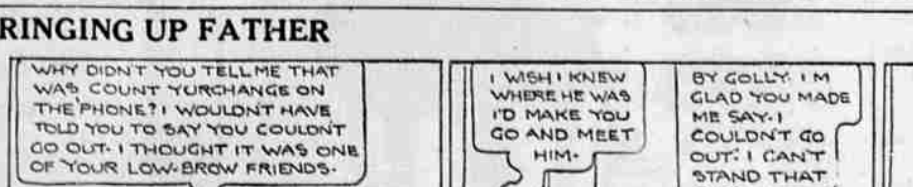
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