

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

BARRITT COLVIN, back to New York after years abroad, falls in love with 25-year-old ELINOR STAFFORD. Barritt is 35, wealthy, and has made a name for himself as an architect. Years before he shied his half-sister, MARCIA, when a youthful romance ended disastrously. Marcia had a son whom Barritt adopted. Marcia is constantly in fear that her husband will learn of the affair.

LIDA STAFFORD, Elinor's best friend and inseparable mother, is carrying on a situation with VANCE CARTER. Lida schemes constantly to keep the good graces of MISS ELLA SKEXTON, her husband's aunt, in order to inherit a share of the Sexton fortune.

When she learns that Barritt is about to propose to Elinor she deliberately tries to break up the romance and succeeds. The girl is heart-broken when she does not hear from him. One day they meet her aunt's house. Barritt offers Lida a cigarette and she refuses, declaring she does not smoke. Rebellious at her mother's hypocrisy, Elinor takes a cigarette, thereby offending Miss Skexton who once more returns her will.

A few days later she dies. Her mother's death leaves her fortune to Barritt. Life does not turn out as yet and yet can't turn it over to the rich girl's mother.

Vance Carter asks Lida to keep her promise to divorce her husband and marry him. Lida refuses and Vance leaves. After drinking heavily he returns with a gun and shoots BENTWELL STAFFORD.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XIX

Meantime Elinor, without taking of her outer wrap, had gone to her father's room to stand by his bed. His eyes were open, glazed, and he was breathing noisily. A doctor, swathed in white that was flecked with red, stood near. A nurse moved about.

The doctor looked at Elinor inquiringly. He didn't want any screaming in the room such as had come from the strong lungs of the patient's neurotic wife. But this pretty girl was evidently controlled.

"You're Miss Stafford?"

"Yes."

"I'm Doctor Moran. Live five doors down."

"Can you tell me, Doctor?"

"It's a little hard to say tonight, Miss Stafford, but if he pulls through the next few days he should have a pretty fair chance. A towel, Miss Hemmingway, I'm sorry to see you before I leave. You'd better go now, Miss Stafford."

She nodded, left. A sensible girl, the doctor thought. He'd leave her a sedative. Her mother would scream away her nerves and then sleep like a baby.

"Not much like her mother," murmured the nurse who had worked under Dr. Moran often.

"No—God help her. Raise his head a little, Miss Hemmingway. That's it. Now—"

Elinor tried to reassure herself, told herself she was becoming absurdly nervous. Nothing could have happened.

But why was Aunt Bessie waiting? Why didn't she come?

Elinor said, "It's the nicest spot I ever saw, Sexton. It really is!"

Then Bessie came. Jim Sexton followed her, carrying a glass of wine in his steady hand. Bessie was smiling rather stiffly. Elinor's heart went cold.

"Sexton," Bessie said, "run up stairs now, please—"

"Aw!" Sexton murmured rebelliously, but he went. Bessie drew Elinor down beside her on the sofa.

"Benson telephoned," she began, "to say that your father—ah—has had an accident. Now don't be alarmed, darling! It may not be serious—"

"What?" Elinor moistened her lips. Jim offered the glass, patted her shoulder as she drank.

Bessie was holding one of Elinor's smooth hands between her work-worn, roughened ones.

"Well, it seems—Benson thinks it may be only a slight injury—that Vance Carter came to your apartment. He'd been drinking and he had a gun. He shot at your father—"

Elinor had never fainted before but the day had been too much for her. Within a few hours she had witnessed the horror of death, had seen her father bitterly disappointed and crushed by her aunt's failure to remember him, had heard her mother's hysterical accusations that Elinor herself was to blame. She had felt Barritt Colvin's chill glance, "rief and heart-breaking. Only a moment he had looked at her, then turned his eyes away. That, more than anything else, had haunted her, making her utterly and completely miserable. A dreadful day!

"Put her down flat, Jim!" Bessie ordered. She knelt clumsily beside Elinor to lean her with the water-spotted, darkened apron she still wore. "I told Benson you'd take her home—"

"Of course."

"Have you enough in your pocket for taxi fare?"

"I don't know—"

"Jim Junior has some change—"

Elinor opened her eyes. There was a dazed wonder in them for a moment. Then she remembered.

"There, there, darling!" Bessie murmured. She thought, "If worse comes to worse we can manage—we'll have to manage—to take her to Poor child, Mr. Bentwell goes she'll have no one—"

Jim Junior ordered the taxicab. A little later Sexton stood on the step, wondering if any of the neighbors would happen to see the cab chugging before their door. Bert, the only one of the boys who was not afflicted by the tragedy, hovered near Elinor, patted her shoulder and murmured, "Gosh, I'm sorry!"

"You are all so kind—" Elinor muttered unsteadily.

She clasped a fold of her uncle's coat during the long drive home. As she thought of the warmth of the home she had just left and the fears that lay ahead her eyes filled.

Jim, returning, told his wife, "She insisted on paying the fare—and paying my fare home, too." That made Bessie cry. It was so like Elinor to think of others even at such a time.

"Tell me about it," she said, wiping her eyes. The boys stood, a tense trio.

"It's pretty bad," Jim told them. "It's about as bad as it could be, I guess. Shot through the left inn. They've locked up Vance Carter. Lida was screaming as we went in. I never heard anything like it—"

Bessie's face stiffened. "Did you remind Elinor that I'd come any time?" she asked after a short silence.

"Yes, but she knows that anyhow." He put his hand on her arm and again tears brimmed her eyes.

SOMEWHERE a clock with an automatic preface to its strike announced that it was 10.

"We'd better turn in," said Jim Senior. "Tomorrow may be pretty full—"

Putting your best foot forward is always a step in the right direction

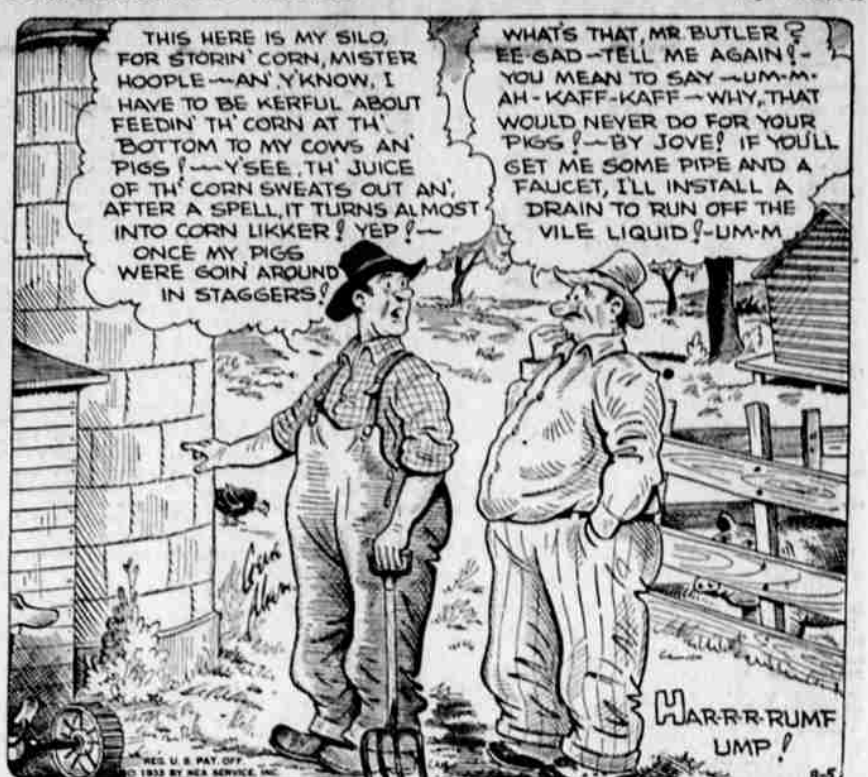
Flapper Fanny Says

CHAD'S PRIMER

OUT OUR WAY

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



SALESMAN SAM

By Small



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



WASH TUBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM 'N POP

By Cowan

