

# Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

ELINOR STAFFORD, 29, falls in love with BARRETT COLVIN, 35, returned to New York after years abroad. Barrett has such a name for himself as an archeologist. Elinor returns his affection but she is a jealous, scheming mother, LIDIA STAFFORD, breaks up the romance by convincing Barrett that Elinor is a heartless flirt.

When Elinor's aunt, MISS ELLA SEXTON, dies she leaves her entire fortune to Barrett. This makes BARRETT RICH about BENTWELL STAFFORD, Elinor's father. Barrett who does not want the fortune tells the girl that if she will marry him and live in his home as a guest for a year he will give the entire sum to her to divide among the relatives. Elinor agrees, knowing the money may save her father's life.

The marriage takes place next day and Elinor and Barrett go to his home.

## CHAPTER XXV

ELINOR said firmly, "The most important thing is that I don't want to bother you. Not in the least!"

"You won't!" Barrett answered. Lord how he wanted to kiss her, to say, "Don't be afraid of me. We'll do our best to make a go of this as long as we must!"

Instead he patted her hands. "Powder your nose," he said briskly, "and come down to lunch. I suppose it's to be a bang-up affair. The cook will want to show you just how skillful she is. And I heard Higgins ordering enough flowers for a hothouse. By the way, the bath is behind the door to the right." He turned to sweep the room with critical eyes. "I left those shelves empty so you can fill them with the books you really want. Meantime there is a selection in my room from which you may be able to choose something that will send you to sleep. Is that night work, I wonder?"

He moved toward the head of the narrow, four-posted mahogany bed to pull the small chain. "Yes, it's all right," he said with satisfaction.

He was at the doorway when she halted him. "Barrett—?"

He wheeled, again moved toward her. "Yes?"

"I—I can't thank you enough for all this—" Her face, lifted to his, was infinitely appealing in its gratitude.

"I'm awfully glad you like it," he said. "I had a suspicion (smiling) that you might be rather fed-up with Chinese red and chromium and modernistic furnishings in general."

"I was," she agreed.

"I'll telephone to ask how your father's been," he said, "and report at luncheon. It's to be served at half past one if that suits you."

"Perfectly. And thank you so much for everything!"

He smiled at her from the doorway leading to his room, gave her an airy salute and was gone, closing the door after him.

FOR a moment she stood staring at the closed door. Then once more she turned and looked around her. It was a lovely room. Lovely!

Her traveling bags had been placed in the adjoining dressing room. Elinor opened them, and, looking over her frocks, suddenly wished she had something that was very, very pretty to wear down to luncheon. She finally selected a soft tan silk frock which brought out the warmth of her hair. Celeste had said it was becoming. She must remember to tuck Celeste's handkerchief into her sleeve in order to show it to Barrett.

She dressed her hair in a roll at the back of her neck. She had worn it that way during those falsely happy days when Barrett had spent so much time with her. He had admired it that way.

Then, looking at the small clock on the mantelpiece, she hesitated. It was only one o'clock. It seemed incredible that her whole world could have changed as it had in the space of an hour. She wanted to go down but she did not want to intrude upon Barrett. Perhaps he would not want her to come down before she must. As she hesitated she heard a tap on the door. She opened it to find Higgins, the stolidness of the perfectly trained servant's face erased by the smile he could not subdue.

Mr. Colvin, said the butler, had sent word that he wished to speak with Mrs. Colvin. Would she join him down stairs whenever she was ready?

"Thank you, Higgins," Elinor said. He disappeared and after a deep breath she stepped into the upper hall. Barrett was standing at the foot of the stairs, one hand on a newel post, looking up at her.

"Look out for that treacherous step!" he called warningly. He found he could not keep his eyes from her as she came down. He had never seen her looking more beautiful.

"I've good news for you!" he announced. At his words she paused, two steps up, her face level with his. "Your father's nurse—Miss Hemmingway, I think—answered my call and said that for the first time your father has shown real improvement."

"Oh!" she whispered on a deep intake of breath. "I'm so glad!"

"I wanted you to know right away because I understand what it means to you."

"It means—everything," she stated in a hush.

HE smiled down at her. "Suppose we go into the library," he suggested. "You haven't seen it yet, have you? Odd how old houses insist upon having libraries, isn't it? Remember the hushed, important way Miss Ella always spoke of her library!"

The girl laughed, nodding.

She liked the rear room to which he led her. Its solidity spoke of all she had missed without knowing it. The room had a look of plenty and of peace. She could not imagine her mother whining for money in that room or anyone planning to deceive an old lady in order to be remembered in a will.

"I think you must have been very happy in this house," she said as she sank into a chair.

For a moment his face clouded. "I don't suppose," he said, "that there are many old houses without some unhappy echoes. Let's hope that we shall not add to them."

The table in the stately dining room had been arranged with the best the house afforded. Higgins had seen to it that the bowl of faint pink roses in the center of the table was a low one across which hungry, eager eyes might meet. "You're looking beautiful!" Barrett reflected, seeing Elinor above the soft confusion of bloom.

They were served a clear soup, deliciously seasoned. Higgins appeared, disappeared silently.

"Your feet don't touch the floor when you're perched on that chair, do they, dearest?" Barrett asked as the butler re-entered the room.

He did this masquerading very nicely, Elinor thought. She flushed. "No, dear, they don't," she admitted.

Higgins had been standing at his elbow staring at the contents of a dish he offered. "Souffle, sir," he reminded after a cough.

Barrett said, "Oh, yes, to be sure! Souffle." She had said that "dear" quite convincingly, Barrett reflected. "This is one of cook's special dishes," he went on. "We are being honored, darling."

HIGGINS had never heard "the Mko of it." Most young married people hid such moods and tried to seem only casually interested in one another at first, hid them even from their servants. And Mr. Barrett was usually so slow to voice a feeling!

"Higgins," said Barrett, "can't you hunt up a small footstool for Mrs. Colvin? I want you to be perfectly comfortable, dear," he added across the table.

"Thank you, darling, you are so thoughtful!" she murmured. Suddenly they both laughed and then, as suddenly, sobered. In light moments it could seem a joke but for both of them, for one shaken stretch, it had been too real.

Higgins came back to raise the Venetian cut work cloth and push a small stool in place for Elinor's feet.

"Is that better, Mrs. Colvin?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you, Higgins."

The butler bowed. The new mistress was going to bring spring and sunshine to the old place, he was sure. Already the house seemed changed. And never had he seen a sweeter, lovelier face.

After the meal was finished Elinor and Barrett parted. She was to order Hatten to bring the car around when she was ready to go to see her father. Barrett was going to look in upon Marcia for half an hour or so.

Perhaps, he suggested doubtfully, with keen eyes on her face, they could have tea together at a little after four. He spoke casually, anxious not to force upon her any more intimacy than she liked. They could talk then about several business matters that must be settled. If this did not suit, he went on, they could put it off until another day.

It suited her perfectly, Elinor assured him. With quick-heating heart she saw him turn from her.

"Until later then," he said.

(To Be Continued)

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Flapper Fanny Says

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A bench shows! In many a girl's cape of good hope.



## OUT OUR WAY



## SALESMAN SAM



## BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



## WASH TUBBS



## FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



## THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



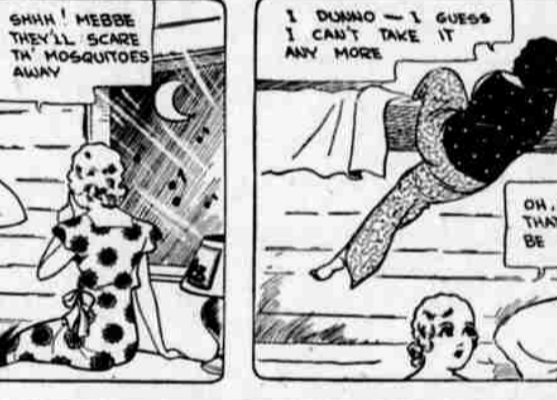
## OUR BOARDING HOUSE



## By Small



## By Martin



## By Crane



## By Blosser



## By Cowan

