

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

ELINOR STAFFORD, 26, fell in love with 35-year-old BARRY COLVIN, who has returned to New York after years abroad. Barry has made a name for himself as an archeologist. He is about to ask Elinor to marry him when her jealous, scheming mother, LIDA STAFFORD, interferes and succeeds in breaking up the romance.

When Elinor's aunt, wealthy MISS ELLA SEXTON, dies she leaves her entire fortune to Barry. Then, drunk VANCE CARTER shoots HENRY STAFFORD, Elinor's father. Barry, who does not want the Sexton fortune, tells Elinor 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. Barry tells himself falling in love with Elinor over again. Then one day he sees her with BOB TELFAIR and believes she has been meeting Telfair secretly. His suspicions are renewed and he treats her coldly. This makes Elinor miserable.

Her father's health is slow to improve and the doctor advises a woman's company. Elinor goes with her father to Alaska.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXIII

ELINOR wrote Barry stiff little notes about the weather, her father's condition, and the routine of the household. He read them. He could not help it. He carried them in an inner coat pocket and scanned himself for leaping them. He tried to learn them one night in the library. Instead he burned the hand that salvaged them.

Toward the end of April Barry saw Lida Stafford for the first time since her daughter had gone south. Lida appeared on a Sunday morning, wearing a dress so simple a man would call it plain, though to a woman it bore the unmistakable stamp of Paris.

"My dear Barry!" she murmured, sliding into the library.

Barry took her outstretched hands. He heard her ask, "Lonely?" and responded heavily, "Yes."

"You must dine with me some night, Barry. I would so like to know you better."

He murmured vaguely about having to get a great deal of work out of the way. He detested the woman!

Lida settled by the hearth. She stretched a slender foot toward the fender. Her ankles were still quite as good as Elinor's, she saw happily.

"I came in because I have found myself to be in the most amusing position," she began.

"Yes?" he prompted without enthusiasm.

"Overdrawn again! Can you fancy it, Barry? I simply know nothing of figures! And I can't seem to learn!"

He said nothing.

"I know if Elinor were in town what she'd help me out for a little time—and this morning I thought, 'But what is more natural than to turn to my Elinor's husband? The man whom she so adores!'"

He opened his cigarette case, offered her one and lit one for himself after lighting hers.

"Mrs. Stafford," he said slowly after a moment's silence, "the last time Elinor lent you money—which you have not returned to her—I told her I did not like it. She promised me she would not do it again. You see, therefore, that, while I am sorry to refuse you, I cannot help you out."

Lida grew white, her eyes hard. She laughed harshly.

Without heeding the interruption, Barry went on. "Elinor settled on you and your husband a large fortune, more than I wanted her to settle upon you."

"I quite believe that!" Lida broke in scathingly.

"If you can't manage on that you couldn't manage on any amount," Barry said, still coolly.

"What a delightful lecture!"

"You'll have to pull up or be very miserable," he stated. "Easy spending is a habit, you know."

She rose. With a slow, almost insolent gesture she pulled her fur close around her soft, white throat.

"I shall not forget," she said, "that I came to you for help and that you refused me!"

"I'm sorry you feel as you do, Mrs. Stafford. Can't you see that when I asked Elinor to refuse you I pledged myself to do the same thing?"

"Elinor would not have to know."

"I do not lie, Mrs. Stafford."

Her face hardened. She caught the implication he had not meant to make with his statement.

SHE left the house shaking with rage. There was Miss Ella Sexton's house across the street. Miss Ella had been influenced by Barry's scheming and persuaded not to leave her money as it should have gone. If the money had been left as it should have

been there would be no need of approaching Elinor or her husband for loans. The shoe would be on the other foot! As things were there were few chances to even up with Barry Colvin. Unless he had on the side some little affair! Lida could hurt him that way, extract from him what she wished with the pledge of silence. Who was it who had said that he was always running up to Connecticut? Why did he go there? Had she hit upon it—the fact that would level his pride and open his purse?

It cost a great deal, Lida knew, to have anyone "shadowed" but the original cost might prove to be one of her best investments.

She moistened her tired lips. If she could find her proud and lofty son-in-law in a compromising situation how she would put on the screws! And someone had said he drove to Connecticut often.

Monday found Lida abroad early. She usually woke about 10 o'clock to bathe and return to bed for her breakfast. After that she would dawdle over letters, the newspapers or perhaps a sensational novel. Then came the first act of dressing which always took an hour and often more. As the clock struck one she usually sauntered forth to meet some one for luncheon or to hunt up diversion for the day.

This Monday morning found her up at eight and dressed by nine. In her car a half hour later she ordered Grier to an address on a side street.

The chauffeur, waiting before the address, smiled the cynical smile that came often to his honest Irish lips. His eyes were on the gilt lettering that appeared on a plate glass window. Women like Lida Stafford went to detective agencies for just one reason—to ferret out secrets to use for blackmail or a divorce.

GRIER wondered about Mrs. Stafford's errand as he waited in the new car she had bought the day after her daughter's marriage. "She can't be havin' that husband of hers shadowed," he mused. "He can't get gay, tied like he is to his bed and a wheel chair!" Grier gave up the riddle.

Meanwhile inside Lida had explained her errand. The sleek individual who sat back of the desk had listened to her tale and written Barry Colvin's name and New York address on a pad. Now he said, "We'll do all that is possible and we'll keep you informed, Mrs. Stafford. If the facts are what you think they are and Mr. Colvin makes a trip to Connecticut soon it won't take us very long to give you the lowdown!"

Lida smiled.

"We usually number these cases," the man went on. "For one thing it makes telephone calls easier. Your case will be—"

He consulted records—"6972B."

Lida wrote, "6972B" in a small engagement book, murmuring as she did so, "Thank you!"

"Not at all, Mrs. Stafford—"

She rose and drew her coat around her. The man's eyes appraised her, resting over her slowly from head to foot and back again. Lida was warmed, reassured. She had been so alone since Vance Carter's "abrupt outbreak." Men had been shy of her. She had once or twice felt the threat of age and wondered what she would do with time—and herself—when she was old. She had no investment that would return peace as the fire burned low. She did not realize her lack of resources. She thought only, "Old age is hideous!"

She left the place smiling over the memory of this strange man's sensuously glittering eyes. Her daughter would have shuddered at their light and struggled to forget it.

The day was clear, unusually warm. "Perhaps," Lida mused, "Barry will drive up there this afternoon!"

(To Be Continued)

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Flapper Fanny Says



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OUT OUR WAY

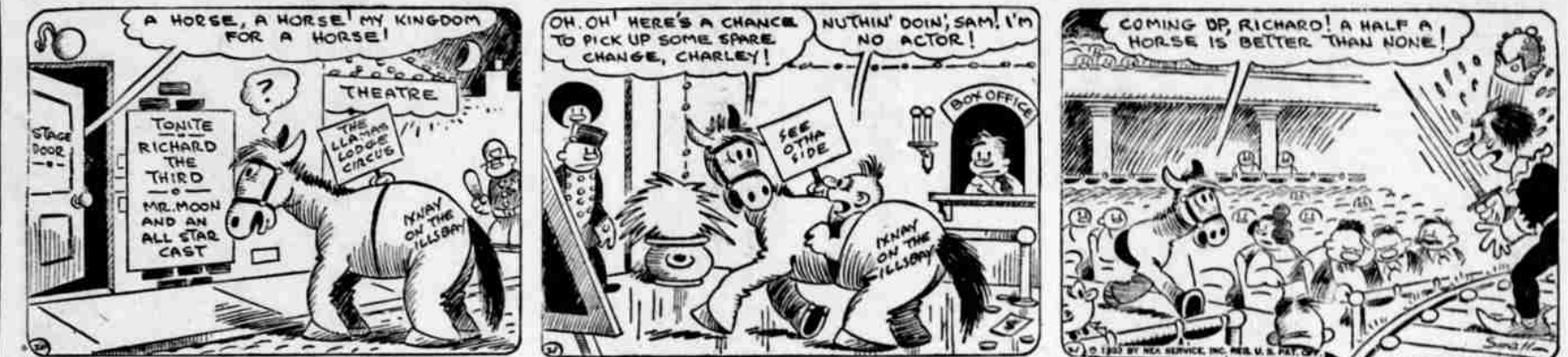


By J. R. Williams OUR BOARDING HOUSE



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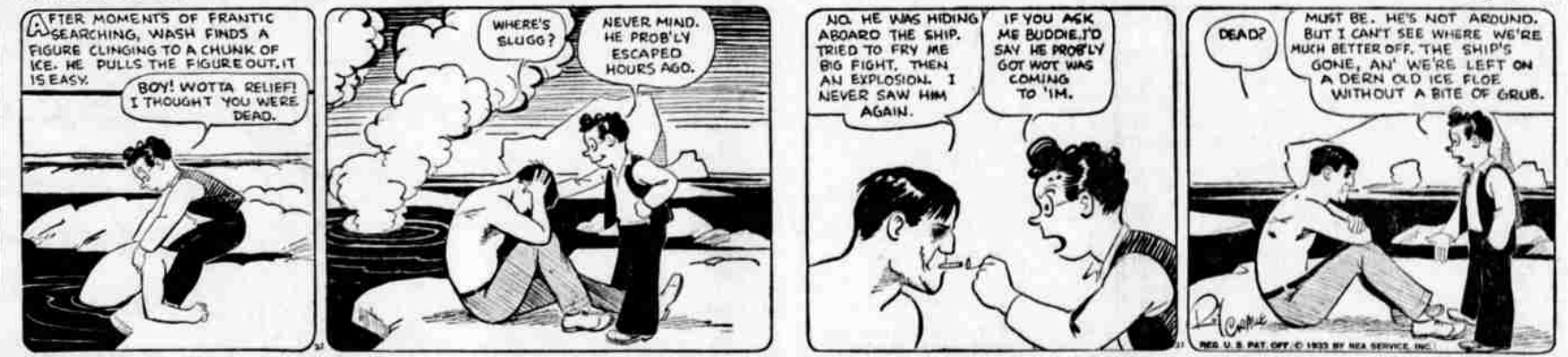
By Small

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



By Martin

WASH TUBBS



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FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



By Blosser

THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



By Cowan