

Bargain Bride

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY
ELINOR STAFFORD falls in love with BARRETT COLVIN. She is 26 and he is 35. LIDA STAFFORD, Elinor's jealous scheming mother, breaks up the romance by convincing Barrett that Elinor is a heartless flirt. When Elinor's aunt, wealth, MISS ELLA SEXTON, dies she leaves her fortune to Barrett. Then drunken VANCE CARTER shoots BENTWELL STAFFORD, Elinor's father. Barrett tells Elinor that if she will marry him and live as a guest in his home for a year he will give her the entire Sexton fortune to divide among her relatives, the rightful inheritors. Knowing the money may save her father's life, Elinor agrees.

The marriage takes place. Barrett, still believing she lies Lida has told him, finds himself more in love with Elinor than ever. The doctor orders a change of climate for her father and Elinor goes to Alaska with him.

Years before Barrett absconded his half-sister, MARCIA HADRON, when a youthful romance ended disastrously. Marcia had a son whom Barrett adopted. He has promised Marcia never to reveal the boy's story. Lida Stafford knows about the boy's existence and concludes he is Barrett's son.

Barrett makes an unannounced trip to Alaska. He becomes jealous and tells Elinor he knows all about her affairs. Later he apologizes.

Elinor's father dies that night. The girl is close to collapse and Barrett tries to comfort her. His mother sends word that she is coming.

HOW DO WE WITH THE POINT

CHAPTER XXXIX
LIDA arrived wearing black crepe and looking tragically dramatic. She murmured brokenly of being "so alone now," of the long years she and Bentwell Stafford had known together. Elinor listened and her expression chilled.

To keep Lida Stafford from poring over her daughter would be a genuine task, Barrett saw.

After dinner on the evening of her arrival Lida asked Barrett to walk with her on the terrace. Unwillingly he found himself pacing the close-clipped grass by her side.

"We must have a frank talk, Barrett," she began.

"It can't be a long one," he said bluntly. "Elinor may want me."

"You are quite devoted to her, aren't you?" Lida questioned. He noted in the half-twilight the bitter menace of her smile.

"I love her with all my heart," he said loudly.

Lida's comment was a dry, "De- lightful!" Suddenly she forgot her tragic role and laughed.

"I don't understand you, Mrs. Stafford," said Barrett, coming to an abrupt standstill.

"You will," she assured him suavely. "I shall be happy to explain!"

Leading gracefully against the balustrade that guarded the terrace from the sheer drop, she spoke of Gerald and the woman in Connecticut. "I know only the bare facts now," she admitted as she finished speaking, "but I can fill in the gaps of the tale— if I need to fill those gaps."

THAT, Barrett realized, meant having Marcia's story broadcast to the world. He stood with teeth set on his lower lip and scowled at the elated lights in the hollow, cheeks that he did not see.

The tale might mean the end of Elinor's happiness, for he had promised Marcia that he would not tell Elinor the true story.

"How much, is it you want, Mrs. Stafford?"

She laid a hand on his arm and at the touch he drew back. "I'm not going to be unreasonable," she said smoothly. "I do like to think that when I really need help I can come to dear Elinor's husband—"

"Suppose we omit flowers," he suggested dryly. "I asked how much you want for silence."

Lida admitted that she really did need a little help. Things had gone so badly for her in a financial way. "But I think I could manage with \$36,000," she told him.

After a moment's consideration he promised her his check.

"Suppose," Lida suggested sweetly, "we attend to it now?" Smiling ironically, Barrett agreed. They were in the living room and he had just given her the check when Elinor appeared in the doorway.

"Inopportune!" Lida murmured. She trailed off languidly. Elinor's expression showed mild surprise but nothing more than that. Barrett understood that her sense of loss was so great she scarcely noticed anything around her.

He drew her arm through his. "Come outside," he urged. "I want to talk to you."

Miss Hemmingsway had said, "Divert her. Do all you can to divert her thoughts."

She went with him without objection. They were to leave for New York the next day. After that her father would be gone for all time! Elinor could not forget that she had clung to him at her aunt's funeral. She had felt that she and her father—alone of the large group—shared the same emotions. Perhaps her father was the only person who would ever understand her, the only soul who would ever comprehend those needs that can not be voiced. A hunger for trust was one of them. She could not feel that Barrett—thoughtful as he was—quite trusted her. And love without trust was not love at all.

"Showers" usually come to the dashing type

HE settled with her in a broad, low, crocheted covered swing.

Dropping an arm around her shoulders, he drew her close. "Mind that?" he asked. "No." "Have you ever been to Cuba?" he wanted to know. She said she had not. "I think you'd like it," Barrett went on. "It's a gay, port, laughing sister of Italy. Suppose we start down there in a few days? I'm certain I can get reservations easily. Travel's all going the other way just now. Would you like it, dear?" "It sounds very pleasant." "It may be a bit warm but the wind always blows." She felt she would like warmth, she said, as she shivered. "We'll take long drives. You'll love the country." "It sounds pleasant," she repeated. He tightened his arm. "Barrett." "Yes, dear?" "I don't want this house." "I know you don't." She began to cry again softly. He drew her closer. In a moment she was clinging to him and his heart began the pounding it knew so well.

JUNE in New York was hot. Houses with drawn shades told the world their inhabitants had departed for the seashore or mountains. Stay-at-home shed garments and sweaters. In newspaper headlines the heat wave took precedence over all other events.

Marcia, however, left her Long Island home on a train bound for New York. She had not seen Elinor or Barrett since their return from Cuba and she longed to be certain that Barrett's happiness, indicated so plainly in his letters, had made him forgive what she called, "my little sins."

She was not comfortable about the matter. She had gone to Dr. Arthur Palmer, rector of the church she had attended for so long, expecting to pour her problem into sympathetic ears. She had been sure that he would absolve her after she had given something in atonement to one of his favorite charities.

But her visit had not taken the position she expected it would. Dr. Palmer heard her faltered tale without a word.

"I am burdened!" Marcia ended a bit dramatically.

"You will be as long as you refuse to tell the truth," he answered.

"I am burdened!" she said. "I came here thinking I could be helped by giving generously to one of the needs about which you know so well," she said.

"Give generously instead to the need you know," he responded. He leaned forward toward her. "What you have done is unfair," he went on, "because some day the facts will come out and make trouble for your brother. Those facts are sure to be misunderstood. If that happens they will break his heart. Your brother's wife has seen how much deceit and dishonesty to forgive it easily. Unless you are brave enough to tell the whole truth she may read a lie in the circumstantial evidence. That lie will end her happiness as well as the happiness of your brother who has so long shielded you!"

Hands trembling, Marcia plucked at the clasp of her bag. "I certainly did not expect this from you, Doctor Palmer!" she said shortly. "I expected help!"

"I am trying to give you help," he said sternly.

She rose. "I presume that even with you, Doctor Palmer, such affairs are private and personal matters?"

"Even with me," he admitted, smiling a little wearily.

After he saw her out he went back to his study, dropped into a deep chair and smoked thoughtfully. He could understand Elinor Colvin's passionate devotion to honesty. Sometimes he felt, especially after such an interview, that he was not honest in the world, that he was beating his head against a stone wall that would never yield. How Elinor Colvin would take this affair he dreaded to think.

(To Be Continued)

Flapper Fanny Says

GADSDY PARKER

"Showers" usually come to the dashing type

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OUT OUR WAY

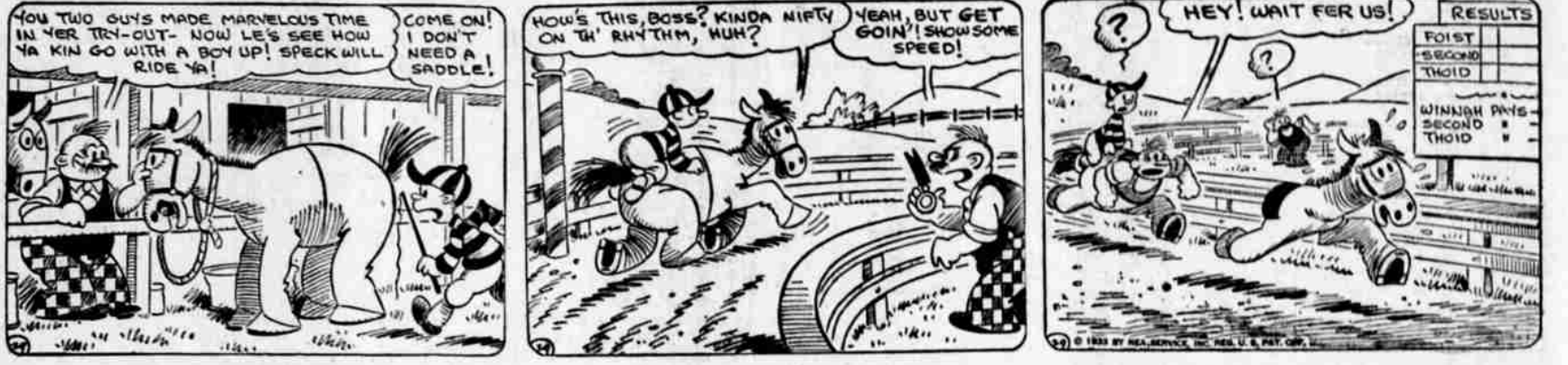
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