

MAD MARRIAGE

by LAURA LOU BROOKMAN Author of "HEART HUNGRY," etc.

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BEGIN HERE TODAY

GYPSY MCBRIDE, 19-year-old typist in a New York office, is miserable and homesick when she finds the AYER BOYS, just returned from a year and a half in Paris studying art, no longer care for her.

Crosby is infatuated with MRS. LANG, the older woman who considers herself a patron of art. Gypsy becomes disgusted with her job and, when she's given a big dinner ready and she's waiting for us to come down."

The girl hesitated.

"Please come," Jim urged. He spoke so earnestly that she was persuaded against her better judgment.

"All right," she said. "Give me five minutes."

Wallace turned to go. "I'll wait for you downstairs," he told her.

There was a bath adjoining the room. It was spacious and finished in white tile. Nothing modernistic, but pastel-hued plumbing fixtures in dinner party rustic.

Wallace had just been visited by his fiancée. She admits she has had the same experience. To spite Gypsy, she's going to call on Gypsy to marry him. She first refused, but later accepted.

They are married next morning and take the train for Forest City, arriving in time to meet the AYER BOYS.

At Jim's home they are greeted by his aunt, MISS ELLEN WALLACE, who has known Jim since his birth.

She is shocked when she learns the bride is not MARCIA TROWBRIDGE.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The terrier had come closer. Gypsy knelt to stroke his head and Pat licked her hand.

"You're going to be friends," Jim announced. "That settles it. Pat's adopted you."

Gypsy put both arms around the dog. His coat was soft and warm and his little body wiggled amably. "I like you, Pat," she said in a low voice. "I like you lots."

Miss Wallace's voice broke in impatiently. "Send the dog out to the kitchen, won't you, Jim? We have things a good deal more important to discuss now than that animal."

Gypsy's smile faded as she arose.

There was a note in the other woman's voice that was ominous. Inquisitively, Gypsy moved toward Jim.

He signaled to Pat and the dog, with a lingering backward glance or two, trotted from the room.

"Just what did you want to discuss?" Wallace asked. There was resentment in his voice. "Personally, I'd like to get cleaned up and go into discussion with a juicy piece of beefsteak. We've had a long trip, Aunt Ellen. Don't you think there'll be a better time—"

"There's no reason to put off what I want to know—unless you're ashamed to tell me," his aunt insisted crisply. "What's this young woman's name? Who is she? You haven't told me anything about her yet."

Gypsy knew Jim was embarrassed and that he was trying to hide it.

"That's so," he said, "guess I did forget. Aunt Ellen, this is Gypsy. Until this morning she was Gypsy McBride."

"Gypsy? Is that what you said—Gypsy?"

"That's what I said. Gypsy McBride. You've heard me speak of Phil Trowbridge. Gypsy and Phil's wife are cousins. It was at their house we met."

"It's a heaven name!" Ellen Wallace spoke as though the very words were contaminating.

"And what about Marcia, I'd like to know?"

"There must be some means of escape!" Gypsy glanced about the room. "Jim," she said, "isn't there somewhere I can go while you and your aunt talk things over?"

"Of course. Upstairs—the room at the head of the flight. Wait—I'll show you."

He led her up the stairs to the old-fashioned bedroom. An hour later from the depths of the rocker where she was sitting, Gypsy heard a knock.

"THERE was a second knock before she reached the door. "Who is it?" Gypsy called.

Jim's face appeared in the narrow opening. "May I come in?"

"Of course."

He entered, closing the door behind him. "Things haven't turned out—exactly the way I planned," he began. "I'm sorry."

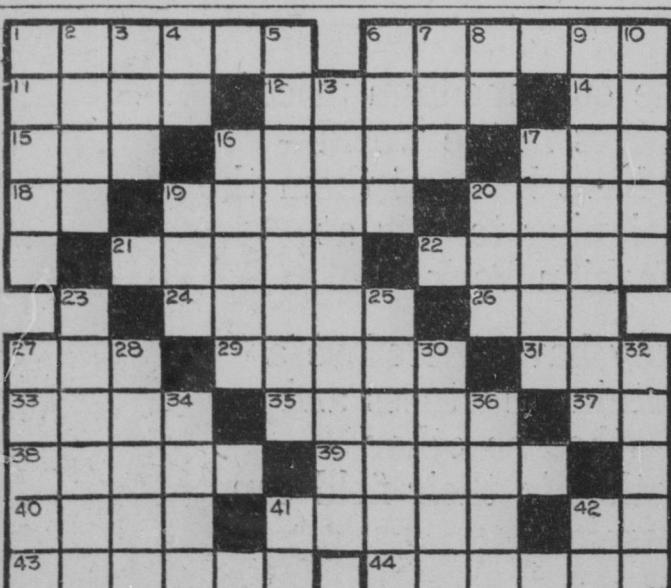
"Hate like the devil to get you into such a mess. But it's going to be all right now. I mean about Aunt Ellen. She wasn't herself when you saw her. Shock upset her."

"Naturally, I didn't tell her—well, exactly how we met. She thinks I've known you quite a while. That's best, don't you think so?"

Gypsy had been watching him. Phil made her eyes look larger.

"Much better," she agreed. "I was wondering how you accounted for me."

Wallace waved the matter aside. "Oh, I just said: you were Anne Trowbridge's cousin, and I met you at a party at their apartment. That's true, you know! But that doesn't matter—you're starved, is your religious faith?"



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

DORSAL 1. Kit 2. American 3. frontiersman 4. term. 5. Daubs. 6. To kill. 7. To affirm. 8. Fat. 9. Southeast. 10. To proffer. 11. To grin. 12. Devoured. 13. Alleged force. 14. Tip. 15. Glided. 16. Musical instrument. 17. Chambers. 18. Footprint. 19. Ocean. 20. To sunburn. 21. Stuporous. 22. Eye tumor. 23. To press. 24. Exultant.

SCIENTS 1. ALEET 2. VA 3. REVIVAL 4. LA 5. IRK 6. RATED 7. POI 8. SAIL 9. LAD 10. MOON 11. TIP 12. HOW 13. ABET 14. DIE 15. TEST 16. FACTS 17. RUE 18. SW 19. AIRSHIP 20. EN 21. EMIRE 22. EROS 23. TRADED 24. REPORT

aren't you? I came up to tell you dinner is ready."

"All I want is something hot to drink," Gypsy said.

"Listen, you don't know what a wonderful cook Harriet is! She's disgusted with her job and, when she's waiting for us to come down."

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"I—why—I used to go to the Presbyterian church—" Gypsy floundered, color surging to her cheeks.

"The Wallaces are English," the older woman informed her, "and were regular in attendance. Our pastor is a splendid man—the Rev. Mr. Brooks. His messages are always inspiring."

Gypsy would have liked to reply that when you pound a typewriter six days a week until your shoulders ache it's easier to talk about "inspiring messages" than to arise and go to church on the one morning it's possible to sleep. She didn't say it.

Gypsy recalled in time that Jim probably had concealed the fact of her three years in the MacNamara office.

There was a lull and Jim tried to turn his aunt's attention to another subject. The effort was useless.

"I understand your name was McBride," Ellen Wallace persisted. "Sounds Irish. Was your father a professional man?"

"See here, Aunt Ellen," Jim interrupted. "You're tired. She can tell you all that some other day."

"I don't mind," the girl assured him. "I like to talk about my father. 'Yes, I guess he was what you call a 'professional man.' He worked on a newspaper."

Miss Wallace frowned. "An editor?" she asked.

"No, he wasn't exactly editor. He worked on big New York newspapers. Different ones. He wrote headlines and corrected mistakes and he knew everything in the world. He was wonderful. We were always together—up until three years ago."

She turned her head away. They had finished the coffee and Wallace was returning to the living room. His aunt arose, regretfully.

"Let me show you the house," Jim suggested to Gypsy. "You'd like to know your way about, wouldn't you?"

She said she would. The Wallace residence was a rambling structure that had been added to as demands arose.

Originally the building had been square. The old part, built by Grandfather Wallace, included the living room, which was fully thirty feet long and half as wide. Its furnishings were too dark, Gypsy thought, and too massive, but the room had a "lived-in" quality that was pleasing and the fireplace was cheerful.

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