

OBEDIENT

Sandy Uses a
Thoroughly
Baby-Like Way
to Bring Two
Hearts Together

MARCIA -

Illustrated by Henrietta McCaig Starrett

By PHYLLIS M.
GALLAGHER

around, his bald head bobbing against Peter's chin, his little arms twisting and turning. Sandy was working like a dog to get up his burp for Peter.

Marcia said lightly: "Try hard, Sandy darling." And Sandy burped. He nearly took off the roof.

Marcia laughed. "Well, Sandy, I can see you haven't been reading your book on etiquette." And Peter laughed, too. He said: "Nice going, old man! You couldn't have done better if there had been beer in your bottle."

Back in the kitchen Marcia closed the door gently and leaned against it. Her young heart ached. "This is like being married," she thought. "To Peter. Dinner cooking. The baby." For one moment she buried her face in her palms. Then the coffee boiled over and Marcia ran to it, and presently Peter came into the kitchen. He said tenderly: "Sandy's asleep."

He stood close, looking down into her eyes. She didn't move. In that one short second she saw her future pass before her; the brittle, crystal future that had no place for Peter; the future her mother desired for her and which she was obediently following like Grace and Gwen. She saw a baby, too. A nurse would have it all day and she and Ed would be so busy climbing, meeting the right people, that days would go by before they even stepped into the nursery.

Grace and Tony had a baby, too. Grace was always writing: "We go to Florida, and when we come back six months later we wouldn't know Junior to be our own child." She and Ed would be saying that. She and Ed!

BUT Peter didn't take her in his arms. He looked away from her and Marcia knew, with a sinking feeling, that he had no intention of taking her in his arms. So he didn't care. He had found that he could get over being in love with her, after all.

And she knew with something almost like shame that if Peter had taken her in his arms she would have returned his kiss; she would have cried a little with this sudden happiness, and tomorrow there would have been a short notice in the paper saying that Miss Marcia Davis' engagement to Captain Edward Stafford was broken. The mails would have been crowded with wedding presents being returned to the donors.

Peter said awkwardly: "Ah, coffee! . . . And she thought, miserably, "He's embarrassed. He knew I wanted him to kiss me and he couldn't because he doesn't care any more."

She said gayly, "Coffee!" and then the doorbell shrieked. Peter cried: "Avenue, that would wake up the dead!"



you're engaged. And you're liking this man's blue eyes, his crooked smile—and it's a bad."

On the floor the young man said: "I'm Peter Blain. I write a daily political column. And who are you?"

Marcia told him, finishing with: "—and I'm a wow at knitting. You ought to see me."

"When?" insisted Peter, instantly.

"Well, really . . . !" gasped Marcia. "Look here," said Peter. "I know a nifty barbecue place. I've a car. Not very new, not very big, not very full of gas. But we could make it. How does it sound?"

"Fine," said Marcia lightly. "Only I can't. I'm with Ed Stafford."

"**I**T WOULD take a galvanic vitality to keep up with Washington and Ed Stafford," Marcia thought as she advanced slowly in line at the Demarests' reception. She ached all over. Her feet had been trod upon that afternoon at a tea-dance; her ribs ached from elbows ramming her at the Egyptian Legation's celebration; her tummy ached from the Bourgogneonne entree at the Lloyd's dinner, and her heart ached because last night Ed Stafford had taken her in his arms, had kissed her and she had said she would marry him. Not loving him. Not even quite liking him.

Marcia glanced at the tall, dark Ed hovering behind her: Ed, one of the big patronage men in Washington. She had met him in the Autumn at a Fort Myer Drill when her mother had come streaking across the crowded gallery with him in tow and had presented him with an air of offering a rare diamond. She had said: "Marcia, darling—this—is Captain Stafford!" Each pause pregnant with meaning. They had said: "Marcia, get him! He's rich. Remember the beating Dad took in the crash."

Obediently, Marcia had flashed her blue eyes, had smiled, languorously Southern. Then Mother's little bird-like face had turned on Ed, and her robin's breast had fluttered. Ed was beaming. Ed was going to be a push-over.

Ed had been a pushover. Almost too easy. From the beginning he had sent flowers, candy. He had taken her to cocktail lounges, the theatre, the movies. Then, finally, he had introduced her to his friends. The Right People: Ambassadors, Ministers, Senators, high Government officials, rich cave-dwellers.

At first it had been vastly exciting for the little Kentucky girl who had come to Washington with her ambitious mother and her job-seeking father. She almost forgot it was Ed who was taking her about, that it was Ed who was