

**CHAINS: A PLAY  
IN FOUR ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649381609

Chains: A Play in Four Acts by Elizabeth Baker

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**ELIZABETH BAKER**

**CHAINS: A PLAY  
IN FOUR ACTS**



CHAINS: A PLAY, IN FOUR ACTS, BY  
ELIZABETH BAKER

UNIV OF  
CALIFORNIA

BOSTON: JOHN W. LUCE & COMPANY.  
LONDON: SIDGWICK & JACKSON, LTD.  
3 ADAM STREET, ADELPHI. MCMXIII.

70 5000  
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*First Impression, January 1911*  
*Second Impression, October 1911*  
*Third Impression, January 1913*

CHAINS

ACT I

PR6003

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1911

MAIN

*SCENE: Sitting-room at 55 Acacia Avenue. The principal articles of furniture are the centre table, set for dinner for three, and a sideboard on the right. There are folding doors at the back, leading to the front room, partly hidden by curtains; on the left a low French window leading into the garden. On the right is a fire burning; and above it a door into the kitchen.*

*The furniture of the room is a little mixed in style. A wicker armchair is on one side of the fireplace, a folding carpet-chair on the other. The other chairs, three at the table and two against the walls, are of bent wood. The sideboard is mahogany. The carpet-squares over oil-cloth is of an indeterminate pattern in subdued colours, dull crimson predominating. Lace curtains at window. Family photographs, a wedding group and a cricket group, and a big lithograph copy of a Marcus Stone picture, are on the walls. There is a brass alarm clock on the mantelpiece and one or two ornaments. A sewing-machine stands on a small table near the window; and on the edge of this table and on the small table on the other side of the window are pots of cuttings. A couple of bookshelves hang over the machine. A small vase of flowers stands in the centre of the dinner table.*

LILY WILSON, much worried, is laying the centre

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table. She is a pretty, slight woman, obviously young, wearing a light cotton blouse, dark skirt and big pinafore. The front door is heard to close. CHARLEY WILSON enters. He is an ordinary specimen of the city clerk, dressed in correct frock-coat, dark trousers, carefully creased, much cuff and a high collar.

LILY. Here you are, then. [She puts up her face and they kiss hurriedly.] Did I hear Mr. Tennant with you?

CHAR. Met on the step.

LILY. How funny! Well, that's nice. We can have dinner almost directly.

CHAR. [putting down his hat carefully on side-board, and stretching himself slowly, with evident enjoyment.] Saturday, thank the Lord!

LILY. [laughing prettily.] Poor thing!

CHAR. [looking at his silk hat.] I should like to pitch the beastly thing into the river. [He shakes his fist at it. Then he stretches his neck as if to lift it out of the collar and shaking down his cuffs till he can get a fine view of them, regards them meditatively.] Pah!

LILY. [anxiously.] What's the matter with them? Are they scorched?

CHAR. Scorched! No, they're white enough. Beastly uniform!

LILY. But you must wear cuffs, dear.

CHAR. A chap came to the office to-day in a red tie. Old Raffles had him up, and pitched into him. Asked him if he was a Socialist. Chap said he wasn't, but liked red. "So do I," says the Boss, "but I don't wear a golf coat in the city!" Thought he was awfully smart, and it did make Poppy swear.

LILY. Who's Poppy, dear.

CHAR. Popperwell. He almost left there and then. Said he should wear whatever tie he liked.



LILY. It would have been rather silly of him, wouldn't it? He's so sure there.

CHAR. That's what *he* said. He thought better of it and swallowed it. Well—dinner ready?

LILY. Waiting.

CHAR. [*going out.*] I'll be down in a jiffy.

LILY *goes to the fire.* TENNANT *heard outside whistling a bar of the song "Off to Philadelphia." He comes in. He is a broad-shouldered young fellow, a little shy in his manner with women.*

TENNANT. Nice day, Mrs. Wilson.

LILY. Beautiful.

TENNANT. I've brought you home the paper, if you'd like it. It's the "Daily Mirror."

LILY. Oh, thank you. I do like the pictures. Charley is getting so dreadfully serious now in his reading, and won't buy it. He takes the "Daily Telegraph." He thinks the gardening notes are so good.

TENNANT. He's luxurious. It's a penny.

LILY. Oh, he shares it with somebody. [*Pause.*]

TENNANT. How goes the garden?

LILY. It's rather trying—I should like to give up those peas and things, and have chickens. They would be so useful.

LILY *goes out.* TENNANT *takes a map out of his pocket and stands studying it.* CHARLEY *and LILY enter together.* CHARLEY *has made a wonderful change into a loose, rather creased suit of bright brown, flannel shirt with soft collar, flowing tie and old slippers. A pipe is sticking out of one pocket, and a newspaper out of the other. They sit down, and LILY tries not to look worried as CHARLEY laboriously cuts the small joint which she has brought in with her and put before him. He splashes the gravy a little and has to use the sharpener. LILY serves vegetables.*

CHAR. I think I shall get one of Robertson's pups.

LILY. It would be lovely.

CHAR. He's got one he'll let me have cheap.

TENNANT. I saw them last night. They're a good breed. Make fine house-dogs.

CHAR. That's what you want round here. A quiet neighbourhood like this is A 1 for burglars.

LILY. You don't think we shall have any, do you?

CHAR. No. 24 had 'em the other night.

TENNANT. What were they after?

LILY. 24? That's the new people. What a shame!

CHAR. Wanted the wedding presents.

LILY. And Mrs. Thompson told me they had real silver at 24.

CHAR. Trust the burglars for knowing that. They won't risk their skins for electro. So we shan't have 'em.

LILY. Charley! You forget the biscuit barrel and the tray.

TENNANT. Where's the Bobby?

LILY. There's only one about here.

CHAR. They don't have Bobbies for burglars in these sort of places, only for rows. And we don't have rows. We're too respectable.

LILY. I think it's so mean of burglars to come to people like us.

CHAR. [*with a burst of laughter.*] Let 'em go to Portman Square, you say?

LILY. Well, of course, it's wrong to steal at all; but it doesn't seem quite so bad. [*She stops, a little confused.*]

TENNANT. Of course it isn't.

CHAR. [*lying back comfortably in his chair.*] Going away Sunday?

TENNANT. No—the fact is—

LILY. Maggie is coming round this afternoon. Shall we ask the Leslies for whist to-night?

CHAR. All right. Don't make it too early, though. [*Looking out of the French windows into the garden.*] I've got to get in my peas.

TENNANT. Green peas?

CHAR. Green peas in that patch? My dear chap, don't I wish I could!

LILY. [*to TENNANT.*] Have some more?

TENNANT. No, thanks.

CHAR. For one thing, there's the soil! It's rotten. Then there're the sparrows. . . .

LILY. Some of them are so tame, dear, and they don't seem to care a bit for the cat next door.

CHAR. [*bitterly.*] They don't care for anything. I wish they'd take a fancy to a few snails.

LILY. They don't eat snails.

CHAR. You spoil 'em. She gives 'em soaked bread all through the winter, and then expects me to grow things. Lord!

LILY *collects plates.* TENNANT *goes out.* CHARLEY *lights pipe.* CHARLEY *goes to window, where he stands leaning against the post and smoking.*

LILY. The baby across the road is such a darling, Charley.

CHAR. Is it?

LILY. The girl was out with it this morning, and I called her over.

CHAR. What is it?

LILY. It's a boy.

CHARLEY'S *replies are without interest and he continues to gaze out into garden.*

They're going to call him Theodore Clement Freeman. It's rather a lot, isn't it?

CHAR. What's he got it all for?