

# Bringing Up Baby

BY HAGAR WILDE

With a great deal of pleasure we give you *Baby*, the only panther in the history of music with a critical ear

*Baby*, stretching luxuriously, hesitated only a moment between love and duty. He followed the dog, disappearing into the woods

DAVID was surprised when Suzan's call was announced. They'd had a row the night before and it was Suzan's custom to punish the people who quarreled with her by making them call first, thereby placing them at a disadvantage. David reflected that Suzan must want something. For a brief moment he considered having Ching tell her that he had gone out with a "velly plitty lady" but Suzan was smart and she'd know that he was skulking there listening to every word. No, the thing to do was take this call and make Suzan feel that she'd been something of a weakling to ring him up.

He said, "Hello, Suzan." In brighter moments she was Suzy.

Suzan's voice was vague and far away as though she were lighting a cigarette, which she was. "Do you want a panther?"

"Do I want a panther?" David said. He untwisted the telephone cord, a futile gesture, but instinctive. "I can't hear you very well. Come closer to the transmitter."

Her voice came, cupped and resounding, even scratching a little along the sides of the wires. "I said, do you want a panther?"

"No," David said. "Why should I?"

"Well, for that matter," Suzan said peevishly, "why should I? But I've got one."

"Where would you get a panther?"

"Mark."

Mark was her brother. He'd been away for two months, nobody knew quite where except that he was below the equator. An important point presented itself to David. "How big?" he said.

"Big," said Suzan. "He just fits into the bathroom. Aunt Elizabeth is coming and I have to farm the beast out somewhere."

"Suzan Vance, you get right out of that apartment."

"Nonsense," said Suzan. "I have a lease. Maybe Tommy—"

"Tommy's out of town."

"Rats," Suzan said.

SUZAN'S maid had taken her stand in the corridor but she had retained a key. This she delivered to David, who arrived breathless, with an oration. "It's not me that's putting any wild beast into any bathroom. If she wants it in the bathroom she can put it in the bathroom and I wish her good luck."

At this point, Suzan, a bit disheveled, popped her head out at them. "You can come in now, lionheart. I've stowed him away. Oh, hello, David."



David followed her inside. His hands were a bit clammy and perspiration was starting around his hairline. "Suzan," he said, "I will not allow—"

"Don't stand there yapping about what you'll allow. Try to think of some nice, responsible person you know who likes panthers."

"No responsible person likes panthers!" David yelled.

A familiar gleam entered Suzan's eye. "My brother Mark likes panthers and you wouldn't tell Mark to his face that he wasn't responsible."

David kept his temper because losing it never got him anywhere. "Darling—"

She said sharply, "Don't wheedle. If you're going to try and get your own way come out in the open and fight like a man."

"I was about to say, we'll get somebody from a zoo to—"

Suzan said stubbornly, "Mark says I'm to keep him, so I'm going to keep him." It had a note of finality. "I've other things on my mind. Listen." Producing two documents from a pile of mail on the table, she waved them at him and then read the first, prefacing the reading by saying, "From Mark. From Brazil":

"Dear Suzy:

"I'm sending you Baby, a panther I picked up. He's three years old, gentle as a kitten and he likes dogs."

Suzan paused, frowned a little and then smiled apologetically. "I don't know whether Mark means he eats dogs or is fond of them," she said. "Mark's so vague at times." She continued reading:

"He also likes music, particularly that song, 'I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby.' It may be because his name is in the lyric but, anyway, it enchants him. Try getting records with the word baby in them. That shouldn't be hard if music is what it was when I left. Guard him with your life. I am leaving Brazil tomorrow. Will communicate with you from the next port. Don't feed Baby potatoes. He gets sick as a dog."

"I wish he'd get sick as a panther and die," said David.

"Don't interrupt. Mark adds a postscript. Wouldn't Mark put a thing like this in a postscript! 'Aunt Elizabeth's changed her will in our favor again. Give the old girl my love when she arrives.'" Suzan put the letter down and stared at it angrily. "When she arrives! As though he didn't know that I never open Aunt Elizabeth's letters except on the first of the month!"

"I don't follow you," David said.

"Mark's probably known for weeks that she was coming, but I didn't. She writes four times a month, once with a check and three times with lectures, so naturally I skip the lectures. Fortunately I save them in neat little piles. Here's her last. I opened it after I read Mark's. Aunt Elizabeth says in it that

she is arriving in America on the twelfth."

"That's tomorrow," said David.

"I know it," Suzan said, glaring. She went on reading:

"Why have you not replied to my last letter? I intend leaving my erstwhile friend Drusilla Maretti for good this time. Nobody could get on with her, what with her overweening conceit about a voice that might have been good once but certainly is nothing to listen to now and that moth-eaten cheetah she's always lugging about. I am thoroughly out of patience.

"I will expect you to move out to the Connecticut house for the length of my stay.

"I understand that you are engaged. You might have apprised me of this fact but I suppose I can expect very little from you and Mark in the way of acting like human beings. However, I want your fiancé to come to Connecticut with us. It's a good idea, in the country, to have a man in the house.

"Drusilla and I, at the moment, are not speaking. It makes things very difficult, living in the same house. I look forward, in America, to peace and quiet.

"Your affectionate aunt,  
"ELIZABETH REARDON."

SUZAN stared into space, two frown wrinkles deeply embedded over her nose.

"So she comes to America to get away from a cheetah," she said, "and runs smack into a panther. Just after she's changed her will. It doesn't make sense."

"Drusilla Maretti's the opera singer, isn't she?"

"The ex-opera singer. They've lived together for years. They should both be packed away in woollies, knitting. But, no, they give the most ghastly dinner parties and wear feathers in their hair and serve champagne and Drusilla sings after dinner and Aunt Elizabeth sits in the corner and sneers."

"I've always wanted to make faces back at singers, too," said David.

"Then one of them packs up in a huff and makes a dramatic exit, saying she hopes she'll never set eyes on the other again. Two months later they're back together again, thick as thieves. Well, anyway—" Suzan sat briskly erect. This meant that she was now prepared to deal with the matter in hand. "Aunt Elizabeth can't know that we have Baby."

"Can Baby know that we have Aunt Elizabeth?"

"Don't be tiresome. We'll take him up to Connecticut in the station wagon. Two of the tenant houses are empty. We'll tie him in one and sneak food out to him nights."

"You mean I'll sneak food out to him nights," said David.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think it's lousy," David said, his head in his hands, "but I don't suppose that makes any difference."

"How would you like me not to have any money if I ever decide to marry you?" Suzan demanded.

"I shouldn't like it. I've only got just enough to live on in luxury and entertain you. I certainly can't keep you."

"Precisely. So you help or I won't marry you."

"You broke our engagement last night," David said.

"Oh, that," said Suzan airily.

HAULING a panther seventy miles in a station wagon without bars between you and the panther is no joke. Suzan kept referring to Baby as a lamb because he was quiet but David was aware at all moments during the drive that Baby was no lamb. Those few hours marked a turning point in David's life. He realized that life was not all fun and that it might end in death by drowning or perhaps, through no fault of your own, by having a panther who was in a position of advantage take a dislike to you. He marveled at Suzan, who seemed perfectly cool and unaware of the fact that chance plays such an important part in whether one lives or dies and the manner of the latter.

He was still regarding Suzan with wonder at three o'clock the following afternoon. They sat in the drawing room of the Connecticut house. Suzan was pensively staring at the arrangement of a bowl of heather as though she hadn't another care in the world. She in no way resembled the girl who had pushed Baby into a deserted house a stone's throw away and secured him with what she optimistically called a sailor's knot.

She looked like a normal, exceptionally pretty girl of twenty-two, wearing a most attractive print dress and awaiting an aunt who was, if not beloved, at least highly respected. But there was an expression about her mouth that David had come to know. She wore it when she'd outwitted somebody.

Elizabeth Reardon was the biggest woman David had ever seen outside a circus tent. She was accompanied by a

personal maid named Marie, a chauffeur named Anthony and a fox terrier named George.

When Suzan said, "I'm glad to see you, Aunt Elizabeth," she replied, "I've always said you'd grow up to be an accomplished liar." Then she looked at David. "Is this the man you're going to marry?" She implied that if Suzan had been a better specimen she might have expected better luck.

George, the fox terrier, and Aunt Elizabeth had lived together so long that each knew, without consulting the other, what had to be done first. Their first duty was an inspection of the premises.

An awkward moment arose when Aunt Elizabeth came face to face with Baby's rations. As David pointed out later, one look at Aunt Elizabeth should have told them that she'd go straight as a homing pigeon to the source of life. She yanked open the refrigerator door and there reposed what in its most elegant terminology could only be called a hunk of meat.

"What," said Aunt Elizabeth with loathing, "is that?"

Suzan stammered, "Meat."

"For what?" said her aunt.

David jumped into the breach with, "For George."

"George doesn't eat muck like that. Throw it away."

ILLUSTRATED BY  
EARL OLIVER HURST



Under her and George's eagle eyes they chucked it into a garbage receptacle.

Then Aunt Elizabeth unpacked.

The day wore on. It wore on everybody. When Aunt Elizabeth retired at nine o'clock Suzan and David dived quietly out the back door and rummaged for Baby's supper. "Got it," said Suzan finally and inelegantly.

Baby was pathetically glad to see them. Not only had he been feeling the pangs of the inner panther but he'd been lonely. He rolled over on his back and Suzan scratched his stomach. "Cute," Suzan said.

"Very cute," said David at a safe distance.

Suddenly Suzan jumped, listened and came over to clutch his arm, hissing, "What was that?" Baby had pricked up his ears and abandoned his supper momentarily.

What she'd heard was a sniffing sound. It grew in volume. It finally stood in the doorway. It was George, spying as usual.

"Grab him," said Suzan.

"You grab him," said David. "You know him better."

"That's why I won't grab him," Suzan said, dancing agitatedly.

David advanced, saying, "Nice George." George growled.

"He knows better than that," Suzan said, still dancing.

She panted, as they plunged toward the house with George in David's arms. "He must like you. He hasn't growled once since you picked him up."

"He can't," David said bitterly. "His mouth is full of my hand."

They persuaded George to relinquish David's hand and shut him up in Suzan's bedroom.

THE following morning at ten o'clock a great uproar started, made its way down the corridor and turned out to be Aunt Elizabeth rousing the house. She stood in Suzan's doorway and said, "Get up."

Suzan stirred sleepily and sat up. She hadn't had much sleep.

"What's George doing under your bed?"

"Growling the first part of the night and snoring the last," said Suzan.

"Well, get up. Get that young man—what's his name?—David. Get him up, too."

Suzan sighed.

Suzan's devotion to George that day was a thing of beauty. The fact that it awoke in George no answering loyalty proved rather conclusively that he had a nasty character.

Suzan took him into the kitchen and gave him his breakfast with her own hands, standing guard while he ate it. When he went outside for his morning constitutional, Suzan was at his heels. George was all for heading straight toward the tenant cottage but at the risk of life and limb Suzan carried him in the other direction. She did everything but follow him into a hollow tree. After maneuvering him back into the house she sank exhausted upon the divan, her eyes glued upon his hideous form.

George stretched out on the drawing-room threshold and snoozed peacefully, his snores mounting in volume as he drew farther and farther away from a waking world. Suzan began to understand the principle of hypnotism. The object held in front of the eyes needn't be bright. It can be just a dog who is intent upon visiting a panther against your wishes.

David came in and found her, fast asleep, her arm tucked under her head. He joined Aunt Elizabeth in a game of double solitaire in the sunroom.

At three o'clock Suzan started up like a frightened doe. Asleep at the switch. Asleep on sentry duty. George was gone.

Suzan started a systematic search of the house. She ended up in the sunroom gesturing wildly behind her aunt's back, making a pretense of barking and pointing toward the tenant cottage. David stared. "George is such a nice dog," Suzan said desperately.

"Nonsense," Aunt Elizabeth said, without turning, "George is a fiend and you very well know it."

"He's gone for a walk *all by himself*," said Suzan.

"That's because nobody with any sense would go with him," her aunt said.

David said, rising, "Excuse me, I just thought of something."

"Finish the hand," barked Aunt Elizabeth.

Suzan snatched David's cards. "I'll finish it."

She finished it and then she, too, bolted. Aunt Elizabeth could hear her little rubber heels thudding down the front steps at a terrific rate.

slipped a ten into a king space and said, "Where's David?"

"Telephoning a friend," said Suzan.

David's opponent on the telephone was saying, "Yeah, I heard you. You saw a panther. In Connecticut."

"Well, aren't you going to do something about it?"

"You do something about it. You had the fun. Go to bed and sleep it off."

DAVID clutched the instrument desperately and sank his mouth into the transmitter. "I tell you this is a bona fide panther!"

"Listen, I know every species of panther and that isn't one of them."

"He must be having a fight with his friend," said Aunt Elizabeth, slipping a queen into a king space.

The doorbell rang. Suzan went to answer it. Aunt Elizabeth took advantage of her absence to cheat on a large scale. She'd practically run her cards out when

young scoundrel enough money to run the White House—I've changed my will in his favor—and yours, I might add, though why I don't know—and all I asked was a panther. Then he cables me asking if I'm pleased with you. That's the way Mark does things."

"Excuse me," Suzan said faintly.

As she staggered from the room she heard her aunt booming, "I'll get a panther if I have to rob a zoo! Why I should have to pay a stranger to go out and hunt for me when I have a nephew—"

Suzan skidded across the waxed floors of the bedroom and landed at David's feet, saying, "Don't call the zoo! That Mark! He couldn't tell me! Don't call the zoo, David!"

David hung up. "I've called the zoo. It's all fixed."

"Call them back and unfix it. Don't ask questions. Call them back."

"I will not," David said indignantly. "I offered the man two hundred dollars and the panther, if he'd come over. And he's coming, with some helpers."

"You gave him Baby!" she raged. "You gave away my life's happiness, my brother's trust in me, my brother's inheritance—"

"Stop flinging your arms about," said David. "Explain."

Suzan explained but when David called back the zoo somebody said that everybody except himself and the night watchman had gone hunting a panther that was loose.

Suzan drew a deep, determined breath. "Then there's only one hope left. We must find him before they do. Have you any idea how to catch a panther?"

"No," said David simply.

"Start thinking about it," said Suzan. "If those men from the zoo ring the doorbell one of us must answer it and get rid of them."

"How?" David said, but she was already on her way downstairs. He followed.

WHILE they were at dinner there was a loud and insistent pealing of the doorbell.

Suzan drifted from the room and flew down the corridor. Opening the door a crack she slid out, closing it behind her. The man who stood outside was rubbing his chin as though by so doing he could free it of a two days' growth of beard. "You the party that called us about a panther?"

"Oh, no, indeed," said Suzan.

"Man live around here by the name of Melton?"

"Never heard of him," said Suzan.

"I've asked everybody on this road so far."

"Well, there are still five miles of this road. If you're going west, that is. Seven, if you're going east."

He hesitated, looking east. "Better lock up your chickens tonight, lady. There's a panther loose around somewhere."

"Haven't got any chickens," Suzan said, as though she'd just played an ace on his king. She went back to her dinner.

Seeing the expression around her mouth, David knew that she had been successful. He envisioned all the men from the zoo locked in the back of their truck with the ignition torn out.

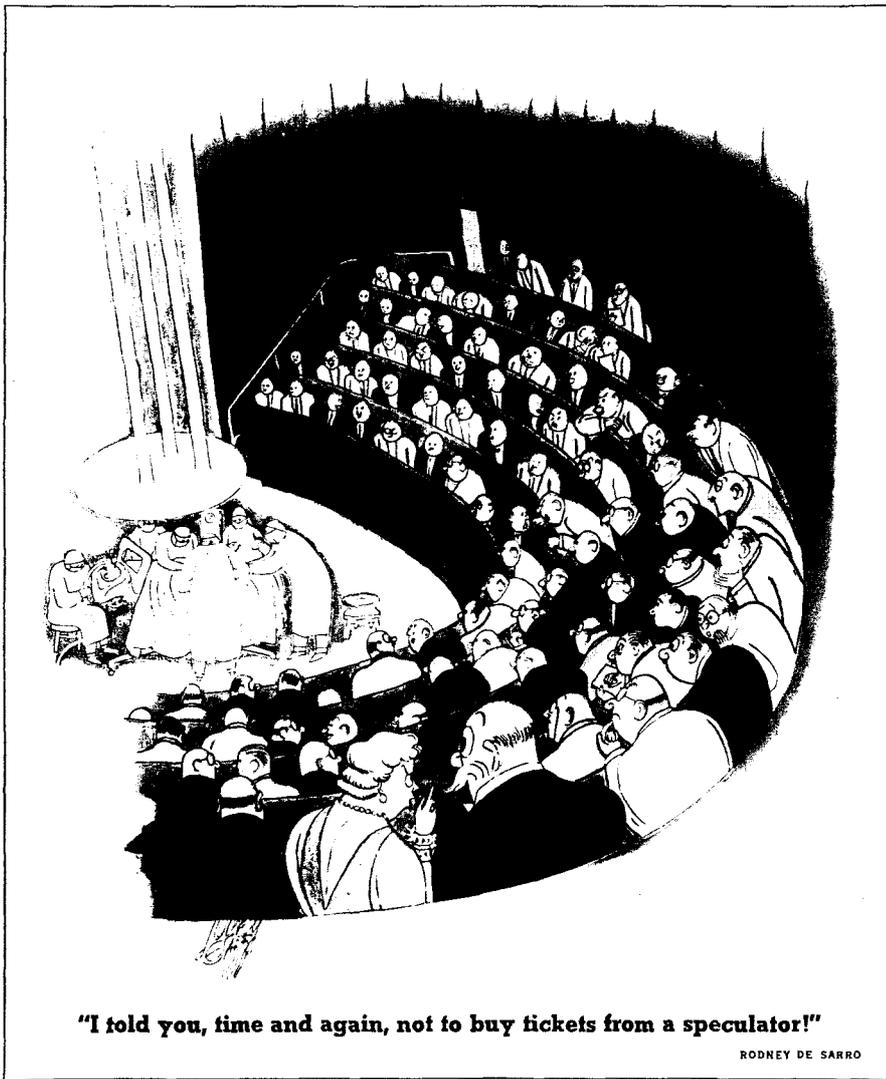
Aunt Elizabeth, as was her custom, retired at nine. Suzan and David crept down the back stairs to confer in the basement. "Now," Suzan said in a hoarse whisper, "we must be methodical about this. Before we act we must think."

"You think," said David. "I'll just sit here and recover from the thinking I was doing at dinner."

"What would be the most logical thing to take on a panther hunt?"

"A bigger panther," David said.

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"I told you, time and again, not to buy tickets from a speculator!"

RODNEY DE SARRO

"Mad," said the old lady. "Balmy, the lot of them." She went on playing.

Suzan lunged around the corner of the tenant cottage. David was sitting on the top step. Suzan stood, quivering like an anguished pointer. "Were you in time?"

"Oh, plenty," said David. He displayed a frayed end of rope.

SUZAN gasped and sank weakly beside him. "What do we do now?"

"I wonder," David said, "how one goes about telling people there's a panther at large without telling how he got at large."

"They j-just say they s-saw a panther."

"We might try it," David said.

Suzan didn't reply.

David made his plan on the way back. "I'll just call a zoo and tell them I've seen a panther. Then they'll come and catch him."

"It's too simple," said Suzan.

Aunt Elizabeth was still engrossed in her solitaire when Suzan came in. She

Suzan returned, flourishing a cablegram.

Aunt Elizabeth opened it, saying, "It's from Mark," and then, sharply, "Don't play until I've read it. It's not fair."

Upstairs, David was saying despairingly, "Let me talk to the man in charge. The man in charge of everything."

Aunt Elizabeth adjusted her spectacles and read in a monotone, "Welcome America are you pleased with Baby Love Mark."

She put the cablegram down and stared at it. "Baby?"

"He means me," Suzan bleated.

"You're no baby," said Aunt Elizabeth, "and he doesn't say a word about my panther. You might know. Mark's always been highly unreliable. Cable him at once and say I want to know whether he's going to keep his promise."

Suzan had risen, disarranging her cards by clutching motions. "Panther?" said Suzan. "Promise?"

"Mark promised me a panther and I mean to get it. I'm not going to have Drusilla Maretti lording it over me any longer with her cheetah. I've given that



PHOTOGRAPHED FOR COLLIER'S BY J. W. MC MANIGAL

**C**LEVER people, those Chinese! When Henry Wallace, our unabashed Secretary of Agriculture, delivered the crop insurance bill now under consideration by a plainly puzzled Congress, it was generally assumed to be another of those highly original ideas that New Deal minds spawn with all the ease of a Columbia River salmon. How can a grower of wheat or corn or cotton be insured against loss? Just another crazy scheme for the waste of millions in taxpayers' money!

As a matter of fact, never was any idea less original, for the Chinese had a plan of crop insurance as far back as 54 B. C. A certain Han Hsuan Ti, ruling at the time, faced an agrarian problem almost as acute as that which has bedeviled American Presidents for the last quarter of a century. When the harvest god blessed China with bumper crops, a surplus depressed prices below the cost of production, ruining the farmer, while in years of drought, prices to the unhappy consumer shot sky-high.

As the Emperor brooded over this very unhappy state of affairs, the doorbell rang and in crawled an elder statesman by the name of Keng Shou-Ch'ang, proudly lugging a thought that he called "The Constantly Normal Granary." As he explained it, the first step was the establishment of a *normal* price for agricultural products based on a year when

crops were just average, neither very good nor very bad.

"So what?" grunted Han Hsuan Ti.

Whereupon Keng Shou-Ch'ang explained that when overproduction glutted the market, dropping prices, the government would purchase all of the surplus grain at the normal price, storing it in granaries built for that purpose. In a year of poor harvests, when prices rose, the process would be reversed, the government releasing its stored reserves at the normal price. The Emperor approved the plan, and when it gave the Celestial Kingdom a happy medium between feast and famine, Keng Shou-Ch'ang was honored with a yellow jacket and peacock feather.

The Incas and the Aztecs also evolved a system somewhat similar to that of the Chinese, storing grain in fat years to take care of the lean, but it was not until several centuries later that the idea reached the United States. In 1922, Henry Wallace, then editing a farm paper in Iowa, ran across the plan in the course of his voracious reading, and began to preach the gospel of the "ever-normal granary," coupling it with crop insurance, a conception of his own. Senator Sheppard of Texas waxed enthusiastic, as did several others in Congress, but eventually the crusade fell flat, for harvests were good and a brisk export trade took care of the surplus.

The passing years, however, worked a tragic change. The three dread D's—depression, drought and dust storms—fell on the land even as Pharaoh's plague, and only a lavish outpouring of government aid saved the farmers of the nation from bankruptcy and despair.

In 1933 alone the government made corn loans in the amount of \$120,000,000 at 45 cents a bushel, an emergency measure that enabled farmers to store their surplus instead of dumping it on a glutted market at 25 cents a bushel. As it happened, production control assured a rising market, and the drought of 1934 gave corn prices an additional boost, but what if there had been no production control, and what if there had been no drought? The government might well have lost seventy-five or a hundred millions, a sum that even Harry Hopkins would not consider "chicken feed."

#### Agriculture, a Hazardous Business

Such loans were obviously a gamble of magnitude, even as seed and feed loans and relief grants constituted a steady drain on the nation's purse. For the ten-year period ending June 30, 1936, by way of illustration, federal expenditures for agricultural relief totaled \$615,937,000. Henry Wallace, no longer a mere editor but now Secretary of Agriculture, viewed these figures dolefully,

and realized that some more permanent solution of the problem than just giving and lending must be discovered. As a result, he bobbed up last September with his old plan for an "ever normal granary" and crop insurance. The idea appealed to President Roosevelt as a "natural," and with his usual enthusiasm, he ordered instant action.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the matter held so many complications that even the New Deal's most confirmed optimists confessed unwillingness to draw up a bill overnight. Agriculture, for one thing, is essentially a hazardous business, due to the handicaps of uncertain weather and uncertain markets. When a farmer plants in the spring he neither knows how good his crop will be nor what he will be able to sell it for. To make matters worse, each region has its own peculiar conditions.

Now the Department of Agriculture has many experts, but when it comes to agricultural economics, one A. G. Black is generally regarded as a wizard. Forage and fertilizers excite him just as a sunset thrilled Tennyson. Borrowed from Iowa State College in 1933 to serve as head of the corn and hog division of the AAA, the eminent doctor stayed on as a sort of all-round authority. Only forty, yet when he bends his bulging brow over a problem, his gray eyes  
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