

LEAP YEAR BRIDE

By LAURA LOU BROOKMAN (Copyright 1932) (By NEA Service Inc.)

BEGIN HERE TODAY Cherry Dixon, pretty 19-year-old daughter of wealthy parents, falls in love with Dan Phillips, newspaper reporter. She quarrels with her father about Dan, leaves home and, taking advantage of Leap Year, asks Dan to marry her.

They are married and for the first time Cherry finds out what it means to lack money. Her struggles with housework are discouraging. Dixie Shannon, a movie critic of the News, is friendly with Cherry. She meets handsome Max Pearson, who also works on the News.

One morning several weeks after her marriage Cherry receives a letter in the morning mail.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXII Cherry did not need to look at the signature of the letter. She had recognized her mother's handwriting. Something slipped her fingers and dropped to the floor as she opened the envelope. A narrow, folded strip of pale blue paper, Cherry picked it up, unfolded it. She read: "Pay to the order of Cash—\$500."

A check from the First National Bank for \$500! Oh, what would Dan say? Five hundred dollars would pay all their bills and leave a balance with which to start a savings account. It would buy the new suit Dan really needed. Five hundred dollars—why it was a fortune.

Cherry turned to the letter. "My dear Cherry," her mother had written. "It has been a long time since I've heard from you and

I have been so worried. Sarah is badly crippled with neuritis and unable to leave the house. I have no means of reaching you except to send this note because of promises I made your father. He is bitter—refuses to have your name mentioned—and the situation is very hard.

"I can not endure the thought that you may be in want, perhaps actually suffering. The enclosed check is to buy anything at all that you may need. Consider it a wedding present if you wish—although I certainly never thought my daughter would be married without either of her parents present and by a justice of the peace! Cherry, darling, the last month has been a terrific strain on me. I can only wait and pray that some time this terrible trouble may be lifted. If only I could know you are well and not in need. Day and night I think about you. May God keep you—Your Loving Mother."

Thoughtfully Cherry studied the check. Five hundred dollars seemed a lot of money now. Two months before it would have been only the price of a few dresses. How had her mother managed to send such a sum? Cherry knew her father scrutinized household accounts, paid all the bills. It must have required scheming and Mrs. Dixon was not the sort to scheme.

"Poor Mother!" Cherry said to herself. "I'll write her and send the letter to Sarah. I don't want her thinking Dan and I are now ertry-stricken, going around in rags."

All at once the figures on the check stared back at her accusingly. Five hundred dollars—FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS!

"You can't take it!" a small voice in the back of her brain was insisting. "You aren't starving or cold or helpless and you can't admit to your mother or anyone else that Dan doesn't make enough to take care of you. You can't accept this money and admit your marriage isn't a success!"

Cherry sank to theavenport.

There were all the things which that money could do for her and Dan. It could hardly have come at a more opportune time—the rent to be paid, Dan's new suit, the money he had borrowed.

"Take it!" a second voice, equally far away, seemed to argue. "Accept it as a wedding present. You wouldn't even have to tell Dan!"

Ah! There it was! She had known all along what was holding her back from accepting the money. She had known Dan would never agree to take money from her parents. Dan was proud and bitter still over things her father had said on the only occasion when the two had met. This \$500 was really her father's money though it was her mother who sent it.

"You can't do it," the first voice argued. "It's your loyalty to Dan that's at stake. You can't do the one thing you know he wouldn't want you to."

Well, there was no use sitting there staring at the check. The breakfast dishes were to be washed and the laundry sent. Cherry had a full day's work ahead. She got to her feet, folded the check and slipped it back into the envelope. Then she placed it in the top drawer of the big chest. She would decide what to do later.

She was waiting, stacked on the shelf that served as a kitchen table. Cherry drew a pan of steaming, sudsy water and began to ply the dish mop.

After the dishes were washed and put away she began energetically to clean the living room. She worked as though getting the room clean were the one important thing in the world. It wasn't of course. No matter how hard Cherry worked it was the check of which she was thinking. Those two persistent voices, the one arguing that she should keep it, the other that she should send it back, continued their duel.

She finished with the living room. She collected the laundry and put it out for the driver. Just before

1 o'clock when she was about to sit down to a frugal lunch Cherry went to the chest and got out her mother's letter.

She took paper and pen and ink and sat down at the table. Five minutes later she folded the check inside the note she had written and sealed them both in an envelope. She addressed it to Mrs. Sarah O'Fallon and finished it with a stamp.

"There!" the girl sighed aloud. "It's settled!"

She was so eager to have the whole thing off her mind that without waiting to eat, she slipped on her hat and coat and walked to the corner post box.

Another week and it would be June. The sky was deep sapphire today, the clouds like down. Sunshine shimmered back from window panes and the white pavement. Cherry walked slowly, enjoying the fresh air.

She had dropped the letter into the box and started back up the street when a noisy police ambulance passed. A minute later Cherry caught her breath. The ambulance had halted in front of her home!

The girl walked faster. The ambulance was backed to the door now. Two men entered the house and a woman came out the door.

Cherry began to run. "What is it?" she asked the man in the driver's seat. "What's happened?"

"Don't know, ma'am. Emergency call."

A group of youngsters, attracted by the noise of the ambulance, formed an inquisitive semi-circle on the sidewalk. Cherry rushed up the steps. The woman by the door was another tenant whom she had seen but never before spoken to.

"What's happened?" the girl asked. "It's Miss Jamieson," the other told her. "She has that little room on the top floor. Took some kind of poison."

"Oh, how horrible!"

"I'll be a mercy if she doesn't live," Cherry's informant continued somberly. "She's been out of work. Haven't paid her rent for three weeks. That's why the janitor happened to go upstairs and knock at her door. Believe me, I know what it's like to be out of work with no friends!"

The door opened and the two women stepped aside. Two men bearing a stretcher came out. There was a figure on the stretcher, entirely covered except for the pale face with its frame of dark hair. The eyes were closed but the face was contorted as though from pain.

Instinctively Cherry drew back. The crowd of watchers on the sidewalk had increased. Cherry wanted to tell them to go away. That poor girl—surely in her suffering she was entitled to privacy! They were taking her to a hospital to try to save her life. Would she live? If the doctors succeeded would she be grateful to them?

"It's—so—terrible," Cherry said brokenly. "Let's go inside."

The other woman followed her. Mr. Bergman, the janitor, stood in the entrance hall. "Well, it's too bad," he said. "It's a bad thing to have happen in an apartment. I hope they won't get a lot of rumors started."

"Do they think she'll get well?" Cherry asked.

Mr. Bergman inclined his head skeptically. "Who knows? She ain't been eating much for a long time I guess. The doctor said she had a chance. That's all. She hasn't looked so well for a couple months."

"Haven't she any friends? Isn't there anyone at all to help her?"

The janitor shook his head. "Not since she's been here," he said. "I've never seen her with anyone. The note she left said there wasn't anyone to notify."

"But it doesn't seem right!" Cherry began.

The other woman put a hand on the girl's arm. "They'll do everything that can be done for her at the hospital," she said. "It's charity comes like this one and rich folks that get the best care. They'll save her if there's any way to do it."

"They were right of course. There was nothing for Cherry to do but go upstairs to her own apartment. Lunch was waiting there but she knew she could not eat."

"This is where you live, isn't it?" the other woman said when they had reached the second floor landing. "You'd better lie down for a while. Look sort of worn out. Would you like me to bring you a cup of tea?"

Cherry thanked her but refused. The woman said she was Mrs. Morrison and lived on the third floor. Cherry promised to come up to see her some afternoon.

The apartment had never seemed such a refuge. Cherry entered, closing the door behind her. The familiar room with its bright colors and comfortable furnishings had never looked so attractive. Oh, why had she and Dan considered themselves poor! They were young. They had health. They had each other.

Throughout the afternoon Cherry was unable to rid herself of the memory of Miss Jamieson's white face. At 4 o'clock she went down stairs to ask the janitor's wife if there had been any report from the hospital.

"If she lives through the night," Mrs. Bergman told her. "they say she'll get well. The poor girl! Yes, it's too bad—too bad—"

There was nothing to be gained for Miss Jamieson or anyone else by standing there and discussing what had happened. Cherry went back to the second floor.

Dinner was ready, waiting to be put on the table when Dan arrived at 8 o'clock. Cherry heard him whistling in the hall and ran to open the door.

"Hello, darling—" she began, but the words died on her lips.

Dan Phillips entered, his face alight with excitement. "Hello, Cherry. Wait till you see what I've got for you!" he exclaimed.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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RALPH WILSON SEES HAPPIER DAYS IN 1933

WELLESLEY, Mass., Sept. 8 (AP)—Ralph D. Wilson, vice president of the Babson statistical organization, sees happier days for the business world in 1933.

"The depression would be over at once," he told the 19th annual national business conference. "If it were possible for us to reduce at one fell swoop the cost of governing ourselves 15 per cent."

He predicted that "business has struck rock bottom" and added "a sharp rise in the commodity and security markets indicates that the worst is over."

"The total volume of business in 1933 should be greater," he said, "than that of 1932. Because the readjustment has been drastic it is not unreasonable to expect the recovery to reach normal by the close of 1934."

Bob Zuppke will be coaching his 20th University of Illinois football team this fall. His record with the Illini includes seven Big Ten championships.

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