

"A Husband"

There's one thing every wife needs and cannot do without - a husband. He's the man of her dreams who pursued her until she caught him. He's her favorite companion; he understands her like nobody else does; he fixes things around the house for her; he keeps her car in top shape; and he cheers her on when she is down. A wife's best friend is her husband. He knows all of her faults and excuses them; he understands her sense of humor and can make her laugh when no one or nothing else can. A husband can flash a smile or a special look across a crowded room and his wife knows he's about to be with the party as she is.

The life-mate of a woman understands and sympathizes even when he doesn't know why she is crying. He knows what she is thinking about when they share that special look. The man she married works hard to make all of her dreams come true. He shares his dreams with her and they come up with new dreams. A husband backs up his wife when she is arguing with the gas company. A woman's spouse supports her in her choices whether they are about her career or what she is going to wear.

When a woman will open it for her. A husband will rearrange the furniture for a wife when she gets tired of the way it has been for a year, or a month. Setting up the tent, carrying the firewood, building the fire, and cleaning the fish are things a husband does when he and his wife go camping with the kids, or without the kids. When the car needs fixing or an oil change, a woman's spouse does it or takes it to have it done. A husband takes out the garbage. Of course, a husband carves the turkey at the holiday table.

A husband is what every wife needs and cannot do without. A husband makes a woman a wife, but not every woman wants to be a wife.

"A Husband"

There's one thing every woman can do without - a husband. A husband can be the man of a woman's dreams and can turn into the specter of her nightmares. A husband is a woman's most boring companion; he doesn't understand her: he messes up her clean house; he takes her car apart when she has a hair appointment; and he makes her cry when she has just put her make-up on to go to work.

A woman needs a friend when she has a husband. Her husband knows all of her faults and tells her about them, even the ones she doesn't have. Her best friend knows how to improve their faults, and only when a woman wants to talk about them. A husband never understands his wife's sense of humor and he laughs at things she knows are not funny. A husband can make a woman cry at the most inconvenient times and never understands why she cries when she is reading a novel or watching a sad movie. Yet, he expects her to understand why he is angry and shouting at the television set when someone takes a ball from someone in a different colored jersey. A wife can be having a good time at a party and she is expected to leave just as soon as her husband gives her that certain look.

The so called life-mate of a woman expects her to fix a rip in his jeans when she has a thousand other things to do. He complains when she rearranges the furniture so that his favorite chair is not directly in front of the television set. When a woman is looking forward to a vacation in a luxury hotel on the beach, her husband announces they are going to spend their vacation camping in the mountains with his best friend and his family. Of course, his best friend has a wife that the woman can't stand and the worst three kids that were ever born. A husband uses his wife's dish towels to wipe the dip-stick when he checks the oil in his pick-up and never checks the oil in his wife's car. A woman's spouse never takes out the garbage, but complains that he smells a rotten banana and always says the turkey is tough in front of all of their guests.

A husband is what every woman can do without. A husband can make a woman the happiest person in the world when she is feeling down when he takes her in his arms, kisses the tip of her nose, and tells her he loves his beautiful wife. Every woman wants that once in awhile.

by Becky Bontrager

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"Solon Springs, Summer 1926"

Billy Charbonneau, Marion Bell, Marion Dudley, and I went exploring that day in the hills surrounding Solon Springs, the small town on the north shore of Lake St. Croix, in northern Wisconsin. If there is such a phenomenon as perfect weather we had it: a cloudless sky, no breeze, plenty of Spring flowers blooming along the path as we trudged higher into the hills. Below, the lake shimmered in the sunlight and a meadow lark sent its cheery message out for all the world to hear. A halcyon day for anyone's memory.

When we came into the high meadow, we uttered a collective gasp. Acres of daisies, grown to full height, stretched out before us. We were enveloped in a beauty that enriched our souls. Over the 60 years since that day, I still experience a feeling of joy, remembering each little facet of the ambiance there in the meadow, the bouquet overlooking the sunlit waters of the lake.

We paired off as we explored, Billy with blonde Marion Bell, and I with lovely, dark-haired, brown-eyed, Marion Dudley.

Soon my Marion and I could not see the others. I realized they were lying among the daisies, doing God-knows-what. Billy was younger than I, but quite aggressive. I was very shy, comfortable only with girls I had known for some time. Marion and her family came to Solon Springs from Madison every summer. Their cottage was next to the Charbonneaus where I had spent about a month each summer since age five. Now fifteen, I counted Marion Dudley as a friend for 10 years.

So it was that we found ourselves on our backs looking at the sky, speaking in low voices as though we were in church. The dome of blue above us invited conversation, short sentences that were really only comments, not at all weighty in content, but very suitable for the occasion. The lark offered some trills. Marion connected the sounds with a piano piece she was working on. I heard an upper octave embellishment from one of Liszt's rhapsodies I was struggling with.

There we were in a loving situation making small talk about our mutual love, music. My hand brushed Marion's and she grasped it, squeezing. I felt a marvelous wave of emotion sweep over me. I wanted to kiss her then and there, but my innate shyness, I suppose, froze me. I must have transmitted a message by tightening my grasp on her hand. My eyes were closed as they usually were when I became emotional.

They opened to the shifting movement as Marion rose on her elbow, leaned down and kissed me tenderly on the lips. My eyes closed again like valves to contain the feeling of pleasure that swept over me. No other kiss in all my life to that moment affected me as did that one. I tingled all over. I was immobile. What do I do

now? I laid there while Marion cuddled and caressed me. She told me she liked me a lot and I murmured responses. Incoherently, I am sure.

After a while, we heard Billy and his Marion approach. My Marion and I stood up and greeted them. All four of us would have appeared flushed and flustered to a casual observer. Knowing glances passed between the girls. The secret of our good spirits brought laughter to our little gathering and we decided it was time to start for home.

by Joseph Patrick Lee

