

LEAP YEAR BRIDE

by Laura Lou BROOKMAN

CHAPTER X

CHERRY crossed the room and gave the window shade a tug. Bright morning sunshine was a fine sight, but too much of it was as bad as none. It blazed you. She tossed her head back, shaking the tangled mass of dark hair into the big chair, leaned back and surveyed the room.

She made an amusing picture. Puffed about her and tied securely at the waist was Dan Phillips' old dressing gown. A strange purple-blue and black patterned robe. It was many sizes too large. Cherry rolled the sleeves back, but the slender arms reached almost to the elbow. Dainty lace trimmed the edges. She showed where the dressing gown fell away. Her buckled pumps were tiny and narrow, her hose of the palest mesh.

Suddenly she jumped up and went to the dressing table. A sheet of paper lay there, a few words scrawled on it in pencil. Cherry picked up the paper and read:

"Cherry—I love you. Be ready to have lunch with me."

"I'll call some time after 12—Dan."

She had read the words at least a dozen times. At first it had been a surprise to realize that never before had she seen Dan's handwriting. That was odd, and still it wasn't. There were so many things Cherry had yet to learn about this young husband of hers.

Her husband! The girl's smile became a dreamy sort of radiance. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and stared, fascinated.

Was that what love did to you? She remembered she had been yesterday. The worn-out dressing gown caught her eye and suddenly the smile became a rippling laugh. Of course she was a different person. She was Mrs. Daniel Phillips!

"Oh, I'm so happy!" Cherry sang aloud. "I'm so happy!" She whirled in a dashing pirouette and flung herself upon the bed.

Back among the home Cherry had started the day with fruit, hot rolls and steaming coffee. Usually they were brought to her bedside on a tray. Sarah would be there to pour the coffee and ask if everything was as it should be. Sarah would bring a quilted satin breakfast coat and slip it about the girl's shoulders to keep her warm while she ate.

Sarah, bless her! Where was she and what was she doing now? What were Cherry's mother and father thinking of the night before? Were the servants whispering and wondering what had happened? Did others outside the house know about it?

For an instant the girl felt a pang of guilt. Her mother would be worrying. Crying perhaps at this very moment. Cherry loved her mother. She loved her father, too—she was not running out orders or frightening her. Perhaps she would write a note.

Cherry's chin raised and set in a firm line. No indeed! If she wrote that morning she would imagine she was forgiving. She could not do it.

The dainty platinum watch on the girls wrist reminded her. It was almost 10:30. There would be an hour and a half at least before Dan telephoned.

Another note for her mental memorandum: she would have to buy some cleaning.

With the polo coat pulled about her and the brown hat drawn down nearly Cherry set forth. Downstairs the hotel lobby, with its chandeliers still burning, looked exactly as it had the night before. A clerk she had not seen stood at the desk. Very self-consciously Cherry approached and left her room key.

She went out into the sunshine. The air was cool, bracing, but with that indefinable quality that never leaves you but a day of spring can leave you. Cherry breathed deeply, wondering why all the world was not out to enjoy the glorious morning.

She made her way to a restaurant where she and Dan had gone the night before. At the corner she stopped and bought a newspaper. She wanted to know what help her father had never read a want ad, but she understood vaguely that people who had apartments to rent advertised there.

An apple-cheeked waitress in a neat yellow uniform smiled at Cherry and presented the menu.

"Orange juice, coffee and toast," the girl ordered. She spread the newspaper to its full size and

glanced at the first page hastily. A headline caught her eye.

MISS DIXON BRIDE OF NEWSPAPER REPORTER

It was only a paragraph. The brief report stated that Miss Cherry Dixon, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Dixon of Starwood Heights, and Daniel Phillips, reporter for the Wellington News, had been married the night before by Justice of the Peace Cunningham. The paragraph listed the schools Cherry had attended, adding that she was a popular member of the younger social set. Another sentence stated that Dan was on the News editorial staff and previously had been employed by the Sentinel.

Cherry was flushed and her eyes bright as she read the last words. So everyone knew! Her father and mother must have seen that paragraph. Well, they would understand now that she had meant what she said!

Lost in these thoughts Cherry scarcely noticed when the waitress returned with her order. She remembered presently, drank the orange juice and coffee and nibbled at the toast. Then she paid her bill and departed.

She went directly to the hotel, anxious to hear from Dan. It seemed a long while before the telephone rang and his voice came over the wire.

"Hello. That you, Cherry?"

"Yes, Dan. I've been waiting for you."

"How are you, baby? Sorry I couldn't give you a ring earlier, but I've been chasing all over town. Listen, dear, we'll have to call off that lunch date."

"Oh, Dan!"

"It's bum luck, but there's no way out of it. I'm packed out here at the airport and there's no telling when we'll get away. Those two girl flyers were due half an hour ago and we'll have to wait till they and or word comes they're down. It wasn't supposed to be any excitement, but Groves is tied up at City Hall."

"But can't you—"

"I can't do anything but stay here. Dan assured her, "I hate to disappoint you, honey, but I can't help myself. Try to be some way to amuse yourself and we'll make up for it with a bang-up dinner party tonight. Is that all right?"

She made up her mind to go shopping instead. There was less than \$10 to her purse, but all her life Cherry had made purchases on charge accounts. Besides she simply had to have a dress. If she went to Madison Madeline she knew they would be glad to open an account for her.

She picked up purse and gloves and started for the door. On the way down in the elevator car Cherry revised her plans. She remembered Madison Madeline was expensive.

No, she would go to Stanley's, the big department store. Miss Lacey in the French room was always so pleasant and helpful.

Miss Lacey was equal to the emergency. She greeted Cherry effusively. Yes, she had seen the announcement of the marriage in the newspaper and thought it was romantic! An elopement of course. And what could she show the little bride today?

Cherry had set out intending to be economical. A practical woolen day dress was what she wanted. Something becoming of course, but not fancy. Miss Lacey, beaming, whisked away to return with a frock of glowing spring green over her arm. Feather-weight to touch. Exactly right in size. The price was \$35.

"I'm afraid," mumbled Cherry, "that's a little more than I wanted to pay."

Miss Lacey's brow lifted slightly. She said quickly that of course she had less expensive models. If Mrs. Phillips was interested in picking up a really remarkable bargain there was a little blue novelty mixture—

When Cherry departed almost an hour later not only the blue novelty mixture but a printed silk frock and half a dozen dainty garments of flesh silk were being packed into a box to be delivered to the Bismark.

The bill totaled \$83.70.

She stopped at a drug store to buy perfumed soap and a jar of the face cream she always used at home. Four dollars and fifty cents on the cashier's check. Back in the hotel Cherry undressed, bathed and hurriedly made herself ready for dinner.

It was after five when she heard a quick rap at the door. Cherry rushed forward, opening.

But it was not Dan Phillips at the other side of the door.

(To Be Continued)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

Gone But Not Forgotten

By HAROLD GRAY



TIM TYLER'S FLYING LUCK

By LYMAN YOUNG



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

Sol

By MARTIN



BRINGING UP FATHER

By GEORGE McMANUS



THIMBLE THEATRE

Starring POPEYE

NOW SHOWING—"SHE KNOWS NOT HER OWN STRENGTH"

TOMORROW—"NON-SHATTERABLE GLASS"

By E. C. Segar



OUT OUR WAY

By WILLIAMS OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By AHERN



— THIS CURIOUS WORLD —

