

# SERIAL STORY BRIDE ON A BUDGET

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CHAPTER IX

It was a memorable honeymoon, but then, few honeymoons are ever ordinary or humdrum. Only to Bart, it looked so.

They drove 200 miles that first day and put up at a smart resort hotel. There was an orchestra playing to a crowded dance floor of smartly garbed resorters. Bart was momentarily glad he was in to Iris' insistence that they wear the white sharkskin suit and sport shoes. Every woman wore evening clothes, and men wore smart sports outfits. There were flowers, too, while Iris pointed out that the girl present had a corsage, when the tray came around, and she bought gardenias, knowing she wanted nothing else on her wedding day. And a honeymoon party, closely linked to the wedding day, however delayed it might be, as well do it right," he said, handing her the corsage. Iris looked at it with a dimpled smile. Her ivory damask dress contrasted beautifully with the deep, rich red of the gardenias. She had achieved through the Beauty Salon, supplemented with such swimming and actual exercise with summer sun as had managed Sundays, evenings and holidays. And her new dress was exotic. It made Iris feel ever had. That, and the platinum rinse she had had to get her blond hair.

"This is fun, hm, Bart? Aren't you glad you came now, darling? Not slaving in that pokey old office all these months?"

Bart nodded. And dispelled a momentary anxiety lest disaster befall his precious store during the absence.

"In the morning, Iris wanted to go golf. Not because she was slaving in that pokey old office all these months?"

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body's attention.

They rented clubs, and hired a caddy, until Iris saw the pro. Then there was nothing to it. She had to have a few lessons. She was terrible. Her slice was something out of a mail order catalog, and her approach was awful. The pro was 28, Latin, dark and handsome. He was also cynical, and hard pushed for money.

Bart paid, watching with seething frustration. He didn't like golf. He considered it silly, a waste of time. Besides, it was hard work. And why pay out good hard earned money to work away at something you didn't like?

"You go on back to the clubhouse, darling," Iris said several times. "If you don't want to watch. Mr. Hess can help me."

Bart stayed. Grimly, he stayed until the golf lessons were over. He disliked Mike Hess on principle alone, and he did not care for golf. Still as Iris pointed out later, what was a honeymoon, or a vacation either for that matter, if you couldn't do any of the things you wanted to do?

"All my life, darling, I've wanted to try a few golf lessons and see what I could do with my game. Don't be an old stick-in-the-mud. All the girls at home, do. Marcia Trent and Judy Gallagher and Mary Pearce. They took lessons from the Country Club pro, and they're frightfully expensive. I'd never dream of taking any, if they were that extravagant."

Thinking of the \$10 thrown to the far winds, Bart was silent. Perhaps Iris was right. Perhaps he didn't understand.

But at the beach, when they went out to swim and sun-bathe, Iris was by far the loveliest lady present. Her thick, powder blue wool suit, and brief little terry cloth cape, and the bright blue cap she tugged down sung over her platinum hair, snapping a narrow strap under her soft little chin, had half the smart resort beach watching her.

It made Bart so proud, so enormously proud of his bride. Of knowing she was his wife, not just his girl. That this was their honeymoon.

They lay on the sand, sun-bathing and watching a lifeguard do stunts dives off the spring-board. Watching Iris turned away after a while and sighed. She was an excellent swimmer, but had never learned anything spectacular in diving.

"Want to try some of that stuff, honey?"

Iris stared at him, startled. She swallowed carefully and sifted a slender handful of hot white sand over his lean wrist.

"You're kidding, Bart."

"Kidding nothing; you'd have them falling off the sand, at Avalon Beach, back home, honey. And you could do that flip. You're quick at picking up things like that."

"Bart, darling, didn't you see the sign on the lifeguard stand? It says lessons, instruction by the hour, or to suit your purse. Diving extra."

"Sure, I know, honey. Go ahead."

"Bart, he's just the same as a pro, don't you see? You'll have to pay him to teach me." She didn't add, "and you'll hate that; you always hate paying for anything unless it's absolute necessity." She was too enthralled over the prospect of actually learning how to do one of those graceful, man on the flying trapeze tricks dives. Absolutely no one at home knew how to do them. Not even Buddy Sylvestor, who was a perfect seal, and could do almost anything in, on, or under water.

"Come on, honey. I'll bet you'll wow 'em when we get back."

They spent \$25 for diving lessons, and the pro was a peach. Married himself, he confided. The little woman was there with him. She worked in the main dining room, and bossed five girls. He gave Bart a reduced rate because they were honeymooners, and because Bart's friendly interest moved him.

"The wife would love to meet you folks, I'm sure," he told them, when the lessons were over. Iris managed to execute an imperfect, but nonetheless fairly authentic single-jack-knife dive.

"You're good, Mrs. Whitaker; you could be a pro. Only it's a cinch you won't ever have to worry about working."

Iris explained to Bart, in their room, while they changed to normal clothes again.

"Just a lifeguard, married to a waitress, Bart. Nobody you could afford to cultivate."

Secretly, Bart was disappointed. He liked the ex-college boy, turned lifeguard to eke out a summer's existence. He liked the idea of the girl bossing five girls in the dining room so she could be near her husband. He thought they were swell. He said so.

"What's wrong with people like that, Iris? They're swell. And if there were more folks like Bingham and his wife, there'd be less dizzy finance in this world. People with both feet down solid on earth like that, earning their own way and not going beyond their means."

"Bart, couldn't you leave your finance and adding machines behind until we finish our honeymoon, please?"

"Sorry," he said gruffly. But he wasn't. He was a trifle mad.

That night, while Iris dressed for the moonlight dance, he went down ahead of her, and hunted Bingham up, offering him a smoke. They sat on the running board of a sports car and smoked and talked. Bart learned that Ted Bingham was an engineer—that is, he had his degree and was waiting for an assignment, and Dotty, his wife, was a singer, with five years at the Conservatory of Music behind her.

"She wants to make grand opera but if we wangle a radio spot for her, we'll be pretty tickled," Ted explained.

Bart left him with genuine regret. He liked him more than any of the fellows they palled around with at home; John Trent, or Horace Negley, or Don Hammond. He liked him for a realism, a simple, direct honesty that he saw less and less of, around him at home.

The way Bingham surveyed his scuffed crepe sole oxfords and said, "Gosh, have I got to buy another pair of shoes pretty quick, or be on my feet again?" The contrast to the simple statement made to the light sophisticated veneer over everything his friends at home said or did.

"Darn," Negley had said, spilling cafe au lait down his new seersucker suit front, "my favorite Saturday night pants, too." As if he had a dozen at home; as if any one pair of trousers were even half paid for, on time.

"I'm glad," that was Yolanda Negley, laughing shrilly, "I hated that cheap cloth. Ho, I told you it would look awful on you. Seersucker is for flat, thin men. Like Bart."

"Where were you, Bart?" Iris asked, when he returned to get her, 10 minutes late. "Whatever kept you so long?"

"I forgot to lock the car," Bart said gravely. Knowing he'd be censured petulantly for cavorting even conversationally with life-guards. Ex-college halfback, cub engineer lifeguards. Iris didn't approve.

(To Be Continued)

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