

The FLAPPER WIFE

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CHAPTER I

IT WAS the last night of Gloria's girlhood. Tomorrow would be her wedding day!

She stood looking down at the white satin dress spread out on her bed. It had been worn by two other brides, her grandmother and, later, her own mother.

"But I certainly don't intend to have the kind of life they had!" Gloria shook her bobbed head at the white walls of her room.

Her dead grandmother, whose work-worn hands had raised ten children.

"Ten children! Think of it . . . Gloria shuddered.

"Not for me!" she said aloud. "Not if I know myself!"

Of course, Dick might want children. He probably would. Most men did want them. Why not, since they had none of the bother and pain of having them?

They could go on living their lives while the wives lost sleep and freshness caring for the children.

They could rush about, doing as they pleased. For their women were safe at home, chained to the cradle. . . . No, she was not going to have babies! Not even one!

So that was that!

Then Gloria's thoughts flew downstairs to the sitting room. She knew her mother was there in the old rocker, mending stockings. She was always mending. And still the basket was always full. It held an endless job.

Poor Mother! How hard she worked!

There was nothing for her but housework and her family, year after year. Ye gods, what a life!

... A woman was either a slave or a doll.

But if she was a slave, it was her own fault. And that's all there was to it.

Gloria had made up her mind that she was through with hard work, forever, last week when she had said goodby to her typewriter and her job.

Here Are Hero And Heroine of Flapper Story



Gloria Gordon

Dick Gregory

anyway," Dick replied in a stage whisper. "Look here, I want to kiss you. . . . I've been thinking about you all evening during that dogged bachelor dinner . . ."

With a bang, Gloria shut the window, and went back to bed.

She lay there waiting for the sound of Dick's rooster. But there was no sound anywhere except the lone, soughing of a train in the distance.

At last she got up and looked out of the window. Dick hadn't moved. He was still waiting for his kiss.

Gloria opened the window.

"Why in the world don't you go home?" she asked crossly.

Dick didn't answer at once. He stood twirling his hat in his hands.

"Oh, have a heart, Gloria," he said finally. "Come on down to the front door for just a minute. . . . I must kiss you, dear! Think, it's our wedding day!"

Gloria hesitated. After all, where was the harm in one little kiss in the dead of night? In another twelve hours they would be man and wife.

"All right, I'll be right down," she whispered.

She put on her bathrobe and thrust her bare feet into slippers. She tiptoed out into the hall.

Halfway down the stairs she paused.

"This was not the thing to do!" She was making herself sheep . . . "easy." The way to hold a man was to keep him guessing. To kiss him so seldom that love-making would never lose its tang and flavor.

A man was a born hunter. He loved the chase. As soon as he got what he wanted he was off at top speed for something else, for somebody else!

Well, she would keep Dick running after her! She would never go to him as she was going now! Never!

last look at the house he had built for her.

What a boy he was!

At twenty, she was more worldly-wise than Dick, in spite of his thirty years and his reputation as a lawyer.

He was like wax in her hands. She could make him utterly miserable by refusing him a kiss. And when she was tender he would willingly go through fire and water for her! He said so.

When she did kiss him, she was never thrilled by it. What excited her was the power that kiss gave her over him!

Yes, Dick was mad about her. He would give her anything she asked for. And she was not going to be slow in asking for the things she wanted. . . . leisure, love and luxury. But above all, luxury!

Gloria's first thought the next morning was "This is my wedding day."

Her second was "This is the last morning I shall have to wake up in this dingy old room, thank goodness!"

She hated everything in it, from the battered brass bed to the imitation ivory toilet set.

By tomorrow morning she would be the wife of a man who could buy her the finest things. . . . a toilet set of silver, perfumes, lay handkerchiefs, chiffon stockings too thin ever to be mended!

She had made up her mind that her honeymoon would be a shopping trip. . . . With Dick to pay the bills!

"Sweetheart," Dick had said, "let's honeymoon in some quiet place where we can be alone." But she had laughed him to scorn.

"Don't you know you can be lonelier in a big city than anywhere else in the world, silly?" she had asked.

"I've decided on Montreal. It's romantic, but it's full of lovely shops and restaurants. And we shall stop at the Ritz. . . . and be very smart and Ritz!"

Dick had laughed. And she had her way.

So when a certain train rolled across the country that November night, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gregory were on it. Their drawing room was packed with brides' roses.

"You're like a rose, yourself, my little Gloria! All mine at last!" Dick murmured. His arms held her close. His eager lips pressed down hungrily

She turned and ran back to her room.

"Dick!" she called softly from the window. He came out from the shadow of the porch.

"Darling, I'm not coming down," Gloria said. "I just can't. It wouldn't be right. You shouldn't have asked me to do such a horrid thing!"

Without answering, Dick crossed the lawn and started his car.

Gloria lay in bed listening to the sound of it. She heard it for a long time, and she knew that Dick had gone out on the avenue, to take one

upon hers that were so smooth and cool.

CHAPTER II

HER honeymoon was the most wonderful time of Gloria's . . .

She slept the morning breakfasted elegantly at . . .

In the afternoon she hired a fiacre to take the steep road to Mount Royal, or out into the country.

They ate in quaint little French restaurants.

And Gloria shopped!

She bought beads and earrings and more than a dozen bottles of French perfume, while Dick stayed in the hotel reading.

Gloria had never known anyone who read so much as he.

"For a rising young lawyer, you're quite a night-brow, it seems to me," she said one morning.

She was lying back in a long chair while the hotel hair-dresser unrolled her reddish gold hair. She laughed almost scornfully.

Dick made no answer. He sat down and picked up a book, only to put it down. He filled his pipe and laid it unlighted, on the dresser.

"Come here, restless soul. I want to talk to you," Gloria held out to him a slim hand. "Do you know, it's awfully cold out doors? I nearly be the wife of a man who could buy me a fur coat. I need a coat. I'll like a fur one. I've been looking at one in that little shop down the street . . ."

Her voice trailed off. The hair-dresser had finished her work and was putting her iron and brushes away in a little black bag. Gloria paid her.

The moment the door had closed behind her, Dick came across the room. He put his hands under Gloria's elbows, holding her away from him.

"Look here, please don't have people hanging round here all the time," he said. "You're beautiful enough without having your hair curled every time the wind blows. I want you alone, all to myself . . ."

With sudden passion he pulled her to him, and kissed her eyelids, her mouth, the little hollow of her throat.

"Wonderful! Beautiful!" he said. His voice was choked and queer.

Gloria could feel the beating of his heart against her own, and the quivering of his hands.

With one of her own she pushed him away from her. She smoothed down her ruffled hair.

"Do you think you can afford the coat?" It's four hundred dollars. . . . the one I want, dear," he said coolly. "It's a jacket of Siberian squirrel."

She faced her fingers at back of his neck, and held her face up to his.

"Say you'll get it for me," she said.

Without a word Dick nodded and turned away. He picked up his pipe and his book.

"I'm going down to the men's lounge for a while," he said shortly.

"I'll meet you at the elevator at two. We'll hunt up a new place for lunch, shall we?" . . .

And so it happened that the new Mrs. Richard Gregory came home from her honeymoon wearing a costly fur coat, fragrant with scent. . . . first night with Dick's father and mother in the old homestead.

"Roly-poly pudding," said Dick when Maggie, the maid, brought in the dessert. "I'll bet mother made it just for me."

"She certainly did," answered old Mr. Gregory. Mrs. Gregory beamed at Gloria.

"Dick sometimes has nervous indigestion, as you probably know, my dear," she said in her rich contralto voice. "and when he has an attack, I always cook everything for him myself . . . very carefully. You undoubtedly will, too."

"I can't cook," Gloria said in a very small voice. "I can't cook at all."

Mother Gregory frowned. Then her wide brow cleared.

"You will learn," she smiled comfortably. "You will learn."

And Gloria smiled back with her ripe lips. But there was no smile in her amber eyes. They were like pools of water that no sunlight has warmed.

She would never learn to cook! She would never be a household drudge, her hands shrivelled with washing dishes. Her nails broken,

"I must kiss you, dear! Think, it's our wedding day." "Darling, I'm not coming down," she said softly. "You shouldn't have asked me to do such a horrid thing."

If Dick's mother thought this was the kind of girl her son had married, she was jolly well mistaken!

Gloria widened her eyes. She turned to Mother Gregory.

"By the way, I'll need a cook right away," she said sweetly. "I wonder if Maggie would know of anyone who wants a place. If Dick has a weak stomach, my efforts at cooking would kill him, most likely."

After dinner she and Dick walked home to the new house. It was white with green shutters, and it nestled among the evergreens that surrounded it. Everything in it was fresh and new. Dick and she had spent happy months buying furniture for it.

"I say, Gloria, I wonder if we can afford a cook," Dick began the first of what Gloria later called his "economy sermons."

They had just come out on the little porch. The house with its Chinese rugs and yellow silk curtains was a dream. A dream come true!

"Afford a cook? Why, of course, we can afford a cook," she said.

It was absurd that a successful lawyer couldn't afford a cook for his wife!

"I'm not so sure," Dick said. He set their bags on the floor and dropped into a chair.

"You see, dearest," he went on, "the furniture isn't quite paid for. And our honeymoon cost a thousand dollars to the four winds. Then, there was the fur coat I gave you . . ."

"Well, for goodness sake, what did you want to get married for, if you couldn't afford to keep up a home?" Gloria asked with sudden fury. She was tired, and she was sure that Dick's mother hated her.

"Your mother thinks that I ought to spend my whole life cooking, so you think so, too. Well, I'm not going to do it. . . . You hear? I'm not going to do all the color out of my cheeks standing over a red-hot stove for hours and days and years . . ."

Then she burst into wild sobbing and ran upstairs.

She threw herself on the bed in their room, and waited for Dick to come to her. He forgave her, and to tell her she could have a cook.

But he didn't come. She listened. No step on the stairs.

Then Gloria began to laugh. Not as she had ever laughed before in all her life, but with great gasps that shook her from head to foot.

And as she laughed tears rolled down her face.

All at once she was aware of Dick standing at the foot of the bed. He had a big pitcher in his hands. Then she felt the sting of ice-water in her face!

It choked and blinded her. But she went on laughing and crying. She tried to stop. She couldn't stop! Presently she heard the loud rattle of Dick's rooster under her windows . . .

And the next thing she knew it was broad daylight. She lay in her own bed, very tired and hungry.

"What's happened?" she asked herself. For she felt blue and unhappy as if something dreadful were hanging over her. Then she remembered last night.

"Dick!" Gloria called. "Oh, Dick!"

Immediately he appeared in the doorway. His face was covered with water, and he held a shaving brush.

"Dick Gregory, who did you throw that water into my face last night?" that water into my face last night?" Gloria asked. Dick grinned.

"Because I thought you had hysterics, and I guessed right," he cheerfully answered. "I went out and got Doc Seymour, and he gave you some pills to put you to sleep, or you'd probably be crying yet . . . or laughing. I'll admit that the laughing got my goat."

"Well, don't you ever dare to throw one drop of water at me ever again, no matter what I do," Gloria said solemnly. "or I'll walk right out of this house and never come back. Do you understand?"

Instantly he was beside her bed holding her close, stroking her perfumed hair.

"Darling, I was a brute to do it, but I'd always heard that ice water was a sure cure for hysterics . . ."

Dick stopped talking and put a

finger to his lips in warning. From the stairway came the tinkle of dishes and the aromatic smell of fresh coffee.

Maggie, Mother Gregory's maid, walked into the room carrying a huge tray.

"Here she is! The world's best cook!" Dick said with a flourish. "Mother has promised to lend Maggie to us for a few weeks, until you get your bearings, Gloria."

"Indeed, I wanted to come, Mr. Dick," Maggie said heartily.

"I phoned Mother last night that you were ill, and Maggie came over first thing this morning," Dick explained when the door had closed upon Maggie's broad back. "And she sent word that you were not to worry about her. She says she can get along beautifully, alone, for a few weeks."

It had not occurred to Gloria to worry about Dick's mother in a maid's house. She seemed so large and capable . . . so adequate to any of the small worries of life.

There was breakfast for two on the big tray . . . chilled grapefruit, shirred eggs, and coffee with thick cream.

Gloria beamed at Dick over the rim of her cup. Her eyes were soft as a child's once more.

"Darling, I was dreadful last night, wasn't I? Tell me I don't deserve such a duck of a husband," she cooed. She patted Dick's big hand. She was yielding and adorable now that she actually had a cook in the house.

For she had had her own way, as she always had since the day she was born!

"I'm afraid my Gloria is a spoiled child," Dick said, but his voice was deep with love.

"Next time she has a tantrum I'm going downtown and play poker all night with the boys," he finished.

Gloria gave a gasp of surprise. This from Dick!

"Just try staying out nights!" she cried. "Just you try to pull anything like that on me! Do you know what I'll do?"

(To be continued Saturday, May 16, and daily thereafter)

Bridge Work on Highway Speeded

HARRISBURG, May 11.—(Special)—Bridge work here is progressing rapidly with full crews busy on both the east and west banks. False work is almost completed clear across the river. This replaces the trestling washed out by the sudden flood waters of late October. Since beginning the work this year over 1000 feet of trestle has been built and one pier put down. In another week excavating for the two remaining piers will be begun. No date has yet been set for completion of the entire structure. It is said the gravel plant constructed at the west ferry approach by the paving company will be ready for operations next Monday. Truck haulers are arriving and getting their outfits into condition.

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