



Honeymoon Mountain

By Frances Shelley Wees

CHAPTER VIII—Continued

"And the reason it was awkward," Tubby said evenly, "was because she wasn't just one of the gang, and you knew perfectly well that she expected to marry you in the end. Didn't you?"

"I didn't ask her to."

"Don't quibble."

"I never told her I was in love with her. I wasn't in love with her. I've never kissed Pilar in my life." He looked down at the note. "It's a very kind note, under the circumstances," he said. "She might perfectly well have written it to me. I don't see why she didn't."

"That note," Tubby said deliberately, "is about as innocent and kind as a stick of dynamite with a fuse burning."

"Oh, don't be a fool, Tubby. What's got into you, anyway? You used to like her. You said she was a good sport, and a lot of other things. You and she were great pals."

"Mhm," Tubby agreed. "So we were. So we were. But why? That's what I found out when you pulled your little stunt. She didn't care two pins about me. The only reason she ever spread herself about me was because she thought it might make it easier for her to get you. See? And that night when I went to tell her that you were married, I caught her off her guard. Never again. I wouldn't go near her with a suit of boilerplate on."

Bryn folded the note and put it back on the table.

"And now," Tubby said, watching him, "she knows where you are."

"And what of it?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Go on mooning, old hophead."

Bryn took out his case and lit a cigarette.

"Say, Bryn," Tubby said at last, "did you hear what Madeline said to me tonight?"

"What did she say?"

"Well, nothing much," Tubby answered, embarrassed. "It was the way she said it. You know, Madeline's a darn nice girl. I never really thought much about it before, sort of took her for granted, you know. But she's a peach."

Bryn got up leisurely and went to the door. He opened it. Bryn moved across the hall and tapped at Madeline's door. Tubby sat up, stiff with horror.

"Madeline," Bryn called through the keyhole.

"Mhm?"

"Madeline, Tubby says he likes you."

"Oh," Madeline said, and obviously sat up in bed. "How much?" she inquired after a moment.

Bryn turned. "How much, Tubby?"

"Bryn, if you aren't the damndest fool!"

"How much?" Bryn said inexorably.

Tubby's dimple wavered in and out wildly. "I said I thought she was a darn nice girl," he muttered. "You crazy idiot."

"Madeline, he says he thinks you are a darn nice girl."

"Well," Madeline said with a bounce of the springs, "that isn't anything to get up and get dressed over. Good-night."

Feeling better, Bryn pulled Tubby's door shut with a last pleasant smile, and sauntered down the hall.

"Deborah," he said softly, without knocking.

She was awake. Her voice came, low and clear, on the instant. "Yes? Has anything . . . happened?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to say . . . pleasant dreams . . . and good-night."

For an instant she did not answer. Then, "Good-night, Bryn."

"Good-night, darling," he replied, and went quickly across the room to his own door.

CHAPTER IX

THE breakfast table was spread on the small terrace at the side of the house, where Bryn and Deborah had eaten their first breakfast together. There were six places laid, but Sally was still upstairs, sleeping, as Simon explained, like a dormouse; and Bryn had not yet returned from his early errand to the farm down the road. Deborah, in freshly starched blue gingham, sat erect on her chair behind the silver coffee pot, and poured out a third cup for Tubby. Beside her, Madeline sat quiet, gazing dreamily out through the trunks of the tall pines.

"Well," Simon sighed, "I wonder if today will be the big day."

"Oh, probably not," Tubby said comfortably. "I give him until about Thursday noon."

"It doesn't make any difference when he comes, does it?" Madeline inquired. "The sooner he comes,

the sooner it will be settled. I wish he'd come now and get it over with."

As she spoke, Bryn pushed open the dining room door and came out to the terrace. He put a hand on Simon's shoulder, tweaked Tubby's hair, let his eyes rest on Deborah's lowered eyelashes, and spoke to Madeline. "Who, me?"

"No, Graham."

"He'll come," Bryn said cheerfully, and pulled up his chair. "And there's one sure thing, he won't get past Joe. I left Joe on a box high up on the seat of a wagon box, where he can see the road coming up the mountain for about two miles. He's got the wagon pulled under a shady tree, and he's got an old pair of spy-glasses, and the horn."

Bryn finished his breakfast, and he and Tubby and Simon left the table. They were going, Tubby informed the two girls, to inspect the dungeons and see that the chains were in good order.

When they were gone, Madeline put out her hand and patted Deborah's lightly. "Deborah," she said after a moment, "would you do something for me?"

"Of course."

"It's about Tubby. I don't know what to think." She looked up. "With any other man in the world, I'd just exercise my feminine charm and . . . wait. But that isn't safe with Tubby. Tubby isn't exactly shy, but he doesn't have any idea that he's so attractive that anybody might want to marry him. It's one thing I like about him, his absolute lack of conceit."

Deborah considered. "Tubby wouldn't marry just anybody," she said comfortably.

"I don't mean just anybody. But I can think of half a dozen girls in our own crowd who could make quite a dent in him, Deborah, if they set about doing it. And, of course, there's one in particular."

"Pilar?"

"Pilar."

"What's she like?" Deborah asked curiously. "I never knew any girls but you and Sally, and I understand you two pretty well. Isn't she like us, this Pilar?"

"Not in a hundred years, Innocence. Not in a thousand years. She's one of these hot-headed stamping beauties. Pilar has those huge flashing black eyes, and smooth black hair . . . she slicks it back and pins a red rose in it, you know . . . and she makes her mouth very red and doesn't use rouge on her cheeks. And she's tall and graceful and buys wonderful clothes, the kind other people can't get by with."

"Is she very beautiful, Madeline?"

"Very. Almost as beautiful as you, honey, only quite, quite different."

"Have she and Tubby known each other long?"

"Years and years."

"Then . . . surely you needn't worry, Madeline. He would have married her long ago if he'd been going to, wouldn't he?"

Madeline hesitated. "No," she said finally. "Something new has just occurred in Pilar's life. She wouldn't have married him until now."

A cold finger touched Deborah's heart; but the touch was so light that it was gone in an instant, and she had forgotten it.

"What can I do, Madeline?" Madeline brought her gaze back from the distant eastern horizon. "Tubby likes me," she said. "I know he likes me. We get along beautifully together. If I were sure he didn't love Pilar I'd just simply set about making him love me."

"But could I find out about Pilar? Is that what you want me to do?"

"I thought you might ask Bryn. Bryn knows. Bryn knows everything about Tubby, just as Tubby knows everything about Bryn. And then you could tell me."

Deborah looked up. "Do you really love him, Madeline?" she asked.

Madeline smiled, a slow smile. Her eyes were tender. "Yes, honey. Really."

"Well, then," Deborah said with a sigh. "I'll see what I can do, Madeline."

It was only an hour or two later when she saw her chance. Tubby was sitting alone on a stump down by the brook, whittling industriously at a willow stick, trying to make himself a whistle. Deborah went down the path and perched herself on a mossy log in front of him.

"Do you like it up here, Tubby?"

"I think it's great. I'm crazy about it."

"Don't you miss all the excitement in the city, and all the rest of your friends?"

"Not a twinge of missing do I get."

"All the things you do sound very exciting. I mean, all of you, of course. Madeline and Sally have been telling me a little, about places, and people. Yesterday they told me about Pilar. I think she sounds fascinating."

Tubby looked up. "Pilar?" he said incredulously.

"She sounds marvelous. So tall and beautiful. Even her name is lovely, isn't it? Pilar."

"Do you mean to say those women told you about Pilar?"

"Yes. Why not? I was awfully interested."

"Well," he said with a heavy sigh, "women are the funniest things in captivity. I should think that would have been the last name they would have mentioned. And, if somehow you had heard about Pilar, I should have thought she'd be the last person you'd be happy about. I never would have dared open my mouth about her, but then, who am I? Just a mere man."

"I don't see why you feel that way," Deborah said, but her smile began now to feel a little stiff and queer. "There isn't any reason why I shouldn't want to hear about Pilar, is there, or wouldn't like her?"

Tubby was silent for a moment. Then, "I suppose not," he said slowly. "Not under the circumstances. After all, everything went spang right by the board for you, didn't it? And you know it. So why should you worry about Pilar or anybody else?"

Deborah tore a little piece of green velvet moss off the log, and spread it on the back of her hand. So Tubby didn't know, either. Tubby thought that Bryn had fallen in love with her in Mr. Holworthy's office. Tubby didn't know everything about Bryn, after all. Suddenly Deborah thought she understood why Bryn had told all these

people the same story, the story about falling in love with her. It was to save his own self-respect. He didn't want any of them to know that he had just found a new and interesting way to earn money. Oh, that wasn't fair. That wasn't like Bryn. And, last night . . .

"From the sound of Pilar," she said at last, "I couldn't blame anybody for thinking she was wonderful."

"I suppose she does sound all right," Tubby said dubiously. "But she's no good, Deborah. I'm warning you, in case she ever comes near you. But what's been handed to her is hard to take, and it isn't agreeing with her very well."

"Did you hear somebody calling?" Deborah said suddenly. "It sounded like Grandmother. Excuse me, Tubby," and she got up and ran swiftly up the path to the house. Grandmother was not calling. But Deborah knew she couldn't bear to stay with Tubby another second. Her heart felt as if it was breaking. She went up the stairs to her own room, and shut the door behind her.

The girl he loved . . . she would be Pilar. Beautiful Pilar, with her black eyes and her black hair and her red mouth. They all thought Bryn had given her up, forgotten her, for Deborah. That was what they had to think. They couldn't possibly understand, when they didn't know the truth; when they didn't know why Bryn had married

And his tenderness toward her? His hand over hers, sitting there in the twilight? What was that, then? Deborah got up and went into her bedroom. She stood before her mirror, and lifted her eyes to the girl in the glass. The faded gingham dress, the braided hair . . . she looked like some forlorn little orphan youngster who needed some one to love her. Bryn was kind. He was sorry for her. The feeling he had for her was . . . pity.

She pressed her lips together firmly to stop their trembling. She went into her bathroom and bathed her eyes in cold water.

And, just at that moment, she heard the sound of Joe's horn, far down the mountain. Three long blasts and two short ones . . . a pause . . . three long notes and two short ones. Deborah's heart sprang up into her throat. She tore open her door and raced down the stairs to Grandmother and Madeline, out on the veranda. At the foot of the stairs she caught the sound of Madeline's voice, going steadily on with "Shadows on the Rock." Deborah stopped at the sound of that calm voice, and

steadied herself. Then, chin up, she walked out serenely and smiled at Grandmother. She dropped down on the step, and sat there, waiting.

A low humming sound made itself felt on the air. It rose to a whine . . . the shining top of a motor car appeared sliding along outside the wall. It slowed abruptly, and swung in toward the gates. Gary started down the drive.

"It looks as if we had guests," Grandmother said, interrupting Madeline. "I wonder who it can be?"

"It's probably another plumber," Madeline said languidly.

Madeline reached the gates. He opened them, and passed through. But then, after a moment's colloquy with the driver of the car, whom Deborah could not see, he came back to the gates again, and swung them wide; and the long blue car jolted a little and came on through. Deborah put a slow hand to her throat.

But it was not Stuart Graham driving; it was a woman . . . a girl . . . in a bright red silk beret, and a red jacket. Gary plodded along behind the car, after he had shut the gates and locked them. The car came slowly up the drive, and stopped opposite the end of the veranda. The girl got out, and Deborah knew her. She was tall and very slim, with a long oval face and a very red mouth. Her eyes were black, and sleepy, like a cat's, with slow black lashes drooping over them. Deborah rose, and found Madeline at her side. They went down the steps.

"It's Pilar," Madeline said under her breath, and Deborah nodded.

"Ah, Madeline!" Pilar said, in a voice that made a tune. She moved forward, and let her hand rest lightly on Madeline's elbow, holding her, as she looked down at Deborah. "And this," she went on caressingly, "this will be little Deborah. My child, you are adorable."

"Thank you," Deborah said sweetly, and put out her hand in welcome. "I am so glad you have come. I am sure you must be Pilar. I have heard so much about you."

Pilar looked a little startled, but she lost not a whit of her poise. She looked at Madeline. "And aren't you glad to see me, too, Madeline?"

"Oh, rather," Madeline said coolly, and turned back toward the veranda.

"We must take you to Grandmother," Deborah explained, as Pilar's eyes lifted to the delicate old face turned toward her.

"Lovely," Pilar said, in an audible whisper. "Oh, lovely."

"Grandmother," Deborah murmured, "this is Miss D'Avillo. She is another friend of Sally's and Madeline's."

"I'm so happy to welcome you, my dear," Grandmother said warmly. "Oh, thank you," Pilar murmured, and held Grandmother's hand quite unnecessarily long. She straightened.

Simon and Tubby and Bryn, all silent, came around the end of the veranda. Bryn's face, as he glanced at Deborah, was very queer and stiff; Tubby was white. Simon looked detached, as usual, but his eyes went at once to Pilar. And she stood there, for a moment, beside Grandmother, beside Deborah. She put her hand lightly on Deborah's shoulder, before she moved, and Bryn looked at them together, so, Pilar beautiful and sophisticated and perfect down to the last gleaming finger-nail shining in the sun. Deborah small and insignificant in her faded gingham.

Pilar smiled. She went forward and held out both hands. "My dear Bryn," she said affectionately. "But how well you look, and how happy! Allow me to congratulate you; I think she is the loveliest thing I have ever seen."

Grandmother looked up swiftly at Deborah; and Deborah, calm now, with something cold and frozen where her heart had begun some short time ago to ache, smiled gently and contentedly back.

The rain, which had threatened for twenty-four hours, came at last on Tuesday night. Deborah lay awake and listened to the soft steady fall on the balcony floor outside her bedroom window. She found herself wishing ardently that it might rain hard and long, so that the road might be impassable to Stuart Graham, so that nothing further should break in upon the peace and loveliness of the summer days. But that was a useless wish, she knew. The peace and loveliness were already gone.

Pilar was very beautiful, but the most troubling thing about her was the so obvious fact that she belonged to Bryn's world, his real world, that she was part of his own life and always had been, and not just a chance passerby whose path had happened to meet his and for a time followed along close beside it. Madeline and Sally and Simon and Tubby were out of Bryn's life, too, but somehow before Pilar came, Deborah hadn't realized what a different life it was from her own, how far away and impossible. Pilar was very kind, and she did her best to draw Deborah into the conversations, and always stopped carefully to explain anything that she thought would be unfamiliar or strange to Deborah. In a way that Sally and Madeline never had thought of doing. But Pilar's very kindness and thoughtfulness seemed to emphasize Deborah's unfamiliarity with the world, Bryn's world and its customs.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Uncommon Sense

By JOHN BLAKE

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Make up your mind that you will have more or less trouble as you journey through this world. You will meet with many disappointments. People whom you trusted may turn out to be "bad actors." If they are, drop them from your acquaintanceship.

But don't under any circumstances begin to believe that you are misused, that there are conspiracies against you, or that you are not getting a "square deal."

Sometimes you won't get a "square deal." That may be no fault of yours. But don't worry about it. Drop the acquaintanceship of people who have proved themselves to be mean and tricky, and choose friends that you can trust.

There are plenty of these. Don't think for a moment that everybody is trying to get the best of you, that your boss is "exploiting" you, or that you haven't any chance to get ahead.

Your chances of getting ahead will be just about what you deserve. Today you, like everybody else, have plenty of opportunity to educate yourself.

But to do that it will be necessary to work, and to work hard. You will find people who will seek

to crowd you out and get ahead of you. You will come into contact with unscrupulous "office politicians."

But that kind of people always work themselves out of jobs before long, for they are so busy with their little venomous plans that they will have no time to win any sort of success.

Don't work on the principle that this is an ideal world, and that everybody gets an even break. It is not that kind of a world. But its sordidness and selfishness are overrated.

Work out your own plans, and stick to them. Pay no more attention to a rascally office mate who is trying to "tunnel" you out of a job than you would to a tree root that tripped you up when you were taking an afternoon walk.

Be helpful and considerate to other people. If they repay you with backbiting,

THE CHEERFUL CHERUB

I feel so sorry for a flag Alone upon a building tall That twists itself around its pole And never gets to wave at all.



drop them, and find people who are a better sort. Enough of these exist in your neck of the woods to help make life very pleasant for you.

Above all, do not whine. Take things as you find them. Use them for your own good. Take care of your health and your disposition.

And in the end you will find that you have been more or less the architect of your own fortune, and that you deserved the kind that you got.

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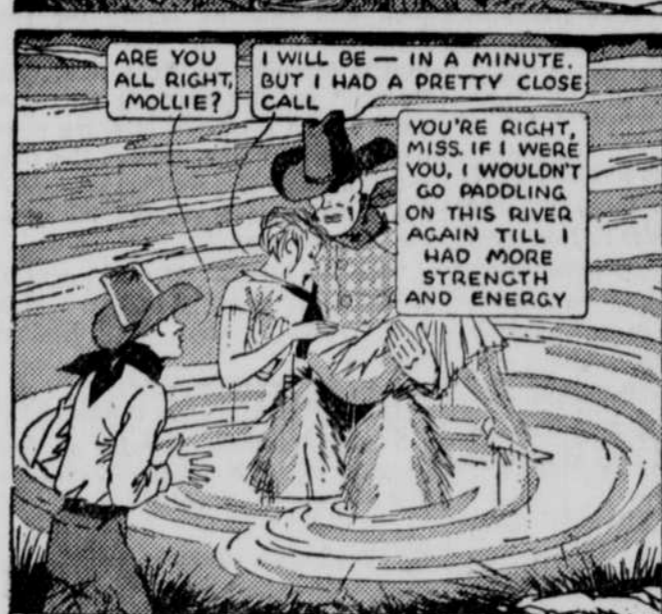
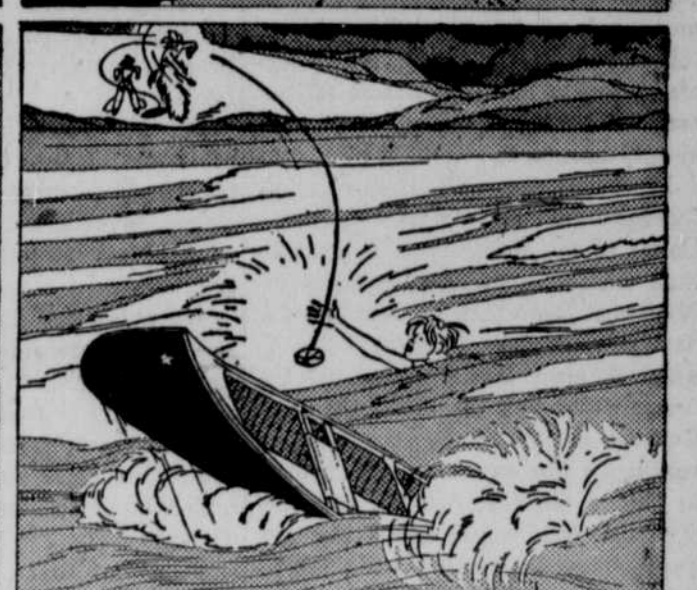
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