



Honeymoon Mountain

By Frances Shelley Wees

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SYNOPSIS

Bryn (James Brynildson III), a tall bronzed young man of wealth, and his chum, Tubby Forbes, are discussing Bryn's coming marriage. Tubby believes it a scheme to get Bryn's wealth from him. Should the girl, Deborah, whom Bryn had met at the office of his attorney, Ted Holworthy, marry Stuart Graham before her twenty-first birthday, she will inherit a vast fortune from her grandfather. Stuart had greatly displeased Deborah, who refuses to marry him. Bryn, posing as an unemployed engineer, offers to marry Deborah, as Stuart, for \$50,000, they not to live as man and wife. Twenty-three years previous, Anne Larned had eloped with an adventurer on the day set for her wedding to Courtney Graham. Two days after the birth of her daughter, Anne died. Shortly after, the father died. The Larneds, grandparents, took the child with them to Oregon where, without child companions, Deborah grew up. To safeguard her from some fortune hunter, her grandfather had arranged for her to marry Stuart, son of Courtney Graham, when of age. When Deborah was fifteen, her grandfather died. Securities had been set aside to keep the family, but a market crash left scarcely enough for them to live on. This was unknown to Deborah's grandmother, an invalid, Gary, servant, managing the finances. At twenty, the thought of marriage greatly frightened Deborah, Tubby and Bryn await Deborah in a hotel in Frisco. Over a period of one year the groom is to prove he is no fortune hunter and can make Deborah happy to the satisfaction of her grandmother. Otherwise, the fortune is to go to charity. The will is somewhat ambiguous as to whom Deborah is to marry. The girl arrives with Holworthy, Tubby is surprised to find her charming and sweet. The wedding over, the couple arrives at the home of Deborah's grandmother. The grandmother and Bryn, who she believes to be Stuart, take to one another, which somewhat displeases Deborah, who foresees difficulty when they are to separate after a year. Deborah remonstrates with Bryn for his familiarity and insincerity. Bryn declares he is sincere. Deborah believes Bryn has a sweetheart waiting for him. Grandmother plans improvements far beyond their means. Bryn's offer to borrow the money from Holworthy is accepted. Bryn takes Grandmother shopping.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Now," he said, with a foot on the running board, "how would you like to come out and stroll down the street, Grandmother? Nothing shall happen to you. I promise."

She looked up, her eyes sparkling. "I . . . I don't think I would be afraid, Stuart," she said haltingly.

Bryn came to a sudden decision. He took her hand lightly in its black glove. "Will you do me a tremendous favor?"

"Certainly, my boy."

"Do you mind calling me by the name I've always been called? If you can believe it, almost nobody has ever used the name Stuart. Could you bring yourself to call me Bryn? It's what my friends say, and I scarcely know myself by 'Stuart.'"

"It's very strange," she said thoughtfully. "I don't understand why you're called Bryn. But I don't mind using it. As a matter of fact . . . 'Bryn, Bryn,'" she repeated. "You know, my boy, it suits you, somehow."

"Thank you, Grandmother. You know how it is. When you aren't accustomed to a name . . ."

He opened the door wider, and waited. She gave a little fluttering breath and emerged slowly from her long retreat.

Both together they saw the hat in the window. It was a small window of a tiny millinery shop at the end of the street.

On a pedestal in the center was one hat, a molded toque of gray velvet the exact shade of Grandmother's hair. Bryn felt her hand move on his arm. He looked at the hat, and then down at her face. He turned, slowly, without a word, and they went into the little shop.

"The hat in the window, please," she said. The girl put the soft gray toque on the silvered hair. Grandmother, startled, looked at herself in the glass, and then turned to Bryn. Her eyes were deep blue and shining; her cheeks were pink.

"We will take it," he told her, and handed her a bill.

"And now," he said happily, "now let's go shopping."

Grandmother was a little intoxicated. She made no protests whatever. She clung tightly to his arm and followed where he led, and Bryn enjoyed himself thoroughly. He bought her a long soft gray woollen coat. He took her to a florist's and bought her a bunch of purple, scented violets to pin on the new coat. He bought her five pairs of gray gloves and a gray suede purse to match. Grandmother, by the time they were through, was twenty years younger.

They proceeded down the street toward the car. "I've got one o-

two more things to buy," he declared, and went into a confectioner's. Grandmother accompanied him and stood waiting.

"I want," he told the proprietor, "a very nice box of chocolates and a pound of your best tobacco and a good pipe."

The proprietor knew what was meant. The articles were selected and paid for. He placed Grandmother carefully in the seat and got in himself.

On the sidewalk in front of the car a small boy in clean faded blue overalls came slowly along with a very small dog on the end of a leash. The dog shone like silk in the late afternoon sun. It sniffed the sidewalk happily.

The boy's eye caught Bryn. He called out. "You don't want to buy a good dog, do you, mister? This here one's for sale. Two dollars."

"What is it, a cocker spaniel?" Bryn inquired, regarding the floppy ears, the water-waved coat, the thumping tail.

"Yessir, a real cocker. Ain't that a pretty color?"

"What's the matter with it?"

"Well," the boy told him, dropping his voice, "it's a lady dog. And," confidentially, "you know what they're like."

"Oh. A lady dog. What's her name?"

"Garbo." The boy grinned. "Just take a look at her." He made a little clucking noise with his tongue. Instantly the dog sat up, paws crossed limply before her, mouth closed, silky ears drooping, her eyes sad and mournful and pleading. Bryn looked. He began to laugh, silently.

"Well," Bryn decided, "she's sold. Here's your money."

CHAPTER V

BRYN, on the morning after his trip to town with Grandmother, paused in his systematic and careful examination of the grounds, leaned against a tree down at the lower corner, lit a cigarette, and considered.

He was remembering Deborah's face when they had returned yesterday, he and Grandmother. White and cold, she had met them in the doorway and led Grandmother into the small sitting room to rest for a moment before removing her new coat and hat. Deborah was no longer angry. While they were away she had obviously come to some agreement with herself; Bryn decided, as she smiled faintly and took the box of chocolates, as she put it down without a glance upon the small table beside her, that he preferred her angry. He had swung on his heel, leaving her there with Grandmother, and gone out to Gary. Gary stood in the drive, his parcel laid on the grass, watching the puppy rolling over and over, wild with excitement, and yelping with joy at her release from the car.

"Perhaps you'll tell Miss Deborah that the puppy is for her," Bryn said curtly, and went back up to his room.

But the puppy wasn't having any difficulty in penetrating these frosty layers and discovering the real Deborah. From his window yesterday afternoon Bryn had witnessed their first meeting. Deborah had come out to Gary, and at her appearance the puppy had rushed upon her with a ferocious threatening growl which ended precipitately as the little dog fell over her own feet and tumbled in a heap before Deborah's. Instantly, unquestioning as a child, she had bent to lift it in her arms. "Oh, Gary," she cried, "isn't it a darling? Isn't it a darling puppy?"

She hugged it close, and it snuggled for a moment comfortably under her chin. Then it put out a pink tongue and kissed Deborah entirely without reserve.

"You're a bad dog," she scolded, but her voice was soft and laughing and tender. Bryn drew a deep breath. When she spoke to him her voice wasn't like that. "Where did it come from, Gary?"

"She's for you, Miss Deborah. Mr. Bryn brought her out from town."

"Oh," Deborah said. "Of course, I might have known." But she did not drop the puppy. She stood silent, thinking.

"Now look, Miss Deborah," Gary began, "I don't think he means any harm, after all. He's only acting natural."

"Oh, hush!" Deborah cried stormily, stamping her foot. She held the puppy close and ran off with her, back of the house, down to some hidden nook of her own which always seemed to be her chosen place of refuge.

That had been yesterday.

Bryn went down and got into the car, standing on the drive. He

draw from his pocket the worn piece of paper which . . . was it only yesterday morning? . . . had caused Deborah such woe.

His eyes traveled down the list on the paper in his hand. Magazines, catalogues, tea, servants. Gardeners, yes. The bank manager was sending them out as soon as he could find them.

Gary came out to him.

"I must say," he said to Bryn, "you got a way of getting things done. And . . . I'd like to thank you for that tobacco, sir."

"I suppose the electric light situation is next," Bryn said, unheeding. "Well, I think I can fix that myself. Several years of engineering ought to prove of some value. Lead on, Gary."

There was, as Bryn had suspected, nothing seriously wrong with the engine of the electric plant. He opened the cocks to drain out all the old oil, cleaned the connections, and made a note of the few parts it would be necessary to replace. Before the motor was started, he decided, it would be wise to inspect the connections at the house.

"Where's there a ladder?" he asked.

"Out on the edge of the orchard," Gary told him. "But you better be careful of it. It isn't as good as it might be."

Bryn went out behind the house and followed with his eye the line of the electric wires as they crossed the trees and the brook. He went out to the orchard, lifted the ladder lying half-hidden in the grass, carried it back and propped it up against the wall of the house, beneath the place where the wires entered. Trying each rung cautiously, he went up the ladder.

As he reached the top he turned half-around as he took the pliers from his pocket, and was just in time to see Deborah emerge from her retreat down near the bridge.

There was a sudden ominous cracking which Bryn scarcely heard; he was listening for Deborah's footstep on the path beside him, wondering whether to look down and smile or to continue absorbedly with his work. He was spared the necessity of making a choice; for, a moment after the unheeded warning, the rung upon which he was standing collapsed into splinters, and Bryn fell neatly through. He heard Deborah scream; the puppy barked furiously; and then he dropped into oblivion.

He awoke, a few moments later, with something cold dashing across his forehead, and the sound of Deborah's voice saying in a whisper, "More, Gary, get more, quick!" The sound of footsteps. Bryn lay motionless, collecting himself. He was not hurt. He knew he was not hurt. The grass was thick here, and he had broken his fall; his head had probably been whacked just hard enough to put him out for a minute or two. He did not open his eyes. Deborah was beside him. She put her hand on his forehead, lifted the wet hair back from his brow.

She bent over him. "Don't die," she whispered like a breath. "Don't die, please don't die."

He moved his head faintly, and lifted his hand. He would find hers . . . with his wedding ring on it . . . he would hold it firmly, and tell her . . . her little white hand . . . he groped for it.

Something soft and light fell on his cheek, a delicate gentle touch.



"I'm Sorry You Fell and Hurt Yourself."

He caught his breath and held it. The touch came again, gentle, on his cheek, at the side of his mouth. He threw off his pretense of weakness, put his hand up quickly, opened his eyes, his heart thumping; and found himself clutching with both hands the puppy, nosing him in an anxiety of curiosity. Deborah was gone.

He got up with the puppy under his arm and strolled grimly around the corner, to meet Gary, wild-eyed, approaching with a brimming dipper of water.

"You aren't hurt, sir?" Gary gasped breathlessly. "Aren't you hurt?"

"Not a scratch," Bryn replied. "Sorry to frighten you."

"Well, that is good," Gary said with heartfelt emotion. "I got a terrible fright. And Miss Deborah was coming to the house and saw you fall. She . . ." he stopped.

"She what?" Bryn asked calmly.

"She's crying."

Evening came on. Dinner

was served in the dining room, brighter now with a host of tall tapers. Grandmother was happy to-night, gay and light hearted. When dinner was over she wanted to go for a little stroll.

It was a glorious night. The moon had already risen, and hung, a huge silver lamp, just over the top of the lowest hill. The sky was deep blue. Grandmother leaned on Bryn's arm; Deborah was on her other side.

They came back to the front porch at last, but Grandmother did not stop. She did not seem to notice their awkward silence. She walked to the corner of the house, and there, gently, she withdrew from between them and tucked Deborah's arm in Bryn's.

"There, my darlings," she said, with the ghost of a laugh. "Walk together down the path beside the brook. It's a perfect night for lovers. I am going in now. Good night!" and before Deborah's hand could stop her, she was gone.

"Very nice night," Bryn said formally.

"Yes," Deborah agreed after a moment.

She glanced up at him in the moonlight, but his face was cool and unmoved. Wordless, she followed his lead, walking quietly beside him. They went slowly down along the brook.

They were almost at the end of the path. He had not spoken. She lifted her head. "I'm . . . I'm sorry you fell and hurt yourself," she said in that delicious low voice with the tiny break.

"I didn't hurt myself," Bryn said calmly. "Sorry to cause a commotion."

They reached the end of the path. Bryn turned. Deborah hesitated, but, after a second, turned beside him. Half-way to the house she hesitated. "It was . . . kind of you to remember tobacco for Gary," she said. "I didn't realize why he wasn't smoking."

Bryn did not reply.

Almost back at the house, she spoke again. Her voice held a hint of desperation. "It . . . it is a lovely night, isn't it?" she said.

"I think it's a little chilly," Bryn replied. "Do you suppose your grandmother thinks we've been out long enough now?"

She stopped and looked up at him. And as he looked down at her, she turned away with a little droop in her shoulders, and left him.

Deborah stood against the stone railing of the balcony, surveying the changes taking place in her little world, and was thoroughly miserable. Everyone seemed to be in a conspiracy against her. Day by day, slowly but inexorably, all that reminded her of the old peaceful happy life was being removed, and nobody seemed to realize or care that she was being left alone in a vacuum. Even Grandmother didn't care. Grandmother was very happy; her cheeks grew pinker every day, her appetite had improved. Grandmother, of course, thought that Deborah was happy too. It hadn't occurred to her that this dream of hers which had come true had never been Deborah's dream.

Yes, Bryn was making Grandmother happy; but that was frightening. Because, at the end of the year . . .

Deborah fell to wondering what Bryn's own girl was like. She would be beautiful, of course, and probably tall and queenly, instead of little and childish. It was difficult to understand what her circumstances were that she would allow him to make money for her in such a strange way. If she were wealthy, surely they would have been married whether he had money or not. If she were poor, one would think that she would have been willing to marry him and share his difficult times with him. There must be something about her that Deborah didn't understand.

Deborah moved suddenly from the balcony railing and went inside her own pretty bedroom; and there she flung herself on the bed and cried miserably into the silver and violet spread.

After a long time she sat up and dried her eyes. There wasn't anything to cry about. What if they had laughed at her? She would never see the girl, and the girl would never see her. As for the man, they were as distant from each other as any two people could possibly be, who had to act at intervals an affectionate little comedy. The other night she had tried, it was true, to be friendly. He had been cold and unresponsive, and she hated him for it. But it was better for him to be so. Far better. There wasn't anything between them but the relation of an employer to a servant; he had said so himself. That was the way he wanted it to be.

She got down from the bed and tiptoed to the door. No one was about, she knew that. The maids had been here for two days, and the cook as well, but they were all down in the living room with Gary, putting it in order.

Deborah went through the back door and down the path to her old playhouse.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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SMILES

Stir-n Truth
Jack—Poor Bill! He swallowed a teaspoon.
Harry—Is he sick in bed?
Jack—Yes, he can't stir.—Washington Post.

Just So-So
"Well, Thomas, how are you?"
"I be better than I was, sir, but I ain't as well as I was before I was as bad as I am now."—Tilt-Bits Magazine.

No Sooner Said
George—I'd like, the best in the world, Kitty, to marry you; but I don't know how to propose.
Kitty—That's all right, George. You've finished with me; now go to father.



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Rules of Life

THE longer I live the more I feel the importance of adhering strictly to the rules which I have laid down for myself in such matters:

1. To hear as little as possible what is to the prejudice of others.
2. To believe nothing of the kind till I am absolutely forced to it.
3. Never to drink in the spirit of one who circulates an ill report.
4. Always to moderate, as far as I can, the unkindness which is expressed towards others.
5. Always to believe that, if the other side were heard, a very different account would be given of the matter.—Charles Simeon.

And No Fooling
Seagling—May I have the last dance with you?
Girl—Big boy, you just had it.—U. S. S. West Virginia Mountaineer.

On High, Too
"Hi, miss! I reckon you took that corner at 60 miles an hour."
"Really, officer. Good old me!"

The Same Boat
"She seemed like a sensible girl."
"Yes, she wouldn't pay any attention to me, either."

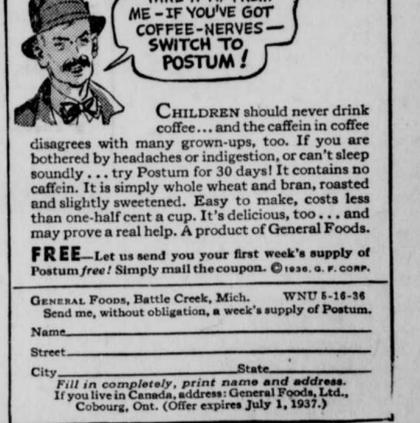
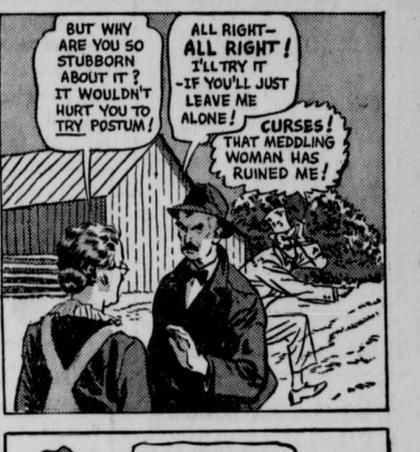
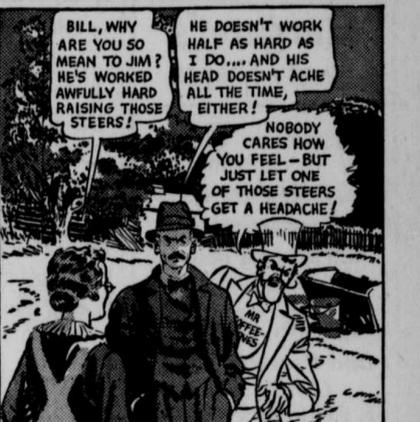
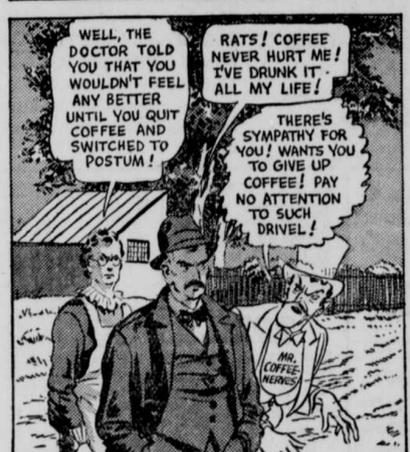
Perhaps
Q.—Why does a puss purr?
A.—For an obvious puss-purr.—Washington Post.

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