



Chapter One: A New Year's Kiss

Jack arrived just in time for New Year's Eve. The second I saw him walking through the door, grinning and out of breath, I knew this year would be different. He was home. And soon, I would be his wife.

We spent the evening surrounded by laughter, glasses clinking, and a few quiet glances between us. The world felt like it paused just for us to exist in it.

The next morning, I dragged him—yes, practically by the collar—to confession. It was like pulling teeth, but we made it through. Then off to communion, and afterward, we spent the day practicing. Not just for the wedding, but for life. We practiced love. We practiced laughter. We practiced the art of not taking ourselves too seriously.

I couldn't sleep that night. Jack might not be able to wake up at 6:00, but I knew I would. I was going to be a bride.

Chapter Two: Wedding Bells and Train Whistles

The air was crisp, my veil fluttered in the wind, and my heart nearly leapt from my chest. “Here comes the bride” played gently as I walked down the aisle, eyes locked on Jack. He looked so proud—nervous, yes, but proud.

Everyone came to the wedding – Eleanor, Mac, Justina, Emma, Dot, and Bus – it meant so much to us both. After the reception and tearful hugs, we climbed into our car and headed to Omaha.

We caught the Steam Lines train, rode all night, and by morning were in Chicago, off again to Detroit. In every city we stopped, there was a moment—somewhere between the uncertainty and the laughter—where we looked at each other and smiled. Our honeymoon wasn’t about luxury. It was about adventure. Tiny hotel rooms, hot coffee, and counting our pennies while dreaming big.

We visited the Plymouth factory, picked up our brand-new car, and headed back west. Our hearts were full, even if our pockets weren’t.

Chapter Three: Scrubbing and Settling In

Madrid, Nebraska, welcomed us with wind and dust. The little house Jack and I moved into was humble, maybe even a little sad. But I was determined to make it shine.

Jack had his first patient today – a young farmer with a sore back. He made a whole dollar and came home beaming. I told him it was his first of many. He just kissed me on the forehead and went back out to stoke the fire.

The days passed quickly. I scrubbed and tidied and made the house into something that looked like a home. Jack stayed busy, both with his patients and keeping our little hearth burning. He was in love with his work, and I was in love with him.

We were surrounded by family and thankful. Alice and Stan, Eleanor and Van, Mayne and Dotty, Mother and Ms. Mary. The fields were

icy, but our home was warm and happy. This—this strange little chapter—felt like the beginning of something good.

Chapter Four: Doubts and Decisions

Jack took his medical exams this week. He says they were brutal. I told him I had no doubt he'd pass – but he's been restless ever since. Business has slowed, and he talks more and more about joining the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The idea breaks my heart, if I'm being honest. I don't want to be away from family. But he needs purpose. He needs to feel useful. So, when the wire came with his exam results and another from the CCC offering him a position, he surprised me. He chose the Corps.

I cried when I packed. Not because I was angry—but because I was afraid. Arkansas felt a thousand miles from the life we were building. But I pressed my dresses, wrapped our wedding photo in a scarf, and told myself this was part of the journey.

Chapter Five: The Mountains and the Moon

Camp life was nothing like home. I stayed in a cabin with Elizabeth, deep in the Ozarks. Fifty miles from anything, it felt like we lived on the edge of the world.

Jack was gone most days at Camp Pike. I filled my time with walks, letters from home, and long talks with Elizabeth. Sometimes Jack and I got the weekends—dances at the officer's club, little dinners at local inns, stolen moments in parked cars under the stars.

But some nights, he drank too much. And other nights, I cried too much. I learned quickly that love wasn't just church bells and train rides. It was choosing each other even when we were tired, distant, or afraid.

Still, there were bright moments. A letter from Dotty. A new dress arriving just in time for a dance. Watching Jack from across the room and remembering why I married him in the first place.

Chapter Six: Roads and Roots

Jack resigned from the CCC. I never asked why, not directly. I think his heart wasn't in it.

We drove back to Lincoln with Rose and Jack Foster. Surprised the whole family. Mother's Day was filled with laughter, strawberry picking, and one of Jack's signature arguments after he drank too much. We fought. I cried. Then we danced again.

Soon after, we left for California. The road was long—Salt Lake, Reno, mountain passes cold enough to freeze the smiles on our faces. But eventually, we arrived in San Francisco, crossing the ferry into a new life.

We stayed in hotels and tourist camps. I was exhausted but hopeful. Every turn of the wheel felt like a step toward something more.

Chapter Seven: A Doctor's Life

Jack started work with Dr. Newfield in Concord. It was demanding—long hours, cranky patients, and nights he came home past midnight. We moved into a small apartment and tried to live like other people. It wasn't always easy.

I filled the days with homemaking. Picked out curtains, cooked supper, wrote letters. Mac came from Grass Valley, and suddenly I had a piece of home again. She and Paul visited often. We rode horses, had chicken dinners, and sat around laughing like old times.

We went to San Francisco on weekends, danced at Topsy's Roost, visited Golden Gate Park, and once even caught a burlesque show (which I hated). Still, I laughed. I loved. I made it work.

Chapter Eight: Uncertain Tomorrows

The day came when Dr. Newfield said Jack's services wouldn't be needed after the 15th. Business was slow. I watched Jack's face fall, and I held his hand.

We stayed in a dusty hotel again. Mac and Paul moved to San Mateo. Luella came from Oakland. Rose threw a spaghetti party. In the middle of all that movement, I stood still and tried to stay strong.

We considered Los Banos next. Drove through the valley, looked at homes, and whispered dreams into each other's ears. Maybe there. Maybe somewhere else.

We went to church. We went for walks. We danced when we could. We argued. We forgave. We dreamed. We worried.

But through it all—through every train ride, every packed bag, every night he came home late or not at all—I loved him. That year taught me that marriage wasn't one day in a white dress. It was every day after.

And if I had to do it again, I'd still say yes.