

Chapter Two

The Wedding And The Honeymoon

Tom came home on leave a couple of days before Christmas with a present for me. It was the size of a shoe box and he would shake it and say, "Guess what I got you for Christmas?" I guessed many things and his answer was always, "No." Finally, it was Christmas Eve and when I opened my present I was very surprised and excited. It was an engagement ring.

We made plans to marry on July 18, 1964 and honeymoon at Niagara Falls, the honeymoon capital of the world. Niagara Falls is a six hour drive from my house. We did not want to drive six hours after a long day of celebration. So we planned to spend our wedding night in Erie which was only an hour drive away. Since Tom was in the Air Force and stationed in North Carolina, all the wedding arrangements were left for me. Tom said, "I'll take care of the motel reservations in Erie and Niagara Falls." I did not know how to plan a wedding so I bought a book one year prior the wedding date which took me step by step through the planning stages of the wedding.

Over the next few months I read my book and started to make the arrangements for our wedding. I asked Tom if he made reservations for our honeymoon and he said, "I'll take care of it."

I ordered the invitations, chose a photographer, ordered the flowers, hired a band, chose a caterer, picked out a wedding cake, ordered the liquor, and rented the V.F.W for the reception. I called Tom and asked him if he made the reservations for our honeymoon. He said, "I'll take care of it."

I met with the priest, organist, and soloist to set up the wedding ceremony. Then I picked out a beautiful wedding gown. My aunt volunteered to make the wedding party's dresses. We picked out a pattern and material for the dresses. I made arrangements for my maid of honor, bridesmaid, and flower girl to meet with my aunt for fittings. This took much maneuvering since my aunt lived in Cleveland, Ohio which was seventy miles away. I called Tom and asked him if he made the reservations for our honeymoon. He said, "I'll take care of it."

Then I made appointments for the best man and ushers to get fitted for their tuxes. I also made Tom's appointment since he could not leave the Air Force base until a couple days before the wedding. I called Tom and asked him if he made the reservations for our honeymoon. He said, "I'll take care of it." I informed Tom that according to my book all reservations should be made well in advance to insure a room. Tom said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of it."

Next I gathered family and friends addresses and bought gifts for the ushers and the bridesmaids. Then I made an appointment with the photographer to get a photo for the newspaper and wrote up an article about our upcoming wedding. I continued to periodically ask Tom if he made the reservations for our honeymoon and he would reply, "Don't worry everything is taken care of."

Tom and I were not twenty-one when we applied for our marriage license so our parents had to go with us to the justice of the peace. This was quite a feat since Tom was in North Carolina and our parents worked different shifts.

The wedding day was approaching and the invitations were addressed and mailed. Everything was falling into place. Tom just had to get fitted for his

tux, show up for the wedding and of course make arrangements for our honeymoon.

At last, July 18, 1964 our wedding day! It was the hottest day of summer but, I never noticed the heat. The wedding ceremony was beautiful and everything went perfect. We went to the park for pictures of the wedding party. Then everyone gathered at my house to socialize with the out of town friends and relatives until the reception.

At 5:00p.m., we all went to the V.F.W. for the reception. The food was delicious, the band was fabulous, and the photographer was on top of taking memorable pictures for our wedding album. The cake was beautiful and just as delicious. Everyone ate, danced, and enjoyed the festivities.

At 9:30p.m., Tom scooped me up into his arms and carried me to his waiting 1956 red and white Chevrolet. We went to my house and changed into our traveling clothes and left for our honeymoon. I asked Tom where we were staying and he said, "It's a surprise."

We arrived at our destination of Erie around 11:00p.m. Tom drove up to a motel and went inside to get our room. When he came out I asked, "What is our room number?" Tom said, "They are all booked." I said, "I thought that you made a reservation?" He said, "This is Erie not New York; you do not have to make a reservation here." So we proceeded to the next motel and the next and the next and the next with the same result all booked up.

Finally, after an hour of driving around Erie and much coaxing from me; Tom went into a motel to ask if they could help us find a room for the night. The

manager checked around and said, "All of the motels are booked solid this weekend. I do not understand why since nothing special is going on in Erie this weekend. I guess that this is just one of those crazy weekends. There is not a place to stay until you get into New York." Then he hesitatingly said, "There is a hotel that would have vacancies at the lower end of town but I usually do not recommend it."

By now, it was well after midnight and we were both exhausted. So Tom asked for directions and we proceeded to the lower end of town. Oh, the things I wanted to say, but didn't! After all, how bad could it be? Well, it was disastrous! In the distance, I could see this old broken down gloomy dirty looking hotel with plywood over some of the windows. It looked like a haunted house right out of a horror movie. As Tom drove past the front door toward the parking lot, I noticed ladies walking back and forth in front of the main doors. I asked Tom, "Why are those ladies walking in front of the hotel so late at night?" He said, "They are not ladies. They are prostitutes." I had heard about prostitutes but I never thought that I would go where they hang out especially on my honeymoon! As Tom proceeded into the parking lot, I exclaimed, "I am scared! I do not want to stay at this place!" Tom said, "It's either here or a five hour drive to New York." Tom did not bother to make reservations at Niagara Falls either which I discovered while traveling throughout Erie looking for a room. So if we drove all the way to New York we may not get a room there either. We really didn't have much of a choice. With much hesitation I got out of the car and walked up the sidewalk toward the front door. The sidewalks were crumbling and weeds were overtaking the area. I

held onto Tom really tight as the prostitutes propositioned my husband of just twelve hours. They followed us into the hotel watching our every move.

The fellow at the front desk was expecting us since the manager from the motel had called in advance to tell him that we were coming. He said, "You are getting the best room we have." As Tom leaned his head to sign the registry some rice fell from his hair onto the desk. Suddenly, I became aware that this is my wedding night. The night that I dreamed about my entire life and the very first time that I will share a bed with my husband of just twelve hours. How special could this night be now?

Tom paid the manager \$8.00 for our room. (This was considered cheap even in the 60's} He got the key and we took a creaky elevator up to the twelfth floor. We went to our room and opened the door to our honeymoon suite. The room was dark and dismal even with the lights on. It smelled of dust, mold, and mildew. The whole room was dirty with cracked faded wallpaper. The paint on the ceiling was peeling and flaking off. The window was cracked and had tape holding it together. The curtain rod was bent and barely held up the dirty torn curtain. The blind was torn and would not go all the way down. But it did not matter since the window was so dirty that you could not see in. The carpet was filthy and had holes worn clear through the padding to the bare wood floor. It was difficult to tell the color of the carpet because of all the accumulated filth, dirt and holes.

I went into the bathroom to change into my sexy, pink negligee. The bathroom was so dirty that I did not want to touch anything or set my negligee

down. The toilet was rusty and stained. I did not take a shower because I was afraid that I would catch something. The bathroom was as big as a closet and had a cement floor with worn off green paint. I bumped my head on the shower door when I sat down on the commode. As I sat there on that filthy commode holding my sexy negligee which I had spent hours picking out for my wedding night; I was having thoughts that a bride should not be having on her wedding night about her groom. I know that I probably had unrealistic expectations of a honeymoon and unrealistically expecting my groom to be my Prince Charming. However, this was not the honeymoon that I envisioned it was the depressing, exhausted, hopeless end to a very long day. I thought that if I get through this night then the rest of the honeymoon could only get better. And I was pondering over what exactly does "I'll take care of it" mean? Little did I know that those five little words would haunt me throughout the rest of our marriage.

I finally came out of the bathroom and at first in the dim lights I could not see Tom very well, but then I caught a glimpse of him lying in bed with a smile on his face. I asked him, "What on earth could you be smiling about?" He said, "This turned out to be a perfect evening. We have a place to stay and it only cost \$8.00. What more could you possibly want?" He was absolutely clueless to our gloomy honeymoon night. Then I joined him on the lumpy smelly old mattress on the broken bed with torn sheets.

Tom had opened the window since there was no air conditioning and it was the hottest night of summer; now I notice the heat! As I lay in bed I could hear the prostitutes on the sidewalk below. Since they followed us into the lobby

they knew which room we were in so I had a cheering section on my wedding night. I heard words that I had never heard before. I could only guess at what they were saying. Tom thought that this was greatest evening of his life. Without a doubt, he is in for a rude awakening in a few minutes! And tonight was just the start of many silent conversations that I would be having with Tom!