

Chapter 4

The Things We'll do for Love!

After a few years I decided to move back home. By now, I was more comfortable with myself and the direction my life was headed. I had become pretty proficient at social interaction, and of course, I was still packing my *secret weapon*, (my padded girdle), and now I felt more confident than ever.

Prior to New York and the time I spent with Kathy, I never dreamed I'd have a chance to find "true love," but with my new shape and my improved self-esteem, I began to believe that maybe I could do the same sort of things that other girls were doing. Shortly after I returned from New York, I'd landed a good job as an optical technician in an optical shop in the city. After working there for two years, my boss realized that I had a knack for organization and office skills, and I was promoted to manager of a branch store near my home-town.

I was feeling very comfortable with myself at this point in my life. I had a good paying job, boys were asking me out regularly, and I had even made myself two more padded girdles so I wouldn't have to worry about not having one to wear when one was being laundered. The funny thing about this was that every time I washed my girdles, they'd puff up so much in the dryer that it would look like I'd put on five more pounds. I usually wore medical scrubs so I looked pretty much like everyone else when I wore long pants and a top. Life was good.

The building where I worked was located on a corner, and the entire front of the store was glass. Sometimes I felt like I was working in a giant fish bowl! People would walk up and down the street and look right in at us as we did our work. Behind the shop where I worked was a pizza parlor. It was called Bimbo's Pizza. I'm not kidding... who on earth would name a place "Bimbo's?" It still makes me laugh. Even so, their pizza was great! The restaurant was located on the interior of a large building. It had two entrances leading into it, one from the street to the east of us, and the other on the street to the north. The owners decided to remodel the pizza place, and in the course of doing this, they closed off the north entrance. This meant that anyone wanting to get pizza would now have to use the east entrance. This caused quite a bit more foot traffic to parade in front of our office every day.

A Midas Muffler shop was located about a block away from us. Four or five of the workers from there would eat at Bimbo's every day. I hadn't noticed them before because they went in through the north entrance. Now that it was closed, they had to walk right in front of my window every day in their cute little blue uniforms with Midas written across their chests.

One day, I noticed that the same five guys kept walking by our window on their way to and from lunch, and one of them seemed to be sort of interested in me. I watched the other guys elbow him whenever I'd look out, and then they'd say something to him. It seemed to embarrass him which is probably just what they hoped they could do. I thought that perhaps he was shy.

One day, as they were walking by, I noticed them teasing him so I waved and said, "Hi," through the glass. Next thing I knew, there he was in my shop! I've never really been what anyone would call shy. I've always been a talker. So, when he walked up to me, I just blurted out, "Hi, how are you doing?" Then without even giving him a chance to respond, I looked at him and said, "I know you. You went to the same high school as me. You're Grant Phillips!" He just smiled, but that was just the first of many conversations we would carry on together for months to come.

I loved talking to Grant because he had such a great sense of humor. He **always** made me laugh! Every day he'd stop in and just talk for a few minutes during lunch. Although I liked Grant, I still dated other boys, and occasionally one of them would take me out to lunch. One day, Grant was talking to me when Jim, my lunch date, came in to pick me up. I introduced him to Grant, excused myself, and left with Jim. I didn't realize it at the time, but Jim was interested in getting serious with me, so it was very irritating to him when he'd come in and find me talking to Grant. It made him **insanely** jealous when he'd stop by and find me laughing at the things Grant was saying. I couldn't help it... Grant was funny. Before long I began asking myself why I even bothered going to lunch with anyone else. After all, the guy I really enjoyed being with more than anyone, was right here in my shop! He was the guy that made me laugh and feel like a million bucks. One day Jim took me out to lunch and informed me that he didn't appreciate me talking to Grant. "Don't be silly," I said. "He's just a friend. Gosh, we went to high school together. He's been coming in to visit me for three months now, and he's never even asked me out." "That doesn't matter," Jim said. "The next time I come to pick you up for lunch, if I see him in there, you can just forget about lunch! You just tell him to buzz off!"

Well, the next day. Grant came in to see me at lunch, as usual, and I was supposed to be going out to lunch with Jim again. All of a sudden, I heard tires screeching! I looked up just in time to see Jim's car tearing around the corner, burning rubber all the way. (I guess he'd seen me talking to Grant.) Well, I thought... no lunch today! Just for an instant, I was a little angry. I'm not sure why, but in the confusion of the moment I looked up at Grant and said, "Grant, are you ever going to ask me out? Because you know what?... you're ruining my lunch dates!"

I was so embarrassed about what I'd just said, that I left my desk and went into the back room to hide until I got my composure back. I felt *terrible* about what I'd just said to him, because I realized now, that I was only reacting to Jim's anger. I really didn't want to hurt Grant's feelings. After a few minutes, I went back into the office to apologize to Grant, but he was gone. Now I *really* felt terrible. The first thought that came to my mind was "Oh great! Now I've hurt his feelings, too, and now neither one of them will ever take me out." I was heartbroken.

I asked one of the girls what Grant did before he left. Had he said anything? Before she could even answer, the phone rang. I answered it, and a voice on the other end said, "Hello, this is Grant. Would you like to go on a date with me tonight?" I was shocked! He must have hurried right back to work and telephoned me. It had only been a few minutes since I'd left the room. I was so happy he called and so relieved that he wasn't angry. Without even thinking I blurted out, "YES!"

The minute I set the receiver down, I realized that I was in trouble. ***I had already planned a date for that night.*** (And no... not with Jim... a different boy named Larry.) Now what was I going to do? I really wanted to go out with Grant. So, I decided to call Larry and tell him I wasn't feeling very well, and ask him if we could we make it another time. (I really wasn't feeling too well after the traumatic lunch I'd just had, or more accurately *didn't* have.) He said he was fine with that, and I breathed a huge sigh of relief. With Larry out of the way for the night, I began to wonder what it would be like to "date" Grant.

Every time I'd seen Grant, he was in his greasy work clothes. He wore a hat and had oil splatters all over his face and arms. I wasn't at all sure how he'd clean up! I'd never seen him in nice clothes before. Now I have to tell you, there were a few things Grant did that I thought were a little odd. For example, he had these big work boots, but they weren't like any of his friends' boots. He'd painted his boots silver with bright red toes. They were the goofiest looking things I'd ever seen, but I figured it was just one of his little idiosyncrasies.

That night, as I was waiting for him to arrive, I was telling Marian about him. I told her that he'd gone to our same school, but she couldn't place his face or his name. "So, what's he like?" Marian asked. "Is he tall? Is he cute? Where does he work? Where does he live?" ... You know... all the standard questions. After a while, I said, "You know what... I guess I really don't know all that much about him, but one thing I do know... he makes me laugh!" "When's he supposed to be here?" she asked. I looked at my watch, and realized I'd lost track of the time. *He was already twenty minutes late!* Great! He's standing me up because I made him feel bad when I yelled at him at work, and now I have no date at all for tonight!

I was beginning to wonder what could be wrong when Marian said, "Wow... look at that!" I looked out the window, and there was this beautiful blue 1965 Corvette convertible driving slowly up and down the street in front of our house. Then she said, "Hey! Let's go out and see who it is." I agreed, since it was becoming obvious to me that *my* date wasn't going to show up. We walked outside, and when it drove by this time, it stopped. There, inside this beautiful car, was this gorgeous hunk of a guy. I didn't recognize him.

He got out of the car and walked around to the passenger side of the car. "Hi Linda," he said. "Your house doesn't have an address on it. I've been driving up and down the street for twenty minutes trying to figure out where you live. I was just about to stop and ask someone for directions. It's a good thing you came out."

Holy cow! You could have knocked me over with a feather! This didn't look at all like the guy I spoke to every day at lunch. He was dressed... nice. He had on a leather jacket and normal shoes, and he was so handsome! At first I didn't know what to say. I was surprised that he'd cleaned up so well, and now I was *really excited* for this date.

Well, we went to dinner at a really nice restaurant. Then he took me to a drive-in movie. The ***Romantic Motorview*** was the name of the place. I haven't the slightest idea what was playing that night.

That night was a dream-come-true! It was perfect in every way, and I was sure that nothing could spoil it. Man, was I wrong!

In the fifties, sixties, and early seventies, guys were often defined by their "wheels." Having a great car wasn't just cool, it was an extension of who you were. You could tell when certain guys were around, just by the sound of their engines or the rumble of their glass-pack mufflers. It was almost like being announced by the

butler, except there was no butler... but everyone knew when you were coming by the sound of your car. That was a fun part of the fifties and sixties culture.

That's when it happened. I heard this very familiar-sounding car drive right up next to us and shut down its engine. I recognized the sound of that engine immediately... It was Larry's. The same Larry I was supposed to be dating that night! I couldn't believe my ears, and then, I couldn't believe my eyes! I looked over in his direction, and he had another girl in the car with him! I was so mad! I thought he should be sitting at home, miserable because he wasn't on a date with me, and there he was with some other girl!

I was so embarrassed. I sunk down in the seat and tried to hide. Grant immediately picked up on what was happening and made no effort to help me out of this predicament. Then he looked over at Larry, put his arm around me, and smiled. After a few minutes, Grant got out of the car and put up the "ragtop." Then he got back into the car. All the while, Larry was watching. I was positively dying!

It's funny how a perfect date can change to a disaster in just a few seconds. Soon however, the awkwardness of the situation gave way to Grant's great sense of humor, and I totally enjoyed the rest of the evening. I had such a fun time with him that night. I got the feeling he wanted to make me his "steady" after our first date, but I wasn't ready to give up all the dates I was having with other guys, at least not yet. After all, I'd only been on one date in all my years of high school, and I felt like I needed to make up for lost time.

We both continued dating other people for a while. I remember one time, though, when Grant took some girl to lunch at the restaurant right across the street from my work. **Right across the street!** I couldn't believe he did that! I was so jealous. I thought he had no business taking some other girl to lunch, and I have to admit it made me a bit crazy! Then I realized that I was just wishing it was me that was with him.

Before long Grant decided to quit dating other girls. He'd had enough of that and only wanted to go out with me. But, I wasn't quite ready to call it quits with my other dates...not yet.

My family absolutely loved him. My brothers thought I should marry him just because of his **cool car**. My mom loved him, but she used to be glad when he'd go home, so she could get some relief from laughing so hard. She said he made her sides hurt. My dad thought he was wonderful, too. He was so nice to everyone in the family, and everyone was ready for us to get married... except me.

Grant was becoming a part of the family now, with or without me. I remember him coming over one night and sitting down with my brothers to watch a football game. I told him I needed to get ready for my date (which wasn't with him) and he just said, "Okie dokie."

I expected that he would take my subtle hint and leave, but he didn't. I thought that maybe I'd better explain to him *again* that I was *leaving* on a date, and that he probably didn't want to stick around.

"Grant," I said. "Gary, my date, will be here any minute. Thanks for coming, but I really have to be going now!"

"All rightie. Have a good time." He said.

All rightie? Have a good time? I thought I'd give it one more try.

"What I'm trying to say is, Gary's going to be here any minute now, and we won't be back till late!"

"That's OK... I don't mind waiting up. I've got nothing better to do," he said grinning from ear to ear.

When Gary arrived, I took him, as was customary, into the family room to introduce him to everyone. I'm sure that Grant stood out like a sore thumb. My brothers you see were all very blond with blue eyes, and here was Grant with dark hair and brown eyes. I felt so stupid introducing my date to my boyfriend.

When we got out to the car, Gary asked me who the guy with the dark hair was. "Oh, just a friend of the family's," I said. Then he looked over at the Corvette and said, "Wow... who owns the Corvette?" I just smiled and said, "The friend of the family's."

Well, we left for our date, and it was all right I suppose. But, when we returned to my home at about midnight, Grant's Corvette was still in the driveway.

"Man," Gary said, "that friend of the family hangs out here a lot, doesn't he?"

"Yeah, he does," I said.

Now I could tell that Gary kind of liked me, so when he walked me up to the door, he took me by the hand, said good-night, and then he *leaned* in towards me... if you know what I mean. All of a sudden, the porch light started blinking off and on. I couldn't believe it. I knew it was Grant. I shook Gary's hand, and said good-night.

From then on, Grant was over at my house nearly every time I had a date with some other guy, and he always waited up for me. I felt like I had two fathers watching out for me! I'll be honest; it made me a little bit crazy at times.

Once Grant and I were walking together in the mall, when some boys approached us who obviously knew him. As they approached, one of the boys said, "Hi Lee!" Grant let go of my hand and stepped in front of me to speak to his friends. The conversation was very brief, and then they left without introductions. After they'd gone, I turned to Grant and asked "Did he just call you Lee?" "Yeah," he replied. "It's kind of a... nickname." I never gave it a second thought.

As I became more and more sold on Grant, I realized that he'd never taken me to see his parents, nor had we ever done anything with any of his friends. I asked him one day why he didn't take me to meet his parents or go out with any of his friends. "I don't have time for any of those guys," he said, "and I'm sure you'll meet my parents soon enough. Anyway, they're just your average parents. Besides, I already know them. It's you I want to get to know better. I'd rather just be with you."

Grant loved sending me flowers, and he sent me dozens and dozens of long stemmed red roses. He was very romantic and took me to only the nicest places for dinner. I was getting to like him a lot. However, I thought I needed to be totally honest with him if we were going to get "serious." I felt like I needed to let him see me for who I really was, without the padded girdle. It was only right.

I wanted to introduce Grant to my Aunt Amy anyway, since, I'd told him how good she'd been to me. He wanted to meet her too, so, we took a trip to her house. It was late summer and very hot outside. Amy suggested that we all go swimming in the local reservoir. (That was the best way we could figure out to expose him to the real me.) I was so nervous. I had visions of him backing off or dumping me completely when he finally saw *me*...me without all the fluff and the emotional armor my girdle provided. It was one of the hardest things I'd ever had to do.

We'd been dating for some time now, and we'd sat close together often. I knew he'd touched my thighs, whether on purpose or accidentally, and he must have realized that these weren't my real legs he was feeling. Either that, or he must have thought, "Good grief, this girl needs to go to the gym and do a little exercise to tone up her muscles." We'd never spoken about my physical condition at all.

What would he think when he saw the "*real*" me. After all, here I was, five foot six, eighty-three pounds, I was virtually skin and bones, especially from the waist down. I couldn't imagine what his reaction was going to be.

We went to the reservoir, and I went into the dressing room to get into my swimming suit. I'll bet I was in there for over an hour. I just sat there, looking at

myself in the mirror, trying to decide whether I could go through with this or not. Grant was so patient and so kind. He never got upset. After a while, I heard him say, "Are you ever coming out of there? Are we really going swimming today? Come on... It's OK. I promise It's OK."

Finally, I came out. I had my swimsuit cover on, and I'd put my long pants back on... *but I wasn't packing my secret weapon*, and I felt very self-conscious and totally vulnerable. We walked down to the water, and Grant jumped right in. After a few minutes, he said, "Come on, it feels great! Come on in."

I took a deep breath and took off my pants. Then I removed my swimsuit cover and walked out into the water. My heart was pounding! What was he thinking? What had I done?

I was so nervous what he might think or say, but he quickly came to my rescue. He walked over to me, put his arms around me said, "Linda... listen to me... please don't worry. I think you're the most beautiful person I've ever known." A calmness settled over my mind. I was so happy, so relieved, that he'd accepted me for *who* I was and *what* I was, that I began to cry. I think that was the moment I knew I really loved him. He never said I had a nice body, but he said I was a beautiful person, and that's all I needed to hear. I believed that was his way of telling me that he really cared for me as a person, that he didn't care that I didn't have the perfect body. That wasn't what he was looking for. I didn't know what he was thinking, but I do know that he treated me like a princess. I fell for him more now than ever before. He'd accepted me just the way I was, which was just what I hoped he would do.

We'd been dating steadily now for two and a half months. I really started to believe that maybe I had found the one that I would be with forever.

About four months before this, an old boyfriend had promised to take me out in his Ford Bronco and go "four wheeling." I didn't want to go now, but I'd promised four of my little brothers that they could come along with us when we went. They were so looking forward to going and I just couldn't break their hearts.

Well, when Grant asked if I would go with him to our favorite restaurant the following Saturday night, I told him that I had something else planned for that day. By the look in his eyes, I knew he was hurt, but I had no idea he would take it as hard as he did. Little did I know, that **this** was the date he'd picked to propose to me. My timing couldn't have been worse.

My response devastated him. He'd spent a lot of time planning just how he was going to ask me and thinking about what a wonderful weekend it was going to be, and I told him I was going four wheeling with my old boyfriend! I later found out that he felt so bad, and was so heartbroken that I still wasn't totally committed to our relationship, that he decided not to go through with his proposal. But, something inside him told him to go home and talk to his mother about it. She counseled him not to act in haste. "If this girl really is all that you say she is, she's worth giving a second chance," she said.

I didn't know he was thinking about giving me a diamond ring, or asking me to marry him, not this soon. I just thought he was this very nice guy that I liked to hang out with. In my mind I didn't really believe that anything this wonderful could happen to me. I still couldn't imagine in my wildest dreams getting married or having a family. I just kept hearing the words the doctor said to me years before...

"I don't know what's wrong with you... I'm sure there must be something really wrong, but I have no idea what that might be. But, I'll tell you now, you probably won't live very long... I don't think you should ever consider getting married, and I don't think you could ever have children. "

I think that because I believed in my heart that the doctor was probably right, I never seriously entertained thoughts of marriage. I wanted it, of course, but I didn't dare dream that it might really happen to me.

Thank goodness Grant listened to his mother. He called me up a few days later and asked if I he could take me out the following weekend. The big night finally arrived, and he took me to our favorite restaurant. Once we arrived and were seated, he presented me with a dozen long-stemmed red roses. I love roses. I didn't notice that he had slipped my engagement ring around one of the stems and positioned it so I would see it! I guess I just wasn't paying attention to the roses at the time.

At this particular restaurant, one of the unique things they did was to bring out a small round head of lettuce to your table for your salad. Then, you could cut it in half, or break it up, or shred it yourself, and prepare it the way you wanted. Along with that, they would bring out an assortment of dressings and toppings.

Well, when I didn't notice the ring around the rose stem, Grant tried to reposition it so it would be a little more obvious. As he reached for the roses, he knocked the head of lettuce off the plate. It rolled off the table and across the aisle next to the couple seated beside us. He was so embarrassed, but he didn't want to

pick it up and draw more attention to himself. Confident that no one had noticed the lettuce fall, he simply reached out with the tip of his shoe and gave it a little kick. It rolled underneath the table behind us and out of sight. I was trying so hard not to laugh out loud, but it was *really* hard to restrain myself. The look on his face, coupled with his silly antics, pretty much ruined the romantic mood he'd hoped to create.

As the evening progressed, he kept hoping I'd notice the ring. I never did. After a while, I excused myself and went to the ladies' room. While I was gone, he took the ring off the rose and put it on his little finger. When I returned, he offered me a drink of water. I thought it was a bit odd as he held it up right in front of my nose, but I figured he just wanted me to have some water. So, I took it from him and took a drink. I still hadn't noticed the ring.

Eventually, we left the restaurant and headed for a movie. As we drove down the road, he kept adjusting the rearview mirror, hoping I'd notice the ring around his little finger, but I never did. We walked up to the ticket counter and purchased our tickets, and, even then, I didn't notice the ring sparkling in the lights.

We went inside, and he bought me a box of popcorn. As he handed it to me, he was jiggling his little finger, hoping I'd finally notice it. I'm sure the people behind the counter thought I was this really dumb blond, because *they* saw it and were starting to laugh at how hard Grant was trying to get me to see it. Finally, he decided to make one last attempt. He bought me a drink, and as he handed it to me, his little finger was just bouncing and flapping like a little birdwing gone crazy. I just looked at him and said, "Not right now, thank you." Completely frustrated by now, he looked me right in the eye and said, "All right... if you don't want a drink, would you like this ring... and will you marry me?"

Oh my gosh... I finally noticed it! He had a ring on his little finger and I was the last person to notice! I looked at him, and, before I knew it, I started to cry. I'm sure all the people around us thought I must be crazy, but I didn't care. Then I looked him in the eye and said, "You want to marry me? You really want to marry me?"

I've often wondered how other girls feel when they receive their proposals. Is it just as wonderful for them? To me it was more than wonderful; it was a miracle. The thing I never ever thought would happen to me was actually happening. I felt like Cinderella.

We were very excited to be engaged and we set the date three months down the road to get married. We soon discovered, however, that we couldn't wait. Before we knew it, we changed the date to just **one** month away. There were a lot of things that had to be done... and fast! We liked being together so much that we just wanted to get married as soon as possible. I think I wanted to get it over with because I was afraid he might change his mind.

Up until now, Grant never had a photo of me. He asked if I had a picture of myself that I would give to him. I had a friend who liked photography who'd taken several "glamour" photos of me for his portfolio. He'd asked me to do some modeling for him, because, he said, "Thin people look better in pictures, since pictures tend to add pounds." He'd given me some of the pictures he'd taken of me, but they were all eight-by-tens. I didn't have any wallet-size photos, but Grant didn't care. He wanted this one particular picture of me, so I gave it to him.

I couldn't believe it. He carried that eight-by-ten everywhere, and he'd whip it out and show everyone the girl he was going to marry. He seemed to be so proud of me... and that made me very happy. He didn't feel the least bit silly about carrying around that big picture and whipping it out to show to just about anyone.

Well, we decided we'd better hurry and print up wedding invitations to send out to friends and family. I told him to meet me at the printers so we could decide on a style, a paper color, and so on.

That afternoon, he sent me a dozen long-stemmed red roses, with a card that read...

***Just to remind you
We have a date,
At eight.
Grant.
(Alias Lee)***

I read the note and thought, "What in the world does 'alias Lee' mean?" I never even gave it a second thought.

We met at the printers and together we sat down to talk to the man who would copy down the information for our invitations. He looked at me and began asking the standard questions...

"Parents of the bride?"

"Floris and Eva Copier," I said.

"OK, Bride's name?"

"Linda Jane Copier."

"OK, Parents of the groom's names?"

"His parents' names are Fred and Irene Phillips," I said.

Grant stopped me. "No... you'd better put down Fred and Irene Llewellyn," he said. My first thought was that his real parents must have gotten divorced, which would explain the difference in last names. I thought I sensed a little smile on the man's face, as he continued filling out the paperwork.

"OK, Grooms full name?"

"Grant Phillips!" I blurted out... proud as could be.

But once again, Grant looked at this man, pointed to the appropriate line and said, "Umm, you'd better put down Lee Llewellyn there." By now I was getting very confused and feeling just a little bit foolish. I looked over at Grant and said, "What the heck are you talking about?"

I couldn't believe what was happening. My mind started racing as I tried to sort things out. Was he just being funny again? Then, slowly, it all started coming back to me! Lee Llewellyn... I remember that name! That was the name of the guy who used to get into fights back in high school. I remembered his name because he'd even gotten into some fights with my cousins. I looked into his eyes, and then it hit me like a brick. My mind flashed back to the day I was eating lunch at school and nearly got smashed.

That was where I'd seen him before! He was the guy who went sailing under my nose that day in the lunch room. He was the reason I had to save my lunch that day! I was speechless for a moment, and all he did was look at me and smile. I glared at him, that goofy smile still plastered on his face, and the only thing I could come up with was, "You're Lee Llewellyn?"

By now, the printer who was working with us was laughing so hard he could hardly speak. "Gosh, you don't even know who you're marrying? Maybe you should just date a little bit longer," he joked. I didn't see the humor in it.

I looked at Lee and said, "My whole family's giving a shower for me and Grant Phillips tonight. You're gonna have to go home and tell my dad who you are!"

I was so embarrassed. I didn't even know the name of the guy I was marrying! I looked at the printer and said, "Just put down Lee Llewellyn!" Then I grabbed Lee

by the hand and said, "Come on, Grant... Lee... whoever you are. We're going home right now!"

As we drove home in our separate cars, I couldn't believe that I had been with this guy all these months, grown to love him, introduced him to everyone I knew... and I didn't even know his real name! This guy's a lunatic! I thought. One thing I did know for sure, I still loved him no matter what his name was.

When we got home, I took him into the house and called my parents into the living room.

"Mom. . .Dad, my fianc'e has something he wants to tell you. Go ahead, tell 'em."

He just looked at them, smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "Go on," I said. "Tell them your real name."

"Hi... my name's Lee Llewellyn." He said with a grin on his face.

"Yeah," I said. "This isn't Grant Phillips, it's Lee Llewellyn! Can you believe that?" I glared at Lee.

Well, my mom just started to giggle. My dad looked him right in the eye and asked, "Grant... I mean Lee... why would you do a thing like that?"

Lee looked my dad right back in the eye and said, "Hey... she wanted Grant, I gave her Grant. I wasn't taking any chances."

My dad laughed and laughed. He thought it was so funny. The irony of the situation, of course, was this. Here I was, hoping he would like me for who I was now, *trying to keep him from remembering me as I'd been in school*. And here he was, *worried that I **would** remember the Lee who always got into trouble at school*, afraid I wouldn't like him because of who **he had been**.

I was even afraid to tell him my last name when we first met for fear that he would remember me and the way I looked in school. He told me later that he did remember me. He confided in me that in high school, he would sometimes watch me carry my books and wonder if he should offer to carry **me**, worrying that the sheer weight of the books might break my arms.

I was madly in love with Grant - I mean, Lee - but I have to admit, I loved his Corvette too. I loved it almost as much as he did. We dated a lot in that car, and I thought it would be around for a long time to come. But, Lee had a practical side to him that I hadn't seen, and I wasn't really sure I liked it once I discovered it!

When he decided he was going to marry me, he didn't want to go into our marriage with any debt. He hated debt! So, when some guy saw his Corvette and

offered him a thousand dollars more for it than he'd paid for it, Lee sold it! He never even asked me what I thought!

Now Lee was left without any wheels, so his brother told him that he could use his old Chevy Impala for a while, until he came up with a car of his own. The next time Lee showed up he was driving this old beat-up Chevy Impala. I laughed when I saw it and asked him if he was driving it just to see if I would still go out with him if he drove an old "junker".

He laughed. "Yep... just want to see if it's me you like or my car."

"Oh... so, you probably sold your corvette to see if I would keep dating you, huh?" I quipped.

We had a good laugh, but I noticed that the next time I saw him he was still driving that ugly old car. I joked around with him for a while about it, and then I said... "I really do love you. Not **just** your car, but would you mind going back to the Corvette? I feel a lot safer in that." (I really didn't feel safe driving around in that piece of junk.)

He never bothered telling me that he really had sold his car, until weeks later.

One night he showed up for a date and he looked like his best friend had just passed away. "What's wrong?" I asked. He looked at me and said, "I haven't been completely honest with you. I did something you need to know about. I really did sell the Vette. Some guy offered me a good deal, and I took it. Tonight, I found out that he got in a wreck and totaled it."

I was so sad. I knew how much he loved that car. I loved it, too. But, my sadness was somewhat tempered by the fact that I knew that he'd sold it in order to start our marriage off on the right foot... debt free. Let me tell you what else he did. I had a nice 1965 Chevy Chevelle, and it was "hot," too.

His brother's car really was dangerous. It didn't have any brakes! He had to use the emergency brake whenever he wanted to stop it. So, we gave it back to his brother and started driving my Chevelle.

One night, he came to my apartment and knocked on the door. I opened the door and the first thing he said was, "I need the title to your car."

"What do you mean you need the title to my car?" I said "What for?"

"I need the title to your car, because I just sold it."

"You did what? Are you joking?"

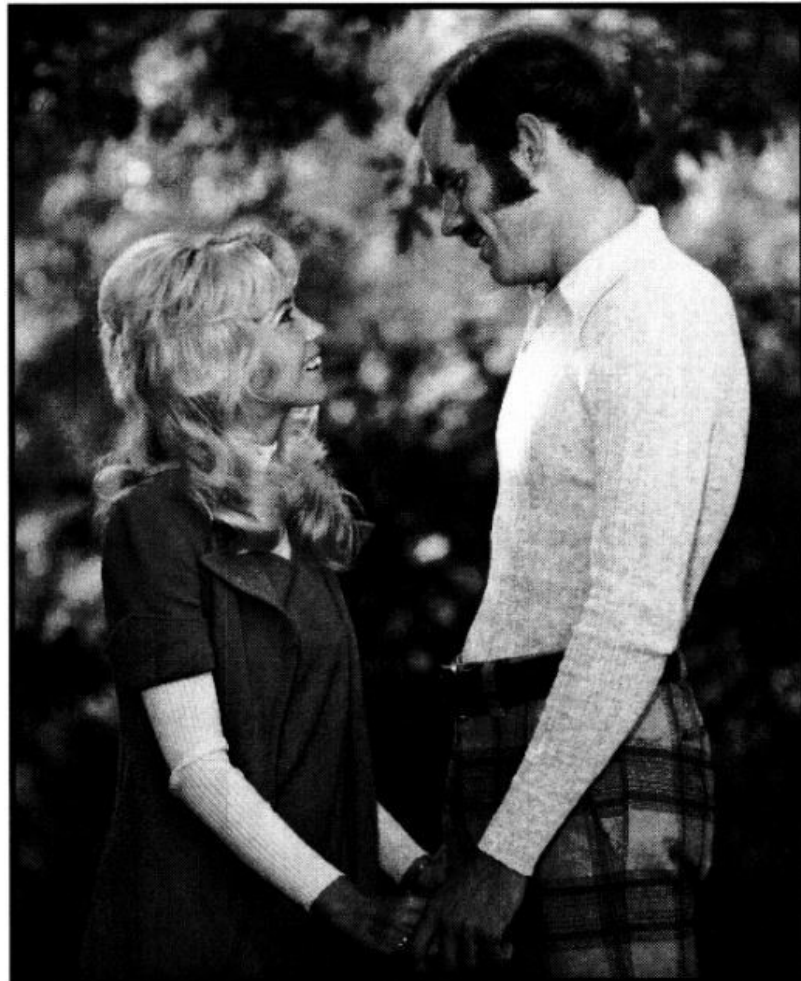
"No... I need the title to **your** car because there's a guy out front, and I just sold him **your** car."

I still thought he was joking, until I looked out the front window and sure enough, there was a man standing by my car. Lee had just sold him *my* car! So, I went outside and signed over the title of my car to this stranger.

"Well," I said. "Now that you've sold your car, *and* my car, how are we supposed to get around?"

"Let's go car shopping," he said. So, we borrowed a car from some friends and went out and bought a '65 Buick Riviera.

It was pretty crazy, but Lee told me later that he didn't want me driving around in a "hot car" anymore, because I was going to be a married woman, and he didn't want all the guys looking at me! Four weeks and two cars after I discovered *Grant* was really *Lee*, we got married. My dreams of a Cinderella romance had finally come true.



Linda and "Grant" 1973

