

## New Fables by Skookum Chuck

(R. D. Cumming)

### VIII.—Sinbad the Husband

Sinbad the Husband lived in a charming little bungalow in one of the choice residential sections of the city of Vancouver. He had just recently purchased the property at a valuation of three thousand dollars, on terms of one thousand cash down, (his total bank balance at the time), and the remainder secured by interest-bearing, monthly notes spread over more than three years of his natural life.

In the bungalow, besides himself, he housed a beautiful young flapper named Bootsy who arrived shortly after the liability of the home had been assumed, and was therefore his wife of a few weeks' standing only. Bootsy was a plump, bob-haired, clear-complected, smiling, and almost squatty, young female person, (Sinbad was slightly taller than she), who in the past had been more than an ordinary masculine attraction in the neighborhood. All things considered at the time, Sinbad had himself to congratulate when he carried Bootsy off in triumph to the privacy of his sweet little, partially owned bungalow.

Bootsy wasn't the girl's real name, but it was one that had clung to her from the baby carriage up, and the one by which she was universally well known in the vicinity of the home haunts.

In the interior of the mortgaged bungalow Sinbad had gathered about him a rare collection of articles of virtue both useful and ornamental, but Bootsy was the most beautiful ornament among the lot, for it transpired after marriage that she could neither cook, sew, mend, knit, wash nor scrub. The first few months of her married life, therefore, she basked in a paradise of idleness under the glory of Sinbad's tolerance, love, endurance, and, all those dangerous things that man will so naturally lavish on a woman. During this time the couple lived on canned meats, vegetables, fruit, fish, etc., and only escaped ptomaine poisoning by the providence of a miracle.

Bootsy was a bear, however, when it came to crocheting and making things that she never found use for, or that she gave away to friends; or at arranging the parlor spick and span in order to create envy in the hearts of those same friends. In fact Bootsy trailed behind none in the matter of things that were non-revenue producing.

Sinbad's monthly life-saver threw a fit when it faced the current account accumulated for extras and things in connection with "opening up," as well as for articles purchased from time to time to meet Bootsy's high-flying, and for the pink teas which she donated to the neighborhood without profit and with an extravagance that went far beyond the resources of the monthly pay cheque. In fact expense was the one thing that never occurred to Bootsy when it was a matter of her own thrills and the entertainment of her girl chums, so the overhead began to get miles and miles ahead of the available assets before the honeymoon was quite cold. And Bootsy's clinging weight across Sinbad's shoulders became heavier and heavier as the weeks and months went by.

Sinbad had less intelligence and independence than a wild horse; a horse would have bucked.

Sinbad's breath was taken away for the first time at the end of the first month of married life when he came home with his first cheque.

The month's living expenses had been abnormally high, but he had attributed this to the settling down process and the initial expenses attached to house-keeping.

"This'll clean things up a bit," he said, waving the cheque in Bootsy's face.

"What things?" she asked him.

"Why, our store bills of course."

"What, you're not going to spend all that good money to

pay old store bills when I need a new dress so badly, are you?" she complained.

For a few moments Sinbad was speechless.

"It's all we have between us and starvation," he warned her.

"Oh, we're not going to starve. Don't you ever think it," she replied.

"Well, it will be some relief to get those bills off our chest," Sinbad persisted.

"I haven't had a new dress for ages," she continued to wail.

"You wouldn't buy clothes and let the storekeepers wait, would you?"

"Certainly! They are rich; let them wait; they can stand it. Look out for Number One, I say, every time. That's me."

Sinbad's laugh was really pitiful.

"How about a suit for yourself?" continued Bootsy. "Goodness knows you need one bad enough. Don't think I'm going down town with you in overalls."

The result was that Bootsy got her new dress, and the balance of the cheque went to make a payment on account at the local stores.

Bootsy had a way of getting just what she wanted from her blubbery husband just at the right time. She could speak one language fluently—English—and every time she opened her mouth to speak she would put something over on Sinbad.

Sin's monthly revenue was one hundred dollars, but he found that this was a mere trifle in Bootsy's financing and went between her fingers like water through a sieve. Pressure soon forced him to seek a raise in salary. This appeal was made on the ground of matrimony and not on that of a standard of living that used up dollars when only cents were available. The increase was granted on the basis of past services rendered rather than on the plea put forward, and Sinbad went home with his temperature of optimism several degrees higher than it had been for many weeks.

But there was always a limit in speed to what a hundred dollars and the bonus would do, and Bootsy month after month never failed to exceed that speed limit. The irony of it was that, the more he gave in to Bootsy the more she wanted and the more dissatisfied she became, even when she must have known that each and every one of her silly and selfish flings was adding pounds avoirdupois to her own weight clinging to his shoulders.

Sinbad began to have ghostly visions of unpaid interest and principal on payments maturing on the home—all that they had to shelter them from the cold world. Without a dollar in sight to retire notes when the due date would arrive, he began to quake at the knees and to realize that Bootsy was perhaps a load that he could not long carry on his pins.

"You know, Bootsy," he remarked one day in all seriousness, "we must economize a bit."

"Why?"

Sinbad groaned:

"Well, we're running along on high when we should be creeping on low: can't you see?"

"See? See nothing! We haven't anything we don't need, have we?"

"Perhaps not, but we might deny ourselves many things in order that we may provide funds to lift the mortgage on the house."

"Oh forget it! I've heard enough of that! You're not going to get me to live on crackers and cheese. If the job you have isn't big enough and don't pay, give it up and get another better one," she sympathized with him.

Sinbad laughed in the usual tragic way, and Bootsy laughed in the usual giggle of contempt for anything that savored of