



The GI Bride

Iris Jones Simantel

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Iris had escaped the Blitz but now lived in crippling poverty after the war - until a chance meeting changed her life. Aged just sixteen, she fell in love and married US soldier Bob Irvine. And soon after she set sail for a new life in America.

It was the 1950s, the land of hope, dreams and Doris Day movies. But Iris ended up in a cramped Chicago bungalow, shared with Bob's parents. With a baby on the way and a husband turning daily into a stranger, Iris was wracked by homesickness. Trapped and desperately lonely, she had to make a fresh start, in a country where hope and opportunity thrived.

In this dramatic sequel to the Sunday Times bestseller, *Far From the East End*, we follow young Iris Jones Simantel from London to New York, Chicago and Las Vegas in her struggle to find work, love and a sense of belonging in a foreign land.

The GI Bride Details

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From Reader Review The GI Bride for online ebook

Carrie Carteret says

I have to declare an interest - Iris Jones Simantel is a distant cousin of my cousin's husband. However I have never met her.

I read her first book, Far From The East End, which finishes as sixteen year old Iris sets off for the US with her new American husband. I feared for her and wanted so much to know how her life turned out. In GI Bride the story unfolds and the skinny teenager has to come to terms with a life which is short on Hollywood glamour but certainly not short of character and drama and occasional high comedy.

I think I enjoyed this book so much because I came to it straight from reading a literary novel which was carefully researched and calculated to climb the bestseller lists, but which didn't really have a heart. This book is quite the reverse: it's not literature, but it is raw urgent telling of a story which clearly needs to be told. And that turns out to be more important.

Jo Barton says

Iris Jones makes an early marriage to US soldier Bob Irvine. Although only sixteen, she feels that she has met the man of her dreams and is prepared to leave behind her family in England and crosses the Atlantic to a new life in America. But America in the 1950s is very different from the home she has known, and at first Iris struggles to cope with her marriage, and a baby. What then follows is the detail of Iris's life as she copes with the loneliness of being trapped in a country where she is considered a stranger. Forthright and brutally honest, Iris doesn't shirk from telling it like it is – from the cramped living conditions she shares with her husband's parents, through to infidelity, despair and overwhelming homesickness.

This is a follow up to Iris's first memoir – Far from the East End and is a worthy continuation of this feisty woman's chronicle of her life in all its glorious detail.

Woody Barlow says

The GI Bride is a tightly written sequel memoir to Far from the East End. Iris, now a GI bride, lands in the United States on a boat with her GI husband ready to begin a new life. With money tight, and relatives even tighter, Iris does her best to carve out a life in America, receiving criticism for her Cockney accent and British ways. As George Bernard Shaw said, "Britain and America are two countries separated by a common language." I have known Iris for ten years, and can report she has found her way in the world regardless of being dealt some tough hands.

Kendall Lynn Babcock says

I really enjoyed this book. I was very excited to learn about her vacationing in Wisconsin Dells, where I live.

But mostly it was interesting to learn how different life used to be and how hard it single someone thousands of miles from their family. I was disappointed by the end and wanted to know more, but it gives me a good way to use my imagination.

Shaz Goodwin says

Iris' account begins with her experiences as a child in WW2, her evacuation (including the alienation of returning to a family she could barely remember). This leads on to being re-housed after the war in Hertfordshire where she meets American serviceman Bob Irvine.

Although this a reflective account, I could still 'feel' the innocence of that young women setting out on a journey that would take her a long way from her family and her roots. From the journey to New York through all the moves and changes in her life while living in America, Iris shares with the reader a very honest (and sometimes brutal) account of her experiences.

It's interesting to read about the differences between life in the UK and US back then. Things we take for granted now ... our debit cards, supermarkets, freezers etc of course didn't exist in the UK then. Even the foods Iris had to eat with her in-laws Germanic heritage were totally different. Iris finds solace with the church at different points in the narrative and her experiences here are interesting too ...

Iris is admirable in how she copes with trying to fit into the different circumstances that she finds herself. Within these pages you'll find the darker side of life too ... alcoholism and abuse but despite these experiences that happen without her family by her side, Iris' spirit of making things work shines through. Not giving up, each time something happens to sidetrack her, she picks herself up and moves through a different phase.

Through all her trials and tribulations – romance, health and finding a place to belong, Iris takes us with her on her journey from an innocent 16 year old GI bride to a 26 year old who has experienced many things and although happy, is still trying to find a place to belong.

I would like to thank the publisher for providing a copy in exchange for an honest review.

Courtney Laramore says

This was a pretty interesting memior for someone that was a GI bride though (spoiler alert) she wasn't a GI bride very long.

Liz Norman says

After the first quarter of the book, the story was about a woman making her way through bad marriages, not so much about being a GI Bride.

Ashley-Taylor Fuller says

This was an extremely easy book to read. Iris doesn't shy away from the good, the bad, and the ugly in her life. Her honesty was what compelled me so much as I read.

LeeLeeLoves says

This is a book that gave me a real insight into what life was like in 1950's London and America, having been born in 1989 and only just scraping by the title of being an 80's kid I actually wasn't aware of what a GI bride really was. GI stands for either Government Issue or General Issue and GI bride refers to the latter, it's British brides of American servicemen during the war.

Not many books I have read are true accounts of a person's life; those that I have read haven't been as interesting as this one. Iris Jones Simantel was the Saga Magazine life story competition winner and her debut novel *Far from the East End* tells the story of her growing up as a child and being an evacuee, this book however is about her adult life and follows a 16 year old Iris on her journey over seas (being very sea sick) to America with her new husband and starting a new life.

As somebody who was born and raised in the British Army family I imagined she would move to America and live on a camp/base and live the life of a Military wife. What I hadn't realised was that many of the soldiers had only been enlisted for the war, I don't think they had a choice at the time. So upon their return home they were no longer soldiers and went on to live their previous civilian lives. This meant Iris had to move into the family home of her new husband living with the in-laws who didn't seem to care about her while she had just left her family and friends, it was tough and she went through a lot.

With multiple marriages and divorces, being beaten, dealing with drunks and having two children to raise life wasn't a fairly tale, but it wasn't all bad either as Iris had many good friends who helped her.

Overall this is a good read and enough to keep the reader engaged as you follow Iris on her journey you may stop to realise how easy things are for us today. I'd actually like to know what happened next!

Anne says

It is February 1955, and Iris Jones is saying goodbye to her family, and to Britain. She is about to embark upon a life-changing journey, across the Atlantic to start married life with her American soldier husband Bob. More than 100,000 women left the shores of England as GI Brides and Iris, at age sixteen was probably one of the youngest. She was just a small child when World War II was being fought, she met her husband Bob after the war. Iris did not have a happy home life, she felt unloved by her parents, and was living in poverty - America really did seem like the land of opportunity.

Starting with the account of her awful sea voyage over the Atlantic, to her first sighting of the Statue of Liberty, and then finding herself living with parents-in-law who made it plain that they didn't approve of her, Iris Jones Simantel recounts with honesty and often with humour how her dreams didn't quite come true. No more than a child herself, her courage and bravery, and sometimes her utter desperation shines through her writing. It's quite incredible that a young girl, barely out of school and very inexperienced would be allowed,

or encouraged to make that journey - so far away from everything familiar, with no support except for a husband who she barely really knew.

The GI Bride is a down-to-earth story, told very well by an author who creates a wonderful sense of place with her writing. She does not shy away from the harsh realities of her life, she doesn't gloss over the things that she had to do to survive, and is totally honest about what she did. There is no doubt that Iris made some decisions that she may have come to regret, but it has to be remembered that she was young, alone, and incredibly protective of her young family.

Adele says

This is the follow-up to Far from the East End and it continues with the honest and raw account of Iris' life in America. Iris' humour throughout her often troubled life astounds me and I suppose this is what kept her going. Iris still has more stories to tell about her life and hopefully we won't have long to wait to read about them.

Sarah says

A gem of a book. I had my own issues adjusting to life in the US but I can't even begin to comprehend how hard it must have been for Iris. I have a whole new respect for the GI Brides that I knew in Texas.

Many thanks to Anne for passing this on to me.
