

THIS IS HOW IT HAPPENED

About 1911 we were all on the Mississippi coast with my Mother for the winter. I had known him about two years. He came to see us there. We used to walk down to the docks with my brother to watch the big ocean liners and steamships come into port from all over the world.

He met a captain who asked us if we would like to go with him one day and watch him pilot a ship through the channel to the port. So we said, "Yes, tomorrow." His name was Captain Sorenson. He was a Sweed. He would take a tug boat, go out thirty miles to the channel and pilot the ocean liner to the port every other day. He would replace the pilot that had piloted the ship to the channel.

My brother, Joyce and I got in the tug boat, and the ship was out there from Japan. It was a Navy ship. All the Japs had on white. There was about a hundred or more of them. You could not understand them at all. On our way out to the ship, the Captain asked Joyce how long he was going to be on the coast. He thought perhaps they could go deep sea fishing one day. Joyce told the Captain that he had to leave real soon as his money was giving out and that he had wired for more money; that he had stayed too long now. He said that he hated to leave me, and asked the Captain if he would help him get on a boat, doing anything, so he could stay. He said that if he had a job we could get married.

The Captain said, "Get married first and then get a job. That's easy. And, more than that, I will marry you both right now. I can marry anyone at sea, and we are thirty miles or more out at sea. I was a captain before you were born. I have married a lot of people. I married young and am not sorry."

Joyce said, "All right,"

I wasn't asked. I thought it was a joke, but the Captain rang a large bell. All of the crew to him. My brother, Joyce and I stood there on the front of the ship. He married us, gave us a letter and signed something. He called it a Log Book. Joyce had the letter; that's why I want the trunk. I hope no one goes in it and destroys anything.

After we came back to port he took us to the Court House, told the man at the window that he had married us, but we still wanted a license. He paid for it, and said, "This is a present from me to you."

My brother always liked Joyce. He kept our secret. I am sorry I did not tell my father and mother. I hope God will forgive us for that.

After the Captain had married us, all the Japs ganged around us talking. We did not know what they said. In a few minutes one of them picked up a wicker basket the size of a wash basin and started to collect money from each one of the crew; then he walked up and gave it to me. One of the crew could speak English, and he said it

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was to buy a wedding present. I could not take it from them. I could not tell my mother where it came from, so Joyce and my brother divided it. It was about a hundred dollars.

I asked Joyce why he did it to me. He said, "I wanted to be sure no one else got you. I just won the amateur championship of the South. I can box and make a lot of money for us, and I will come back for you."

When we got home that evening Mama had prepared a fish fry on the beach. We had gone through so much that day we looked chaginned. We let my sister cook all of the fish. She said we made her nervous.

Mama said, "Joyce, if you can stay just a week longer, I will take you all to New Orleans." His father wired him his money in a telegram and said, "Get home and get home quick. You must think I own a bank."

So he went back home to school. He never was afraid to go and talk to his mother and father, so he told them one day that he loved me and wanted to get married. They said, "Finish school, get a job, save money and we will help you."

They came to our house and both of our parents decided for us that we had better forget it, but my mother spoke up and said, "Well, if they do, they can live here with us. We feel like he is one of us anyway; he is here more than at home."

He was on the Mexican border with the Chicksaw Guards. He made two trips to Memphis. The first war was just beginning. The last trip home he said, "Marie, as you are so stubborn, we will get married again by a preacher and you can go back with me."

He went back alone. So, later we were married by a preacher. Four years later our son was born and we were then married by a Catholic priest in the Catholic Church.

I am glad my secret is out. Before he died he asked if I still remembered, and that the papers were still in the trunk and gave me the key. That happened a long time ago. I used to know a poem:

Time, O time, turn back your flight
Make me a child again for tonight.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could go over our lives? I don't believe I would change a thing.