

Chapter III

Wedding Bells

July 1, 1921 – January 2, 1922

With the Great War over, Curly's Naval career began during an era of peace and prosperity. It was "the war to end all wars" as President Woodrow Wilson called it. Hopefully in Curly's military career he would never have to encounter war. His first assignment was aboard the destroyer, USS Wadsworth.

The Wadsworth, a Clemson Class destroyer built by Newport News Shipbuilding, had only been commissioned in February and was preparing for her shakedown cruise when Curly reported aboard as the navigation officer and helmsman.

Fortunately his ship was based at Norfolk, only two hundred miles from Roanoke. On occasion when his ship was in port he was able to get a three day liberty pass to go home. Other times when she could, Geannie went to Norfolk to see him. During those times, their courtship continued.

In August the Wadsworth went to sea for her shakedown cruise, which took them down to Havana, Cuba and back. When he returned, Curly came home on a three day pass in mid September.

He and Geannie were sitting on her porch swing enjoying a Saturday afternoon. He said to Geannie, "I see you are still wearing your ring."

"I never, ever take it off." she answered.

Before she could beat him to the punch for once, he asked her, "Isn't it about time that we put the wedding band with it?"

Geannie shrieked. When she calmed down, she exclaimed, "Its about time, don't you think, Ensign." Then she excitedly asked, "When!?"

"I have a whole week coming up during the first week in December. Why don't we celebrate our birthdays by getting married?"

"Yes! Yes!" Geannie cried. "That would be perfect!"

Hearing the commotion out on the front porch, Mrs. Austin came out to see what all of the excitement was about.

"Mother! We're getting married!" Geannie announced.

"I've know that all of your lives." her mother exclaimed. "I've just been wondering when?"

Jumping up and down and hugging her mother at the same time, she responded, "On our birthdays!"

Her mother joyfully exclaimed, "That is the most wonderful news I have heard in long time!"

"Oh, Mother! There is so much to get ready for. I have it all planned out." You see, Geannie had it all figured out for years. By this time Curly was just a bystander in all of the excitement.

Not wanting to leave him out, Geannie's mother gave Curly a big hug. "You have always been part

of this family anyway. Now it will be for real. Now, go get your folks and bring them over here.” The rest of the afternoon was a blur of excitement as Curly witnessed the unfolding of the plans and details.

“Of course, you will marry us, won't you Dad?” He asked his father when he got a chance.

“By all means!” Geannie answered for him.

At another point when Curly could get a word in edgewise he suggested, “How about a military wedding honor guard.”

“Swell,” Geannie chimed. “That's a great idea. I hadn't thought of that.”

By the end of the day it was all figured out. The wedding would take place at the Greene Memorial United Methodist Church on the evening of Wednesday, December the 7th their twenty third birthdays. The wedding was to be followed by a reception in the church hall. The plans also called for a three day honeymoon at the cabin. Then the next day Curly would have to go back to his ship.

At the end of a whirlwind afternoon and evening, Curly and Geannie sat on the porch swing, wrapped in blanket as there was a chill in the air. Satisfied with the wedding plans, Curly hesitantly added, “Now, I have some bad news. I'll be leaving in January for a nine month world cruise.”

“No! Don't tell me that.” Geannie was disappointed but took the news well. “I knew that being a Navy wife there would be times like that, but I didn't expect to start off our marriage without you. Nine months is longtime. We've had a long distance courtship during our engagement while you were at the Academy, now that's how our marriage is going to start off?”

“When I get back in September, you can move to Norfolk to be with me.” Curly suggested.

“That's not a bad idea, but there will still be times when you will be gone. I have thought a lot about it and here is what I think. Norfolk isn't that far away. You can come here easily enough once or twice a month and I can go be with you a couple of times a month. I'll continue teaching school and get an apartment so we'll have a place of our own when you can come home. We'd be together nigh on every weekend that way. Besides, you're usually at sea during the week. If I have to be apart from you, I'd rather be here with family than there all alone. Besides, I have my job to keep me busy. I really enjoy teaching.”

“But you could teach in Norfolk as well.”

“That's true, but by then you'll only have another year before your can go to flight school and we'll be moving on any way. Why don't we just keep this arrangement until then? With you being so close, we can have the best of both worlds until then.”

“I see your point.” Curly admitted. “But when I go to flight school, you're coming with me.”

“And anywhere you go after that.” Geannie promised. Then she added, “I know there will be times when we'll be apart. My love for you is bigger than this old world. Wherever you go in it, you will be right here,” she said placing both hands over her heart.

After church services the next day, Curly caught the Sunday afternoon train back to Norfolk. The next couple of months went by quickly. The Wadsworth went to sea three or four times during that time. Curly was able to come home a couple more times, including Thanksgiving.

Geannie had a long weekend in October when school let out for the fall break. On Wednesday afternoon she rode the train to Norfolk and checked into a hotel. The Wadsworth returned from sea the next day. Curly was at his station at the helm on the bridge as the ship eased into its berth. He could see Geannie standing on the pier waiting for him. Once the ship was secure, Curly was relieved of duty and immediately made his way down the gangplank into her waiting arms.

After a brief reunion, with the skipper's permission he invited her to come aboard to show her around his world. The tour culminated on the bridge where he showed her his duty station. Lieutenant Commander Walker was still on the bridge and she got to meet the skipper. Conveniently, Curly was called away for a moment. That gave her the opportunity to ask a favor of him.

Over the course of the long weekend they were able to spend a lot of time together. Each evening, he returned her to the hotel, before returning to his quarters aboard the ship. On Sunday afternoon, it was his turn to see her off. He got to experience first hand what it was like for her. On Monday morning she was back in her classroom. Curly was at the helm of the Wadsworth as she stood out of Chesapeake Bay into the Atlantic Ocean.



Finally it was the big day. Curly came home on the train on Monday. Only two more days until the wedding and Geannie had everything nearly ready. Tuesday was busy day with the last minute details being taken care of and the wedding rehearsal.

On Wednesday afternoon, Curly dressed in his formal dress uniform complete with cocked hat, bow tie, fringed epaulets, and saber. His best man and brother, Walt, walked with him to the church. The hall was decorated for the reception and the final touches were being added. He was sequestered in his father's office next to the chapel as the guests were beginning to arrive. He wondered what Geannie was doing at that very moment. He had hadn't seen her all day.

At the appointed time, he was escorted by Walt into the chapel. The place was full. He noticed that seated at the end of the pews on either side of the aisle were smartly dressed sailors. "I wonder where they came from?" he wondered. "Hey, some of those guys look familiar." At that moment he noticed a naval officer seated on the third row. "That's Commander Walker! What is the Skipper doing here?" he wondered pleasantly to himself.

He was then ushered to a point directly in front of his father with his brother taking up station at his

side. On Curly's other side was Geannie's cousin and his sister-in-law Sarah, who was the matron of honor. She and Walt were expecting their second child.

He stood there nervously until the organ began playing the wedding march. That was the cue for the sailors to arise, face each other across the aisle with drawn sabers forming an archway.

At that moment, the double doors at the rear of the chapel swung open with two more sailors taking their post as sentries. Then Geannie and Senator Austin appeared through the doors and made their way to the front of the chapel beneath the crossed sabers. His heart melted. He had never seen her look so beautiful in her white southern belle wedding gown and wide brimmed white hat. As she took her place beside him, the sailors lowered sabers and stood at attention.

As the organ stopped playing, his father began, "Dearly beloved. We are gathered here to..." Curly's heart pounded. He didn't hear what came after that. But he did recognize his cue. "Do you Ensign Sheffield Brason take Gean Marie Austin to be your lawful wedded wife, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, to love, honor, and cherish for the rest of your natural life, until death do you part?"

In a clear and resounding voice, Curly declared, "I do."

Then it was Geannie's turn. She too said, "I do."

After exchanging rings and their vows to each other, his father concluded, "By the authority vested in me by the Commonwealth of Virginia, I now pronounce you husband and wife." Then he added, "You may now kiss the bride."

Curly lifted back the veil hanging from her wide brimmed hat and took Geannie in his arms and gave her a kiss that seemed to last an eternity.

Pastor Brason concluded with, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce Ensign and Mrs. Sheffield Brason. Please join us in the reception hall to greet the newlyweds."

At that, the sailors again drew their sabers and re-formed the arch. Hand in hand, he and Geannie practically floated down the aisle into the reception hall and took their places, with the best man, matron of honor, and their parents in their respective places. Soon the hall was filled with people mingling about, some standing and some seated at tables at one end of the hall or in chairs arranged around the sides.

Senator Austin stepped forward. Holding a glass in one hand and a dinner fork in the other, he tapped his glass to get everyone's attention. "Thank you all for coming tonight and celebrating this blessed occasion with Geannie and Curly." he began.

"Marie and I and our dear friends the Brasons, Emmett and Ellen, have always know this day would come. Geannie and Curly say that they have known each other all of their lives. True, they were born a couple of hours apart on the same day in houses next door to each other. But it wasn't until about week later when they were introduced to each other.

“The Brasons and us have been good friends for a very long time and have done many things together over the years. So it was only natural that we wanted to show off our new bundles of joy to each other. After passing the babies around and making a fuss over them, Geannie fell asleep so Marie put her down in her crib. A few minutes later Curly was fast asleep as well and Ellen put him down next to Geannie.

“About a half an hour or so later, Marie went in to check on them. She came back a moment later and in an excited, hushed voice said, 'You have got to come see this.' as she beckoned us into the nursery. Somehow they each had managed to get their tiny arms around the other. We just looked in amazement and I think right then all four of us knew that this day would come.

“So Geannie and Curly, when you go to sleep together tonight it won't be the first time. In fact there were many, many times we put you down together when you were babes. And,” he added, “there were lots of times up at our cabin that we even put you in the tub together. Of course we had to cut that out as you started to get bigger.

“They became aware of each other very early on. Soon they were playing together. They started out as playmates, then became good buddies and pals, then best friends. They seemed to have been stuck in that phase for a longtime. They played baseball, went fishing and horseback riding together. When Curly took up wrestling he would use my daughter as a sparing partner. Observing his moves, which were good I might add, I took Geannie aside and coached her on how to use his moves to her advantage.

“Yes, I admit. I am to blame for the tomboy she became. She gets her assertiveness from me. Fortunately her mother taught her to be a lady. Geannie was always smart enough to know which she needed to be at the appropriate time or what combination of both would be acceptable.

“As she grew into a young lady, Curly here was kind of slow to catch on. I don't know what changed that. I think Geannie must have clubbed him over the head to get his attention. When they were about fifteen they finally moved to the next stage of their relationship and became sweethearts. About a year later they began courting.

“We could always trust her and knew that she would make proper decisions and choices. We also trusted Curly because of his upbringing and character that if she ever got out of line that he wouldn't let her. I know that she could certainly keep him in line. I have never, ever seen my daughter in tears over something he said or did.

“After graduating from high school and before he went to the Academy and she went to Hollins they became engaged. I'll never forget the day he came to me to ask me for her hand in marriage. Then a few days later he showed up in that hot air balloon to propose. It was something that everyone just knew would happen.

“The engagement stage of their relationship was quite lengthy, only because of Curly's military commitment. Then one day in the fall it all came together and here we are tonight. I have never known a couple beginning marriage with such a solid foundation. Each stage of their relationship was built on the previous stage. Going from playmate to buddies didn't mean they weren't still playmates. In fact, they are still playmates, they're still best friends, they are still sweethearts, and now may I add lovers. If there ever was a match made in heaven, it is these two”

Raising his glass of punch he concluded, “To Geannie and Curly.”

Other toasts and speeches followed. The next one was from Commander Walker. “Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the officers and crew of the USS Wadsworth, please join me in a toast to Ensign and Mrs. Brason.” He then offered words of congratulations and encouragement to the couple. At that point. Mrs. Walker stood and took her husband's arm and directed words of counsel to Geannie about being a Navy wife. Then Commander Walker concluded with, “I expect you at your post on the bridge at 0800 Monday morning.” He raised his glass to the those assembled, then turned and saluted the young Ensign and his bride. The hall erupted with applause.

Ensign Brason returned the salute with, “Aye, aye. Sir!”

After a few minutes the curtain on the stage was drawn open to reveal a small orchestra. Curly whispered, “Geannie, you have thought of everything, haven't you?”

The director raised his baton to strike up the orchestra. Expecting a dance number, Curly and Geannie were both surprised to hear everyone assembled join in with the orchestra for a rendition of Happy Birthday. When they were finished, Geannie turned to Curley and said, “Happy birthday, Ensign” and gave him a big kiss. The crowd cheered.

When the cheering the died down, Curly announced to everyone, “This is the best birthday present I have ever received.” He then looked into Geannie'e eyes and said to her, “Happy birthday, Baby. I think now is a good time to give you your birthday and wedding gift.” Curly pulled from his pocket a slim wrapped package and presented it to his bride.

She eagerly opened it to find a silver cross about three quarters of an inch long on a long silver chain. In the center of the cross piece was a quarter carat diamond. A spiral etching twisted its way from top to bottom. Geannie gasped, “Oh, Curly! Its beautiful.”

“Look on the back.” Curly encouraged.

Geannie tuned it over and read aloud the inscription, “December 7, 1921.” She placed it around her neck and said, “I don't think I'll ever take it off. Thank you, thank you, Curly! Its beautiful.” She threw her arms around his neck and gave him yet another big kiss. The crowd cheered again as the orchestra began to play. Couples began filling the empty portion of the hall to dance. Others began filing through the

reception line to greet the bride and groom.

Having lived in the community all of their lives, and the prominence of their families, it seemed that everyone in Roanoke was there. Part way through the evening the reception line disbanded momentarily to allow the bride and groom a dance, followed by the tossing of the bouquet, the removal of the garter, and the cutting of the wedding cake. Curly drew his saber from its sheath and with Geannie's hand on his, together they sliced the cake. After posing for some photographs, the reception line reassembled to greet those who were still waiting to wish them well.

As the evening progressed, they were released from the reception line to join the dance. Curly hardly got to dance with his bride, as everyone wanted to cut in. The first was Commander Walker and Curly found himself dancing with Mrs. Walker. The same thing happened all evening as others wanted to dance with the bride. As the evening wore on and people began leaving, they had a better chance to dance with each other uninterrupted.

Finally, just before midnight there were only a few people left in the hall, the conductor announced the final dance of the evening. Curly and Geannie held on tight to one another as they waltzed around the floor to "Kiss Me Again". Everyone else cleared the floor and let them have it to themselves. When the music stopped, they continued to dance a moment longer. Finally coasting to stop in a long embrace followed by another kiss.

"Curly," Geannie interrupted. "Do you recollect when you said that I had thought of everything?"

"Yeah."

"Well, there is something kind of important that I forgot," she admitted.

"What's that?" Curly quizzed. "Everything seemed to go perfect to me."

Geannie laughed, "When Daddy mentioned the part about going to bed tonight, I realized that I forgot to arrange for a honeymoon suite. We have no place to stay tonight."

Curly laughed too. "That's alright, sweetheart. We have a lifetime together. What is one night going to hurt. I'll tell you what. It has been a long day. I don't know about you but I'm beat."

"Yeah, me too." Geannie agreed.

Curly continued, "Why don't we each sleep in our own beds tonight." We can pack first thing in the morning and head for the cabin?"

"That sounds good to me," Geannie yawned.

They left the church together and Curly walked her to her door, took her in his arms for one more kiss, as if the whole thing had been a date. At that, he walked next door and put himself to bed in his own room. As he undressed and climbed into bed he imagined Geannie doing the same thing. He quickly drifted off to sleep with a vision of her loveliness in his mind.

The next thing he new, he felt her kiss his cheek. He thought he was dreaming. He opened his eyes to find Geannie stooped over him in the dim natural light of a winter morning. She was wearing a rose organdie dress, made of sheer cotton, with an elaborate embroidered display on the waist and skirt. The collar (finished with neat black velvet tie), sleeves and skirt pocket were trimmed with plaited white organdie frills. The skirt, with it generous sweep, came ti mid calf. It was gathered at the waistline with a wide sash around the waistline that tied in large bow in back. She had ordered it from the Sears and Roebuck catalog earlier in the year for only six dollars and forty eight cents.

“Good morning sleepyhead,” She greeted him.

“Hi,” he muttered. Then he sat up to make room for her to sit next to him. “I had the worst dream last night. I dreamed that we got married!”

Geannie teasingly slugged him on the arm as she was accustomed to doing. Something that was left over form their younger playmate/buddy years. At that she pushed him back into bed and hiked up her skirt to her knees and straddled him with her hands on his shoulders like a wrestler pinning an opponent. Then she lowered her face to his and kissed him. “Now get up and get ready. We have a honeymoon to go on. Mother has breakfast ready for us. I'll see you in a few minutes. She bent down to kiss him again. Curly pulled her down from her crouching position on top of him. As she collapsed onto him, he kissed her once more.

Pushing herself up, she ordered, “Out of bed, Ensign. We only have three days. Lets shove off.” At that she turned and left is room.

As she left, he responded, “Aye, aye ma'am. Any further orders, ma'am?”

Curly quickly showered and shaved and within a few minutes he packed his bags out to Geannie's old Model T. He found a big sign reading “Just Married” attached the trunk and strings of tin cans tied to the rear bumper. He went next door where he found her setting their breakfast on the table. The only other person in sight was Mrs. Austin.

After breakfast he took her bags out to the car and helped her into the car. After he crank stated the car, she slid over to let him in behind the wheel. Sitting next to him she held his arm and laid her head on his shoulder as they started out. As they drove the twenty five miles to the cabin, they talked of the wonderful evening the night before and all that had taken place. Geannine couldn't have been more pleased with how it turned out. They conversation turned to plans and aspersions for the future. As they neared the cabin, their conversation turned to the next three days.

Curly set the bags down on the porch. Always the aggressive one, Geannie jumped into his arms, throwing her arms around his neck. She planted a big kiss on him and then ordered, “Carry me across the threshold, Ensign.” Being trained to follow orders, he obeyed.

Once inside, he put her down and helped her off with her coat and brought in their bags. The cabin was stocked with everything they would need for the next three days. Stirling had even been there earlier in the morning and delivered the supplies and built a fire in the fireplace. If they needed anything else, the Abbott General Store was only three miles away. It was kind of strange finding themselves alone in the cabin where they had spent so much time together with their families all of their lives.

Eager to begin their honeymoon, they held each other close as they kissed. They were accustomed to kissing and did so frequently and it didn't matter much who was around. But this kiss was unlike anything they had ever had before as years of pent up passion began to release itself. For the first time they were able to touch each other in ways that previously had to be kept under control. Knowing that they now belonged to each other with a commitment to one another and to God, they were anxious, and a bit apprehensive, to get to know each other in a whole new way.

Finally, taking each other by both hands, they stood back, looking longingly at one another. He just stood there staring at her in amazement. Geannie's large, expressive, emerald eyes radiated with brightness and complimented the silky smooth fair complexion of her oval face. Her eyelashes were thick but not extremely long. A dampened brush rubbed against a mascara cake containing soap and black dye in equal proportions applied to the lashes gave them them the look that she liked. It was extremely messy to apply and to remove and getting it wet caused it to run. Her very feminine eyebrows arched gracefully over her eyes.

As he looked deep into her eyes and saw something he hadn't see before. In addition to the love and adoration that had always been there, there was now a look of longing, desire, and passion. The intensity in her eyes burned so bright that Curly thought he could see the reflection of their unborn children; almost as if they were behind a sheer curtain in some distant place and time in the universe just waiting to come and join them. It almost frightened him. They had often talked of having a family and children were a big part of what they wanted from their lives together.

Her eyebrows and eyewashes were darker than her thick, auburn hair which she wore just past her shoulders. The tight curls that were popular at the time didn't hold in her hair, rather her natural wave prevailed. Using rollers did enhance the effect. She parted it on the left side and brushed it behind her left ear; the right side covering her ear. She often wore it pinned up in a twist or in a ponytail around the house. When she really wanted to dress up, she put it up in an elegant pile with thin ringlets gracing her temples. She typically combed her bangs to the right, concealing a slight widow's peak.

Her ears were of normal shape and proportion with a small free earlobe. Her mother let her get her ears pierced when she was twelve. She preferred dainty earrings, either a small stud or an inconspicuous drop earring.

The straight bridge of her nose ended in an angled tip. Her nose was bent to the left just enough to be noticeable, a result of falling on her face when she was a toddler.

Her cheeks complimented her face, bringing her eyes, nose, and mouth together. Her cheeks were highlighted by slight dimples that were particularly noticeable when she smiled or laughed. Geannie used makeup to bring some color to her ivory skin, although she was very attractive without it.

She had full lips that naturally curled up at the corners in a permanent smile. She liked to use rose lipstick as she didn't like too much red. Curly described her lips as, "very kissable". Her teeth were straight and fairly even, with one peculiar abnormality that was barely noticeable. Even though one of her incisors was missing there wasn't a gap as the next tooth took its place.

Finally, her face featured a smooth, rounded chin. Overall, her well balanced face was strikingly beautiful and presented the graceful lines of a perpendicular profile.

From her eyes, he followed her flaming locks of auburn hair that graced her long neck down to her shoulders. Her ivory skin complemented the color of her hair. Though the strength of her arms was evident, her hands were quite feminine with relatively long fingers; ideal for playing the piano. She kept her fingernails trimmed just past her fingertips. She polished her nails by massaging tinted powders and creams into her nails, then buffed them shiny with a chamois cloth. When colored nail polish became available later in the twenties, she began using it.

Curly's eyes slowly scanned her lean, goddess like body down to her slender waist and rounded hips. The vision of loveliness continued down her long, graceful legs all the way to her feet. Geannie had a couple of what she called "battle scars". When she was ten her brother, Stirling, accidentally shot her squarely in the chest with his Daisey BB-gun. He was close enough for the bb to penetrate her skin where it was stopped by her sternum. The bb was easily extracted with a pair of tweezers but left a welt. Later however, it became infected by a small piece of fabric which was left in the wound. It festered and had to be lanced to allow it to drain. Once it healed, a small scar formed. As she grew, so did the scar. By the time she was full grown, the scar was nearly a quarter of an inch long.

The other scar was on her knee, the result of a crashing her bicycle when she was thirteen. As she fell, she gashed her knee on a sharp rock which required stitches. The resulting scar was about three quarters of an inch long. Her body bore one other unique mark. She had a dark brown birthmark on the back of her left shoulder. It was an irregular shaped patch about an inch and a half in diameter.

Taking it all in, Curly memorized every feature of the mature, fully developed, well endowed woman that stood before him. Every inch of her curvy, well proportioned, physically fit, five foot seven inch frame radiated with purity, virtue, and beauty.

In the meantime, Geannie had just stood there looking at him as well. The look of longing in her

eyes intensified as she studied him. At five foot ten, he was three inches taller than her.

While he was looking her over, she looked deep into his brown eyes as they shown out from under his rather thick, almost bushy eyebrows. The bridge of his angular nose was straight, the tip coming to an abrupt point, the bottom being flat. He had a kindly face with an infectious smile, yet his square jaw and dimpled chin gave him a commanding and authoritative appearance.

His broad shoulders topped his moderately muscular physique that tapered toward his hips. Thick, black, curly hair covered his chest and abdomen. He had hair everywhere. It went down his arms and legs and he even had hair on his back; hence his nickname. His hairy disposition also included a heavy beard, which he kept clean shaven, although by evening he had a good shadow and by morning course stubble. If he wanted to, he could have grown a respectable beard in a matter of days.

Coming out of the trance he was in, all he could say was, "You are the most beautiful creature that I have ever seen, and to think that you're finally mine is almost more than I can comprehend."

"Why thank you." Geannie said in response. "You're a mighty fine specimen yourself." she declared. "I'm glad that you like what you see. You haven't seen anything yet, but if you've got to catch me first." and dashed into the other room. Curly chased after her.

After a brief chase, he had her cornered. Giggling, she dashed past him. At that, the chase was on again. As she bolted, Curly followed as she lead him on a merry chase around the cabin. At some point the tables were turned and it was her chasing him as their playful game of tag continued. At one point in an attempt to get away, Geannie darted out the back door into the cold mountain air and dashed around and back in through the front door. After a few minutes of being chased around cabin, she let him catch her and a playful wrestling match ensued.

Not sure where to go from there, they did what came naturally. Geannie was actually better prepared for it that he was. Ever since she was in her early teens her mother had many frank discussions with her about sexuality, the most recent was only the day before. That and the women's health class that she took at Hollins had prepared her for what was about to take place and she had a pretty good idea of what to expect. Curly on the other hand only had a vague idea from what he had figured out on his own.

At the moment of mutual surrender, they gave themselves to one another and became as one physically, emotionally and spiritually, their souls were bound together as one.

Geannie's mother was right, it was definitely worth waiting for. There was no guilt, no shame but rather a feeling of deep spiritually as God blessed their union and the sacred act they had performed. There was no going back, nor did they want to. Their relationship had become much deeper and more intimate in a wonderful way.

For the next three days Curly kept the fireplace stoked and they were warm and cozy in their

honeymoon cottage as they ignored the rest of the world, completely enamored with each other taking full advantage of their new found way of expressing their love for one another. They only left the cabin once and drove the few miles to New Castle to have dinner at the only restaurant in town.

All too soon, it was over. On Sunday morning they drove back down the mountain in time to attend Sunday services. After lunch, she took him to the train station for the trip back to Norfolk. As they embraced in farewell he said, "You know, the ship will be in port all during the holidays. I won't be able to come home again so soon, so why don't you come spend them with me?"

"That sounds like a rendezvous to me." she replied as the conductor made the final boarding call. "I'll be there."

Curly boarded the train and took a seat near the window where he could see her. Waving, they looked on until they could no longer see each other. Come 0800 Monday morning, Ensign Brason was at his post at the helm on the bridge of the USS Wadsworth as Commander Walker gave the order to get underway. At that exact moment Geannie was standing in front of her class as one of the students lead them in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Wadsworth went to sea that morning and returned a few days later. Before going to sea one more time prior to Christmas, Curly reserved the honeymoon suite at the Tazewll, the nicest hotel in Norfolk. He arranged with the manager to have a Christmas tree in the room with a few wrapped gifts under the tree. He left instructions that they were to give Geannie the key to the room when she arrived.

She arrived by train on Friday afternoon, the 23rd and went directly to the hotel as Curly had instructed in his last letter. She found the packages that he had placed under the tree and placed two or three of her own with them along with some from his family. Then she noticed the note that said "I will be there at 8:00. I can't wait to see you."

All day, Curly had a difficult time concentrating on his duty as he stood watch on the bridge. Fortunately, a holiday mood prevailed aboard the ship and there was nothing pressing that required strict attention to detail.

Right on schedule, Geannie heard a key being placed in the lock at eight o'clock. As the door swung open, there was a handsome naval officer standing in the doorway. Before he could say anything, she said, "Come in and shut the door, sailor. A girl could catch a cold."

"Now, aren't you the cat's meow!" He closed the door behind him took off his pee coat and hung it on the coat tree next to the door. He reached in to the bag he was carrying and pulled out a single long stem rose and presented to her as she got up and rushed into his arms.

They spent a lovely weekend together, which was essentially an extension of their honeymoon. He took her around and showed her the sights of Norfolk and took her to some of the nicest places in the city,

many of them adorned in holiday decorations.

On Christmas morning, they opened their gifts from each other. Among her gifts to him was a leather bound journal. On the front was engraved, "The Personal Logbook of Ensign Sheffield Brason, USN." She told him that it was to take with him on his world cruise. "I want you to write all about the places that you visit in it so I can read all about your adventures." They spent most of Christmas day alone in their hotel room, only leaving to go to the restaurant in the lobby.

During the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve, they finally got out of their hotel room. There were a lot of things to do that they took advantage of, including going to a couple of picture shows, ice skating, and visiting the attractions that Norfolk had to offer. On three or four occasions, Curly had to stand a four hour watch on the bridge as the duty officer. During those times, Geannie found something else to do. She spent one afternoon with Mrs. Walker, who gave her some wise counsel pertaining to being a navy wife. Other than standing watch from time to time, they had entire week together.

On New Years Eve, the commander of Destroyer Division 17 hosted a New Years Eve party for the officers on the four ships in the division and their companions. It was a formal affair held at a hotel near the base. All decked out for the occasion, Curly and Geannie arrived in a cab. The evening began with dinner followed by a social hour and dancing to a live orchestra after that.

Geannie helped herself to some fruit punch from one of the several punch bowls. She ignored the liquor bottle standing near the bowl, thinking it was there to add your own alcohol to the punch. Prohibition had been in affect for nearly two years, which banned the manufacture, transportation, and sale of liquor, nevertheless there it was.

Geannie thought her fruit punch had a kick to it, call her naive but she didn't realize that it had been spiked. After two or three glasses of what she innocently thought was punch, the next thing she knew she woke up with a terrible headache. At first the surroundings of their hotel room were unfamiliar to her, and Curly was nowhere in sight. She went to get out of bed and upon throwing back the covers, she let out a scream. "Why don't I have anything on and where are my clothes!?" she wondered out loud. "I don't remember taking them off. I don't even remember leaving the party. Come to think of it, I don't remember anything after dinner." After a moment, she begin to recognize her surroundings.

In a daze, she heard Curly unlock the door. Uncertain as to who it was, in a panic she pulled the bed covers over herself before Curly entered the room. As he shut the door behind him, it slipped from his grasp and closed with a bang. That didn't set well with her headache.

Relieved to see Curly, she said "Oh good, its you." Then she asked, "Where are my clothes?"

"Don't you remember, sweetheart?"

"Huh uh." she shook her head. "I don't remember anything." she said as she sat up the bed. "Where

have you been?"

I went down to the hotel lobby and got a hotplate, a coffee pot, and some coffee. I figured you were going to need some."

"What happened?"

"You really don't remember, do you?"

Again she shook her head.

"Do you remember pouring yourself some punch last night at the party?"

"Yeah, I do. It had a bit of a kick to it."

"That was the booze in it."

"Booze!" Geannie shrieked. "No. I didn't pour any into my glass."

"It was already in the punch. How much did you have?"

"I don't know. Maybe three or four glasses." she confessed. "Are you telling me that I got drunk?"

"Yep, and now you have a hang over."

"Why did I wake up without any clothes on and where are they?" she asked again. "Oh no! Did I do anything foolish?" Geannie gasped.

Curly couldn't help but have a little fun at her expense at the moment. "That was quite a dance you did on the banquet table. I gathered up what I could of your clothes and brought them back with us, but I couldn't find all of them."

"I didn't!" Her face went as white as the bed sheet she that covered her.

Unable to carry it any further, Curly admitted, "No, you really didn't. I didn't realize what was the matter with you at first. I thought you where slurring your speech because you were tired. Then all of sudden you got a glazed look in your eyes and through up all over yourself and passed out. That is when I realized what was in your glass. There were punch bowls that weren't spiked, they didn't have bottles next to them. I just assumed that you knew that. Anyway, I had some one call a cab for me. When I was loading you into the back seat, you lost control of your bladder and wet yourself."

"I didn't!"

"I'm afraid so. So I brought you back here. I took off your clothes and slushed them out in the bathroom and hung them up to dry. When I got back to you, you were out cold. I discovered that it was kind of hard to try to dress someone who is unresponsive, so I just tucked you in like that." The whole time Curly was explaining what happened, he plugged in the hot plate and began making a pot of coffee.

"Oh no." Geannie groaned. "I'm so embarrassed. What did everyone say?"

"Well, seeing that you were in trouble, Mrs. Walker was right there. We figured out what had happened and I assured her that you had innocently got into the hard stuff. She made sure that everyone

understood that it was an honest mistake. Why don't you take a bath and I'll bring you some coffee when its ready.”

“That sounds good. I think I'll take you up on that.” Then she added, “I really don't care what others may think, but do you think less of me?”

“No, sweetheart. I know that you had no intentions for what happened. I'll bet you'll never do that again.”

Geannie climbed to the bathtub to relax and unwind. A few minutes later, Curly brought her a cup of black coffee. He sat there as they visited while she sipped her coffee. When she was finished, he brought her a refill.

As the day went on, which happened to be New Years Day 1922, Geannie started feeling better and her head cleared up. Later they went out for dinner and enjoyed their last evening together.

New Years Day was on Sunday. Geannie didn't have to be back to school until Tuesday, but Curly had to report for duty on Monday morning at ten o'clock. Commander Walker had offered him a two hour extension, which gave him time to see Geannie off at the train station. This would be the last time they would see each other for several months.

* * * * *

The Wadsworth was not a real ship, but the Clemson Class was an actual class of destroyers.

Kiss Me Again was a popular foxtrot tune from 1923 by Clarence Williams and arranged by Don Redman.

The spiked punch story was inspired by an incident my wife almost had. We were attending a function where two punch bowls were set up, the one with alcohol was clearly identified by the the bottle in front of it, the other did not. She innocently dipped into the spiked bowl. Fortunately for her someone pointed it out to her before she drank it.

The ad for the dress that Geannie wore. It didn't say what catalog the ad was in.



Price: \$6.48

Description:

Light and airy as the Spring is this stunning Organdie dress. It is in the height of fashion and selected by our New York style organization because it offered more than usual for the money. The elaborate and beautiful embroidery displayed on waist and skirt front lends uncommon distinction to this model. The collar, finished with neat black velvet tie, the fashionable sleeves and the novel pocket are daintily trimmed with plaited frills of white organdie. Wide sash ties in large bow in back. Skirt of generous sweep is gathered at waistline Choose from rose, blue, or brown. (organdie is the sheerest and crispest cotton cloth made)