

The stars remain unseen when mists enfold,
 And alien laugh gives way to friendly tear.
 But wait; I hurl away the heavy earth;
 I was not acting when its play was cast;
 For bowing shoulders there is no applause—
 I will not hold it up and doubt its worth:
 In vain a Grecian urn reveals the past;
 We see effects and cannot find a cause.

—Ina Marshall.

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Cousin Lloyd and the Baptism

Bruce Hamman

At the time of cousin Lloyd's baptism, there were twelve hundred and twenty-seven people living in the town of Snacarac, not including the people living on the lakes. Cousin Lloyd was the leader of the town's sports. He could catch more fish, drink more beer, and play better poker than anyone else in town. He earned thirty dollars a week delivering ice in the mornings and usually that much more playing golf with the lakers in the afternoon.

The town of Snacarac lies on a narrow strip of land between Lake Wakatawba and Lake Lexnogia. Cousin Lloyd served as game warden for the lakes and the hunting area around them. He was a good game warden until one time the conservation people caught him with seven pheasants, which was five over the limit, and cousin Lloyd was fired from the state payroll.

Cousin Lloyd himself ran for two offices at one time or another. Every year a wit would nominate him for Sunday school superintendent. Every year he was defeated. One time he ran for volunteer fire chief and was elected. He managed the first three fires without any trouble. On the way to the fourth fire, he let the hose drag from the back of the truck and the nozzle was filled with gravel. Before the hose was unplugged the house burned down, so the town called a special meeting and dismissed Lloyd as fire chief.

Cousin Lloyd was twenty-eight at the time of the fourth fire escapade, and for twelve of the twenty-eight years a group of the townspeople, led by Reverend Rocoff, had been urging Lloyd to give up his sinful ways. Their big argument was that nearly all of the young people were in the fold, to which Lloyd would usually answer, "Yes, you convert them one week

and the following week they are at Tate's drinking beer with me." Lloyd didn't mean to cause any trouble for the converted beer drinkers; he just wanted to drink his beer without having to sneak around to do it.

At the time cousin Jeanne came to live in our town, things were at a pretty much of a standstill. She wasn't my cousin then, but she came to live at the lakes every summer and went back to Chicago every winter until finally her dad made enough money so that they could live at the lakes all year. People say that Chicago is a bad town, but that was where Jeanne was from, and she was more religious than nearly anybody in our town, except Reverend Rocoff, of course. She had not lived here five months until she was elected secretary of the Sunday school. From then on, no matter how late he had been out the night before or how badly he wanted to go fishing, every young man in our congregation came to church nearly every Sunday.

The first time Jeanne and cousin Lloyd really noticed each other was at the election of Jeanne as secretary. Jeanne read off the names of the candidates for superintendent of the Sunday school, and as usual Lloyd was one of them. In the past, Lloyd had just kept sitting when the rest of the candidates stood up as their names were read off, but this time he stood up with a smile and looked around the church as if he were going to hand out cigars or something to get a few votes. Jeanne got a mad, serious look and read the next name. It was a close election between three of the candidates. Cousin Lloyd got only three votes. After church he asked Jeanne for a date and she said yes.

When cousin Lloyd went to pick Jeanne up, I guess her father almost hit the ceiling. He and Lloyd had played golf quite a bit together; and it was bad enough that the older man had usually lost five or six dollars to him, but he had never expected to see Jeanne coming home from church with cousin Lloyd.

For about half a year after that Sunday, the only time Lloyd came into Tate's was when he would drop in for a glass of beer and a hard-boiled egg after he finished his ice route. He never went to the pool room for poker any more.

It looked as if he and Jeanne were getting along fine. The talk was that her father was going to set Lloyd up with a boat repair shop and that he and Jeanne were going to be married in the fall. Then Lloyd came into Tate's one night looking mad and ordered three beers. He drank them right down and ordered three more. He went at it like that for

about an hour and finally said, "To hell with it." Then he went to play some poker.

"Well," I thought, "things have finally come to a head." I knew that Jeanne had crowded the making over of Lloyd a little too fast and that it would be an accident if she ever saw him again. I was wrong, because the next Sunday Lloyd was in church with the most crossed-up look of belligerence and misery on his face that you will ever see.

Cousin Lloyd sat on the back seat with me, and I never want to go through another service like it. Lloyd would first let out a long sigh and then look hopeless. After being quiet and feeling sorry for himself for a moment, he would scoot back in his seat and look mad. Every time he moved he would dig an elbow in me and scrape his feet on the floor. I don't know what the sermon was about, and I doubt if anyone else does either, the way everybody was craning his neck to see what was making the noise. Finally the sermon was over and Reverend Rocoff announced that the pond down by the cement factory had the ice off it and all the people who had been converted during the winter would be baptized that afternoon.

Some churches hold with sprinkling a few drops of water on the head for baptizing, but in our church we take the converts down to the cement factory or lake, whichever happens to be handiest, and really duck them. Well, this Sunday we all went home for dinner, and the people to be baptized changed to old clothes and threw some warm blankets in the car to wrap up in after being baptized. Cousin Lloyd went home with me for dinner and followed along out to the pond, looking miserable and apparently not wanting to be left alone with his misery for a minute.

There were seventeen that day if I remember correctly, and each of them took about four or five minutes. You haven't seen anything until you see a nervous person go into the cold water and let Reverend Rocoff duck him. Some of them came up looking sheepish, and some of them came up looking purified. Most of them came up just looking cold, and those were the ones we were standing there feeling sorry for, when suddenly there was a splash and cousin Lloyd was in the water.

If you have ever seen an auctioneer go to work when a hand is raised, you know how Reverend Rocoff acted when Lloyd hit the water. He grabbed cousin Lloyd and started shouting how wonderful it was that Lloyd had seen the error of his ways and wanted to be baptized. Lloyd just looked

surprised while Reverend Rocoff went on about how the light had finally dawned on cousin Lloyd and how he would never regret it. Cousin Lloyd just stood there until Reverend Rocoff got tired of pushing his head down and jerking it up and finally let it go. Lloyd walked out of the water as if he were in a trance. Finally someone threw some blankets around him, and all the people of the church crowded around him and shook his hand, calling him brother and crying how wonderful it all was. Lloyd finally came to enough to accept the congratulations and thank the people for their kindness.

Cousin Jeanne was standing about a hundred yards away by herself. I don't know how she got so far away after pushing Lloyd into the pond.

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The Happiest Time of Your Life

June Lalen

Do you really think Charlie will bring her an orchid?" Mrs. James exclaimed to Mrs. Mathews. Mrs. Mathews almost swallowed a clothes pin in quickly advising Mrs. James that if she were Mrs. James she would see that her daughter's formal was a color to go with orchid, just in case.

"You never know," she said, with a wink of her eye.

Nobody had talked of anything but the high school Senior Dance since the posters had been tacked up two weeks before. Fathers were getting the cars shined for Junior to use. Mothers were carefully planning exactly what Jane or Josephine would wear for the big night. Even the children had been counting the days, for there was a balcony where the parents and children could sit and watch the teen-agers dance in what had normally been the school gym. But suddenly for that one night it would become a fairyland with crepe paper, dim lights, soft music, and cokes.

In a small town like Mapleton things do not happen very often, and when something big like a dance comes along everyone has a part in it. It is not just a dance for the teen-agers. It gives a carnival spirit to the whole town. It is true that only the juniors and seniors were allowed to attend the dance, but everyone was invited to watch. Each child in the balcony dreamed of that day when he or she could really be down there. Instead of hoping to grow up to be president, in Mapleton the children were eager to grow up and go to the Senior Dance. It was that important.