

A photograph of a light-colored straw hat hanging from a vertical wooden post. The background is a wall of horizontal wooden planks. The hat is a wide-brimmed style with a chin strap. The lighting is warm, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is framed by a dark brown border.

Dreams Do Come True

By Ocean

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“Okay, girls come over here and sit with Mamma, and you can hear the story I promised to tell you if you were good. And, you were all good girls today, so now it’s story time. But, before we start, Jenny go and get some more wood for the fire and mind you don’t get your new pajammies dirty. Melissa you run along and bring mamma the cookie jar so we can have us some cookies with our hot chocolate. Little Sara, you come here and sit on mamma’s lap. I’ll cuddle you while I tell my three beautiful girls a bed time story.”

“Okay, are y’all settled now?”

“Good.”

“For your story tonight, I’ve decided to tell you a love story. Little girls always love to hear love stories, don’t they? Oh yes Jenny, I know you liked scary stories like the one I told you last night, but you also do like love stories too, right?”

“I thought so.”

“Okay, so let’s get started. This here’s a love story. Yes, it is. But, it’s also a story about how if you pray really hard you can make your hopes and dreams come true. Well, in this case, make someone else’s hope and dreams come true.

“This story is about how your Aunt Emmie met and fell in love with your Uncle Willie, and how by praying, I’m the one that made it happen for her.”

“You see, when we were little girls, Emmie was my sister you know, that’s why she’s your aunt, and we was just about the ages y’all are right now. Let me think, Emmie was eleven when I was twelve. And we had a best friend, my sister Emmie and I did, and her name was Wilma. Wilma was thirteen. At that time, the three of us girls were closer than the nose hairs on a cow. I tell you what. We did *everything* together, and we was together all the time. We played together. We slept together. And secrets! We had more secrets! Lordie, Lordie. Oh, what fun we used to have back then. So ever though we weren’t really sisters, it’s as if the three of us were sisters, just like you three are.”

“And we was all so different. I had beautiful blonde hair, and well, I was always a little on the heavy side, just as I am now. My mamma used to say I was, ‘healthy.’”

“Yes, Sara, I was chunk, I mean, healthy, just like you are. Okay, back to the story.”

“Your Aunt Emmie had the most loveliest red hair, just like yours Melissa. It was long, and curly, and just lovely, like something you’d see in a magazine. When she ran, those beautiful locks would bounce up and down. And she had a perfect girlie figure. She could’ve been a model if’n she’d wanted to. And our friend Wilma had the blackest hair you ever did see. It was blacker than those black cats you always see advertised at Halloween, you know, with their backs arched high and their hair all spiked up. And skinny! Lord, she was skinnier than a three-legged barn cat.”

“Let’s talk about our eyes. As you know, my eyes were brown, just like all of yours. Emmie’s were hazel.”

“What’s hazel? Well, hazel means they were brown and green and blue all mixed up together. And Wilma’s were the brightest blue you ever did see. They were blue like a robin’s eggshell. But sometimes, especially if she was really *really* mad they’d turn green. It was the darnest thing you ever did see. And eyelashes! I swear you never did see anyone with such beautiful, thick, long eyelashes as on that girl.”

“Yes sirree, those were the good ol’ days when the three of us would run arm and arm together, laughing and giggling over nothing and everything. We thought just about everything in life was funny! Well, you girls know what I mean. Sometimes you three get to giggling and there’s no stopping you, right?”

“Of course, that was before we got boy crazy, or I got boy crazy I should say. In fact, we *hated* boys when we were younger, and the boys hated us. I don’t have to tell you girls how difficult boys can be. You know sometimes they’re downright mean and for no good reason at’all. They used to tease us all the time. Especially Wilma they used to tease. They were horribly mean to Wilma.”

“Why were they so mean to Wilma? Well because... Let’s see, how can I say this. Well, because Wilma was what we called, ‘odd’.”

“No. Not odd like the McKinley boy. He has what is called a mental situation in his brain. Wilma was just different. I always felt bad for Wilma ‘cause her mamma was real sick see, and could hardly get out of bed. And her daddy was a very mean man who drank too much, and he used to beat on her. So, it was up to Wilma to take care of the farm and the other youngin’s in her family. She was the skinniest kid you ever did see. We was all about the same height, the three of us, but there was nothing to her but bones, I swear. Me and your

Aunt Emmie used to sneak food to Wilma, and we'd beg our mamma and daddy to let her eat over our house practically every day. Sometimes they'd let her eat with us."

"Anyway, so not only was she really skinny, but she didn't like being a girl. Imagine? She always dressed like a boy, and she walked like a boy and talked like a boy. And she kept her hair cut really short, just like the boys used to. She'd cut it herself. And on top of her head was—"

"Right. You guessed it. A cowboy hat. She never went anywhere without that straw hat on. So, anyway, the boys used to torment her and do really mean things to her. I always felt kinda sorry for her. But she was a good fighter. As skinny as she was, she could fight like a mamma mountain cat fights to protect her babies. And that child had the quickest mind of any of the kids in the hollow. She could out think them dim witted boys any day of the week. That helped get her out of a lot of trouble. Course sometimes that mind of hers got her into trouble too. She was just too dang smart sometimes. If that child wanted something, then she'd think n' think n' think until she figured out a way to get it. Once she put her mind to something, she'd never give up. Just like a barn dog won't let go of a chicken bone, that's how she was."

"So anyway, when I got to be fourteen, I took a liking to a boy, who, as you know, later was to become your daddy. He was the cutest boy, I do declare, and I knew, even though I was only fourteen, that I was going to marry that boy someday. So sure enough, I didn't hesitate one minute when he was eighteen, and I'd just turned sixteen, he asked me to become Mrs. Billy-Bob Hoyton. And before I even turned seventeen, we were blessed with you Melissa, our first lovely baby. But enough of that, I've told you that story a hundred times..."

"So anyway, about that time, I stopped hanging around with your Aunt Emmie and with Wilma as much. You know, at some point, a girl becomes a woman and grows up. But those two, they were *inseparable*. I'll tell you they were closer than the two eyes on a fly."

"Until suddenly, one day when Wilma was eighteen years old, she disappeared. 'Poof'. Just like that. Didn't leave no note or tell anyone where she was going, at least that I know of. All she left was her hat, hangin' inside our barn. And no one has ever heard what happened to her nor hair of her. Your poor Aunt Emmie was heartbroken, losing her best friend like that and all. She cried for days and days. I tried to tell her she was better off

without her, because they were spending too much time together anyway, and well, that wasn't natural. But she'd just sit there, holding that hat, wiping tears that fell from her eyes. I tried to tell her that she'd never find a husband unless she started to go out and let the boys court her and go to dances and all that. But Emmie didn't want to hear about none of that and she'd just cry and cry. She'd never go out with any of the boys that used to come courtin' her. That's when I started praying to God to help my sister. I wanted her to be as normal and as happy as I was with your daddy."

"One day your Aunt Emmie told me, now remember, she was only about sixteen years old at the time, so she was still a youngin' and sometimes youngin's have silly thoughts in their mind. One day she told me a secret and made me swear not to tell anyone, but I don't reckon she'd mind that I'm telling you now because I'm telling you her love story and it was so long ago that she made me swear. And besides, she probably forgot that she made me swear anyway. So, one day she told me that she was never going to go out with a boy and never going to get married to a boy because she was waiting for Wilma to come back. She said that Wilma had promised her that she'd come back and marry her, and she'd made Emmie promise, a "cross your heart and until-you-die" promise, to wait."

"Well when I heard that, I knew my sister needed more help than I could give her. There was only one thing that could save my sister from the ridiculous ideas that were stuck inside her broken brain. She needed help from the good Lord up above. So, I started praying more. And I'd pray every morning and every evening and sometime, mostly on Sunday, I'd pray three times a day that God, in his infinite kindness and wisdom would help my sister."

"The years went by, I was happily married and was raising you three girls with daddy. We was all so happy, and I really wanted my sister to be happy. But I couldn't get her to give any man a chance. And believe me, many of them men did try. Bobby Duffy, you know the man who owns Duffy's Gas station? Yea him, well he tried more than any man I ever did see try to get a woman to fall in love with him. She wanted nothing to do with him.

Wouldn't give him a chance. Even Jack Gimpett, the undertaker's son, tried to court her. But she was stubborn. Of course, I don't blame her for not wanting him, he always did smell funny and don't you dare ever tell him I said so when you see him in church."

"Well one day, and here comes the love story part. Now remember, because I loved my sister, instead of being selfish and praying for things for my own self, I prayed and prayed

for God to have mercy on my sister and send a man into her life. Well one day, my prayers paid off. When your Aunt Emmie was twenty years old, and we was all afraid she was going to grow old alone as an old maid. A spinster they call a woman who grows old alone, we was afraid she'd become a spinster. Suddenly, one day, your Uncle Willy comes into town. 'Poof' out of no where, just as if God had plucked him down right here in Creeksville specially to make your Aunt Emmie a happy woman. He says he asked God for guidance, closed his eyes, pointed to a map and his finger landed on Creeksville, so he came riding his horse into our town. He says he always trusted that God would guide him to the right woman, and sure enough He did. Right to Emmie. And if he wasn't the most handsomest man on the planet. He was almost what you'd call beautiful, he was that handsome. And although he wasn't a very large man, he seemed big because of how kind he was, you know how that is? The sweeter and kinder someone is, it's almost as if because they have a big heart, that makes them seem bigger. Don't you think? Well I do, anyway, although he wasn't that big, he sure was strong. My oh my. Of course, I never did see him with his shirt off, but I'll tell you what, you should've seen the muscles in his arms when he first met your Aunt Emmie. Beautiful, long thin muscles. But he had the smallest, most delicate hands for a man. They seemed so tender, almost as if he should've been a painter or something. They weren't rough like your daddy's, not that that's a bad thing. And, I'll tell you a secret, your Aunt Emmie told me he had the "tender touch", that's what she likes to call it, you know how us ladies like to talk about that sort of thing, but y'all are too young to hear all of that now. I'll tell you more about that when you grow up."

"So anyway, he'd made his money, and his muscles, working in the coal mines up in Illinois. And smart! What a clever business mind he had. Anyway, he rode into town and before you know it, he and your Aunt Emmie have eyes for each other. They swept each other off their feet. It was just like in a fairy tale. He says the first moment he saw Emmie, he knew right then and that she was the woman he was going to marry. And Emmie says the same thing. She said that the moment she first laid her eyes upon him her heart started fluttering, and she got all weak and shaky and nervous and she knew it was love. Course you girls don't know nothin' bout all that yet, but you just wait. Someday you will."

"Now you don't remember the wedding, you were all just babies at the time, but it was the biggest wedding this town ever did see or ever will again most likely."

“Your Aunt Emmie was the most beautiful bride. When you looked at her, the breath jumped right out of your throat, that’s how beautiful she was. Everyone said she was breathtaking. And Willie was just like a man out of a movie star magazine. He walked in with shiny new boot and a handsome suit. He was wearing that old cowboy hat that Wilma had left. I don’t know why he was wearing it. I guess he just liked it. We all thought that was odd but paid it no mind. All we cared about was that finally our Emmie was happy and getting hitched. When they said their vows, Willy took the hat off, of course, and every single piece of his short, thick, shiny black hair was combed, slicked neatly back and was perfectly in place. And his eyes, you know how they’re usually that beautiful blue color, like the sky on a hot summer day? Well on his wedding day, they were green! They were green as a fresh piece of spring-time grass. It was as if magic had taken over him. I guess that happens to some people when they’re as happy as he was. He sure was happy, in fact when they said their “I-do’s” I seen a tiny tear drip off his long beautiful eyelashes. I never told nobody I seen him cry because you know how men aren’t supposed to cry, but they was tears of pure joy he was crying on that day for sure. He said that ever since he was a youngin’ he’d dreamed about marrying a beautiful woman just like your Aunt Emmie and when she said, “I do”, his dream had finally come true.”

“So, there you have it. See? Since your mamma prayed for her sister, God granted my prayers and sent a wonderful man for her to live the rest of her life and be happy with. They have magic those two. It’s clear to everyone that the good Lord meant for them to be together. You can see the magic between them when they look at each other. Can’t you? It’s too bad they were never blessed as I was with wonderful children like you so you could have some cousins, but they make the best aunt and uncle, don’t they?”

“Okay, now off to bed with you. Now you can go to sleep and dream about who’s going to marry you and make your dreams come true, just like me n’ your Aunt Emmie. Come here and give me a hug and a kiss first. And don’t forget to say your prayers!”

~ The End ~

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