

Clinton & Jennie Wakefield

Grandpa opened the brown carved door and let Grandma inside. The dormant ceiling fans came alive as a gust of winter-spring air hit them. They walked across the well worn hardwood floor that creaked under their weight. With his arm on the dished and rounded counter, his fingers toying with the fifty-cent piece, Grandpa said, "I'd like to get a temple recommend please."

"Not a recommend, a marriage license Clint," Jenny whispered, nudging him in the ribs with her elbow. Grandpa always was a bit shy around new people, new surroundings, and new ideas, and this marriage situation was almost too much.

"Excuse me ma'am. I mean I need a marriage license," Grandma tried again.

The smiling clerk replied, "One minute please. Let me find the right papers. Ah, here we are now. I'll need your names.

Yours first, young man."

"Clinton Nevar Wakefield."

"And your birthday?"

"August 15, 1896."

"Now yours, young lady."

"Jenny "V" wells."

Is your father the mail carrier?" asked the clerk, brushing a strand of wayward grey hair from her eyes.

Yes," answered Jenny. "He runs out of Victor."

"I thought so. What is your birth date?"

"November 9, 1898."

"Thank you. Now if you'll just wait while I fill out the rest of this information, you can be on your way. I can see you are anxious to go."

"Yes," spoke up Clinton. "We need to meet the train in Price today." He had been looking at Jenny.

"There, that will be fifty cents please. You two go on now and best of luck." She watched them go, a nostalgic smile on her face.

They met the mail coach at the post office, found a seat and sat down to wait for Mr. Mills, the mail driver. Clinton carefully folded the crisp yellow permit and placed it in his purse. Yesterday, getting married had seemed so far away. Now this new form with both names written side by side pushed reality nearer.

At last, Mr. Mills filled up the back seats with the mail.

A few other people had boarded to ride to Huntington or on to Price like Jenny and Clinton. Mr. Mills drove east along ~~the muddy~~ ~~same~~ then turned north onto the main road. The mail coach plowed through the puddles formed in last night's rain. Clinton and Jenny had hurried to catch the mail coach early that morning, and now they needed to go back home and complete unfinished packing. As they neared Huntington, Clinton leaned over his seat and asked Mr. Mills if he could wait while they got their baggage.

"Clinton, I'll wait all I can," Mr. Mills told him. "I've got to have the mail in Price for the 3:10 train, and I can't be late. I can't wait too long." Clinton and Jenny stepped out as

soon as the small old bus came to a halt. Hand in hand they ran down the soggy lan, catching and helping one another as they slipped now and then. "You get your bag, Jenny," gasped Clinton, "and then my bag. I'll find my clothes and get the rest of the money from Mother."

They were soon back on the road walking quickly, but breathless from all that frantic hurry, they were soon forced to go more slowly. Mother Wakefield had also taken some time as she gave them some last minute admonitions. "Now Clint, you take good care of Jenny and buy her a nice ring when you get there." Clinton smiled as he curled his fingers around the money in his pocket. It was more money than he had seen at one time in his life and the sensation was pleasing and a little scary.

"Have you forgotten anything? Do you have your clothes? Is your money in a safe place? Give me a hug and kiss and hurry. I wish I could come Clint, but you know I can't. Jenny, remember what they say and tell me all about it when you get back."

Maybe they wouldn't even make it to Salt Lake.

Jenny looked anxiously up and down the road and cried, "Clint, he's gone. Mr. Mills has gone!"

"Jenny, he said he had to hurry, but he said he'd try. I wish he would have waited."

"Now what?" asked Jenny, frantically as tears sprang into her eyes.

"Cheer up now Jenny. Let's go on up town and see if anyone else is going to Price. Maybe we can catch a ride."

Clinton wanted to put his arm around Jenny but his hands were

loaded down with luggage and he couldn't. He smiled down at her as she blinked away the tears. They wandered toward town, downcast but still hopeful. Placing their bags on the porch of ^{Gary's} ~~Gary's~~ Mercantile, they stood together looking, waiting. Clinton stepped inside the swinging old door to ask ^{Gary} ~~Gary~~ if he knew of ^{or ride} ~~anybody going to Price~~ ^{Wells} ~~right next to~~ Clinton," bellowed ^{Gary} ~~Gary~~. "Have you come to town just now for some sweets? I just got a new box in today. Would you like to try them?"

"No," said Clinton. "Jenny and I were supposed to ride to Price with Mr. Mills today but he left us. Do you know of anyone going to Price right away?"

"What are you going to Price for?" asked ^{Gary} ~~Gary~~.

"Jenny and I are supposed to get married tomorrow but we won't if we can't catch the 3:10 train at Price."

"If I can, that doesn't give you much time does it. I don't know..."
Suddenly from the porch Jenny called excitedly to Clinton.

"Clinton, there's Dad. He's just dropping off the mail."

"Dad!" she cried and waved frantically to call him over.

"Jenny, why aren't you on your way to Price?" inquired Dad Wells. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, we were supposed to ride with Mr. Mills but he had to hurry and he left us. Now we don't know what we're going to do."

"Where's Clinton?" asked Dad Wells. Jenny pointed just as Clinton emerged from Gary's.

"Hi Clint," Dad called. "Jenny just told me what happened.

Did you find anyone going to Price?"

"No," answered Clinton. "^{Gary} ~~Gary~~ doesn't know of anybody."

"Well let me see. If I quickly pick up the mail here for Victor, I can take you and drop it off at Victor on the way back. I don't think the folks will mind getting their mail late today for a wedding. Come on Clinton, throw those bags in here and let's go. We don't have time to stand around and jaw about it. I just hope we make it. The roads are quite wet in the draws, and we might get stuck. But let's try it. I think we'll be all right.

Quickly Clinton and Jenny stacked their bags in the Model T, leaving room for the mail. After a quick stop at the post office, they were off. It was wet and more soggy by the river, but Dad Wells was a skillful driver, and they managed.

Jenny asked, "Dad, how did you get that mail so quickly? Usually you have to wait a half an hour."

Her dad laughed. "I just told them to hurry because I was taking my daughter to Price to catch the 3:10 train, and if we were late because they took too much time, they'd catch something besides the mail. They threw on the mail sacks faster than I've ever seen them."

"Look out Dad! It's muddy here," yelled Jenny. "I'm afraid we'll get stuck yet."

"Now don't you worry honey. If Mr. Mills can make it, I can too. You just hang on to Clint there and we'll be in time for the train today and not tomorrow."

Four miles out of Price, as they were going uphill, the tires spun on a muddy spot. The wheels settled in and they were stuck.

"I'll push," yelled Clinton as he leaped from the car before

the wheels had hardly come to a rest. He pushed, his hands on the metal fender, his feet digging into the soft mud for purchase. Just then, Jenny spied the train, steaming around the hill into Price.

"There's the train," cried Jenny. "Oh we'll never make it now!"

"That train has to stop and unload and reload passengers," Dad Wells reassured her. "We'll be in time."

"Clinton wasn't making much progress alone. "Jenny, I need your help," he panted. "If you'll help me, we can do it. Come here beside me and push when I do. Push hard if you want to get married." With that Jenny forgot the mud collecting on her shoes and pushed.

"Keep pushing!" yelled Dad. The back tires grabbed onto dryer ground and the car surged forward.

"Oh hurry Clinton," cried Jenny. "I just heard the train whistle." Back into the car they scrambled. Clinton gave Jenny his pocket knife to scrap the mud from her shoes. Dad stepped on the accelerator and they sped into Price. Reaching the depot, they could see the huge gray train waiting, yet sighing to move on. Clinton ran to buy their tickets, and Dad and Jenny brought the baggage. Just then, Mr. Mills came running breathlessly up to them.

"I'm so glad you made it he puffed. I hated to leave you but I couldn't afford to be late with the mail. But now you're here. Good Luck!" he said. He turned and headed for his mail truck where several station attendants were quickly unloading the mail sacks and placing them on carts to carry them to the train.

It wasn't until the tickets had been purchased, the baggage was

stowed away, a hasty goodbye was said, and the train was out of town, stowed away that Clinton and Jenny both relaxed. They settled back into their seats and smiled into each other's eyes. They congratulated themselves, exultant that they had caught the train. Then Jenny, tired from the many events of the day, rested her head on Clint's shoulder and was soon asleep. Clinton absorbed himself with the passing countryside. The patches of gray-white snow on the north slopes reminded Clinton of the fall he had first met Jenny.

He had worked late that summer, finishing out the contract for power poles for Utah Power and Light that would bring power to Huntington. He started to school late in the year and heard rumors of the new girl in school, but he hadn't paid them much mind. That October morning, he needed to talk to the principal anyway and talk to Mr. Nielsen about band. He straightened things around and went to class.

And there was Jenny.

Then came dances, especially the big one put on by Utah Power and Light. He always played his trombone in the dance band, but that didn't stop Jenny from dancing every dance. And there had been sleigh rides, parties and get-togethers, walks and talks home. His memories of these good times seemed to take but a moment. Already, the whistle was blowing and the train was pulling into Springville. Jenny woke up with a big yawn, rubbed her eyes, and looked about. "Springville already," she remarked. "I slept longer than I thought."

Soon they were in Salt Lake and found themselves in the lobby of the Down Town Hotel. They shyly approached the desk. "We want separate rooms please." At the man's look, Clinton added, "We're getting married tomorrow."

Inside one of the rooms, Jenny sat on the bed, holding her handbag tightly, and Clinton sat on the single chair. Neither had much to say for a minute. Clinton felt a little overwhelmed as he thought about the tender responsibility facing him to take care of this little woman, and Jenny, in turn, was feeling a little fright as she was struck with the all-importance of the big event that faced them.

"Let's go window shopping," Jenny said.

Relieved, they nearly ran from the hotel. They spent the evening arm in arm, looking in store windows and walking around Temple Square.

In the early morning darkness of March 17, 1919, they met Grandma Cooley at the Temple and exchanged news of the family. Then in a happy daze, they were ushered from room to room, from rites to ceremony. Finally they kneeled facing each other, and the officiator spoke the words, "By the power invested in me..." and sealed them husband and wife forever.

That afternoon, the newlyweds stepped into a jewelry store to buy a wedding band. The jeweler kindly showed them a sparkling array of rings to choose from. After much thought, they finally selected a slender gold band. Jenny was radiant as Clint slipped it on her finger. As they stepped outside, Jenny glanced down at the glowing moment on her left hand. It caught the sunlight and as it did so, it seemed to reflect the times she and Clinton had spent together. As she smiled into the recollection, it faded away and suddenly, (Wasn't it but a single moment?) she was an elderly lady of '78 sitting in her living room, twisting the band round and round her finger.

"Jenny, I've just got to go to Huntington. I haven't been there for a month and there's a lot of work needs done. I'll just go down this afternoon and be back tomorrow night."

"Putt, I'm sure Paull has been keeping the place up," replied Jenny with a slight tremor in her soft voice.

"I know," Clint said, "but I'm sure he could use my help, and I don't have anything to do here. Let's eat so I can leave early this evening."

Grandpa turned into the bedroom to gather his clothes, and Jenny stepped into her kitchen. She stood nervously creasing her apron. Since Clint had first mentioned this trip earlier in the week, she had at times been momentarily paralyzed with anxiety at the idea of staying alone in that big house on the busy street by herself. True, she told herself, Clint had been away at night before. Putt, she thought, always someone else had stayed with her. If he went, she would be completely by herself. She roused herself from her reverie as she heard Clint coming into the kitchen. Brushing flat her apron, she reached for the frying pan, keeping her face averted so he would not see the tears she felt forming in the corners of her eyes.

"I'll even bring you some fresh eggs from home if those hens are still a layin' 'em. For all I know they may have quit by now." This spoken as Clint sat in his usual chair watching Jenny prepare the meal. Jenny's usually deft movements were dulled, but her quietness was not consciously noticed by Clinton in his anticipation of the trip."

After a quick meal, Clint was on his way. A hearty kiss to Jenny was his goodbye. "I'll be home tomorrow evening. Look for me then," he said as he placed his arm on the back seat and settled

himself into the driver's side.

Jenny returned to the huge house and turned on the television for company. It was only four o'clock. She washed the dishes, but they were finished too soon. Although she'd just cleaned the oven last week, she scrubbed it again, but it too seemed to take only a bit of time. Nervously she sat in her rocking chair and picked up the paper, but she couldn't keep her mind on it. The fourth rerun of Gilligan's Island was on R.V. and Lawrence Welk wouldn't be on until tomorrow night, so she turned off the television and picked up her crocheting, but her eyes blurred and she could hardly see the piece of work. Then she noticed that she hadn't done enough double crochets in one of the holes and had to unravel for a ways. After that, she just sat listening to noises she had never heard before in the old house.

The sound of the car whipping into the driveway forced itself into her awareness. She waited, tense and alert, hoping, but not too much, in case it was some other husband in some other car re-turning to some other lady in a hardwood rocking chair.

However, when the screen door slammed closed, she gave way to her feelings. Wiping her eyes with her hankie, she rushed to meet him. Clint came in the back door, a sheepish grin on his face and his face and his hand lamely holding the suitcase. "I'll go early in the morning," he said, and turned for their room. Jenny turned also with tears in her eyes, but this time she did not hide her face.

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