

Captain Harry Falls In Love

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For fifteen years Captain Harry McCarthy ran his old paddle wheeler from Point Caswell to Wilmington on the mail run. Not once in all that time did anything of note happen along the way. Then came that fateful day in the spring of 1899 when the earth quaked, the sun shined a little brighter, and the air smell a little sweeter. Harry McCarthy saw the girl of his dreams.

She was sitting on the edge of the wharf at the foot of Princess street, leaning back against a bollard. Quite by chance, Harry held the Anne Belle a little closer to the eastern shore that day as he cleared Point Peter, and he saw her face tilted to the sun and slightly smiling. She was wearing a pair of those new fangled dark glasses everyone called sun glasses. Harry waved a shy wave as he passed, but she only smiled, followed the boat, and shifted where she sat.

Day after day he passed that dock looking to see the girl. Each time the boat passed by the spot he waved and waved again but smiles and stares were all that returned to him. One day he asked old Jim, the cook, if he knew the girl. Though Jim was from the city he had never seen her before. He asked several people down at the mail dock if they knew her but no one knew her name.

One day Harry decided he would have to do something to draw her attention to himself. He made his plan and carried it out with split second timing. As the Anne Belle pulled near to where the girl sat, Harry pulled a short toot, toot on the steam whistle. He waved like a demented windmill and stuck his smiling face out of the wheel house door so she would be sure to see who had done the deed. But, all she did was just smile an even broader smile as she turned her head to follow the boat.

Harry could not believe she did not wave back. It is safe to say that she became an obsession with him. He could not get her off his mind. She began to occupy all of his waking hours. At last he realized that he had to meet her and know her name.

On the next trip down river for mail, the tide was ebbing just right. He wheeled the boat around into the current just off the Princess street dock and had Rawlings, the deck hand, through a bow line on the cleat next to the girl. Anne Belle quietly swung her waste into the dock and lay right where the pilot house door was only fifteen feet away from the sitting girl. The smile she always had on her face had changed to concern and Harry thought she would try to run away.

He could see that she was fumbling for something at her side. Still she kept her face tilted toward the sun while she frantically felt for something near where she sat. Harry stepped to the edge of the old boats bridge and said, "hello, my name is Harry. What's yours."

It was then she found what she was feeling for under a fold of her skirt. She seemed to make a little gasp as she pulled the white cane with the red tip into Harry's sight. She used it to help herself stand and back away from the commotion. She no longer had the angelic smile upon her face.

He could see she was terrified. He said, "Please don't be afraid. My name is Harry. I've noticed you sitting here for so long now. I had to know your name."

Once again the sweet smile grew in its place on her face and she said, "my name is Sally."