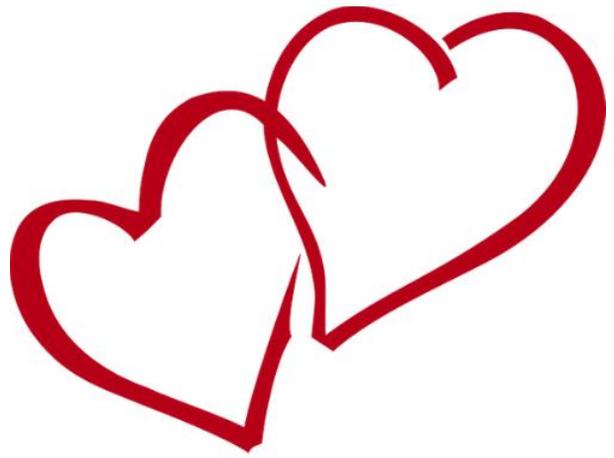




CREATIVITY : HERITAGE : EDUCATION



A True Caymanian Love Story

by Will Jackson

(For Teens and Young Adults)

In the 1900's in East End, Grand Cayman, Thomas Welcome is a handsome, respectable man who has money and lots of property, along with his own nice house of the times, and he marries Matilda Wood, a beautiful woman in her late twenties. The love between Thomas and Matilda later becomes proverbial, and in time they become the happy parents of three sons and three daughters: Boyd, Ronald, Barrett, Ivy, Miriam and Lydia.

Their farmlands are on the other side of the island, and because of the inconvenience of travelling on a daily basis between their home and the farm six miles away, the inseparable couple build a little house on the farm where they usually stay from Monday until Friday each week.

On Tuesday morning 9 December 1930, as the weekend rains have ceased, the couple saddle their horses and go to their farm where they plan to remain until Friday. Uncle Tom is now 70 years of age, an old man, but robust, strong, and full of action and ambition. Later that morning, he returns home from one of his pastures expecting to eat his afternoon meal, only to find an empty house. His wife is nowhere to be found. He goes out onto his land shouting for her at the top of his lungs. As Uncle Tom goes searching for his beloved, a dark looking squall is gathering to the east making the surroundings even more dreary. No one knows how long Uncle Tom searches but when he finally found his wife what a discovery!

“Mama” as he always calls her “Mama, what happened to you?” he cries.

He shakes her and keeps talking to her, but she doesn't stir or answer him. Her skull is crushed over both eyes. Pints of blood have drained down the rock alongside her. Blood, now clotted, fills her ears, nostrils and mouth. Tom's beloved is dead.

The old man is beside himself; grief has benumbed his whole intellect. He knows now that his darling wife is dead, and that she died violently. The couple have often been heard saying that where one died there the other one would die also.

He does not move from that spot. He does not even go back to get a blanket or a sheet with which he could cover her body. Removing his own shirt, he covers her as best he can after fixing her body in a state of death. Then he lies down beside her, prepared to die with her. No amount of rain, or thunder or lightning can move him from her side.

Aunt Tilly is dead, and Uncle Tom is to die with her.

Their youngest son is to find them later that week. Hear Barrett's own story:

"I made my way toward the interior where Ma and Pa would be. A cup of hot coffee or some good warm fresh milk was uppermost in mind. But coming to the house, I saw no sign that anyone had lived there that week. I thought where could Ma and Pa be? I started searching for them. I was wet and shivering in the constant rain, while fear filled my entire body. I soon detected a bad odor in the air and followed into it. O God! No! No, God, this can't be"

There before my eyes, were my father and my mother lying together, both dead, and already in a decomposed state. I could not leave my precious parents to be eaten by whatever creatures might prey on them, or to rot on the face of the earth out here. I started to make my way out of the land. I took a horse and rode bareback seven of the longest miles I have ever rode. I bawled the entire ride home. School was still in session when I reached the schoolhouse, and knowing my two loved nephews, Clifford and Will, were there I called out the sad words to them. Mr. Allen ran out me and helped me down from the horse, at which time I fainted."

All Friday night, men have been working in the construction of two coffins which the officials take along in their launch on their journey to Bluff Bay, and finally, that evening, a funeral service is held in the interior for the late Thomas and Matilda Welcome.

The doctor's diagnosis reads:

"Thomas Welcome died of grief and exposure to inclement weather on or about Thursday 11th of December 1930.

Matilda Welcome died on or about Tuesday 9th of December of serious head injuries caused by forceful connections with a blunt instrument, her brain having been exposed through a gaping wound across her forehead."

This would have been called the Caymanian love story of the century. Nature itself seems to have made preparation for this tragic romance for not far from scene was a spot in the rocky cliff, a level spot of deep earth that was just large enough to hold two coffins.

For years after the event, the tale behind Aunt Tilly's death remains a mystery. After many years of a tortured conscience, an old man, while looking into an awful eternity, makes his deathbed confession to four men standing over him. He reveals that he had been doing some poaching of ground provisions on the Welcomes' land and Aunt Tilly had caught him in the act.

In shame and panic he clubbed her to death and fled. As we suspected at the time, upon finding her, poor old Uncle Tom had truly died a death of love in grief and exposure.

THE END

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