

*Pamela Crabtree*

attention. He prayed out loud, “God, oh God, please let someone see it.” Someone did see it. The problem was that it was the kidnapper. When he heard the key slip in the trunk lock, Matt braced himself for death. The lid opened about a foot and the kidnapper shouted, “If you try that again, I’ll shoot right through the trunk and kill you, you fucker.”

Matt fell back in relief and passed out again. When he awoke, he tried to stretch out of his forced fetal position, but he did not have the room to do it. With tears streaming down his pale cheeks, he fondly remembered the weekend before when he walked his only daughter down the aisle and reluctantly gave her hand to Bob Randall.

It was a grand day, the culmination of months of preparation. It was Sweetest Day, in the early 1990s. Our daughter, Beth, made a beautiful bride. She was about to marry Bob, not our first choice for a husband, but we were nevertheless adjusting to the fact that he was joining our family. We had our qualms about him because he had dissolved a relationship with a woman a few years older than he in which he had fathered three sons. We never kept our feelings regarding his children hidden from Bob, and in spite of the tension, Bob said he understood us. He reiterated that he loved Beth and really felt they could make a go of it. We hesitantly accepted him, but still maintained a wait-and-see attitude. In reality, we could have ranted and raved and forbid Beth to marry Bob, but that would have accomplished absolutely nothing. Beth was a strong-willed child and an even stronger-willed woman who was deeply in love.

The blue-skied, sunny day started off with a limousine ride to my mother-in-law’s house where she joined us on the ride to the church. It was my idea to pick her up and make her an important part of this special day. I always made a concerted effort to include my mother-in-law in as much of our family doings as possible. She was a very difficult person, not because she slung insults and demanded her way, but because she seemed disinterested in anything we did. To say she had a passive personality would be an understatement. She had her moments of passion, however, like when my father-in-law died in her arms from a heart attack, or later when Matt was kidnapped. Most of the time she was just there—never contributing to the conversation, offering apologies and taking blame when none was necessary.

One example was the time she found out Beth and I were in an argument. She said, “I’m sorry, was it my fault?” Her comments made me angrier with her than Beth. She knew very well that it was not her fault and that Beth and I have our moments when we spout off nasty and cruel things to one another—nobody’s fault—it’s just the way we are. In a few days it blows over, and we are talking again. There is no mother/daughter more devoted and loving than Beth and me.

The wedding ceremony went off without a hitch. As a gift to Bob, right after they spoke their vows, Beth, in her beautiful voice, sang “Perhaps Love” while staring into Bob’s teary blue eyes. He was touched at this unique surprise