

Chance Encounters and Fortuitous Events

Turning Points

Louise Jackson

Story 2: The Challenge

While I was married, I had the good fortune to move with my husband to Charleston Illinois where he became a university teacher. I stayed at home and had our first child. It was the only time in my adult life that I was not an active professional, and after a time I missed the work. I took a job as the Director of a local day care facility near the campus. My daughter attended and life seemed very complete.

While working there many students did volunteer work or worked as student teachers for their courses at the University and I had the occasion to meet a number of professors. Finally, one of them asked why I didn't apply to be a temporary teacher in the Psychology Department. I talked it over with my husband and he agreed it would be good to put my vita in with the chair of the Psychology Department so I did.

A few weeks later I was contacted by the department who asked if I could teach for three weeks since a professor was ill with pneumonia and would be out for that time. So I agreed and filled in for her. And a few months later a professor died and the department asked if I would take his full-time job for the year while they looked for a replacement. So I quit my job at the day care and became a full time fixed-term teacher. And it all went so well that I competed for the job as Instructor for a tenure-track position and won it. But to be eligible for the tenure-track position, I had to show that I was serious about getting my Ph.D.

I excitedly went to my husband, who was taking a soak in the tub (he was a large man, 6'4" and 240lbs. and the tub was quite small, so he looked like a beached whale flopping over the edge of the tub) and I told him of my decision to get a Ph.D.. He laughed looked intently at me and said, "There is only room in this family for one Ph.D.." I was shocked because he had never blocked me before. I reacted with a deep anger that I didn't show, and said, "Then it will be mine!" I left the bathroom. The war was on.