

# THE CRUCIBLE



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W Z W

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## Preface

We of the English Club offer this publication to all who may derive enjoyment from it.

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BETTY LORIGAN,  
Editor



## I Remember India

By LEILA DUARTE

Early each morning I would awaken to the cry of the Koel. Its voice filled the cool mango gardens making a pleasant background to the lazy music of my thoughts. After a while I would tread silently through the sleeping house and sit on the porch steps listening to the new-day sounds and breathing in the newday fragrances. I remember very vividly the white magra flowers clustering against their dark green leaves, and the little pink Chinese tea roses delicately drooping their dew drenched heads upon the bamboo props.

Little by little new sounds would mingle with the old—the tramping of the water buffaloes as they went to pasture, the chattering of the monkeys in our tamarind trees, the sound of women drawing water from the well, the creaking of the ropes. Sometimes two women, removing water jars or baskets of fruit from their heads, would stop by our gate for a chat and end up in a fierce argument. In their excitement they would pull each other's hair, and shout loudly in Cannaries.

"Leila, buttcha, hurry up and wash yourself." That was mummy calling me. I would get up, very reluctantly, and make my way to the washroom. With a lotta I would scoop up water from the large tin tubs and wash my teeth and face. Then I would run down the back steps, through Uncle George's 'soda' room and into the large dining hall, to breakfast. There would be hot chapatties to eat, with large lumps of butter and spoons of treacle, fresh fruit, eggs, and tea — with dear old Granny hovering around me, coaxing me to eat. Darling, warm, comfortable Granny who is so ill now. How sad a thing is time! How changing and fickle! I often wonder what I would do if I could live those childhood days again. There are so many things I understand now that I did not understand when I was younger — things like Granny's tears of joy when she saw us, and the hidden tenderness in Grandpapa's fierce old eyes as he called me "little bag of chicken bones"—oh, well!

Once, when Sheila and I spent Christmas at Dharwar, Uncle Reggie, Sheila, I and Joseph, our servant, went out into the jungle to cut ourselves a Christmas tree. Joseph climbed a large tree with an axe slung over his shoulders and started to chop. Joseph was a fool. He sat on the branch away from the body of the tree and started chopping. Then they both fell together — Joseph and the branch for our Christmas tree. I remember the reproachful looks that Joseph gave the tree as he pushed his head out from under the leaves of the fallen branch. Dear, foolish Joseph! I wonder where he is now. The reason I am telling you this is because I remember it as the first Christmas I spent away from home, away from Mum and Dad. Sheila and I awoke on that dark Christmas morning and started crying in each other's arms. It was but a childish sadness, but one

that persists in coming to my mind every now and then.

Sheila and I would go up to Grandpapa's shop as often as we could. Dressed in thin silk dresses, with straw hats covering our newly bobbed hair, we would sit next to Joseph on the water cart and sing little folk songs as we went along. A bullock pulled the cart, and every now and then Joseph would reach out and pull its tail to make it go faster. Sometimes, after much coaxing, Sheila and I would persuade Joseph to allow us to drive the cart. These were great moments, indeed, and I would whistle and shout "hut" in my most superior and stern "grandpa" voice. I never, on any occasion however, tried to tag the Bullock's tail for fear of "feeling its wrath."

Grandpapa's shop was cool and dark and very mysterious looking. I used to love to prowl around, staring at everyone and everything. I do not recall anything about the shop. Whenever I think about it I think of something dark and cool and very vague—almost dream-like, in quality.

On one hot day Sheila and I went to visit a woman doctor friend. She was a doctor in a lunatic asylum, and to get to her house we had to pass one of the rooms occupied by a madman. As we passed he called to us. Leaving Sheila, who ordered me to "come back at once," I walked up to him and he started talking to me. He was a very clever man and said some wise things, but the moment the doctor and her attendants came, he started talking nonsense and ended up by shouting curses at all of them. That incident gave me new food for thought—about people and life. I used to sit for long moments and try to find answers to my questions. It somehow didn't seem right for people to be locked up because they suffered from "brain sickness."

Once, when we were visiting Grandpapa and Grandmama, I fell seriously ill and kept calling for Daddy. One day I opened my eyes and there he was, smiling at me and saying in his deep "dadda" voice, "Hello, baba, we're going on a lovely trip; so hurry up and get well." After about two weeks we left for Goa. Daddy was touring in order to obtain material for his work. We went to Vasco Degama first, and stayed in a little house close to the sea, on the beach. The first day I was there I took my new spade and bucket and started playing on the sands. Then I saw Daddy coming along the beach, and, shouting "Dadda," ran towards him. Suddenly I collapsed. The last thing I remember was looking up into Daddy's anxious eyes and then being lifted up in his strong arms. With what care and tenderness did they nurse me, my wonderful young mother and father! Soon I was well and would play in the blue salt water. I would chase crabs and gather tiny colored shells and build castles on the sands. At night we walked along the beach and the phosphorus in the foam would shine like magic; and I would look at the sea and the long stretch of sand and the palm trees against the deep star-spangled sky, and I would feel all choked up inside of me.



## The Fight

By BILL BIGELOW

Right from the start Bill was having his troubles. He couldn't get set. He slid away from the bar as the bouncer's piston-like right grazed the side of his head. Bill finally got his left to working and sunk it into the gorilla's gut, it was like hitting a medicine ball and with much the same results. With a solid left of his own he sent Bill flying into the tables.

In the meantime I had been watching the bartender. It was obvious that he was a good friend of this overgrown ape because I saw him reach under the bar and quietly pull out a blackjack. He slid around the end of the bar and started toward the fight to lend his buddy a hand. It was clear that this boy was going to need some quick attention unless I wanted to see Bill flat on the floor with these babies applying the finishing touches with shoe leather.

On my way toward the bartender I grabbed a beer mug in my right hand. He was just lifting the old pulverizer to put Bill asleep when I stepped up and caught the blow on the beer mug. Glass shattered and flew in all directions. Both of our hands were bleeding from the cuts. He now turned his attention to me and I knew I had to either get this guy quick or be pounded into jelly. I sunk my knee into his groin with all the power I had. As he bent forward doubled in agony, I hit him in the face with my right in which I still held what remained of the beer mug handle. He dropped like a sack of wet flour.

I backed up against the bar, flipped open my knife and looked around to see if there was anyone else who had some funny ideas about this fight. Apparently there wasn't. Still breathing hard, as much from the excitement as from the physical exertion I watched the fight begin to equalize as Bill and this pug traded roundhouse rights and lefts. While this gorilla was bigger and more powerful than Bill, it was Bill's blows which were landing and the bouncer's haymakers which were missing by that weaving fraction between a near miss and taps. Had any one of the bouncer's whistling rights landed solidly, Bill would have been a cold turkey.

As it turned out none landed and I watched the old rhythm come into Bill's blows. It was beautiful. He had one of the finest lefts I have ever seen either in or out of the ring. It was making sliced beef out of this pug's face. Bill would alternate his attention between face and stomach. I watched fascinated and admiring as lefts and rights thudded into that unwilling human punching bag. I waited for the old familiar sign of a flurry of lefts which would precede the looping right which would drop this guy into a grotesque heap. It came so suddenly that the crowd was caught in a stupefied silence.

Bill walked over, deliberately picked up his pipe from underneath the table where it had fallen, then turned to me and said:

"Let's go."

As we walked toward the front door a wide path opened for us and we stepped out into the cool night air. Bill wiped away the blood which was oozing from his split lip and remarked:

"That guy was kinda tough."

## 'Why I Ain't No English Major'

By JOE HUTNYAN

Little did I know what I was letting myself in for, when three months and fourteen days after the great event, I muttered my first "goo." For the next eighteen years I spoke English, but get my instructors to believe that. Starting in junior high, each succeeding English teacher told me all about my speaking ills, until I thought surely I would have to bring my birth certificate to prove that I was born in this country. At the tender age of sixteen I learned, much to my dismay, that I was an infinitive splitter. Each night I would lie awake and rack my brain, searching for some method of unsplitting my infinitives. But alas, my doom was sealed, for soon we started punctuation. At first it was fun, sprinkling a comma here and there, once in a while a semicolon, a period, and even an occasional question mark. But it wasn't too long before an ardent crusader for the betterment of the English speech took me in hand, and removed all the heretofore enjoyment I had received from punctuation. After coming safely through the punctuation nightmare—don't ask me how—I was once more dealt a staggering blow in the form of sentence construction. Even in my dreams, which had previously been of pretty girls and the like, I became haunted by visions of big black participles reinforced by small fat green verbs chasing me all over the place yelling "I follow an objective pronoun, and don't forget that, you blockhead." But grammar couldn't even be scared into me. All words seemed the same, except that some were harder to spell than others. I imagine that I drove many a teacher to married life as a last resort, and I'm really sorry for it. But the fact still remains that English and I were two parallel lines running in different directions.

Now if you think that was hard on the teacher you should have seen me. Many a time, in desperation, I would open my Boy Scout manual, turn to the second class signaling requirements, gaze at the deaf and dumb code and say, "That's your only chance, son." But after careful consideration I reached the conclusion that, since I would have to talk to someone else who also knew the code, it would not be worth the trouble. The nearest home for the deaf and dumb was located eighty-five miles from the city, much too far to travel for a bull session.

An ordinary man would have given up, but me—well, I didn't exactly give up—I came to college. I was carrying on with the faint hope that my English was not dead, but merely in a state of suspended animation. Still the horrible truth told me that it wouldn't be very long before rigor mortis would be setting in, and I worked like mad. Unfortunately, my start wasn't very good, and in not too long a time every instructor on campus was gazing at me with that God-give-me-strength look in his eye. But still I would not admit defeat and once again crashed my head against the stone wall of English grammar reform. Imagine my alarm, after coming from a physical exam in which I was pronounced perfect, to find that I was a victim of that dreadful speech malady, wide sweeping superlatives. This was the end! This was the grammatical straw that broke the ungrammatical camel's back! I hunted frantically for a solution, read the want ads, leafed through encyclopaedias, and finally was ready to write to Mr. Anthony, when I found the answer. Today, I still carry on slurring my consonants, splitting my infinitives, sweeping my superlatives widely, and even occasionally doubling my negatives. But does it worry me? Not a bit. Why? Well—

### WEEP NO MORE

In the future, when in class English teachers decide to ask The difference between a noun and verb, Or how to say a common word, I'll gaze at them with a look that's flendish And calmly say, "No specka da Engleesh."

## Fall Rain

By MARY KATHRYN STERN

Sandra, my sister, was out on the lawn putting the leaves that I had just raked together into a basket. It was a perfect autumn Saturday afternoon. I had stopped work and was sitting on the porch steps, watching the mountain resplendent with autumn colors of gold and crimson. Then my eyes turned back to the lawn, green and free from the dead leaves.

Nonchalantly Sandra was proceeding with the leaves. I remembered giving her, last winter, those maroon gloves she was wearing. She was picking up the leaves as though they were bits of frail chinaware. Every time she would put some leaves into the basket, she would stand up, look around and pause to talk to some society lady of her acquaintance in the most elegant way about the marvelous tea they were having.

A bit impatiently I requested, "Sandra, will you please hurry up?" She smiled at my impatient command. Then one time she must have looked across the road and seen something. I think maybe it was a stray sumac leaf. At any rate, she never examined it.

I realized with a scream that she had been hit with a car. I can still see the gash in her head. The man jumped out of his car and tried to take her from my clutching arms. Somehow, we must have gotten her into the car and to the hospital.

Someone came out the emergency door just as we got there. I stumbled along through the hall following the attendants to her room. And then I had to sit and think. It was an hour later, they say, she died. All I can remember was telling her, "Sandra, please, please, can't you forgive me for being so cruel? I know I didn't understand you. Your life wasn't full of just working every minute. I should have tried to see that. Oh, I wish I could just have treated you more kindly this afternoon. Maybe that would have made up a little for the other times. Just so easily I could have come up to you when you were standing there and have given you a bear-hug, but I didn't. And now I can't." Just saying words gave me something to do. I tried to kiss her and she didn't move her face a bit in recognition. That set me to crying again.

And now it is Tuesday evening and it is raining. I can still hear myself saying, "Sandra, why can't you understand and forgive me somehow?" Just a few minutes ago I came in out of the rain. I left about an hour ago and walked briskly down the road and into town. I stepped into the drug store for a coke and then started back.

Mechanically I was measuring my steps with each square of the concrete sidewalk. I could hear feet hurrying past me. At the crossroads I looked up, saw no cars in either direction, and started across the street. Just before she passed me, I noticed a little girl coming. She was bedraggled, with only a flimsy dress covering her frail body. I noticed her feet were bare; then I looked up and into her eyes. Looking straight ahead she passed me. Maybe I would have tried to talk to her if she had looked up.

Now I've come back and I'm at home alone. I can still hear the rain pounding the window-pane. I've tried to read, to play some of my old pieces on the piano, to get out my scrapbook and fill it up, but nothing interests me.

Maybe I ought to get my coat and walk down town again. The rain has suddenly ceased its pounding. I'm sure I heard two bare feet sopping the water on the sidewalk.

## Mountain Burial

By COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

There were no more than a dozen leaves left on the walnut tree. One shook itself free and was carried away on the wind. Gray watched it until it became a tiny speck against the twilight sky. Soon all the leaves would be gone. Then? . . . Winter . . .



Gray looked down into the valley from where he'd just come. Five little houses huddled together on the west bank of the creek. Five little houses—the core of the vast valley surrounding them. The black mountains swept up from the fields until their ridges were sharply defined against the sky. Already, a single star had appeared.

In a moment, he turned around and hurried up the wagon road toward the shack. The picture of the valley stuck with him. A vast universe, and tiny people . . . Man lives alone. Some things are his—forever his, things he can only share with himself.

Old Bill's shack lay on the edge of the mountain in a pine grove. Again Gray noticed the trees, stark in the distance. From the chimney, a stream of smoke rose into the air. Soon there would be no more smoke. Soon the air would no longer be disturbed. And the yellow light from the windows would no longer warm the night. Tomorrow, the only sound would be the whistling wind through the grove. Old Bill was dead. The grave was waiting for him now.

Men's voices came from inside the shack; muffled — undistinguishable. Gray paused in front of the door, then he turned down the wooden handle and went in.

"Gray! We've been waitin' for ya," Wingate said as he turned around from the pine box. "Ya wan'na take a last look before I nail down the lid?"

Gray hesitated, then walked over to the side of the coffin. The top was a nice cut of pine. The dark maroon grain and knots stood out against the deep yellow pulp. Pine . . . The old man's favorite wood.

He rested comfortably on the blue denim and white muslin patch quilt. Gray's lips turned into an easy smile. How very much like him in life! His brushed beard looked neat against his new overalls and light blue shirt. The candle light played in his long silver hair. There was even movement in the dead. This was a nice thought. With it Gray moved away from the coffin, then said, "We'd better get started before the twilight is gone."

"The old man must'a been crazy," said Wingate as he lowered the lid. "Wanting to be buried at twilight . . ."

"Ya!" The pine chair made a floor board screech as Pete Gorman rocked back and forth over it. "Ya, he must'a been crazy. We always did our buryin' in the afternoon."

Gray cast his eyes around the room. The furnishings were all hand made; all made from virgin pine. The top of the strong table was one slab of polished wood. And the door hinges were hand-wrought iron. The old man had braided his own rugs. They were blue, made from old denim strips . . . These spoke a man who had known his own heart.

The top of the lid was down now, and the first nail tight. Never again would anyone see the silver hair, the long beard, and the friendly smile.

"Well," said Ezra Gorman, "We won't have ta drag him up the hill anymore."

"Ya, the poor devil," Wingate said through his teeth, "He was probably drinking up to the last." He took another nail from his mouth and started it into the box.

No, they would never see him again. Would they live to see the day when they would be sorry? When spring came, who would tell them when to plant their wheat? . . . Or with whose stallion to breed their mares? . . . Would they ever miss him?

"Well, come on. Let's take this thing out if we want to get it planted before dark." Wingate laid down his hammer and nails on the table.

The Gorman brothers took the ends of the pine box, and Wingate and Gray took the sides. After some difficulty in getting it through the door, they stumbled over the soft pine-needle ground toward the hole. Then they laid the box on two ropes that were tied to the trees. They unfastened the knots and slowly lowered the box into the ground.

"We ought to give the old man a prayer," Gray suggested.

The four men slowly took off their hats and held them over their chests. They bowed their heads. Then all was silent.

Gray was the first to move. Then one head slowly rose, and he put on his hat. "There's still work to be done," said Gray.

The four men picked up their shovels and started to cover the box with the soft earth. They worked silently until a mound appeared where the cavity had been.

Now you go home," Gray said to the men. "Your women are waitin' with your suppers. I'll take care o' everything back here."

"Your wife's waitin' too," said Pete Gorman.

"It's better that we should make only one woman wait."

The three men slung their shovels over their shoulders and went down the path. Wingate stopped, turned around and called to Gray, "I'll stop and tell Sally you'll be along soon." Then he followed the other two men down the road.

Gray watched the three forms until they disappeared over the knoll. Then he went into the shack. He pushed the two chairs the box had rested on under the table. He straightened the rug by the bed, and smoothed the quilt. The old man always kept his shack neat and clean. Wingate had forgotten his hammer and nails. Gray stuck them into his pocket. Then he blew out the candles, and walked out of the shack, pulling the door shut behind him.

The smoke was still coming out of the chimney. Tomorrow there would be none—or ever again.

He walked out of the grove and down the road. The valley was covered with darkness and the sky was filled with stars. He walked on.

He looked up at the walnut tree as he passed. It had lost all its leaves.

He muttered softly to himself, "I guess the time was right."

## Collision at Sea

By JOHN VAIRO

"Mr. Vairo, you were the officer of the deck aboard the U.S.S. Sevier on the morning of June 7. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," I answered to Commander Ferguson's interrogation. Commander Ferguson was the senior member of the board of inquiry investigating the collision at sea involving my ship and the P. Z. Caverhill, a one-hundred-foot Canadian fishing vessel.

"Mr. Vairo, please state all the facts leading to the collision."

My heart thumped; I was worried. I had spent many sleepless nights waiting for this moment. Countless times I had practiced the manner in which I would present the facts to the board. There was no doubt in my mind that, viewed in the light of facts, I and my ship should be exonerated of any blame. Would I in my present state of uneasiness, inaccurately state the facts? The members of the board stared coldly at me, and there did not appear to be a friendly face among the group. The recorder glanced up quickly as though he were telling me to start my narrative, the room was deathly silent, and someone cleared his throat, breaking the silence. I began my story.

"The U. S. S. Sevier sailed from Seattle, Washington, at 2000 local civil time, June 6, 1945. The ship was ready for sea. Our departure was uneventful; thirty minutes after leaving the dock Pilot Jones left the ship. All hands were piped below. The regular sea watch had been set, and I was to have the mid-watch. At approximately 2345, I went to the chart room to read the captain's night orders, to glance over the International Rules of the Road pertaining to the Straits of Juan De Fuca, and to study the chart of that area.

"I relieved Lieutenant Warner as officer of the deck at 2350. However, he remained on deck until I had gained night vision.

"The weather conditions were perfect—clear and cold with a calm sea. No clouds were visible in the starlit darkness. Visibility ahead was good.

"Shortly after midnight the bow lookout reported a white light dead ahead. I acknowledged his report and checked the vessel. Using the intra-ship telephone system, I called the radar operator and had him give me the range and bearing. Captain Ragsdale was informed of the vessel by my messenger. A few minutes later the radar operator called to give me the range at seven miles and the bearing at 287 degrees. I told the operator to plot the vessel for me since our course was 287 degrees true.

"At 0010 I was able to see the vessel's green side light with my naked eye. This told me that the vessel was crossing from our port to starboard bow. Approximately five miles separated us now, and the bearing of the vessel was increasing at a moderate rate. Captain Ragsdale stepped upon the bridge as the radar operator informed me that he found her speed was six knots, her course was 808 degrees, and when abeam she would be one mile to our starboard. This information firmly convinced the captain and me that if the other vessel maintained her course and present speed, collision was not possible.

"Suddenly, without any indication of her maneuvering, she changed her course at least fifty degrees to her own right; we were now seeing a red sidelight. This made us the burdened vessel. Her position at this point was twenty degrees off our starboard bow at a range of seven hundred yards. She was going to cut across our bow from starboard to port. This was her fatal mistake! We were now closing in rapidly. I rang up emergency full astern on the engine room telegraph. They answered immediately. I blew three short blasts of our whistle, and sounded the collision siren. Captain Ragsdale ordered a "Hard right rudder!" The ship momentarily stopped its vibrating as the engines were reversed. We had not completely lost our forward motion when I heard the impact. There was a slight shock and a brief scraping as the boat slid along our port side. We had hit her port quarter and ripped her entire stern away. We stopped our engine.

"Our crew were at their collision stations, the signalmen manned the spotlight, and the light was trained on the wreck. The second division manned the port life boats and started to lower them into the water. I saw the boat in the wake of the spotlight for a moment, and she was riding keel up. I could also see three men splashing about in the water.

"Twenty minutes later we hoisted aboard the life boat containing the survivors. Captain Ragsdale, leaving the bridge, went to the sick bay to inquire about their condition. I remained on the bridge maneuvering the ship at various courses and at various speeds in the area because we had radioed for aid."

"Did your ship sustain any damages?" inquired Commander Ferguson.

"No, sir."

"Could collision have been avoided?"

"Up to the point where the P. Z. Caverhill forced us into a burdened position it could have been avoided. Subsequently, collision was inevitable."

Three months later I received from The Judge Adjutant's Office a letter which exonerated me and my ship from any blame.



## Keepin' Pigs

By ARDEN MONSON

Ben and Angel never knowed it could be so much added work to keep four pigs. The added work came along when the pigs got big enough so that Angel made Ben git to buildin' a big pig pen. Come summer, Angel layed the law down. She said she was through havin' the pigs a wadin' through the house. It was enough with nine kids under your feet, she said, let alone four pigs. She told Ben the pigs would have to eat in their own place near the barn instead of under the back porch. She thought they drew too many flies that wasn't doin' the young 'un any good.

Ben got young Able Watson from across the hill to help him git the pig shed started. Young Able was pretty good with buildin', as young as he was. He wasn't so good puttin' things up very straight, but he could sure pound many nails durin' the day, and he could sure saw fast. He didn't saw straight sometimes and sometimes the boards come out too short or too long. But he was mighty good company fur Ben jest the same.

Ben and Able had the oak floor in good shape. The boards weren't stained, but they sure fit good. They had three of the corners held up by good-size rocks that weren't in good shape fur holdin' things, but they was the best Ben could find without walkin' all over the farm. They had to put two rocks under the left rear corner so the floor was level enough fur the pigs to stand straight. By the middle of the week, the frame was standin' all by itself and the back wall was a half way to the roof. Ben knowed that by the first of the week they'd git the pigs moved in, ifin they'd work on Sunday. He didn't think Angel would be lettin' 'im work on Sunday, but ifin she wanted the pigshed ready, she might not mind so much. Angel didn't say nothin' when Ben told her they was gonna work Sunday to finish the shed.

On Sunday afternoon, Ben got visitin' with the neighbors that come over to see him. Taylor Watson come over in the afternoon. When he saw the pig shed, he laughed good an' loud and said it would fall down the first good rain storm that would come along. Ben told Taylor he was a dern liar, 'cause they used good long spikin' nails fur the braces. Taylor started to askin' Ben ifin Ben would help him out an' keep a couple a bawrels of potatoes that he had fermentin'. Taylor said he heard that there was inspectors comin' again, and ever' time inspectors come around they always come to his place. So Taylor thought maybe Ben would store his potatoes, seein' no one would expect Ben to be makin' whiskey. Ben said it was all right with him and told Taylor he could put the bawrels in the barn. Taylor said he'd come in an' git the bawrels off Ben's hands in a few days 'cause they was ready for boillin' and bottlin'.

On Monday mornin', Ben and Able had the pig shed all done with and had most of the wood'n fence around the part Ben was fixin' to use fur the pig pen. Ben told Able to keep workin' on the fence 'cause he was gonna look fur the pigs. He said he knowed them pigs wasn't gonna like bein' tied up to one spot fur the rest of their lives. And he knowed too what Angel said about feedin' the pen.

Ben got the pigs as fur as the pen, but the dern things didn't want to go in, jest like Ben knowed. They squealed like they'd been stuck with a butcher knife and run in all kinds of directions but the dern things jest wouldn't do what Ben told them. Able had all the fence done and started helpin' Ben to round up the pigs. They run nigh on all afternoon before they got all the pigs in the new pen. When they got the pigs shut up at last, Ben and Able both knowed them pigs wasn't gonna like bein' penned up that way.

That was on Monday mornin'. On Wednesday mornin' Ben heard the pigs squeelin' and gruntin' fur all they was worth. When he got to the pen, he saw them a runnin' back and furth and fightin' each other like wild hogs. So he went over to the house to ask Angel what she was feedin' them. But when she heard that Ben hadn't been feedin' them, she got dern mad and said she hadn't been feedin' them nothin', 'cause she thought Ben was a feedin' them. So she made Ben git to work dern fast gittin' the feed ready fur the starvin' pigs. Ben didn't mind gittin' the feed ready so much, 'cause he knowed how hungry he could git in four hours, let alone two days. Ben knowed he'd have to git lots of feed fur them, so he thought he'd use a bawrel of Taylor's potatoes, and give them at least a three-day feedin' to catch up. When he got to the pig pen, the pigs was raisin' the turf right. They was rootin' in the mud, all in the same place and crowdin' each other. Ben started to empty the potatoes down the feedin' shoot. When the pigs smelled or heard the potatoes—Ben didn't know which it was—they sure started fur the pig shed door, all of them at once. They was fightin' to git through the small door. Ben thought they was gonna go crazy yellin' and squealin'. In the pushin', the pigs pushed the shed plum off the rocks, and the shed fell apart, and the back end come loose. It broke the fence loose too. The pigs got to the potatoes in a great rushin' and all four et fur all they was worth. Ben run down to the pasture where Able was pickin' the dead leaves out of the spring. He told Able what happened and wanted him to quick come up and help him git the fence fixed before the pigs got a notion to run fur it. Ben thought they might take off fur the fields and spoil the garden on their way. By the time Able and Ben got back to the pig shed, the pigs was done eatin' and started runnin' fur the back fields, jes like Ben knowed. Them pigs wasn't gonna like bein' penned up. Ben and Able could hear them squealin' fur joy 'cause they was free again. Ben felt kinda glad 'cause they was free, and he was glad 'cause he wouldn't have to be feedin' them anymore.

Ben sent Able back to pickin' the dead leaves out of the spring. Then he went up to the house to tell Angel that the pigs run away. She sure didn't think of lettin' the pigs go free fur long. She told Ben to start lookin' fur them. Ben knowed him and Able couldn't be catchin' them pigs alone, so he sent Able across the hill to see ifin he could git some help from John Kozak, Taylor Watson, Oscar Peterson and anybody else that was willin' to go pig huntin'.

Ben never knowed so many people in that section of the country was so full of helpin' heart. By the afternoon, all the families from across the hill was over at Ben's place ready fur the pig hunt. Tony Wallace and his whole family was ridin' up the road toward Ben's house. His Ford couldn't make the hill, so all the kids jumped out and started pushin'. It was sure no surprise to Ben. He kinda knowed Tony would make the kids push the Ford when it wouldn't run, and he knowed too that after runnin' thirty-three miles the Ford had to be pushed up the hills. Wilda Aims come early too. Jake, her husband, was drunk again, so he didn't show up. But Wilda come jest the same, drivin' the team the same as ever. She was standin' up, swearin' at the horses 'cause they wasn't runnin' fast enough. All the kids but Will was with her. Ben guessed she left Will home to look after Jake so he wouldn't be burnin' the barn down like he did one time when he got on one of his drunkin' toots. By nine o'clock, Ben's whole yard, front and back of the house, was filled up with horses, wagons, cars. The kids was yellin', bawlin' and playin' hidie-go-seek in the crowd of carts and wagons. Most of them people who come knowed that when pigs run away it takes a good time chasin' them before ya can catch them. So they come prepared. Ben never had pigs run away on him before, so he didn't know what to think of all the families comin' to live on his place. He was kinda worried how he was gonna fix to feed all the horses. He knowed Angel could figger out what to feed the people, but he couldn't see how the oats and hay could last with all the horses.

Saturday mornin', and there was no signs of any pigs caught, so the ladies set right to work gittin' food ready fur the men when they come home from the huntin'. All durin' the work, they got time to talk about their ills and pains and how much work they had to be doin' 'fore winter come. The kids that wasn't old enough fur huntin' pigs was put to work weedin' the garden, pickin' stones and carryin' water fur the cookin'. Some of them helped to feed the stock. Then, when they wasn't workin', they was a playin' in the wheat field.

Late Saturday afternoon Oscar Peterson's boy, Eval', and Gust Printz's boy, Willie, got into an argument. Eval' said that ifin ya threw a cat up in the air it would always land on its feet; and Willie said the same would happen to a rooster. Eval' said it wouldn't neither, a cat was the only thing that landed on its feet. So they decided to drop the cat

from the barn roof, then the rooster. Eval' dropped the cat first. It landed on its feet, jest as Eval' knowed it would. Then Willie dropped the rooster. It hit the ground, but it didn't git up and walk away like the cat. When Eval' and Willie got down to the rooster, they saw it was layin' there pretty still. Willie looked at Eval' and said he guessed it was dead. Then Eval' said, "See I told ya so."

When Ben got home that night, Angel said they'd either have to give up the pig hunt or lose the farm. She said, "The kids have run down all the wheat, picked most of the carrots and beats out of the garden instead of the weeds, and have started killin' off the chickens." Ben told her ifin she wanted the pigs back again they better give'r another try tomorrow. Angel said to him that tomorrow was Sunday and all the people would have to be goin' to church. But Ben told her that Parson Armor had joined the hunt in the afternoon and said he'd have a short prayer befur they started out in the mornin' and they'd just skip church in a good cause.

Next mornin' while everyone was gatherin' in the front yard fur a few words of prayer, the pigs got up from the shade of the blackberry bushes, from in back of the barn, where they'd come to spend the night, and got into the rest of Taylor Watson's fermentin' potatoes. They ate till they was full and went out on the driveway to sleep. They jest couldn't walk any more.

After everyone that was goin' on the hunt got down on their knees and folded their hands, Parson Armor begun to pray. He got right on the subject by askin' fur good luck in findin' the pigs in good health. He hoped they hadn't lost too much weight, 'cause they couldn't git the right food. When he finished and everyone said amen, Able come runnin' around the corner of the house yellin' to everybody that three of the pigs was layin' in the road by the barn. They all got off their knees and started steppin' on each other to git to see the pigs. Ben was wonderin' where the other pig was. Parson Armor bent down and started to talk to the pigs. He asked if it knowed where the other pigs was. Then he raised and told Ben that he could smell whiskey on their breath. Ben said he sure didn't know where they could be gittin' whiskey, 'cause he never had any whiskey on his farm, ever. Then Ben told the Parson that the pigs never talked to no one and they might never find out what happened to the other pig by smellin' their breaths. The people was jest as much in a hurry to leave Ben's place, seein' as he got most of his pigs back, as they was to come. They all run back to their wagons, carts, and cars to pack the kids in and start fur home. Wilda Aims was the first to git on the way, with all the kids too. When she got as fur as the pigs, the horses stopped 'cause the pigs didn't wanna move. Wilda stood up and started a swearin', but the pigs never budged an inch. Oscar Peterson was in back of Wilda with his Ford. He was honkin' his horn fur all he was worth,



but the pigs still never moved. Then the kids started yellin' and bawlin', wantin' to go fur a ride. No one knowed how they was gonna git the pigs to git off the road. They all had ideas, but they never got the pigs to move. They was gonna tie them up and lift them off the road, but Ben thought they would git mad an' run off again, 'cause they didn't like to be tied up. Two hours was gone and the line of horses, wagons, cars and kids was all the way to the end of Ben's road, away past the house. Then Taylor Watson told Ben they could try to feed some of his potatoes to them to see ifin they'd move. Ben thought that would work 'cause they must be goodan' hungry by now. He got a few potatoes. He saw how someone was in them, but he didn't think he should say anything when the parson was there. So he took a few potatoes out to the pigs to coax them off the road. It worked like a charm fur them. All three got on their feet and wobbled slow toward Ben. Then all of a sudden the pigs started a runnin' right to Ben, squealin' and gruntin'. He tried to git away, but fell backwards. The pigs run right up to Ben and started to search fur the potatoes. He couldn't git up fur the pigs. He started yellin' fur help, but Wilda jest swore and started the horses runnin'. The rest of the line moved right past Ben while he was fightin' the pigs tryin' to get up.

## Water Fit Fur Drinkin'

The country ain't like the city in no respects. Ben Searfauce found out that if ya want some water, ya have ta dig fur it. It ain't comin' to ya in no fancy pipes.

For the past eleven years his wife Angel carried water, bucketful after bucketful, a good distance from the pond where the cows drank. She told Ben one winter that the next time she came pregnate, she wasn't gonna carry no water a half mile. He'd have to dig a well. She said she was through bein' a pack horse, especially on wash day. And she was through a washin' all eight kids, then washin' their clothes in the same water bein's she was jest too tired to carry more water.

Angel came pregnate as usual and Ben knowed he'd have to start thinkin' about gettin' a well dug. He had an idea where he'd like the well, but he jest wasn't sure ifin there'd be any water. Angel was pregnate now fur eight months and still luggin' buckets of water up from the frog pond and Ben was still thinkin', tryin' ta figer out the best place fur the well.

Ben begun to dig early one Monday mornin', right in the spot where he thought it would be close to the back porch. He'd dug fur most of the morning when he thought he oughta measure how fur he was. He thought it was kinda deep bein's it was over his head. He looked close to the measurin' stick. Yes, sir,

he had dug a good six foot four and a half inches.

All of a sudden, Taylor Ranks, the bootlegger, coughed over Ben's head wantin' to know what Ben's idea of diggin' was. When Ben heard Taylor, he got so scared that he swallered the tobacco juice. Ben coughed and spit, then said he was a diggin' fur water. Taylor Ranks said, "You better let Jon Kozak tell ya where ya can git water." Ben looked up over the edge of the brown earth and saw Kozak holding his famous witch hazel crutch. Oscar Watson was standin' there a nibbin' too, pushing the damp mud through his fingers. Watson said, "Ranks is right. This here ground ain't got no water." Ben grabbed the rope that was tied to the wood stack and pulled himself over the mud to the top ground. Ben said that there was water 'cause ya could see the way the land was, everything a sparklin' green. But Kozak stopped him with that idea when he told Ben that that was only surface water a makin' that sparklin' business, and that he'd git poison from it durin' certain parts of the summer and it'd always go dry durin' dog days. Everything was quiet and Ben was thinkin'.

Kozak spoke up, "Ben, ifin ya let me test your ground with my Divine Rod, I'll git a good well fur ya."

"There ain't no such thing as findin' water with a stick a wood," Ben said.

"It isn't only the wood," Kozak said. "Ya have to have certain powers. And I have them powers, thank the good Lord fur it."

Both Taylor Ranks and Oscar Watson backed Kozak, said their lands was tested and it turned out mighty fine water and good fur drinkin' too.

Kozak said, "Angel wouldn't have ta be afraid a washin' her new baby in the water he'd find."

Ben thought maybe it would be a good idea and told Kozak to give'r a try. Kozak grabbed hold of the witch hazel crutch with the point up in the air and started a walkin'. The other men follered, watchin'. Sometimes Kozak would shut his eyes and pretend to think hard as he curled his eyebrows together and licked the right side of his shabby mustache. The crutch would sometime move agin his powerful grip, but never would turn completely over. The more Kozak walked the farther he got away from the house. Ben knowed that wouldn't go so good with Angel. So when they got as fur as the chicken coop, Ben said, "Jon, ya better turn around and git closer to the back porch. This is too fur away to be diggin' fur water." Kozak turned around and started toward the house. When he got half-way to the house, the point of the crutch turned right smack over and pointed to the ground.

"This is the spot ya wanna dig," Kozak said, "Right here, yes sir, right here. I could feel the powers, they sure helped me too."

Taylor Ranks picked a few stones and placed them in front of Kozak's feet.

Ben spoke up first, "Well, I'll give'r a try. I'll start diggin' right after I eat. Then he added, "I still don't believe in no powers, but I'll start diggin' jest the same."

After Ben et his lunch, he moved his diggin' tools to the new place, seventy feet from the back porch. He started diggin' agin fur water. But he sure didn't dig too fast. Angel said he was a restin' more than he was a diggin'. She did all the milkin' and feedin' the cows. She even had ta yell to Ben to git up out of the well and go feed the chickens being's he was so close to the coop. So all Ben would do beside his diggin' was feed the chickens.

A week had passed since Ben started to dig this second well. He dug almost twelve and a half feet. The mornin' he was goin' into his thirteenth foot, Jon Kozak look over the edge of the well and said, "Hi yah, Ben! How ya comin' along?"

Ben looked up and said, "I don't think that this dirty, black mud in this well will turn out to be water, but I'm gonna keep on diggin' jest the same."

Kozak stopped to pick up some of the black mud. He put it up to his nose to smell it, leavin' some on his red mustache. Then he said, "Ya know, Ben, I think there's somethin' besides jest plain mud here. It looks to me like there might be oil in this here well, at least the mud sure smells like oil."

Kozak kinda felt of the mud and continued, "Yes sir, Ben, ya might do a mighty good ifin ya git into Derrick City to git those people with the fancy drillin' machines and have them come out to see ifin they could use the oil."

Ben said, "I ain't lookin' fur oil. I'm lookin' fur water."

Kozak said, "There might be aheap of money that you'd git."

Ben thought he might be able to use about thirty or forty dollars when Angel had her kid. Then he raised his head and leaned it agin the dirt wall of the well and said, "Kozak, would you have time ta go in town and talk to them drillin' men for me? I won't be able to git away from here fur . . . well, until I finish the diggin' anyways. Angel's kid is about due and she sure wants to have water in the well when the kid comes."

Next day three men dressed in good lookin', fancy suites come to talk to Ben about drillin' fur oil. Ben told them he wasn't too keen about givin' up the well fur oil, but ifin he got thirty or forty dollars he thought it would be worth it, an' besides he'd git a rest from diggin' fur awhile. The men, when they heard that, looked at each other kinda funny. They got out a bunch a papers fur Ben ta sign. They was movin' so many papers in front of Ben that he wasn't sure what was goin' on. He wasn't even sure of gittin' his forty dollars. The man who was a handlin' the papers fur

Ben to sign, mumbled to the other men, so Ben couldn't hear, that they was gittin' somewheres in the millions of dollars, so they could afford the old boy fifty dollars. After the men assured Ben he'd git fifty dollars the day they started drillin', he told them they could have the well fur drillin' and he'd go back to the first well he had started to dig. Ben signed the papers that same day.

By the time the derrick was up and the drillin' men started a workin', everybody within fifty miles come to see the oil derrick on Ben Searfauce's farm. Ben didn't git the rest he had planned, 'cause Angel made him git to diggin' the other well.

The day Taylor Ranks come to see the derrick, he asked Ben how's a come he was makin' himself a slave a diggin' a well fur water when he'd have so much money from the oil. Taylor said, "If I was you, Ben, I'd git someone to dig fur me."

But Ben said the money he got from the oil was bein' spent for the Doc when the kid was born. And anyways, no oil was gonna turn Ben into a lazy no good fur nothin' city man.

After two days of drillin', the drillers hit an area of ground that showed them there was no sign of oil. They reported to their boss and he come out to Ben's farm to fine what the trouble was. He tested the same ground Ben had dug. But he couldn't understand why there was no signs of oil further down. He asked questions to Ben about the well. He wanted to have Ben explain how's it that he found oil.

Ben scratched his head with his brown fingers and was thinkin' fur a long time. Then all of a sudden he slapped his hat back on his head and said, "Ya know, sir, I guess that oil musta come from the crankcase oil I emptied there from the Ford and tractor. And, by gosh, I remember now that I emptied bawrels and bawrels of oil there too; the oil that was left over from the times they oiled the roads to keep the dust down." Ben stopped talkin' and was thinkin', then he said, "But I didn't think it would be possible fur the oil to crawl that deep."

By night fall of the same day the drillin' men had the derrick pulled down and hauled away from Ben's farm. Lotsa people never knowed why they stopped drillin'. Before the drillin' men left, Ben offered the tool dresser the fifty dollars they gave him. But he told Ben ta keep the money 'cause they kinda tore up the grass when they was movin' the rig in.

Ben stuck to his diggin' fur water jest the same.

Just at the moment Ben struck the big water vein, one of the kids looked over the edge of the well and yelled to Ben that Angel said he was suppose ta git the doctor. Able Watson, being a quick thinker, dropped the rope into the well and run for his horse to ride in town after the doctor. Ben heard everything what was goin' on but couldn't git out of the



well. He was yellin' fur help but either no one heard him or else they was all jest too busy—Ben didn't know which. The water started a comin' up on Ben's shoes pretty fast and he started ta yell all the louder.

When Able got back with the doctor, Ben was still yellin', but not so loud now. As Able passed the well on the way to the house, he yelled down, "Hy, Ben, the doctor is here." Then Ben started a yellin' agin fur some help, 'cause the water was gittin' deeper all the time.

Later Able came out of the house, run over to the well and yelled down, "Ben, ya got a twelve-pound, ten-and-half-ounce boy."

Ben yelled back, "I don't care ifin it is a thirty-pound calf. I want to git the hell out of this here well."

Able then saw the water was around Ben, and still comin' up pretty fast. So Able used his quick wits agin and got three cow chains from the barn. He tied them together so they reached to Ben and then some. When Ben got to the top of the well and put both feet on the ground, he took off his wet shoes and kicked off his wet pants, then run to the house yellin', "Angel, Angel."

When he got in the house, he was still yellin' fur Angel. Everybody was a runnin' back and forth with towels and hot water, everybody except the kids. They was lined up agin the wall in the kitchen watchin' and listenin'. Ben could hear the baby cryin', but he run right ta Angel. When he got ta Angel he kept sayin', "Angel, Angel, I was almost drowned, I was almost drowned in the well, Angel."

## Occupation: Poacher

By JOHN BUDD LAMADE

Alden Weigle chuckled to himself as he dragged a chewed-looking Black Ghost across the Rock Pool on Fenert Creek. It was eight o'clock on Christmas Morning, and his heart was filled with joy. Christmas Day was the one time of the whole year when he could neglect to be on the watch for Warden Zilch. He chuckled again, remembering last night. Poor Warden Zilch. He had read in the Red Dog News that Zilch was to speak forty miles away at the Black Fox Club's annual Christmas Eve venison dinner; so he had followed Zilch there and played the radio in Zilch's car until, around midnight, he saw the meeting break up. As usual, the Warden had stayed to talk with Billy Shakespear, the caretaker, after the others had left; therefore, Weigle had plenty of time to loosen the valves on all four of the Warden's tires and to drain most of the anti-freeze out of his radiator before the Warden rose to go home. Alden nearly bent double in mirth as he thought of the Warden's having to stop three or four miles away from the club to check his tires and find

his radiator boiled dry. The Warden probably made the hills tremble when he perceived his predicament and parked the car, preparatory to shivering the way back to the Black Fox. It would be noon, at the very earliest, before Zilch could induce a garage man to leave his Christmas celebration and get the car once more in running order. Alden wished that Fennie, his wife, would appreciate his little jokes. He wanted someone else to share his triumph, but since there was no one, he smiled to himself. In fact, he smiled to himself so much, and felt so thoroughly proud of himself, that he nearly missed a big salmon.

The salmon had been toying with Alden's Black Ghost for the last couple of minutes. It had bumped the fly so lightly and so daintily that Alden had taken it to be a little white club, and therefore had not struck seriously. Suddenly, in the midst of his musing, he felt a tug and heard the reel buzz as the slack line was jerked from between his fingers. Ha, thought Weigle, as the salmon terminated his run fifty feet downstream and shot into the air. Salmon and green peas for Christmas dinner! Poor old Warden Zilch, if he could only see me now. The salmon made a couple more runs and then sounded to take a rest near the shelf rock on the other side. "Go to it, boy," Alden told the salmon. "I've got all morning."

Alden could feel the salmon jerking his head from side to side, trying to extract the hook. Then the salmon began to make short runs, turning over on his side and trying to rub the hook out on the smooth rock creekbed. Alden gave him the butt. The salmon came straight up, shaking his head and writhing his body as he left the water. Three times more he jumped and sent mercury-like splinters of water flying as he crashed back into the creek. Alden tried to lead him into the current, facing upstream so that he would tire himself out; thereupon, the salmon led Alden downstream. Straight down, through the riffles and past two short pools to the Big Pool in the Woods. Here, the salmon sounded again. He sulked on the bottom and refused to budge. Alden was doubly glad they had stopped. He was wet and out of breath—and the next pool was the Pool under the Bridge. If the fish had gone there, Alden would have had to land him in a hurry, for fear of being seen by a passing motorist. As it was, everything was perfect. The riffle at the head of the pool was too swift for any upstream movement. The pool itself was free from snags, and only moderately deep. There was plenty of undergrowth to serve as cover for Alden, too, just in case someone did happen to be in that neighborhood.

For another fifteen minutes the fish sulked, a dead weight against the line. Alden became impatient. He wanted to feel his silver beauty in his hands. He wanted to weigh the salmon, to see how many pounds he had sneaked away from the state this time. He wanted to know how many of his neighbours he could invite, this evening, to help Fennie and him eat his favorite fare, salmon and green peas. He tap-

ped the butt of his rod with the palm of his hand, but the salmon would not move. He jerked the rod up and down as if his fly were stuck beneath a stone; no luck. Finally, in desperation, he threw a stone about the size of a baseball into the water just below the point where he judged the fish was resting. Then the salmon became impatient. It shot to the surface, shaking its head. Then it ran back and forth across the middle of the pool. Alden put all the strain that they could bear on the rod and line. The rod bent double as the salmon ran, but whenever it stopped, Alden had to relax the strain because of the violent jerking of the big fish. Alden was sure it was the biggest he had had on this year. Gradually, as the fish tired, the runs became shorter and shorter. Finally Alden had worked him so close that he could nearly reach him. He lifted the rod higher in his right hand, and bent over to slip his fingers into the salmon's gills. Weigle's eyes glittered as he looked down at four feet of gleaming silver fish, fresh from the ocean, with sea-lice still on him. He reached down to grasp his prize. A pebble crunched beneath his foot. Away shot the salmon. Up to the head of the pool to waver in the strong current for a moment, and then down the pool and into the riffle. Down the riffle. Weigle could see the bridge. Down a shallow glide and through the last riffle above the Bridge Pool. Into the Bridge Pool. The heart sank in the breast of Alden Weigle. He worked the salmon downstream to where he could stand beneath the bridge. Underneath the bridge the water was deep. The fish sounded. The fish stayed there. Then Alden heard a car.

He tried his best to coax the fish toward the tail of the pool. No use. The car was closer now. Probably coming around the second curve down. Alden payed out line as he hurried into the bushes below the bridge. He could hear tires crunch the frozen dirt road. Holding the rod as low as keeping a tight line would permit, Alden stretched out on the ground beneath the laurel. The car stopped on the bridge. Alden's knife was in his hand ready to sever the line should the motorist see him. He saw a car door open and Warden Zilch step out. Zilch stepped to the rail of the bridge and looked over. Alden's breathing stopped. Finally the Warden turned to get back into the car. As he did, the rotten end of the floorboard on which he stood gave way and fell into the creek. Alden nearly laughed as he saw the Warden injected into the bridge. Then the salmon started. Alden knew better than to hesitate. His knife snipped the line. He stealthily disjointed his rod as he watched Billy Shakespear emerge from the car to help the Warden to his feet. He was out of the bushes and on his way home before Zilch stopped swearing at the rotten board in the bridge floor, for he knew that they would never overlook a salmon rising on Christmas Day as well as he knew that they would head straight for his house as soon as they noticed the leader and line attached to the salmon.

Fennie was even grumpier than usual when he stalked into the house and related his adventure. She was much, much grumpier when he told her to forget the chicken that she was preparing to roast and to open a couple of cans of salmon. They were having broiled fillets of salmon and green peas for Christmas dinner, he said. With many a salty phrase rolling off her spiteful tongue, Fennie got out the salmon and green peas that her helpmate demanded.

They were just sitting down at the table when a knock sounded at the front door. "Well, now, I wonder who that could be?" mused Alden as he answered the summons. Warden Zilch stood glaring on the threshold. "Well, how d' you do?" said Alden. "Merry Christmas to you, Warden. Fennie, lay another place at the table. Warden Zilch has just dropped in for a bite to eat."

Zilch reached down and picked a heavy object off the side of the steps. "I've got a present here for you, Weigle. Weighs forty-seven pounds, eleven ounces. Biggest fish taken all year on Fenert Creek. In fact, the biggest fish taken for quite a few years, from anywhere in Diefendorfer County." He turned and called to the car, "Hey Billy, bring that other package in, will ya?" Then, back to Weigle, he said, "Let's see that reel and line of yours. A most unusual thing about this salmon is that I found him struggling around in the Pool under the Bridge with about thirty yards of line and leader still attached to him. Look here, Weigle, I've waited a long time to get the goods on you. Now I've got you as cold as this fish. I went into Red Dog, before coming out here, in order to get a warrant to search your premises, if you refuse to show me your tackle. You and I both know whose line that is. Where's your reel?"

"Come on back into the kitchen, Warden," said Alden, as he turned to go for his reel.

The Warden and Billy Shakespear followed him back into the kitchen and sat down. Fennie was starting to serve two more plates with salmon and green peas. "Ha," said the Warden. "Ha," Billy Shakespear echoed absentmindedly. "You've done me a good turn this day, Weigle, my boy," chortled the Warden as Alden reappeared with his reel. "Not only do I get the goods on you with the line, but I also find salmon on your table. You must have had pretty good fishing this morning. What a Christmas present this will be for all the deputy wardens of Diefendorfer County! I hate to take your Christmas dinner right out from under your noses, but that salmon and green peas is evidence. Are you ready to go peacefully?"

"Why, Harry Zilch, how you do talk," said Alden in a hurt voice. "You know that you and Billy Shakespear are always welcome at my table whenever you drop by, but what's all this talk about taking our Christmas dinner away from us? You came here to look at my reel and line, didn't you? I'm sure glad you stopped, because I've been wanting to show



you my new double-tapered line, that Feenie's Uncle Archie sent me for Christmas. Here, take a look! Try knotting it once, and see what a real hand-made line looks like. No matter what you do to it, the finish will not crack. I'm sorry that I haven't my old line here, but the truth is that I mailed it to New York a couple of weeks ago to be refinished. I'm afraid I'll have to apologize for not being able to offer your fresh salmon—the cans are there in the scrap basket—and green peas; the only thing is that I wasn't able to put enough salmon in the freezer to last until Christmas, so we've got to make the best of it with canned fish. Sure you can't stay? There's more than enough for all of us. Maybe you'd like to take Feenie's recipe home to your wife. You take two fillets of broiled salmon . . . ."

The red-faced Warden and his silent partner were already stamping out the front door. "Merry Christmas," called Alden.

## Toward Infinity

By OLGA HORLACHER

Ever I searched in life true paradigm,  
And found in nature, all my synonym;  
But essence true . . . . in you.

These pinioned creatures flap about in space—  
Vicious vertical-and-horizonal race;  
So flew my heart, from the start,

Prolific earth, imbued with seeds by fate,  
Waits for wakening season to rotate;  
Thus I reason towards your season.

Onc't I, a colony of trees chanc't by,  
Great trees, with stretched arms, fing'ring the  
sky;  
Kin with infinity . . . . like me.

The symbolic vastness of candid sky,  
Oft is wedded with perverse passions that ter-  
rify;  
Must I believe, love, too, will deceive?

Nature's apostle will, inherently consigned,  
And end of time, to all generated kind;  
All the same, I will tender the flame.

## Thus Silently

By MARGARET HUMIS COLLINS

In quietness her soul is gone,  
As silently as the snow-white swan  
Moves now across the tranquil lake,  
Unheeding shore sounds that would break  
Her spirit's calm.

Thus silently our strivings cease  
In death's miraculous release  
From vain and transitory things,  
For under the covert of His wings  
Our souls find peace.

## Ancient Art

By MARGARET HUMIS COLLINS

Emerald chameleon  
With your toy baloon,  
Slipping through the sunshine  
In a jewelled tune,  
Ruby red's your yawning  
Like the sky at dawning  
When the sun comes soon;  
Now in tiny splendor  
Your green body slender  
Shimmers at high noon;  
Then, oh wee magician,  
As a politician  
Or a sly buffoon  
You change every feature  
And become a creature  
Brown as a cocoon.  
Midget elf of iridescence  
You're the questionable quintessence  
Of the ancient art of rune.

## To Phyllis

By COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

Pent up in jagged green horse chestnut burrs  
The fruit matures to deep and reddened stain.  
One day, in sunny-weathered fall, when stirs  
The limb, the dark and gloss and sheen abstain  
No more. From velvet gossamer, away  
They break—from lodging dark and shielding  
gloom—

To intercourse with freedom. Sunlight, gay  
And playful, splits the burs, then acts the  
groom

To that which lies within. Love-nurtured now,  
No more they cringe to hide their ready souls.  
Philosophy walled up my secrets. How  
Was I to read to you my private scrolls?  
But now, love-nourished all this sunlit fall,  
I move in freedom outside the broken wall.

## To My Mother

By LEILA DUARTE

I saw a woman on the street today.

She was weeping.  
Not hotly, with the passion of youth,  
Not coldly, as a selfish person weeps;  
But quietly, with a dead hopelessness.

People passed, and pushed, and jostled her,  
But she walked on with indifferent stride  
The tears upon her cheeks and tired old eyes.  
And I wept too, when I saw that sigh

For I thought of you, my Mother—Mother,  
Across the seas I stretch my hands  
To comfort you in your loneliness.  
I understand.

## A Sonnet

By COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

New-budded maples veiled the solemn night  
With morning lace. In patterned form the  
street  
Lights marked the bidding path. The boy, his  
bright  
Eyes dimming now, looked up, saw time com-  
plete.

The tower clock struck out the minutes 'till  
The end; until the bells would gravely strike  
Their midnight chimes and echo in the chill  
Of misted air their hymn of death. Alike—  
The veil of night, the tower clock, the grief  
That gnawed his aching heart—the silent three,  
Now biding in a tortured spell of brief  
And laggard time, awaiting the decree.  
The impulse went. The wind-stirred limb  
Proclaiming death divorced in interim.

## All We Need Know

By CAROLYN CARPENTER

All day I had climbed the hill  
To fling myself at its peak.  
Leaving the turbulent earth,  
I thought I'd much to seek.

It must be there, I knew  
In cool air I would find  
Harmony and perfect peace,  
And constancy of mind.

I climbed that day and more  
Only to discover,  
That after I climbed one,  
I must start another.

We think life waits for us  
In certain timely places.  
Soon enough sometimes, we learn  
Pursuits are but endless races.

All we need know of life,  
And all we ever seek,  
We'll find within our hearts,  
Not on a far-flung peak.

## The Third Silent Voice

By GEORGE F. NYCE

I listened to a learned professor disputing the  
history of man,  
From the Dawn of Time until Noon of Today,  
And I agreed with him.  
But I almost heard a silent voice within me  
ask,

"What of the Night before the Dawn of Time?"  
And the voice answered itself,  
"I remember."  
And I heard another voice asking,  
"What of the Evening after the Noon of To-  
day?"

It too answered itself, saying,  
"I remember."

A third silent voice began to ask,  
"And what of the Noon of Today?"  
My soul interrupted with a scornful command,  
"Be still. I try to forget."

## The Mirror

By GEORGE F. NYCE

Three times one day I looked into a mirror  
To see deeper than the reflections of me.  
The first was early in the morning  
And I saw nothing I had not seen before.  
Again at noon I could see nothing but me.  
Late that night I fell asleep,  
And in a dream I rose, looking,  
With closed eyes, into the glass.  
My reflection melted into shadows,  
Byt my soul stood out,  
Clearly defined and awesome in its greatness.  
I trembled at its beauty,  
Knowing it was but Thee in Me.  
I slept on and did not look again  
Until the next morning when I recalled my  
dream  
And vainly tried to see deeper,  
Deeper than the reflection of me.

## Not Belonging Anywhere

By CAROLYN CARPENTER

Not belonging anywhere,  
I was part of the night.  
Hurrying along with the wind,  
I scurried leaves to flight.  
Gay lights in a window by,  
A child's nose pressed to its pane,  
Made me feel more sure  
That I was part of the rain,  
Life inside was warm, at ease,  
Complete in its reality.  
I remained aloof from these  
With inborn partiality.  
Not belonging anywhere,  
I sense myself akin,  
To others, who also are,  
On the outside, looking in.

## Mental Reckoning

By OLGA HORLACHER

All earth, the winds, the stars are synchronized  
To a swelling, constant beat;  
I wait in night already filled with you,  
All eons of beauty meet.  
What withheld your coming? Yet, I will live  
With the strength of searching mind,  
In the silvery-black etching of night . . . .  
Delving philosophic find.

## There Is Singing

By MARGARET HUMIS COLLINS

There is singing in the silent halls of death,  
Little children come but yesterday from earth,  
Lightly tossing their sweet madrigals of home  
Into the infinitude toward which they've gone—  
Till vast angel choirs in heaven repeat the  
song  
In a mingling of hosannas round God's throne.



# Christmas and Margaret Elizabeth

By ISABEL MILLER

Margaret Elizabeth ran down the hall steps and out the front door fast, the tassel on her red tam bobbing as she went. It was only three days until Christmas; Mother said she could go shopping, and the air was full of fine soft snowflakes. No wonder she was happy!

She stopped suddenly outside the door beside her father's grocery store, and looked up above the window ledge at Sam Pepperman's old Santa Claus next door. Sure enough. There he was. Fat and jolly and faintly weather-beaten, but none the less beautiful to children's eyes; a life-sized Santa Claus protruding from a brick chimney, bearing a big pack of toys on his back and gazing benignly down on Main Street.

None of the children in the block liked to start their Christmas shopping until the old Santa Claus man was out. "Is he out yet?" Lou would ask a dozen times a day. Together they would press their faces to the upstairs window, waiting and watching for Mr. Pepperman's approval of the beginning of the holiday season. Sometimes it was two weeks before Christmas when he made his appearance; this year it was only a week before. It had been hard waiting.

She felt all aglow inside; this was her afternoon. It stretched ahead of her, fascinating in all its possibilities. She squeezed her pocketbook, just to be sure. It was comforting to hear the light jingle of coins and she held the pocketbook tightly in her mittened hand.

What could be more wonderful than Christmas-time? She hugged the glowing feeling within her close to her heart. Mama had been making many trips to the third floor spare room. That door was kept locked during this particular season. It added to the mystery and anticipation. She wondered if Mama was making something for her. She must know by now that all Margaret Elizabeth wanted was a real doll's bed for Suzanne. Even the doll clothes were not so important as the bed.

She walked over to look in the candy store window.

"Golly," she said out loud, and stood still, taking it all in, thrilled with the luscious-looking things in their festive display. Someone last night must have changed the whole window; she remembered seeing chocolate covered cherries in boxes and ribbon candy, and black walnut taffy. But today!

"Ummmmmmmm," she murmured to herself. She rubbed her mitten unconsciously against her cheek to brush away a stray snowflake, and started counting the candy canes hung on a cord across the window. Twenty-five. Red and white peppermint ones. Her eyes wandered to the bowls of clear toys; red and green and yellow ones. She identified the various

shapes; a green boat, a red hat, a yellow pipe. Oh, the glory of them! Her mouth watered and she wished she had one right now to suck on. Clear toys always lasted a long time if you only sucked at them.

Then she noticed, with appreciation, that the popcorn balls were wrapped in colored wax paper, and a huge mound of them lay in the very center of the display. They looked like colored snowballs.

People hurried by, and now and then someone would call out to her, "Hello, Margaret Elizabeth." She would turn and smile and nod. Everybody was happy today. It was wonderful to be out of school and have a whole afternoon all to yourself. Her heart sang as the snowflakes laid themselves gently on the top of her red tam.

She decided after a while, having taken her fill of the beauties of Mr. Pepperman's candy shop window, that she would go over to Smith and Winter's Department Store and look around for something for Lou. Mama's handkerchiefs and Papa's box of talcum powder were wrapped and tucked away in her bottom bureau drawer. Kitty's book was also ready. But Lou, being a boy with unusual taste, was a little more difficult to choose for. She wished she could get him a gun. But that was silly. Mama wouldn't like that, and besides she wouldn't have money enough to get a good one, and Lou would turn his nose up at a cheap one.

Just then she heard a trill of bells and the sound of runners on the snowy street. She stopped in front of the Department Store; her eyes took on a look of intense interest and speculation as she waited to see whose sleigh it was and who was in it.

It was Ollie Bruner, her father's hired man. He was delivering in a sleigh this week on account of the snow; a real old sleigh with a big horse pulling it. The very thought of a ride in the sleigh made Margaret Elizabeth's heart pound faster with excitement.

"Oh, Ollie," she called excitedly across the street to him, "take me a ride."

The oldish-looking man in the sleigh yelled "Whoa," and stopped just this side of a snow bank. Then he glanced across the street to see who was calling to him.

"Oh, it's you, Cottontop." That was his nickname for her because of her fine blonde hair. "Too busy now! Have a lot of orders to get out. Maybe later." With a wave, he went into the grocery store. She nodded understandingly and it all added a little more zest to the day. Life was wonderful in Birchfield, Pennsylvania. With all the wisdom of her eight years, she thought it must be the nicest town in the whole world.

Carefully she studied the window display at Smith and Winter's, then walked through the store and downstairs to "Toyland."

An hour passed pleasantly in the company of dolls—beautiful dolls that opened and shut their eyes and had long lashes and little white leather shoes with buckles on them. She examined the doll beds and cribs. One of the doll beds had small pillows and real sheets and pillow cases and tiny pink blankets. Could anything be so marvelous? She had forgotten all about Lou until a clerk who knew her mother spoke to her and asked her what she wanted.

"Why—she looked confused for a minute and her eyes strayed from the small stove equipped with little saucepans to the woman's kindly face.

"Oh, hello, Miss Forrest. Let's see"—she hesitated and thought for a minute. "I guess I'll look at the games. For my brother, Lou." She added this knowingly as if she expected Miss Forrest to know all along that she was really looking for a gift.

"Well, you're in the wrong section, my dear. Way up there at the other end are the games. You go look around and I'll be with you in a minute, as soon as I get this big doll wrapped up."

Margaret Elizabeth paused and looked at the doll in her hands.

"She's pretty, isn't she?" Miss Forrest's eyes took on a strangely mysterious look as she quickly closed the lid on the box. "Some little girl is going to be lucky," she said.

What if Christmas lasted all the year through? Margaret Elizabeth pondered thoughtfully about this as she hunted up the games. She took her time to decide; first there was the Parchesi game—then Lotto; she glanced hurriedly at the Dominoes and "Old Maids" (Lou would scoff at these)—then she picked up a box of Jack Straws. This was her favorite game,—but was it Lou's? She thought not. The Parchesi would do, and she looked at the back for the price. It was fifty cents. Just then Miss Forrest came up.

"Found something?" she asked quickly. Her voice sounded tired. Imagine being tired in this "Toyland" of all places. She couldn't understand the hastiness on the part of the clerk, but handed over the fifty cents and waited patiently while the gift was wrapped for her. Through her mind ran the tinkle of a tune and Ollie and his old sleigh. It ran lightly, like "Jingle bells." Of course, Jingle bells! That was what it was. They sang it in school with all the children standing around the big green tree trimmed with the things they had made for it. Chains of colored paper, strings of popcorn and cut-out paper angels with cotton pasted on them for hair; cardboard candles painted green, with real-looking red flames. Her candle was a good one, Miss Leathers had said.

Christmas! It made her feel warm all over. With her package under her arm, she started up Main Street, kicking the snow with the toe

of her rubbers. Perhaps it was the snow that made her happy—different—like shouting out loud.

She felt in her pocketbook and found the dime. Good. She could have a hot chocolate at Achenbach's. Mama said she could if she got tired shopping. Mama had been baking sand tarts when she left and there would be a large canful hidden away in the pantry when she got home. Yesterday she had helped to make springerles. The best thing about them was the wonderful smell of anise.

Achenbach's was filled to the door with shoppers and children on vacation. Annabelle Packer called to her. She was having a hot fudge sundae with her mother and looked as prim as usual. Even Annabelle didn't bother her today with her "little lady" manners and her immaculateness of dress. She's just an "only child," Margaret Elizabeth reminded herself. She got the phrase from Kitty. Kitty felt sorry for "only children."

Dreamily thinking her own thoughts, Margaret Elizabeth walked slowly over to a table by the window and ordered a hot chocolate from old Mr. Achenbach, who knew her and usually teased her about her blonde hair. But today he was busy and had one of the girls bring her order while he went on to another customer. She glanced over to the cases at the front door and noticed that the chocolate eclairs and lady fingers had been replaced with holiday gingerbread men with colored icing, and sand tarts made in the shape of Christmas trees. There were also Santa Claus men of milk chocolate wrapped in gold and silver tin foil.

They were none as nice as the springerles she and Mama had made yesterday. She enjoyed taking the wooden mold with the designs on it and pressing it down lightly on the dough as Mama laid it out for her. Then Mama would cut out each design into a shape and put them on long cookie sheets to bake. The smell of anise came to her, reminiscent of other holidays and adding another special touch to the time of year.

Just then a girl brought the chocolate in a tall mug with a large blob of whipped cream on top, and two saltine crackers. With a happy sigh, she ate most of the cream off first, leaving just a little bit to stir into the chocolate beneath. It tasted sweet and hot and good. When she had finished, she gave her dime to the girl at the desk, who gave her five cents change. She wished she had a lot of money to get Mama one of those fancy boxes of Huyier's candles with the red satin ribbons. There were sprigs of holly and mistletoe around the counter. Mistletoe! That was what she wanted. Mama loved it.

She hurried out and up the street to the Italian fruit store. Sure enough, there was a box of holly wreaths and one of mistletoe out in front of the store. Joe was busy with another customer; so she hunted through the top layer of the mistletoe box. All the pieces were too big.



"Here's my girl." Joe turned around to her. "What you want? A nice big piece? How much?"

"Oh,"—she was bashful all of a sudden. She couldn't tell him she had only five cents left in her pocketbook. "How much is it?"

"Ten cents for this one." He held out a small bunch.

"Just a tiny one, Joe," she said seriously. "About a nickel's worth."

He hunted in the box again. "How's this?" His eyes looked amused and he grinned at her. "Just one nickel's worth exactly. How's about?"

"Just right." She fished up the lone nickel and took the little sprig reverently. It was a part of Christmas too. She thought she would tie it to the ribbon bow on her mother's present. She started home, but the window displays still drew her and she couldn't pass one of them without stopping to look, especially the one at the Book Store.

"I hope I get some story books." Why hadn't she thought of a book for Lou? Oh, well,—games are nice things to have. The snow had stopped but it was getting darker. Mama would be through baking and would probably be starting supper. Papa kept the store open every evening now and had to have his supper early.

Complacently she made her way through the crowd to Brown's Grocery Store ("Established 1889"). She knew the window there by heart. Raisins, dates, nuts in mounds. Oranges and pop corn balls around the edge and luscious looking deep red cranberries in big glass containers. They made her think of the cranberry sauce Mama would have for Christmas dinner with the turkey. Nobody could make it as good as Mama did.

Just as she arrived at the grocery store, Ollie came rushing out with two huge baskets packed with orders. A small boy followed him with another basket and they put them in the sleigh.

"Ollie!" Margaret Elizabeth was breathless. "Are you going out on a trip now?"

"Sure enough, Cottomtop. Jump in if you want to go along. I've got a bunch of orders."

Joy of joys! She jumped over the pile of snow at the curb and sat down on the seat of the sleigh, arranged her box and mistletoe on her lap. The horse neighed and threw his head around to the side as if to greet her. She laughed aloud.

"Oh, Ollie," she breathed in ecstasy. "I've been wanting a ride in the sleigh for so long."

Goodnaturedly he glanced down at her happy little face and threw the blanket over her lap.

"Better tuck that around your feet. It may snow some more."

The lights were beginning to come on in the stores and houses. It must be near supper

time — other people's. Hers was forgotten. Everything was forgotten in the exquisite joy of being in a sleigh pulled over the snow on runners. The icy coldness of the air, Ollie's hearty remarks as he stopped at a house with a package, all were woven into the background of her enjoyment. She snuggled down into the robe and watched the houses go by, oblivious of time and space.

"Got a long trip over the river," Ollie said quite a while later. "Over to old Tom Hunter's. Don't think your Mama will worry about you?"

"Worry?" Margaret Elizabeth was vague. Nothing could spoil this blissful mood. "Oh no!" She brushed his concern lightly away and forgot it in the excitement of crossing the river at the old bridge. Once on the other side, they followed the road straight along the river; they could see the lights twinkling on in the town in the half dusk. The sky had softened down to a dull pinkish tone. Like something out of a book.

Ollie was right. The snow was beginning again but it was so pretty she didn't mind. The flakes seemed to catch the sparkle of the lights from the passing houses and they glistened softly all about them.

She wondered idly if their Christmas tree at home this year would have an angel or a star on top.

"Here we are." Ollie's voice sounded tired and far off in her reverie. He yelled "Whoa, there," to the horse. "This is the last trip. Sit tight there, Margaret Elizabeth. I'll be right out."

She heard him talking loudly to Mr. Hunter at his side door. The light from the kitchen made a brilliant glitter on the snow.

Mr. Hunter was shouting to her. "Come on in, child. Come in and have a cookie. Ma has been baking all afternoon."

She threw back the robe and waded through the snow. A warm spicy odor drifted out and around her and it made her hungry.

"Here you are, honey. You look frozen. Which do you like the best? Boston rocks, or gingerbread men?"

Politely Margaret Elizabeth chose a gingerbread man. It was still warm and tasted delicious. The eyes were of raisins and there were red teaberries for buttons on his coat. She thanked Mrs. Hunter, thinking all the while what a perfect day it had been. Ollie was suddenly in a hurry. "I have to be getting back. We will be busy tonight. Good night, folks."

They hurried out and as they were about to start found that one of the runners had sunk far into a snow bank. "Gosh darn," Ollie said disgustedly, "now I'll have to get a shovel."

It was quite dark as they started back the river road to the bridge. But the snow had stopped and the stars were still and beautiful

and the snow lay all about them. She felt cozy and warm and secure in the sleigh.

As the lights of the town came into view, she thought of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Away in the Manger"—the songs she sang in Sunday School. Sleepily she hummed them to herself. Her day was complete. Tonight when she was in bed, she would think about the doll bed and what she would do with it if she found one under the Christmas tree.

It seemed to take longer going back, and it was just seven as they crossed the old bridge; the town clock boomed out the hour. They pulled up briskly in front of the grocery store and Ollie started to help her out. Her feet were cold and stiff. All of a sudden, her father ran out of the store.

"Why, Papa," she said, "you forgot your hat."

"Margaret Elizabeth!" His kindly voice sounded hoarse and funny. And then she realized that he was shouting. She looked at him in amazement as he grabbed her up in his arms and held her. "We thought you were lost!"

"Oh, my goodness." Ollie looked guilty. "I shouldn't have taken her. But she's been wanting a ride so bad and I didn't think we'd be so late."

"Oh, Margaret Elizabeth!" That was all her father could say and he carried her in the side door which led upstairs to their apartment over the store.

"Daniel? Is that you?" That was her mother's voice; it didn't sound right either. It had a worried desperate note in it. Her father ran up the stairs carrying her as if she had been a very small child. She was bewildered. It must be late—had she missed supper?

Mama was standing at the top of the stairs. Her face was pale and queer looking as if she had been crying.

"Oh," she cried, "you found her!" And she burst out crying. The faint smell of cookies permeated the apartment. "Oh, Margaret Elizabeth, how could you? How could you?" She kept crying this over and over. "There's your doll bed and your new doll all ready for Christmas!—and you were gone. What would we have done if you had really been lost?"

But she stopped crying when Papa put her down in a chair. Margaret Elizabeth was still holding her game with the mistletoe squashed on top. Mama pulled her rubbers off.

"Her feet are cold." She was all excited now, the tears were gone. "Never go away again like that without telling Mama or Papa where you are going."

Papa straightened up and looked stern. The worry of the last few hours had harshened his voice. "She must go right to bed as punishment. She can never do this again. We were ready to call the police, Margaret Elizabeth! Don't you ever do that again!"

Margaret Elizabeth looked startled. Her heart, which had been so gay this afternoon, turned into a heavy hard thing imprisoned forever inside of her. All the beauty of the day was gone. She turned and ran into her bedroom. The room seemed stifling with steam heat after the winter evening outdoors with its cold stars and glistening snow.

She wanted to burst out and sob, "I didn't mean it. I forgot—I forgot about everything, Mama. I never thought you would worry, Papa. I wanted a sleigh ride—" But she couldn't. Her little world of happiness had fallen in like so many jack straws in a game.

Miserably and bitterly alone, she undressed and crawled into bed. Words were sufficient blows to humble her pride into nothingness. A thousand lashes couldn't have accomplished more. She wanted to cry out but she couldn't. She lay cold and frightened, contemplating the awfulness of her act.

Later she heard Papa go down the stairs to the store. It must still be open and there would be work to be done. She never wanted to see him again. Why did fathers have to worry like that? Everything had been beautiful just a few hours ago. Could things change that quickly?

And then she remembered what her mother had said about the doll bed. Crushed, she shook her head into the pillow and wept. The tears came easily. It all seemed so wicked of her now—not to think. She cried for a long while. Then she lay staring at the dark ceiling, for hours it seemed. She lay quite still in the darkness wondering about it all. Suppose she had been lost? What would Mama and Papa have done?

The door creaked open and Mama came in quietly. She stepped softly and Margaret Elizabeth, peering out over the top of her comfort, saw she carried a tray with a glass of milk and something on a plate. She sat up in bed. "Mama," she said, "I didn't mean—not to tell."

"Of course you didn't, dear." Her mother's face looked serene again, the way she liked it; not queer and worried. She felt better immediately.

"Here, taste the cookies and tell me if they're good." Mama put the tray on the table by the bed and snapped the light on. Her very presence enveloped Margaret Elizabeth with its familiar warmth. The cold lump inside of her began to melt away. She chose a sand tart sprinkled with brown sugar and nuts and cinnamon, and bit into it slowly.

Mama sat down on the bed and watched her with understanding eyes as she ate the cookies and drank the milk.

"They're good, Mama," she smiled shyly and finished up all the crumbs. Her little world with Christmas in it came back into focus once more—just like a picture on the wall which had been knocked crooked and now was straightened up again.



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