

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING

Grace S. Richmond

The Christmas story I should like to recall to you, began a whole year ahead of time. When Guy Fernald, on the evening after Christmas, went to visit his sister, Nan, and her husband, Tom Berdett. They had just finished dinner and were seated comfortably about the fire, when Guy said to his sister: You know, Nan, it's a confounded shame that not one of the family got home for Christmas. Nan exclaimed: Why didn't Carol or Oliver, or... (Guy) No one except me, and I was only there a couple of hours. I was invited to Lucile's for Christmas day, and went, of course - you know why. We had a great time, but along toward evening I began to feel worried. I really thought Ralph was home - he wrote me that he might swing around that way for the holidays - I knew the rest of you were all wrapped up in your own Christmas trees and weren't going to get there.

So, I took the seven-thirty down and walked in on them. They were sitting all alone by the fire. Mother just gave one gasp and flew into my arms. And Dad got up more slowly. You know he has that darned rheumatism worse than ever this winter. (Nan) I wish we had gone - but well... (Guy) Um, well Dad came over and I thought he'd shake my hand off. They were so glad to see me it made my throat ache. Nan felt a tightening in her own throat as Guy continued. Ralph had written them he couldn't get around, and, of course, you'd all written and sent them things - lovely things, and they appreciated them. But - blame it all - they were just dead lonesome - and the whole outfit of us within six hundred miles, most within a hundred. (Nan) Well, we were going down, but we had so many invitations that we.. (Guy) Next Christmas it's going to be different. I have it all planned out. You'll all hear from me before then. Meanwhile - run down and see them once or twice this winter, will you, Nan? Somehow it struck me how they aren't so young as they used to be.

When Guy had gone, Nan said to her husband: We really must be there Christmas

next year, Tom, and Tom assented eagerly. He only wished there were a father and mother somewhere in the world for him to go home to.

Guy was not the kind to forget anything which had taken hold of him as that pathetic Christmas homecoming had done, and when the year had nearly rolled around, the first of December saw him at work getting his plans in order. He began with his eldest brother, Oliver, because he considered Oliver's wife, Sonya, the hardest member of the family he had to convince in the carrying out of his scheme.

And as Oliver listened to Guy, Sonya, his wife, glared at him. But Guy continued: You see, the idea struck me it would do them a lot of good. To revive old times. I thought we could make it just as much as possible like one of the Christmases before anybody got married - hang up the stockings and all, you know - it would give them a mighty thrilling surprise. I plan to have us all creep in in the night, and go to bed in our own rooms. And then in the morning - See?

(Sonya) It seems to me a very strange plan! Don't you think you are asking a good deal, Guy?

(Guy) It doesn't seem to me that I am. It's only for once. I really don't think father and mother would care much what sort of presents we brought them, if we only came ourselves. Oliver, if you'd seen those two last Christmas...

(Sonya) Guy you don't seem to realize that we have arrangements that... But Oliver interrupted Sonya, saying: Guy, have you thought it all out? What time would we arrive? How early on the morning after Christmas could we get away? Are you positive we could all crowd into the house without rousing and alarming father and mother.

(Guy) Sure thing. Marietta will take care of that. You see, father's quite a bit deaf now...

(Oliver) Father deaf?

(Guy) Sure. Didn't you know?

(Oliver) Forgotten. But mother'd hear us.

(Guy) No, she won't. You see, Marietta doesn't go home at nights now, since mother had that fall."

(Oliver) Mother had a fall?

(Guy) Why, yes, a bad one. She's a bit lame and always will be. Her knee stiffens up in the night, and she can't get up and go prowling about at the least sound, the way she used to. So if we make a whisper or noise, Marietta'll tell her it's the cat, or something. Oh, it can be worked all right. ^{and later wives, husbands and children will join us for Christmas dinner and festive} The only thing that worries me is the fear ^{fortu} that I can't get all of you to take hold of the scheme.

(Sonya) But Guy, you must remember that we have....

Again Oliver interrupted: Guy, I believe you're right. If the others fall into line, you may count on me.

Guy got away quickly, feeling that the worst of his troubles were over. In his younger sister, Nan, he hoped to find an ardent ally and he was not disappointed. His sister, Carol, also fell in heartily with the plan. Ralph, from somewhere in the far West, wrote that he would get home or break a leg. Edison, his brother, was persuaded by his wife, Jessica, that he must go. And so they all fell into line, and there remained for Guy only the working out of the details.

It is Christmas eve. Marietta, the Fernalds housekeeper called: Oh Mis' Fernald, fore you get to bed I'm most forgettin' what I was to ask you. I 'spect you'll laugh, but Guy - he wrote me partic'lar he wanted you and his father to - to hang up your stockin's.

Mrs. Fernald paused in the doorway of her bedroom. Guy wrote that? Then - it almost looks as if he might be coming himself, doesn't it, Marietta?

(Marietta) Oh, I don't know's I'd really expect him. I guess what he meant was more in the way of a surprise for a Christmas present - something that'll go into a stockin' maybe.

Mrs. Fernald found the stockings, and touched her husband on the shoulder as he sat unlacing his shoes. Father, Guy wrote he wanted us to hang up our stockings.

(Father) Well, well, anything to please the boy. It doesn't seem more than a year since he was a little fellow hanging up his own stocking, does it, mother?

The stockings were hung in silence. They looked thin and lonely as they dangled beside the dying fire.

(Mother) I think Guy will be down tomorrow. Remember how he surprised us last year? I'm sorry the others can't come. I sent them all the invitations just as usual. But it is pretty snowy weather, and I suppose they don't quite like to risk it.

And presently Marietta called through the door as Mrs. Fernald was putting out the light. Mis' Fernald, the cat's got back in this part o' the house again. I don't think likely he'll do no harm, but I thought I'd tell you sos if you heard any queer noises in the night you'd know it was him.

(Mother) Very well, Marietta.

There was a long silence in the quiet sleeping room. Then out of the darkness.

(Father) Emeline - you, you aren't getting to sleep.

(Mother) I-know I'm not John. I - Christmas eve keeps one awake, somehow. It always did.

(Father) Yes - I don't suppose the children realize at all - do they, how we miss them?

(Mother) Oh, no - no! they don't realize - they never will until they're here themselves. It's all right - I think - I think at least Guy will be down tomorrow, don't you?

(Father) Yes, I think maybe he will...Then after a pause. Mother, you've got me, you know. You know - you've always got me - dear.

(Mother) And you've got me, Johnny boy.

(Father) Thank the Lord I have!

So, counting their blessings they fell asleep at last. But, even in sleep, one set of lashes was strangely wet.

Two hours later we hear Ralph say: Christopher Jinks, how this snow has drifted. And Oliver shouts : Lucky we weren't two hours later.

(Nan) Sh-h-h They might hear us.

(Edison) Stop that laughing, or I'll drop a snowball down your neck.

(Guy whispers) Here, Carol, give me your hand. I'll plough you through. Large bodies move slowly, of course, but go elbows first and you'll get there.

As they reached the house, the rear door opens noiselessly. Marietta's says: That the Fernald family?

(Guy) You bet we're the Fernald family - every man - Jack of us - not one missing.

(Marietta) Well, I didn't really think you'd get here - all of you. Thank the Lord you did. Now stomp your feet good and shake yourselves off. I got some hot chillie and pie and cocoa waitin' for you. But don't you make no noise eatin' it.

They ate hungrily with the appetites they had as children.

Ralph, the stalwart, consuming a huge wedge of mince pie said: Say, but this is great. This pie alone is worth it. I haven't eaten such pie in a century. What a special place this old kitchen is. Let's have a candy-pull tomorrow.

(Guy) Well, get off to bed now. I can't get over the feeling that they may catch us down here.

(Carolyn) Who's going to fix the bundles?

Marietta, I've labeled every one, so it'll be easy.

Happily they crept up the back stairs one by one, each to his or her old room.

There needed to be no "doubling up" for the house was large, and each room had been left precisely as its owner had left it.

Christmas morning, breaking upon a wintry world. Outside the house a great silence of drift-wrapped hill and plain - inside a crackling fire upon a wide hearth, and two elderly people waking to a lonely Christmas.

Mrs. Fernald crept to the door of her room - the injured knee made walking difficult after a night's quiet. She meant to sit in the living room and warm herself by the flame of the fire. She remembered with a sad little smile that she and John had hung their stockings there, and looked to see what miracle had been wrought in the night. What was all this?

(Mother) Father, Father....Her husband came to the door and looked at her, then at the chimney place where the stockings hung - a long row of them, as they had not hung since the children grew up.

(Father) What's this - what's this?

(Mother) The children. They - they - John, they must be here!

He followed her through the chilly hall to the front staircase and up - as rapidly as those slow, stiff joints would allow. Trembling, Mrs. Fernald pushed open the first door at the top.

A rumpled brown head raised itself from among the pillows, a pair of sleepy but affectionate brown eyes smiled back at the two faces peering in, and a voice cried: Merry Christmas, Mommy and Daddy! It was their little daughter Nan, who seemed not yet grown up.

They could not believe it. Even when they had been to every room; and had seen their big son, Ralph, still sleeping, and his mother had gently kissed him awake to be half-strangled in his hug; when they had met Edison's hearty laugh as he fired a pillow at them -

THE THIRD LAMB--by Anna D. Kyle

There is a little village in Europe called Fals, where the streets are like flights of steps and the houses stand one above the other because the valley is too narrow to squeeze them into it side by side.

The people of Fals have always been wood carvers; but it used to be long ago, that they carved nothing except saints and madonnas to supply churches. People came from far and near to buy holy figures. But the demand grew less and less. The people grew so poor it seemed that something surely must happen because they were starving.

Now Dritte was the most skillful wood-carver of them all and was as badly off as any of them. One evening his wife, Beata, said to him: "Oh, Dritte, do you think it could really be so wicked to make other things than Saints for a little while? Surely God, who loves the little children, would forgive--"

"Beata! You do not know what you say! And now I think I shall go back to the workshop and finish the little Angel I am working on, so that if anyone should come--" When at his worktable, he saw something move over in the far corner of the room.

Could it be a thief? No, it was a boy who sat on the floor in front of a group of the Nativity, playing with the animals that knelt around the Manger with their little Lord within! A beautiful boy, too. But what sort of upbringing had he had, if he knew no better than to play with the holy animals of Bethlehem?

"Boy! Boy! Don't you know those are no ordinary animals? They worship the Babe in the Manger! You must not touch them!"

The little boy said, "The Babe does not mind, see how He laughs!" Dritte saw that the boy's feet were bare and stained with much traveling. "I wish to take this lamb with me. Surely the Babe will not mind. And--I have no toys to play with when it is cold on the mountains."

"Put back the little lamb at the Virgin's knees, and I will make you another one all for yourself; one that nods its head when you touch it."

Dritte worked so briskly that next day the lamb was finished. All at once he noted a shadow fall across the doorway. "Come in, see what I have made for you."

2 THE THIRD LAMB

There was a tinid shuffle of feet, and a ragged gypsy child with matted hair and black eyes set in deep brown hollows. On one hip she supported a baby, who, seeing the lamb upon the table, its head still nodding as if in welcome, shrieked with delight and stretched out dirty hands for it. The baby had managed to get a finger on the lamb's ear, and Dritte moved it out of harm's way, but at once there was a cry from the baby. "Look" and Dritte set the head to nodding up and down harder than ever. The crying, however, did not subside.

"He wants it, and because he can't have it he will cry until father throws things at him to make him stop."

"Throws things at a little child!" "Here." Impulsively he thrust the lamb into the baby's hands. "He shall not throw things at you this time!"

The gypsy girl stared at him for a moment; then she turned, hugging the gurgling baby, and the lamb, and darted out of the shop, lest Dritte should change his mind.

Slowly he sat down and reached for another block of wood. Late that afternoon he was putting the finishing touches on the second lamb, when outside he heard boys' voices. "Dritte, what is that you make? A lamb! Look, it nods its head!"

"It is not for you. It is for someone else." A cloud of disappointment that fell across their eager faces, he smiled at. "Very well! I will tell you what I will do if you like. I will make you each what you wish. Now, speak in turn, what will you have?"

"A lamb, Dritte, just like this one!"

"A donkey that will shake its ears!"

"A rooster that will flap its wings--"

"That is a rather large order, but I will try. And what do you want?" This to a little fellow who had stood silently all this time, his elbows on the table, his shining eyes fixed upon the lamb. He was little Drino, whose father and mother had been lately killed by an avalanche on the mountain. "You may have anything, you know."

But Drino shook his head. "Tomorrow the priest is going to send me far away to an Orphan's home. If only I might have this one!"
"There is no time to wait."

"Here, take it along, boy."

Night came and the boy had not returned. The Third Lamb, finer even than the other two, stood ready and waiting on the shelf. But still the boy did not return.

One chill autumn day Dritte looked up and saw a stranger staring in the window. He was clothed in velvet and furs! He would buy many Saints, and tonight Dritte and Beata would have a good supper. "Master, come in!"

The Stranger said, "I saw your work through the window,"

"Thank you. (Dritte clasped his hands) Will you please look around. In that corner is the Saint Christopher, and yonder is a Nativity--"

"When I wish to see Saints I go to church. It's the toys I am interested in." He strode over and picked up the Third Lamb. "How much will you take for this toy, my man?" "I am a great merchant from the shouth. I will pay you well for them and leave a goodly order--"

"No! I am sorry, my lord, but these are not for sale. Saints I will make you gladly, but toys I cannot." (And to all the merchant's arguments he only shook a stubborn head until at last the stranger gave it up.)

Later Beata said: "I used up the last of the flour today, Dritte, and the goat gave hardly a cup of milk. With a groan he rushed blindly out-of-door. He cared not where his feet took him, until presently he came upon the village priest making his way downhill toward the church. And he told Dritte how he had just now been far up on the mountainside to visit the small town of Over-Fals. And there he had seen little Marte, Halli's only child, who had fallen from a precipice a month ago. "All day she lies flat upon her back; she who could never be still a moment. Poor Halli is near to distraction over it. He, the richest man in our parish and nothing he can buy to cure, or even make her a lot easier. Yesterday he told me, a gypsy band stopped at Over-Fals, and one of the children came to his door offering to tell fortunes. Thinking it might amuse Marte he had her in, and while she told the poor child's fortune, her baby brother played about on the floor. He had a toy lamb carved out of wood, that nodded its head."

"Why, that must be the one I made and--"

"You? Then you are the very one I want, Dritte! When Halli tried to buy it, those gypsies would not give it up, though he offered them many times its value! You will do a Christian act, Dritte, if you will make her another one, and Halli will pay you well, besides--

"I want no pay." The clouds had come quite low when Dritte started for Over-Fals, the Third Lamb beneath his arm. He had not gone halfway before he felt the first keen sting of snow against his face. It was with relief that he finally saw Halli's house ahead and he stepped inside shaking the snow from his shoulders and brought out the Third Lamb..."See, this is for Marte...." Sometime later he started home again. A gray twilight had set in as Dritte stumbled down the road. The wind tore past him, the snow buffeted his face so that he had to keep his head down as he walked. For that reason he did not see that someone waited for him in the snow. He swung his lantern upward. It was the fair boy himself who stood before him! The boy smiled and it seemed to the other as if a peculiar radiance surrounded them which came from some light within the boy himself, as tho' a candle were burning in his heart.

The boy asked, "Where is my lamb, Dritte?"

"I--I kept it until today, but you never came, (Dritte stammered), "and so--I gave it to Halli's daughter Marte, but I will gladly make you another one, a fourth, if you will truly come for it."

"I do not need a fourth", his voice was clear and sweet above the stormy wind, "The ones you gave to the gypsy child, and to Drino, and to Marte, you gave also to me.

"I--I do not understand." "You did not come--"

"Oh, Dritte, are you still so blind?" He flung his arms wide until in the soft mysterious light about him Dritte saw the shadow of a cross upon the snow. At last he understood. Dropping on his knees he hid his face before the brightness of the vision.

"Cannot you understand that to make toys may serve God's glory better than to carve the fairest saint? For the laughter of one happy child is sweeter in His ears than the praises of all the Saints in Heaven!"

Dritte picked up his lantern and stumbled on. Presently shouts

5 THE THIRD LAMB

AND HAILS THROUGH THE STORM CHECKED HIM. Turning aside he discovered a little group of horsemen huddled in the scant protection of a rock.

"Ho, peasant, I will give you a purse of gold if you will lead us back to Fals." And Dritte recognized the voice as that of the merchant who had called on him that morning.

"I am on my way there now. You have but to follow me."

"Now Heaven be thanked we had started for the pass but the storm caught us."

When they were safely at the Inn again, the merchant pressed a big purse in Dritte's hand. "Nay, but you must take it! You have saved our lives."

"Why, I believe it is the woodcarver I talked with this morning!"

"Yes, my lord, and if you still wish, I can start upon those toys you spoke of tomorrow morning."

"So, you have changed your mind."

"No, but I have had a sign."

And that is why the people of Fals make toys now instead of Saints.

* * *

carefully, so his father could catch it; when they had seen plump, pretty Carol putting on her stockings as she sat on the floor smiling up at them; Oliver, advancing to meet them in his bathrobe and slippers; Guy, holding out both arms from above his blankets, and shouting, "Merry Christmas! And how do you like your children?!"...Even then it was difficult to realize that not one was missing.

When they were all downstairs, about the fire, there was a great rejoicing.

Later at the breakfast table, while the eight heads were bent, a thanksgiving arose, as the father of the family offered this prayer to one unseen:

Oh Thou who came to us on that first Christmas Day, we Thank Thee for this good and perfect gift Thou hast sent us today, that Thou hast not forgotten us in these our later years, but hast given us the greatest joy of our lives in these our loyal children.

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

Walter Ben Hare

It was Christmas Day. The bells in the old cathedral tower rang out on the cold December sky. "Glory to God! In the highest and Peace on earth, peace! Good Will to Men! In the highest--in the highest--in the highest!"

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them and they were sore afraid. And the Angel said unto them, "Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Tidings of great joy to all people, to all people! The rich, the poor, the mighty, the humble, the proud, the meek. To all people --tidings of great joy! This was the song of the Christmas Angel.

A mighty senator sat in his private office alone with his troubled thoughts. He had wealth, fame, position; a leader of his people. Power was his. Even now his was the vote to decide an issue that meant joy or sorrow to millions. He glanced at the petition before him.--begging his intercession in behalf of the Child Labor Law. Theoretically it was right--morally it was right, but practically? That was the problem.

"It is left in my hands. The committee stands half for and half against the measure. Tonight I must make my decision. I know the pain, the suffering, the slavery of child labor, the child lives snapped out in the dust and the grime of the factories, the misery of the mother, the demands of the mill! More labor, more child labor. I won't think of it. I have my own family to protect. If I vote yes, it means another million for me. I'll do it! I'm getting nervous. Sentiment has no place in the world today; only production and efficiency count. My mind is made up. I vote "Yes."

Far away the cathedral bells called out, "Peace on earth, good will to men!" But the senator heard not the voice of the Christmas Angel.

A minister, Dr. Alcorn sat in his study in deep thought. He was the beloved pastor of a church in the slums of the great city. He had built up a mighty institution to the glory of God, a refuge for the unfortunate, a beacon light for the outcast. The people of his

2 THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

parish almost worshipped the gentle minister, but today, Christmas Day, a call had come to him from a wealthy congregation in another city. Should he accept? For hours he prayed, asking the help of God in making his decision.

"It means advancement, wealth for me--comforts, luxuries even, for my patient wife and my children. Is not man's first duty to his own flesh and blood? But to my people here--my poor, dependent, child-like people! They trust me and love me. Maybe I over-estimate my own importance. It will be an easy matter to find someone to take my place here. --I have made my decision. I'll accept the new call."

And the bells rang out, "Peace on earth, good will, good will! But the minister heard not the voice of the Christmas Angel.

A debutante sat in her boudoir with two open letters before her. One was from the boy back home, big honest Jin Taylor. "Square Jin" they called him in that little mid-western town where she had been born and reared. There never was another boy like Jin, and every girl in town had envied the debutante when she had appeared with his modest solitaire on her finger. But--then. Her mother had died and she had been adopted by a wealthy aunt in the city, and now--her glance turned to the other letter. It was an offer from a wealthy man. Middle-aged, to be sure, and with a rather questionable reputation. He had been a matrimonial prize for the last ten seasons.

"Which shall it be? My aunt says that no girl in her right mind would refuse the offer of marriage of Stanley Gerald. It means a town house, a summer cottage, a limousine, a yacht, servants, jewels, travel; everything that money can buy. And yet, I have given Jin my promise--and love! Love in a cottage. No, I can't do it. I mustn't think of Jin. I'll write to him and tell him that--that--it is all--over. Tonight at the ball I'll give Mr. Gerald his answer. He has won."

Far away the cathedral bells called out their message of peace and love, but the ears of the debutante were deaf to their pleading.

She was about to enter her limousine when the senator came round the corner. She greeted him with a "Merry Christmas", Senator. "I thought I'd like a little ride to clear the mental cobwebs, Senator: Wouldn't you like to join me?"

3 THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

The great man, a close friend of her aunt, accepted her invitation, and the car sped northward toward the slums of the city, with the debutante at the wheel.

She said, "I have been trying all day to come to a decision," and if you don't mind, I think I'll drop into Doctor Alcorn's study and talk it over with him for a few minutes."

He answered, "I'll go with you, if I may. I, too, am in need of advice, and I feel sure the good doctor can help me."

And so a meeting of the three seemed inevitable; the senator who had decided that gold was greater than needed service; the debutante who had decided that prestige was more important than love; and the minister who had decided that the needs of his family were more important than the needs of his people.

And the bells of the old cathedral called forth, "Good will to men--Good Will, Good Will!" But the Song of the Christmas Angel was unheeded.

Suddenly, dark stratus clouds covered the sky; the wind shifted to the north, and a heavy fall of snow began. The cold north wind blew shrieking down the street and the afternoon became almost as dark as midnight.

A little boy paused a moment to listen to the bells from the cathedral, but a sudden blast of wind nearly swept him from his feet. He had been trying to sell small, tattered wreaths, of holly all day, but nearly everyone had wreaths already, and he hadn't made a single sale. Now he was bound for home shivering in the sleet and snow. He, too, was headed for the tenement district of the city.

"I'n a-going to make it; 'course I'n a-going to make it. Only twenty blocks more, only twenty--! Whoo, that was an icy one! Mebbe I'd better try and run." He made a try, but it was a futile effort. The icy winds tore his wreaths from his hands and pierced his tattered clothing. The storm became more intense. Icy sleet stung his little form like bullets, and the wind howled--howled like a lost soul. Now and then a belated car dashed madly down the street, but the little waif trudged on alone.

"It's a-doing me up, it is. I'n a-getting all tired and numb and cold. Oh, awful cold! B-r-r-r-r-r! Only eighteen more blocks, only eighteen. I'n a-going to make it. Doctor Alcorn told us to

36 THE TRANQUIL BEASTS

Christmas was a week away, and everything was ready.

"Isn't it joyful, Peter."

"Yes.... Let's talk!"

"But, darling, I haven't time. I must telephone Mrs. Maddox about the old

ladies from the home who are going to dine with us, Christmas day, and I must talk over my menus with Martha - and Daddy will be here before we know it."

"Oh, well..."

And so he got out his Noah's Ark, and set the animals all in a row on the honey colored rug in front of the fire.

Peter was seven and he went to school. But he loved the animals of his Noah's Ark in the same way that he loved the great log on the fire, and the sound of the wind booming about the handsome house in which he lived, and in the same way that he loved the shine of the candles in the dining room.

At the telephone his mother was saying to her friend, Mrs. Maddox: "Oh, there will be ten of us - we three, the two old ladies from the home, and Big Peter's brother, Robert, and his wife and three boys.... No, we are not going to have a tree...."

"No TREE!" And when his mother hung up the receiver, Little Peter said: "Mother, you didn't tell me we wouldn't have a tree!"

"You've always had a tree. I've thought of something new: It's a secret."

"But I don't want a secret. I want a tree."

"Darling...."

Peter knew that tone. His mother's logic would be convincing, but there never seemed to be any room for your own ideas.

Peter lay on the rug and dreamed. The camels loomed large through his half-shut eyes. Three kings were riding them, in turbans and long robes.

→ arms at side asking?
"Asleep, Peter?"

→ arms turn forward accepting
"No, Daddy, I wasn't. I was waiting for you." → R. h. to chin.

→ arms at waist - R. h. to chin.
"Good boy.... It's good you started them so soon. They have far to travel." → R. h. to chin.

→ arms at waist - R. h. to chin.
"Yes, they have." → his mother the three toy camels were just three toy camels - but to his father they were Gold and ~~frank~~ ^{frank} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~sense~~ ^{sense} and ~~my~~ ^{my} ~~own~~ ^{own}.
And they sat and talked together. Then Lucia came in. She was dressed beautifully -

in a gown that looked like a flame.

→ accepting chest level
"Daddy, you here? It's so late. And I have an early dinner because of the play." → Defining
→ turn neg.

"Are we going out?" → again

→ L. H. touch chest → fingers open slightly
"I told you this morning - the Hungarians - and dinner is ready! These are busy → full length palms forward.

days. I have to fit everything in so."

It seemed to Little Peter, that his Father's days were busy, too. He was a great ^{distinguished} doctor, but he never talked about being in a hurry.

It was the morning after they had been to see the Hungarians in a strange and moving play that Big Peter had a letter from his brother, Robert. The letter said it would be utterly impossible for him and Jean and the boys to come down for Christmas. One of his patients would need him. It was a great disappointment to all of them... So he and Jean had talked it over, and wondered if Big Peter and Little Peter and Lucia could come up to the farm for a glorious Christmas..."Such as you and I had when we were boys together."

Big Peter and his brother had studied medicine together and when their father had died Bob had decided to go back to the hills and take up his father's practice. Big Peter, then, had thought him foolish. The city promised so much. And it had kept its promise. Big Peter was famous. But perhaps Bob had the best of it. Big Peter wondered what had happened to his own life - and Lucia's. Lucia was lovely. One couldn't pick a flaw in her. Yet she seemed separated from him by some intangible barrier. And she was separated, too, from Little Peter. It was noticeable how the boy shut her out of his confidences, and left all of his close and intimate things to say to his father when they were alone. And a boy shouldn't.

Big Peter adored Lucia, but he admitted reluctantly that at times her perfection clicked

like a machine.

It was late when Lucia and Big Peter returned home from a dinner party.

undress
"I had a letter today from Bob. *case of coat* They can't come. *hang coat* They want us to come to the farm for Christmas."

undo the necklace
"Well, of course we can't."

the loosen
"Why not?"

put necklace on vanity
"It's impossible. We have so many engagements." *its impossible*

cut the string on the arm
"I would like to make it possible. *open it accepting* Little Peter would love it."

"I have everything planned for Little Peter, *only* too... Perhaps he could go to the farm in the Spring, when we haven't so much on here."

"I wasn't thinking entirely of Little Peter. I was thinking of...myself."

"Would you really like it?"

"Like it? It was my home."

"We'll go, of course."

Before going to bed Big Peter went in to see Little Peter. As he drew up the covers there was a rustle under his hand. Little Peter had written a note. "Dear Santa: Please bring me a tree. Mother says I am not to have one, so will you just drop it down the chimney. There isn't any fire before 7 in the morning. Yours truly, Peter Blake."

Well, Peter *will* would have his tree. *and we will* They would have a wonderful holiday.

At the farm they went straight into the *living* front room, and there was a huge fire on the hearth. Aunt Jean was there. Little Peter felt that he could ~~sit~~ sit there forever, but his Mother was saying:

Jean "May I put Peter to bed. It's so late for him."

"Doesn't he want something to eat?" (Aunt Jean)

"I do want something to eat, Mother."

"Peter!....Well, perhaps a glass of milk...." And Peter went with his Aunt Jean to get it.

They stopped to pet the dog and look in on the new kittens.... "Do you know, Peter. I have often wondered what the animals ^{also} thought when they first saw the Christ Child."

"They fell on their knees."

"That's just a legend, isn't it?"

"Well, Daddy says some people believe that they kneel-down now on Christmas eve."

"Do you believe it?"

"They might kneel, you know."

He tucked his hand in hers. It was as if he had lived with her all his life.

His Father walked beside him in the woods and the snow sparkled, and all the beautiful young pines seemed like such loving things as they stood tall and straight in the sunshine.

Getting ready for Christmas in Aunt Jean's kitchen Little Peter found was a great event.

He liked ^{also} the way, ~~too, that~~ Aunt Jean and Olga ^{the maid} served the ^{food} meals. Everything was put on the table at once except the dessert. And Uncle Bob said grace, and the grace that Uncle Bob said was: "Oh, Holy Father, ^{help us be} ~~make us~~ good men and strong men and good women and strong women. For our Lord's sake. Amen."

It seemed to Little Peter that one just had to be good and strong when one heard ^{Prayer} things like that three times a day.

There was one thing that Big Peter had promised Little Peter. They were to go out to the barn at midnight on Christmas eve. "There's a chance that the Animals might kneel."

^{But} You musn't be disappointed if they don't."

"Oh, I won't...It's just a legend...but then, you know Daddy - they might."

Peter found that while Aunt Jean was a very busy woman, she was not busy in the same way his mother was. She always ^{found} seemed to find time for her boys and Uncle Bob. ^{Her boys adored her} When they came in, she would drift to the fire and the chintz chair. She was the sun that lighted

their world... Lucia envied her that.

It was Christmas eve. The tree was set up in the living room and there was the piney smell that Little Peter loved. And late that afternoon Little Peter and his cousins had popped corn and strung it into chains for the tree. And the snow came down outside.

Uncle Bob and Big Peter had to have an early supper. Uncle Bob had been called out on an emergency and he had asked Big Peter to go with him. "It's an operation, Peter, and you can help a lot."

Before leaving Big Peter said: "I'm sorry, son. I may not get back in time to go to the barn."

"Well, of course, if you can't, you can't."

"I'll get here, if possible."

Later that evening Jean and Lucia sat alone by the fire talking. Lucia said, "I've been watching you and Bob and the boys. You are the center of their world. And I am not the center of mine."

"Bob and the boys are so important to me. They just open the gates of their dreams - and off we go together!"

"Little Peter has shut the gate of his dreams and locked me out."

"The key is in your heart, Lucia... I always think of my boys as potential leaders of men.... I want them to be that."

"It's Peter's bed time.... You are a very inspiring person, Jean."

Little Peter had gone to bed, but not to sleep. He heard his Mother open her window. Then she came to his door. "Asleep, Peter?"

"No."

She knelt by his bed ^{and} ~~with~~ her arms around him. "And when you awaken it will be Christmas morning."

Peter knew that he would be awake long before that. He was going to the barn to see if the animals would kneel at midnight.

For ^{one} moment he was tempted to ask his mother to go with him, but he knew what she would say, and that would spoil it.

^{Later} He found a pencil and wrote a note. "Dear Daddy: I've gone to the barn. I thought it better not to wait. I hope you'll come....Peter."

Peter felt very daring as he opened the door and went out into the night. Brutus, the watch dog, came out of his kennel and trotted over the frozen snow ahead of him. The barn was lighted by a single lantern. Back among the shadows the cows were comfortable on beds of straw. Beyond them were the work horses. Peter sat on the feed box and waited. The big bar clock said a quarter of twelve....Something must happen!

Suddenly young Brutus was on his feet - his eyes on the side door. The door opened and a woman came in wearing a long blue cloak. Over her head was a ^{blue} scarf which hid her face.

Peter knew ^{at} once why she had come. There was no room ~~in~~ the inn.

"Mary!"

"It's Mother, darling."

"I...I didn't know you!"

She sat on the feed box beside Peter her arms around him.
"Why did you come, Peter?"

"Well, I thought they might kneel - the animals, you know."

"At midnight?"

"Yes."

"Five minutes."

Tranquility! Was that what she had missed?

"Mother, it's twelve....It's twelve!Mother, they didn't kneel!"

The Tranquil Beasts -7

"Darling - perhaps they knelt - in their hearts."

"Oh, well, it was wonderful to come, wasn't it?"

"Wonderful, Peter."

The great door slid back and Big Peter peered in. "Who's there?"

"Daddy, it's Mother and me!"

"Lucia?... Lucia, in that blue cloak, with your arm around Little Peter, you reminded me of the Madonna."

"When I came in Little Peter called me...Mary."

"All Mothers are Marys, my darling."

And with the child they stood in the circle of light made by the lantern.

And it was Christmas morning!

4 THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

push ahead and have faith in God and we'd win. That's just what I'n doing, pushing ahead. God's going to take care of me. He is, I know He is. I'n a-going to make--it! I--guess--I an!"

He struggled on a block farther, two blocks, and now the church in the slums, Doctor Alcorn's church, loomed up before him. The choir was giving a musical service that afternoon; and the child, struggling thru the storm, heard the distant singing.

"I hear singing, I do. It's the church. If I can get to it, I can get warm. Mebbe they'd take me home. I--I'n all worn out. But I--I just can't push no more.--Listen, they're singing in the church, or is it the angels he told us about? He said God 'ud take care of us, if we'd ask Him with faith. Oh, God--God--take care of me now! Gimme the strength to--to push ahead, just only as fur as the church. Please God, ginne the strength. I--I can't go--no--more." And he fell in the snow almost at the very door of the minister's study.

In the distance the cathedral bells were still calling, "Glory to God--on earth peace--good will to men--. And the boy seemed to smile as if the ear of faith had heard the song of the Christmas Angel.

The minister, the senator and the debutante came to the door just as the last note of the bells rang out upon the air. Doctor Alcorn, in his own unsettled state of mind, had been unable to give the spiritual advice required by his visitors. Each had deliberately decided to do the unworthy thing. The girl waved farewell to the minister as she took the senator's arm and started toward the limousine. She stopped with a gasp. The form of the little boy was directly in her path, half buried in the snow and sleet.

Tenderly they carried him into the minister's study. The minister, the senator, and the debutante forgot their own troubled consciences. What were their petty affairs when a human life hung in the balance? A physician was called, and half an hour later the child opened his eyes and stared at the minister, the senator and the girl who were bending over him.

He said, "Is it Heaven?"

"There, there, you're all right, Sonny, you're coming round. Just keep quiet and rest. It's been a hard fight, but you're all

5 THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL

Right now."

The senator's heart was full as his thoughts flashed from this little boy to the children of the mills, to the slaves he was about to make.

"But I don't want to rest until I thank you," "You must be God, aren't you? I asked you to give strength, and I knowed you'd do it. The minister said to push ahead and to have faith in God, and that's what I tried to do. I knowed that if I did the right thing, and had faith, that God would do the rest. And he did. Just did the right thing and had faith--faith--" And he fell into a peaceful slumber.

The debutante turned to the minister with a new light of resolution glowing in her eyes. She repeated the words, "Do the right things, and have faith and God will do the rest--and that is just what I'm going to do!"

"And I," said the senator.

"And I," said the minister.

That night the senator voted NO, and a million children were saved from the horror of the mills; the minister wrote a letter declining the large city parish, and thousands of God's poor rejoiced in his decision; the girl sent a telegram to Jim Taylor telling him to come for her. Love had conquered pride, and good will had conquered selfishness, and the voice of the Christmas Angel had been heard.

* * *

NO GREATER GIFT

By Betty Wall Madsen

This was the part of the day that Shari loved best of all. She had finished her chores around the small stone house that was her home, had helped her mother take the hot loaves of bread from the oven, had swept the hard earthen floor and the dooryard, and had carried an armful of sweet hay to the cow who lowed in the stable.

But now the copper sun was bouncing on the edge of the western hills and the shadows of the olive trees along the roadway were long and thin. The small kitchen was filled with the crusty brown smell of the freshly baked bread, and on the table were jars foaming with warm white milk just in from the stable.

One morning in the middle of the summer just past, her lovely mother had said to her, "Shari, now you have reached the age of 10 years and you are strong and tall. I think you are old enough to carry the basket of supper each evening to your father who tends his sheep on the hillside." And every evening since then Shari had helped her mother pack the woven basket with good food for her father.

It soon came about that Shari asked her mother to put into the basket an extra piece of bread and cheese so that she could take her supper with her father. She found it a great delight to sit close to him beside his small glowing fire on the hillside. The thick fresh bread and the tangy cheese tasted far better when eaten there with his strong arm about her shoulders and the milk she drank from her little wooden cup took on a special flavor when their fire was shining golden and the lights of Bethlehem glittered like tiny stars below the hill.

Once in awhile she was even allowed to stay all night there on the hill with her father. There she could nestle down and go to sleep listening to the thin bleating of the little lambs and the crackling of the fire and the sound of her father's voice as he sang an old shepherd's song. And tonight was going to be one of those nights. Her mother had promised.

Her mother hummed a little tune as she packed the supper into the basket.

There was a way her mother had of tying the basket to Shari's back, one leather thong about each shoulder so that it rested comfortably there and enabled her to use both hands to help her climb the rocky ledge that ran around the edge of the hill. The basket was firmly in place now. "Farewell my mother, I shall return when the sun rises in the morning."

The misty evening air folded over her as she went through the courtyard. The copper sun had left a shimmering haze over the little town and the hills that cradled it were beginning to grow blue and purple and the far edges were darkening even more and melting away into the sky. Shari remembered the little tune her mother had hummed and she hummed it too.

At the crest of the little hill in the deepening dusk Shari stopped to rest a moment. It was growing colder. She pulled her woven shawl up under her arms and shoulders. There was a strange feeling in the violet dusk. She could not quite tell what it was but it was almost---almost--as though one were waiting for something to happen. Something wonderful. Then she heard a faint far off sound. She whispered, "Someone is singing". "I can hear voices, but they seem so far away. Perhaps I am dreaming them."

Then she saw the first rays of a great star; turned to the east as she was, she saw its vague beginning in the darkening sky. While she watched, it grew larger and brighter and more golden, and it seemed to move in the purple sky. It moved from over the far eastern hills and came closer and closer. Then it dropped lower in the sky and its rays like long golden fingers seemed to point to a tiny white building that lay in the fringes of the sleepy little town.

She said to herself, "O, my father. The hour grows late and you must feel a great hunger, too. I shall hurry now to where you are and perhaps you can tell me of this golden star I have seen, and explain to me the singing I have heard."

The way seemed longer now and everything seemed to delay her. The dark shadows on the ground, a playful wind that blew her black hair into her eyes. Once she stumbled over a stone, falling, and bruising one small knee.

There it was at last, the outline of the tent against the golden sky and the small red glow of the fire.

"Father," she called, but no one answered. "Father, it is Shari come with your supper."

Then she could see that the fire was burning low and had been carefully banked with earth and rocks. She looked about her, dismayed. The flap of the tent fluttered in the wind. The sheep were restless on the hillside.

Shari ran over to the rocky ledge of the hill and looked down toward the town. The blazing finger of light was even brighter now, and in its glow she could see the other road into Bethlehem--the long straight white road that the shepherds traveled when they drove their flocks to the market place. On this road she could see the forms of men, three of them, and one of them her father surely. She recognized the wide strong shoulders and the easy swinging stride and the other shepherds who grazed their flocks on these same low hills.

Shari whispered "My father follows the great star, and in his haste he has forgotten that I bring him his supper. I shall go to him."

The road curved on down the hill, frightening and strange, and it flattened out into the long white ribbon that led into the heart of the town. But Shari could not take time to be afraid. She felt

a great urgency to find her father and to go with him to the place where the star was shining.

But the basket upon her shoulders was growing heavy, and her little bruised knee hurt when she hurried too fast, and it seemed a long, long way into the town.

Now she could see the small building over which the star hovered. "It is the inn. Yes I have seen it before once when my father took me into the market place with him. But why should such a star be shining down on the inn?"

She came closer to the white stone house. It was a round roofed structure with a heavy oak door. There was a square courtyard below it in which a fountain tinkled and shown silver in the strange new light.

Then Shari saw that the pointing star was not over the inn at all, but directly behind it. She quickly skirted the mass of the courtyard, and came at last to the place where the immense magnificent light shown in all its glory.

"Why it is only a stable. A little stable much like ours at home. She tiptoed quietly up to it. Light was streaming through the door from a yellow lantern hung on a cross-beam.

The first person she saw inside the stable was her own beloved father. She saw the two other shepherds who had walked beside him. There were others there too. Dark bearded men with silken scarves knotted about their heads, with long purple and scarlet robes hanging from their shoulders. All of them were kneeling on the stable floor, and their heads were bent over their folded hands.

Very very quietly Shari watched. Her dark eyes were wide and glowing and a happy little smile kissed the corners of her pink mouth. Because at last she knew why they were kneeling, why they had folded their hands in prayer why the heavenly star had pointed to this sacred place.

She thought, "Here is the little new baby king. My mother has told me that soon he would come."

She saw him lying in the manger that had been filled with fresh sweet hay. She saw his beautiful little face and the soft cling of his golden hair.

Under his eyes were half moons of lavender shadows where his lashes rest in his sleep.

He lay in the curve of a lovely lady's arm. She watched her baby almost all the time, but at times she glanced up to smile at the kneeling figures or to whisper something to another man who stood beside her in the shadows holding her hand.

Shari slipped quietly in and knelt beside her father. His grey eyes looked down at her surprised and happy. His arm about her shoulders was warm and strong and Shari felt a wordless peace. Then she saw the gifts on the stable floor. There was a carved casket open and filled with golden coins. There was an ivory box and the gleam of jewels shown from it. There was a tall silver urn and a polished copper chest.

She turned to her father and whispered, "They have all given him gifts. What is there for us to give him? What can we do to let him know how much we love him?"

She turned to her father and whispered, "They have all given him gifts. What is there for us to give him? What can we do to let him know how much we love him?"

Her father shook his head slowly. "I am afraid we have nothing to give, Shari." "But let it not trouble you. Somehow I am sure the newborn king knows of our love for him."

Shari looked again at the tall man who stood near the manger. He seemed to stoop a little from weariness and there was a smudge of dust across his cheek. The lovely lady in the hay had deep shadows under her blue eyes. Then she smiled a happy and very proud smile. She carefully and quietly slipped her arm out of the leather strap that held the basket on her shoulders. Then lifted the basket around to her lap.

She said to herself, "No one has thought to give them their supper, and they must be so very hungry."

Slyly she arose from her knees. She carried her basket around the manger and lifted it up for the tall man to take. With gentle hands he took her gift, and his lined and tired face crinkled into a grateful smile. He placed the basket upon the stable's window ledge and opened it.

Shari watched while the man found the bottle of cool milk and her own little wooden cup. Carefully he filled it, then knelt and held it to the lips of the lovely lady. (His voice was low and musical.)

"Here is milk for you Mary. It is a gift from this little girl."

The lady raised her blue eyes. "Thank you Joseph". (she said.) (Then she turned to Shari) "And thank you, my child. And blessyou. No gift is more welcome." She drank deeply from Shari's little wooden cup.

Only then did Shari remember her father. She returned to his side. "My father, I have given away our supper and you must by now feel a great hunger." But when he smiled down at her, Shari knew that he, too, was glad they had a gift to give.

Then he said, "Come, Shari, now we must go."

"Yes, my father. But first may I say good night to the little baby?" She knelt beside the roughly fashioned manger that held Mary and her child.

"Good night, little new King. I shall love you always." And she gently touched the wee hand.

The Lovely Lady said, "Good night my child. Again thank you. May God go with you always."

Through the mist of her happy tears, Shari scarcely saw the empty basket which Joseph placed in her hands, scarcely felt her father's firm hand guiding her to the stable door and out into the night. Before she was aware of it they were upon the wide road that led back into the hills, and the small white inn and the thatched stable lay behind them sleeping under the paling light of the great star. Shari and her father walked on in silence. The other shepherds following them, discussed in low voices the birth of the new King, and what his coming would mean to the troubled world.

"I am sorry there is nothing left for your supper, Father. Are you hungry?" "No my Dear One. I am glad you gave our food to the little one." "But my gift was the littlest of all, my father. The others were all so beautiful." Her father looked thoughtfully into the fire. "No, Shari. You promised the new born king your eternal love. There is no greater gift, my child, than such a promise."
