Sketch

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Get a Horse

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MARIAN strolled blithely up the hill towards her home. Her spirits soared for no other reason but that it was spring, the apple-trees were in bloom, and it was almost dinner-time. Dreams dimmed her eyes, and it was more through habit than by sight that she managed to turn in at her gate, saunter up the walk, and enter the house. Her mother's voice called her from her reveries.

"Omigosh!" she exclaimed inwardly and dashed for the kitchen. "Mom, I completely forgot about the bread. I'm awfully sorry. Er—should I go back for it?" This last was said quite low. Deep down inside her recited a little voice of her soul, "Let her say we don't need it; let her say we—."

Mrs. Harrigan lifted a flushed, damp face from her scrutiny of the boiling potatoes to survey her oldest daughter reproachfully. "Oh, dear, I'm afraid we'll just have to get some. You know John simply must have bread with his meals."

"Well, then, let him go after it himself," suggested Marian hopefully. By this time Gracie had managed partially to dispose of the bite of cake she had been struggling with since Marian had first entered the room. She turned swiftly around and entered the conversation with all speed.

"Oh, Mom, I'd be glad to go to town for the bread." Marian and her mother turned astonished eyes upon their sister and offspring. She bore their scrutiny imperturbably as she swallowed the last chew convulsively. Assuming her cherubic expression, she looked meltingly into her mother's face. "It would be awful for John to go without his bread."

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“Now what the heck is she after?” Marian appealed to her mother. “She just got her allowance this morning; it can’t be money. Report cards aren’t due for three weeks. She’s already seen the show—” her brows smoothed as she hit upon the right answer. “She wants to take the car to town after the bread.” During the rather grim, impersonal, deductory soliloquy by her sister, Gracie assumed the injured expression of one who is accustomed to being misunderstood, but at the conclusion thereof her face cleared, and she exclaimed eagerly, “May I, Mom?”

“Oh, I suppose so,” she said wearily as she returned her attention to the food cooking on the stove.

MARIAN opened her mouth to protest, but before any sound could issue, Gracie had disappeared out the kitchen door and around the house to the front where sat the family carriage, or rather much used and abused Model T Ford. But to Gracie’s view it assumed the proportions of a Cadillac V-Eight. Reverently Gracie stepped upon the running board and slipped under the steering wheel. For a few moments she just sat there, wrapped in dreams of sweet content. Gently she drew herself from her reveries and to the business at hand.

Her foot sought and found the starter. Pressed it. Nothing happened. Again she pressed. Still nothing happened. Puzzled, she mulled over the various things which might be the trouble. Her shoulders shrugged off that problem as she recalled how John had started the jitney one day not so long ago. First, she pulled the gas down as far as it would go. Then she stepped out, planted her feet firmly upon the slanting roadway, and strove to push the car forward down the hill. It was fairly simple to start it rolling. Gracie gathered herself together so that she could leap gracefully into the moving vehicle. But bang! Off it started with such violence that she didn’t have a chance.

For a moment she stood there mutely watching the little two-seater moving rapidly down the hill. Then she regained control of her speech and screamed, “Marian! Marian!”

Inside the house, Marian thought she heard someone calling
her; she stayed her hand, which was in the process of lifting a
pickled apple to her mouth, in order to listen. Again came the
cry, “Marian! Marian!” She dashed to the front yard, the apple
still dangling from her hand. Out to the middle of the street
she rushed. Her eyes grew wide as she took in the items of
the scene.

The week before, the members of the Christian Church had
taken up a collection and presented their minister with a
spick-and-span new Chevrolet coupé.

At the present time this gift of love and charity lay directly
in the path of the bedeviled Ford. Marian lifted her eyes
heavenward, and the little voice of her soul began to chant,
“Don’t let it hit that car. Don’t let it hit that car. Don’t let it
. . . .” Crash! Marian jerked her eyes back to earth.

The trundlebus, motor still running, reposed against the
stump-end of a telephone pole which it had broken off by the
force of the collision. Gleaming brightly in the sun, the minis-
ter’s car still sat in front of the church in righteous glory.

Marian’s knees buckled under her and she sank slowly to
the ground. Her gaze dropped to the pickled apple, and she
dreamily raised it to her mouth.

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Peace

By Edna Oberndorfer, ’40

My peace I find in simple things:
In songs of birds, the whirr of wings,
   In moonlit nights, and summer days,
In forest paths, and snowy ways,
In gleaming stars, and misty rain,
In fleeting sight of golden grain.

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