

Sketch

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Linda

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Linda

by J. David Prince

Economics, Sr.

“COME ON,” I urged. “Breakfast is ’bout done.” The smell of bacon spiraled up the stairs like a genie from the mysterious-looking bottle on Aunt Harriet’s end table.

“Okay, stupe. Don’t get up if you don’t want. But I’m going to Grandma’s and get Blackie and we’re gonna chase Deal’s cat.”

The blond, tousled, Dutch-boy-topped head came out from under the covers.

“Stupe, yourself,” she said. “If you do, I’ll tell Mom.”

“Better not,” I shouted. “Or I’ll tell her you swiped some of Ware’s apples.”

“Okay, but wait for me.”

“Better hurry,” I shouted as I spiraled down the bacon-genie.

Breakfast bounced and squirmed its way into us that summer morning as the sunshine suggested all the glamorous things the day had in store for us. A visit to my cousin’s house was always a grand adventure into the land of aunts and uncles and Grandma. While it was true my cousin was a girl, she was still okay. I guess what I mean is that she wasn’t a

full-fledged girl. See, she liked to walk fence-rails and chase after Deal's cat with me and our noble tracking dog, Blackie. She even fished and blew bubbles in her gum, so you can see she was okay. I don't think she even owned a doll house, although, now when I think about it, she may have hidden it in the attic when I came.

"Do you want to go to the park this afternoon?" Aunt Harriet asked.

"Okay," we confirmed, banging out into yesterday's backyard and down childhood's sidewalk. We didn't step on any cracks as we headed for Grandma's house.

"Maybe we can feed the swans," she suggested.

"Yeah," I agreed, "if they're tame enough." We never did feed the swans because they hissed like dragons and Blackie wasn't there to do battle with us. Blackie wasn't allowed into Spring Lake Park, but I was never sure if that was Grandma's decree or a rule of the grounds-keeper who rode a big lawn-mower, smoked a pipe, and, I think, sat on his hat when he wasn't wearing it.

"Hi, Grandma, we came over to feed Blackie."

"Well, he's already fed, but you can take him with you, if you'd like."

"We're going to the park this afternoon and feed the swans," I announced.

"Yeah. Do you want to come? You can push us on the swings and watch us slide," Linda offered.

"Well, we'll see," said Grandma. "Watch the cars when you cross the streets."

On the way back to Linda's, we stepped on ants and had a skipping race for a block with our black dragon-battler pattering along beside us.

"I win," she said.

"Oh, I beat you," I answered indignantly.

"Okay, it was a tie," she then claimed.

"Okay—a tie." We never had any real big fights, just lots of little arguments of which she won more than her share. 'Course, she was exactly four months older than I—a fact of which I was always a little ashamed and for which I blamed my parents.

The brick steps led us past the patio and down into Uncle Ivan's garden which we carefully skirted on the way to the alley choked with chest-high grass which tasted pretty good for a while, but then tasted just like grass.

"Let's go see the horses," I suggested. The horses never ate the grass we threw over the fence to them.

"Here, Horsey," Linda pleaded. "Here's some grass for you." And then we'd eat some grass just to show how good it really was.

"Dumb horses," we decided and set out for the junk pile behind Paine's barn which was really a garage, I guess, but looked like a barn.

"Hey, look," she pointed at a gallon-size brown jar. It was a new addition to Paine's junk pile. Even Blackie showed a sniffing interest in it.

"Hey, good. What's in it?" I asked.

"Pills!" The label said something about a thousand capsules for pig's diseases, if I remember now. The rest of the morning was spent opening the capsules, dumping out their powdery red contents into a pile and filling the empties with water.

"We'll throw them at cars," we decided as we returned them to the brown gallon jar.

"This smells like red-hots," Linda announced with a red smudge on her nose. It did. We decided not to eat it anyway, and we hid the jar under our secret tree stump.

"We don't have time to chase Deal's cat," I said. We decided we'd give Deal's cat the chase of its life the next day and we swatted a path back through the river of grass which flowed in the alley. We even swatted Aunt Harriet's lilac bush on the way back up the brick steps that led past the patio. We left our sticks outside near the door where they'd be safe.

"We'll take them to the park with us," Linda suggested.

"We're going to feed the swans and Grandma might come along and swing us," I said, and Linda mixed iced-tea. My aunt asked whether I wanted dark or white bread for my sandwich. I was always amazed at Linda's proficiency at iced-tea mixing. I figured she must know how because she

was a girl and girls just know those things. But we never got the tea until we had finished our milk.

After lunch, we went out and threw pine cones into Ware's back yard, then went to the park. We had to leave our swatting sticks standing through the afternoon beside the back door because they wouldn't fit in the car.

"Come on," Linda shouted as she shot out of the car.

"You kids be careful," Aunt Harriet called after us into Spring Lake Park.

The park had swings and slides but the best part was the lake itself with ivory swans gliding under the little wooden foot bridge that connected the tiny islands in the lake with the picnic-tabled shore.

"Let's feed them some grass," I suggested.

"Okay," she said snatching a handful of the green carpet. We threw the grass into the water's edge and the swans gracefully glided toward us but didn't hiss because we were already standing far enough back from the lapping water's rim.

After that we climbed the hill to the old black cannon, and with it bombarded the pirate fleet sailing from the sea of our imagination into Spring Lake Park.

"Are you kids ready to go?" Aunt Harriet called from the parking lot down the hill.

"Yeah, let's go," we agreed because we had thrown grass to the swans and bombarded the pirate fleet and that was all that was interesting in Spring Lake Park.

On the way home, we looked for Model A's.

"I think my dad has the only one," bragged Linda, and she must have been right because we didn't see any until we got home and saw the shining antique in the garage.

Supper was fried chicken. Linda got one drumstick and I got the other. We had our own secret salt-shaker which we passed back and forth under the table while everyone else wondered where the salt had gone.

"Let's go catch lightning bugs," I said.

"Yeah!" Linda clutched the Skippy jar with the holes punched in the lid. The evening backyard flashed at the sky which sparkled in return, and the moon's crescent stood as a

sentry as we chased and laughed our way to bedtime. And later, in our beds, we whispered the next day's adventures across the blackness between us.

"We'll throw pills at cars," she said.

"And chase Deal's cat," I added.

"Yeah, good night."

"Good night," I whispered and thought about horses and stealing Ware's apples, Model A's and Paine's junk pile, swans and red-hots and Deal's cat, and I slept as the moon tumbled headlong down the sky.

Poem

by *K. P. Kaiser*

Architecture

On your left as
We go by
You will see the Flying Red Horse,
symbol of
A fine gasoline
 it should be a white horse
Who ever heard of a flying white horse?
 i have: Pegasus, from the blood of Medusa
 and too i have heard of the Centaur
 and Unicorn, and of Pan the Satyr
You mumble incoherently
Speak up
 just that . . . nothing, pardon
 i mean not to digress
yes, the Flying Red Horse
symbol of
A fine gasoline.