

"Kiddies" Matinees

Nancy Anne Neale

FROM the time I was nine until I was about eleven, the Saturday matinee at our neighborhood motion picture theater was the highlight of every week for me. The theater was always jammed with dozens of my contemporaries who had also come to see the special "kiddies" show, which always included at least one western. The western was definitely our favorite type of show, and each of us had his favorite cowboy star. We really kept the projectionist on his toes. Whenever the show was started the least bit late or was interrupted in the middle, we always indicated our disapproval by stamping our feet on the floor as hard as we could. All of us seemed to be of the opinion that yelling, screaming, cheering, and booing added to our enjoyment of the picture; and many felt that being dressed in western clothes helped even more. Yelling back and forth to all our friends and eating pop corn and candy made the afternoon complete.

It had been seven years since I had attended a "kiddies" matinee when, on my brother's sixth birthday last June, I took him and his friends to one. Two westerns were shown, but somehow they weren't nearly as wonderful as the ones we had watched. The dialogue was trite, the plot was not nearly as exciting, and the hero wasn't as handsome. Furthermore, I was distracted by hundreds of little demons who were milling up and down the aisles or squeezing in and out of our row the whole time. A whole posse of little cowboys was sitting in the row behind us and all through the picture they took turns poking cap pistols in my back, sticking candy in my hair, and putting their feet on the back of the seat in which I was sitting. The worst part, though, was the noise; it was absolute bedlam. The screaming and yelling were much louder than when I used to frequent the matinees, and the stamping of feet was unbearable.

There was no doubt about it; something had changed. Was it the show or could it possibly have been I?

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The Steel Tomb

David L. Hodge

IT was 3:30 a. m. on a Friday late in October when I was awakened by a companion. I arose quickly from my canvas bed and hurried out onto the deck of the huge troop ship. It was a cold, windy morning, and touching the steel ship was like touching an iceberg. We went down into the dining hall, where we had a breakfast

of steak and eggs. This may seem an odd menu for breakfast, but it is a custom for the Marines to make available a good breakfast to the men who may never eat again.

After breakfast we checked our equipment and started lowering it into the small boats at the side of the ship. The small boats rolled and tossed like logs in a turbulent river. It was a difficult task climbing down the rope nets to get into the small boats in the semi-darkness of the dawn. When the required number of men were in the boat, we moved away from the giant troop ship. Some of the men looked back to see where they had slept (or had not slept) the night before. You could see on some of their faces that they felt they would never sleep again.

The small boat moved toward a ship that was built differently from the troop ship. One end of the ship was open, and it looked as though the water was going to rush in. As we neared this odd ship we recognized it as the garage for the steel tombs. The armored amphibious landing craft were known to the men who were to ride in them as the steel tombs. After transferring from the small boats to the larger ship, we assembled at our respective vehicles. These armored vehicles resemble tanks except that they are capable of moving on water as well as land. Their primary object is to insure that the men do not get wet while making a landing, and they afford more protection than the open boat.

We climbed into the monster and got situated as well as possible. If you could see one of these craft, you would note that they were not made for comfort with twenty men in them. As we started to move toward the water, two steel doors were closed over the top; for an instant panic gripped each man. When the craft plunged into the water, every man held his breath, praying it would not sink. When the craft was finally afloat in the water, the tension among the men lessened, but only temporarily.

After circling for about an hour we started for the shore. Shells were falling occasionally, but the men in the landing craft knew they were going to fall more frequently. The closer we got to shore the more we felt that we were the only craft in the water and that all the enemy guns were aimed at us. The driver had a small slot through which he could view the shore. The machine gunner was starting to fire at objects on the shore. We knew we were getting close to the shore because we could hear the bullets of rifles and fragments of shells hit the craft. The bullets and shell fragments hitting the craft sounded like a giant popcorn machine.

It was October, but the men in the steel tomb were wet with sweat. Besides the individual tension on each man, we had to cope with the heat of the two Cadillac engines that powered the craft. Also each man was praying that an enemy shell would not find its way to our craft. If a shell were to make a direct hit, there would

be no hope for anyone in the craft.

Suddenly there was a lurch that sent everyone off balance. The motors strained, and the driver shifted into another gear. We all knew we were in shallow water and that it would be only a matter of minutes until we would be in the middle of the battle. As we bumped along, we could see that the water no longer splashed over the driver's slot. The craft, with motors racing suddenly, was propelled forward. This continued for about fifteen seconds. Then the craft came to a halt and the roaring motors died. There was almost a silence except for an occasional shell blast and the report of rifles.

The men inside the craft knew they had cheated the steel tombs, but in the back of our minds we knew that immediately beyond us was the threat of another tomb; maybe we would not escape it.

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My Second Home

Barbara A. Irwin

THE brisk autumnal breeze has already begun pulling and tearing the once white paint, now scaling and peeling off the narrow weatherboards of this small farmhouse. Its gray wooden steps are beginning to sag noticeably in the middle. The roof shows the effects of the breeze, roguishly tugging at some loose shingles. The long, narrow window panes with their black scaling trim creak and pop as the shutters bang from an occasional gusty sweep of wind.

However, if one should enter this house, the cold, austere atmosphere would quickly change to one of warmth and congeniality. Here in the living room he would see a fireplace, bright from glowing coals, a well-worn divan heaped up with multi-colored pillows, a large over-stuffed chair, a small table or rack here and there, a giant black wicker rocking chair sitting in front of the fireplace, and crocheted doilies over all the furniture. Proceeding into the spacious kitchen he would see a heavy round table, with its bright colored cloth on top, located directly in the center of the kitchen. And in the far corner would be the gas stove on which a pot of coffee would be sitting any hour of the day or night. The hours spent drinking coffee at the table in this kitchen are among my favorites.

Yes, this is my favorite haunt, this rustic home of my great aunt and uncle. Within its walls are the warmth and comfort that everyone desires for his own home. Its high ceilings and creaking floors are not distasteful to me, but instead they bring to me that "homey" feeling that is so necessary to make any house a place of comfort. And so in this manner, I have come to feel that my great aunt and uncle's house is a real home; my home. It offers shelter, peace, and quiet. It is what every house should be—a home.