

"Am I dreaming? Is this my little girl speaking so to me? Don't you care about us anymore?"

"Good God, Mother, I'm twenty-two years old. When are you going to let me make my own decisions? You've run my life up to now. Now, I'm going to take over."

"Dear God, help me," moaned Miriam. She fell back into the chair and leaned back, gasping for breath. She felt sick. Her head was burning, but she was cold all over.

Jake rushed over to her. "Miriam, are you all right? What's the matter?"

She just sat there, moaning, gasping for air.

"Deborah!" Jake screamed. "Call the doctor! I'm afraid it's her heart."

Deborah was confused. She didn't know what to do. She had always thought her mother was faking before. She looked to Glenn for help.

"Debbie, call the doctor, then leave with me now. If you don't, you'll never get away."

She was helpless. "Glenn, what if she really is sick? I brought it on. I can't leave now. Glenn, she's my mother!"

Glenn's face was dark. He stared at her for a moment, then turned and stalked out.

"Glenn, wait!" she called. But it was too late. He was gone.

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Several months passed before Deborah heard anything more about Glenn. Then she received a letter from a buddy in his outfit. "Dear Debbie—Glenn talked about you so much that I feel I know you. He would have wanted me to write to let you know of his accident. It was over quickly. I doubt—"

Debbie leaned back in the chair. She was conscious of her mother chattering on the phone in the other room. After a while, her mother came in.

"Deborah, Mrs. Kuhn and her son are coming over for dinner tonight. Be sure and wear your pretty blue dress. I'm sure you'll like Harold. He's such a sweet boy. And it's time you met some nice Jewish boy and settled down."

"All right, Mother," Debbie said. "Whatever you say."

The Tent

Jean F. Campbell

A BRIGHT slice of sun cut the sleep out of Johnny's eyes and he sat straight up in bed. The house was quiet. That meant it was early—or else Saturday. Janie slept hunched on her hands and knees in her baby bed across the room. He started to sing one of his nameless tunes to waken her but he stopped in the first breath. Something was special about today. What was it?

Oh—the tent! He slid down the side of his bed and plat-plattered to the door, dragging his tattered pink blanket along behind him. It caught a teddy bear and a book left over from yesterday's play and scooted them quietly over the linoleum rug into the hall. Softly he closed the door to his bedroom.

Just to make sure, he went into the other bedroom. Mother and Daddy were still asleep. He closed their door, too. Carefully he dressed, sliding off his pajama pants, pulling up the underpants and then the red denim shorts he found on the bathroom floor. Careful to get the fronts on frontwards. It would be harder when summer was over. Buttons and shoes and socks would be terribly hard. Mother said boys in kindergarten always dressed themselves. He bet they didn't.

He looked to see what book he'd pulled out of his room. "Indian Tribes." Just right! He picked up Charley Bear and the book and a ragged corner of his blanket and trailed through the house into the kitchen. There were two big bakery cookies on the table. That meant it was Saturday—no telling when Mother and Daddy would get up. Mother always thought he gave Janie a cooky. Sometimes he gave her a little piece so Mother would find crumbs in her bed. Not today, though!

Out the back door into the world. He could see the sun peeking at him through the tree. All the houses on the street in back were quiet. Some birds were singing and some bees were humming around. Helen came springing around the corner of the garage and purred against his leg.

There it was! The bright yellow tent, waiting for him. Its plastic roof looked slippery in the sun this morning, like spilled milk on the kitchen floor.

The grass was wet on his toes. He crawled into the tent and spread the blanket for him and Charley Bear and Helen to sit on. He gave Helen a piece of cooky. She didn't like it so he ate it. He ate Charley Bear's cooky too. He opened "Indian Tribes" and began to read the pictures to Charley Bear and Helen, about how Indians had lived right here the year before he was born.

He read all the pictures in the book. It took a very long time, and then he heard Mother in the kitchen. Helen went to sit by the back door. But he would hide! He sat very still. Very softly he told Charley Bear about the real bears in the forest where there were so many trees you couldn't see the sky. "When I get big, I'll take you there and we'll live in a big tree full of honey up high where the wolves can't get us," he whispered.

Janie's voice came through the kitchen window asking for breakfast in her strange private language. He wanted his orange juice. They must think he was still in bed. He'd wait, though.

He whispered to Charley Bear what he expected to have for breakfast. He sang a quiet song about forests and bears and Indians to the tune of "Waltz of the Flowers" without making a sound,

rocking back and forth and twisting the end of his blanket. It took a long time because he knew the whole tune. He would hit Janie if she touched his record player today.

"Here's your bib, Janie. Up you go," Mother said.

He stopped rocking and listened. Maybe they would call the police to help find him.

"Bill, will you go get Johnny out of the tent and bring him in to eat?" Mother said.

Slowly, he gathered up his blanket and Charley Bear. He could hardly wait to get in to breakfast. He hated the tent.

My Responsibilities as a Twentieth-Century American

Tom E. Willey

INDIVIDUAL responsibility in twentieth-century America is a challenging proposition. It is a concept that can encompass every aspect of our lives. A staggering list of explicit duties could be compiled in order to define responsibility in this sense. However, one cannot possibly pursue every opportunity which may exist within the structure of modern society. I, for one, would not attempt to serve as precinct chairman for my political party, organize a Community Chest canvass, bake cookies for the church social, read to disabled veterans on Saturdays, and circulate a petition for the Parent-Teacher's Association. I would not attempt all these activities in the span of a year, nor perhaps in the span of my life. Such a dilution of individual energy would not contribute to the total welfare of any one group. How, then, can a twentieth-century American fulfill his responsibility as a citizen without becoming frustrated by the innumerable vehicles that can serve this purpose?

Home base is the nucleus of any operation. In business, home base is the main plant. For the spider, home base is his web. The spider fulfills his role by maintaining a sturdy and intricately woven web. His opportunities are grasped within the scope of his web. He does not run after every beetle that comes trundling by. Human beings also spin webs. These human webs may be composed of many different materials, but they are effective only when composed of integrity, objectivity, intellectual curiosity, and humility. The human web is personality. I am my own home base. The breadth, depth, and texture of my personality determine the quantity and quality of opportunities that fall within my scope. In examining the natures of my acquaintances who can be classified as "good citizens," I find that they possess most of the materials necessary for an effective web. Being primarily involved in living sound, ordered lives, these people almost unconsciously perform the duties of citizenship without tub-thumping or Chauvinistic patriotism. These people keep their own back yards clean and do not self-righteously peer