

One was called "Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates." It was inscribed "Won by Miss Barbara James for perfect attendance in Sunday school, 1931." The other book was called "The Little Colonel Stories," and the fly-leaf was inscribed "Barbara James, winner of the Spelling Contest, Room 9, February, 1928."

Besides these books Barbara placed her little Girl Scout pin and a green Audubon Society pin with a red cardinal on it. She allowed her eyes to wander over the varied assortment of books and papers and pins, and her lips again twisted into an ironic smile.

Then she opened the door of her closet and searched impatiently among the clothes hung carelessly on the hooks. Under two soiled dresses and part of a pair of pajamas, she found a quilted bath robe. She detached the cord which served as a belt, and re-entered the bedroom, closing the door carefully on the chaos within. She looked up at the low and ornate chandelier. Then she got a chair and a thick book, called the "Standard Dictionary of Facts." She placed the book on the chair and then climbed up onto it. She tied a lasso in the cord and then reaching up on tiptoe she tied the cord to the chandelier. She put the loop in the cord around her neck and then stood silently for minute after minute, listening. She heard nothing. The house was as quiet as a tomb.

Then a long sigh escaped her, and the wrinkles in her forehead disappeared. Her eyebrows went up in the middle and down at the ends. She removed the loop from her neck and got down off the chair. Then she put the book on the floor and sat down on the chair. She sat bent forward, her dress dropping between the knees and her hands in her lap. She sat and stared at the rug.

Presently her chin tightened and her lower lip quivered; a sob escaped her and the tears began to flow down her cheeks. She turned to the bed again, and buried her face in the pillow.

The Highwayman

Dorothy Thompson

"The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees," began Nan, "The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas. The road was a—."

"Nan Harris, stop reading that spooky poem," said Betty in a shaky voice. "It's bad enough to be left here alone to take care of the house, without your making it a whole lot worse."

"You'd be afraid of your own shadow," returned Nan calmly. "There's nothing to get warmed up about. Dad'll be back in a few hours, and besides, what could happen to us?"

"Nothing, of course," Betty answered. "But it's lonely out here on the main road at night, with no other houses around."

She went to the window, and watched the big sign that said, "Gas, Meals, Rooms for Tourists," swing in the wind.

"I don't like this kind of night, Nan; it fits the description you read too well."

"All the more reason for me to go on with the poem," Nan replied. "You've got to have atmosphere for this. Just listen: 'The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor, and the highwayman came riding—riding — The highwayman came riding up to the old inn door. Over the cobbles he—.'"

"Evening, girls," said a voice from the doorway.

Betty jumped up like a shot, and even Nan turned her head quickly toward the threshold.

"Hope I didn't frighten you," the man continued. "I just stopped in to get warmed up a little. You don't have any coffee handy, do you?"

"Of course we have," returned Nan, rising and going toward the kitchen. "Sit down at one of the tables. It'll be ready in a minute."

The man took off his coat quickly and slipped into a chair. He was of medium height, rather slim and blond, with piercing gray eyes. He seemed inclined to talk.

"It's a bad night. Cold—say, the wind cuts like a bullet. Thought I'd never come to a place to stop. Finally I saw your sign, and I headed straight for it. Not many people on the road, either. I don't suppose you have a whole lot of business in the winter, do you?"

Betty had recovered some of her composure by this time, and she answered readily enough, "No, we don't have very much. You're the only person that's been here tonight. We really didn't expect anyone; that's why the coffee isn't ready."

"What did you say about coffee?" said Nan, pushing the kitchen door open with one shoulder.

She brought in a steaming cup. The blond man said, "Thanks," and began to drink it eagerly. Some of the lines in his face seemed to smooth out, as the hot liquid warmed him.

"I suppose you want some gas?" Nan asked in her best business manner. "I'll go out and fill it up while you're getting thawed out."

She started toward the door, but the fellow answered, "No, I don't need any. And by the way,"—with an apologetic smile—"I took the liberty of running my car into the emp-

ty garage by the side of the house. Hated to leave it outside; you never know who's liable to come along and steal or strip it. Hope you don't mind."

"Oh no," Nan said, "it's quite all right."

She began to turn away from the door, but as she did a blaze of light streamed along the road, and four black cars, sirens going full blast, swept past the inn.

"The police are after someone," she said with a grin. "Maybe it's our highwayman, Betty."

"What do you mean, 'highwayman'?" said the blond man.

"Oh, Nan and I were reading the poem, 'The Highwayman', when you came in," returned Betty. "That's why we were frightened for a moment when you came; it seemed so realistic. You know, the one that goes, 'The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees. The moon—'"

"'Was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,'" smiled the stranger. "I know it too. It always seemed to me that the highwayman had a raw deal, and Bess too, for that matter. Let's see, how does it go toward the last, 'Blood red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat, When they shot him down on the highway, down like a dog on the highway—'"

Suddenly his voice changed, and the lines seemed to come back into his face. "Got to be going, girls; there's a long road ahead of me before morning."

He pulled a bill out of his pocket and said almost gaily again, "Keep the change. This is a present from your highwayman."

He was through the door quickly; his car was out of the shed and speeding up the road almost before the girls had time to say goodbye.