

RACE TO KITTY HAWK

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ONE

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“**T**ESS RANEY, GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF that freezing wind and shut the window! You’ll catch a cold for sure and your clothes are getting all sooty.”

Twelve-year-old Tess stuck her tongue out at her sister, Ellen. Then with a sigh, she did as she was told and sat back down on the hard wooden bench of the train car. Tess was tired of Ellen’s constant nagging. Since the death of their parents from influenza earlier that year, Ellen had taken her role of older sister a bit too seriously in Tess’s opinion.

“I was watching that flock of geese,” said Tess. She pulled her feet up under her long skirt to keep them warm. She tried to comb her curly brown hair with her fingers.

“Tess, you waste too much time daydreaming about flying,” said Ellen, shaking a finger at her just like Mama used to do. “Now brush yourself off before Miss Carsdale sees what a mess you are.”

At that moment, Miss Carsdale, the chaperone for thirty children from The Children’s Aid Society in

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New York City, was making her way through the train car. She was an earnest woman in her forties who had dedicated her life to placing city orphans in new homes on farms and towns in the midwest. Her face showed the strain of such a grave responsibility. She rarely smiled.

When she reached Tess and Ellen, her hand flew to her mouth and her eyes widened in a look of dismay.

“Tess, why are you so filthy? What have you been up to now?”

The overworked woman pulled a lace handkerchief from her pocket. Wetting the corner with the tip of her tongue, Miss Carsdale began to rub Tess’s cheeks. Tess scrunched up her face and twisted her head away.

“I’ll take care of her, Miss Carsdale,” volunteered Ellen.

“Well, I hope so,” said Miss Carsdale impatiently. “We’ll be eating lunch soon and Ellen, I need you to help the little ones get cleaned up.”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Ellen politely. “I’ll start right away.”

With her green eyes and blonde hair, Ellen always looks like a princess. I don’t know how she keeps so clean, thought Tess. Ellen never seems to get into trouble like I do, either.

She watched her obedient sister take a washcloth from their carpetbag and work her way down the aisle toward the wash bucket. After dipping the cloth in icy water, she made her way back and began wiping Tess’s face.

“Stop it, Ellen!” cried Tess, her blue eyes flashing angrily. “You’re not my mother. Why, you’re only one year older than I am. Go help the babies!”

Ellen shook her head in disgust and started toward the front of the car. She smiled sweetly at the small children huddled by the stove. One by one, she took them in her lap and gently cleaned their hands.

Relieved to be left alone at last, Tess returned to staring out the window at the Ohio countryside. She had never seen so much open space.

If I lived on a farm, I could have all the room I need to fly kites.

She began her favorite daydream about going to the park on Sundays to fly kites with Papa. It was the only day Tess could spend with her father because the other six days he loaded ships at the docks. She pictured Papa running behind her lifting the red and gold Chinese kite to catch the wind. She remembered the way the colors danced in the sunlight. Papa always praised her kite-flying ability. He never seemed to mind if she got a little dirty. He knew it made her heart sing to be outdoors running in the wind with her beautiful kite, the next best thing to flying herself. She missed him so much.

Her sister’s voice interrupted Tess’s daydream. “Wake up. Miss Carsdale says we’re almost there.”

“Let’s warm ourselves by the stove before we get off,” suggested Tess.

Ellen and Tess moved slowly, steadying themselves as the swaying train rounded a curve. When

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they reached the black pot-bellied stove, Tess spread her open palms over the top. The fire was barely flickering, so Tess opened the grated door and flung a piece of coal inside. Sparks flew everywhere. An ember landed on Tess's cloak and started to smolder. Quickly, Ellen yanked off her sister's cloak and threw it on the floor. She stomped out the small flame with her high-topped boots. Then she placed the singed cloak back over Tess's shoulders.

"You've got to be more careful!" hissed Ellen.

More sisterly advice. All she does is worry about me.

But Tess knew why Ellen was concerned. Tess did have a way of getting into all kinds of trouble. She didn't mean to, but things just seemed to turn out that way. Once she accidentally used salt instead of sugar in a pie she helped Mama bake for the church bazaar. Another time, Tess caught her head between the iron bars in the fire escape of their tenement building. Papa had to be called away from the docks to saw the railing and free her. The list of her misdeeds and mistakes went on and on.

"I'm sorry, Ellen," apologized Tess. "I just wanted to warm up the car."

"Warm up the car?" whispered Ellen crossly. "We're lucky that you didn't set the whole train on fire!"

Tess turned away from her sister and pressed her face against the etched-glass window of the train door.

"I won't do it again," she promised.

Tess squinted through the window past the landing

and into the next car. She saw waiters dressed in white, starched uniforms setting tables in the dining room.

“I wish we could eat in the dining room instead of our car,” she said wistfully. “It would be grand to be served a hot meal on such fine china!”

“Don’t even think about going in there,” warned Ellen. “It’s against the rules and besides . . .”

Tess was spared the rest of Ellen’s lecture when the locomotive whistle blew, signaling the approach to a small town.

“Everyone stay seated,” Miss Carsdale called out. “We’ll eat here first before stretching our legs.”

Ellen helped Miss Carsdale pass out crusty bread and cups of milk. The children finished their light meal and then Miss Carsdale led them from the train to play in a nearby field.

Several older boys left the group and wandered over to the station platform. Tess followed them. A traveling organ grinder was entertaining a small crowd. His little brown monkey, dressed in a red vest and matching hat, was dancing to music and begging for coins. The orphans stood mesmerized while the monkey went through his routine.

“Oh, he’s so cute!” cried Tess, bending down to shake the monkey’s hand. Suddenly the train’s departure whistle pierced the air and the monkey jumped into Tess’s arms. She hugged the frightened creature close and patted him. Then Tess reluctantly handed the little animal back to his owner.

“Thank you for holding Ringo,” said the friendly

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man. "Loud noises, they scare him, but he's fine now."

Just then Miss Carsdale approached the group on the platform and called, "Line up, children. It's time to go."

While the orphans climbed aboard the train, Miss Carsdale spoke to the organ grinder.

"Will you be going to the next town?"

"Yes," he replied, "Ringo and I are traveling in that direction."

"Would you ride in our car and let Ringo entertain the orphans?" asked Miss Carsdale.

"I'd be happy to," said the generous organ grinder. "They look like they could use some cheering up."

Tess watched him put Ringo into his cage and carry the monkey onto the Orphan Train. The man took a seat by the door and set his monkey beside him. Tess pulled Ellen into the seat directly across from them.

Once the train was on its way again, the organ grinder set up his music box in the aisle. He attached the monkey to a long leash. As soon as he started playing, Ringo began to perform his funny act.

An hour had passed when Miss Carsdale announced, "The show's over children. Let's all give Ringo and his kind owner a big round of applause."

The children clapped enthusiastically and called for more. Miss Carsdale, however, remained firm, and the children soon settled down on the wooden benches to rest. The organ grinder returned Ringo to his cage on the seat beside him. With a smile and

nod to Tess and Ellen, the man pulled his hat over his eyes to take a nap. In a little while the entire car was quiet, except for the organ grinder's snoring.

Still too excited to rest, Tess looked over at Ringo, who was running back and forth inside his cage.

Ringo can't sleep either. The organ grinder's loud snoring must be frightening him. He doesn't like loud sounds. I think he'd calm down if I held him for a little bit.

Tess made sure Ellen was asleep. Then she carefully eased past her sister and knelt down in the aisle by the cage. Ringo started to chatter excitedly when he saw her.

"Shhh . . ." whispered Tess. "If you're a good little monkey, I'll take you out for a minute."

Quietly, Tess unfastened the latch and lifted Ringo from his cage, but the monkey continued to chatter.

"Let's go out to the landing," Tess murmured to the monkey. "You'll wake up the whole car with your jabbering."

Tess stepped out onto the platform that connected the cars. She held Ringo up to the window of the dining car so he could see the people.

Suddenly the door to the dining car opened and a gentleman stepped out onto the landing to light his cigar. At that very moment, Ringo sprang from Tess's arms and scampered inside!

TWO

TESS WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS THE MONKEY jumped from table to table. Some diners screamed. Others laughed. Ringo bounded onto a chocolate cake and then leaped onto a waiter's chest, leaving tiny chocolate footprints on the crisp white uniform. When Ringo paused to eat a lemon pastry off the dessert cart, Tess reached out and grabbed his tiny collar. She pulled the mischievous little creature into her arms.

Just then, an enraged conductor stormed straight towards her and Ringo. Tess realized she was in big trouble. Frightened by all the noise, Ringo jumped onto Tess's head and held on for dear life.

"What's going on?" demanded the supervisor glaring down at Tess. "How did that monkey get in here?"

"I'm sorry, sir, he just got away from me," explained Tess.

Everyone stared at her while she peeled Ringo off her head and tried to calm him. Tess felt her cheeks turning as red as Ringo's vest.

The conductor marched Tess and Ringo back into the orphans' car where they found the organ grinder frantically searching for his monkey. By now all the children were awake. The older boys watched gleefully to see what would happen to Tess.

"Return that monkey to his owner!" ordered the annoyed man. Tess did as she was told. Then he turned to meet Miss Carsdale who was moving purposefully toward them.

"You need to keep a tighter rein on this girl!" he advised loudly, proceeding to describe in great detail the chaos that Tess had caused.

"If there's any more trouble," he finished at last, "I won't hesitate to put your group out at the next station!"

Without another word, he stomped off toward the dining car, leaving Tess to face Miss Carsdale.

"I'm so sorry," said Tess meekly. "I never meant for this to happen. I was only trying to comfort Ringo. You see, Ringo is frightened by loud noises."

"Taking care of that monkey is not your job!" cried the chaperone. "Your job is to take care of yourself."

Miss Carsdale struggled to regain her composure. Once she was calm, she spoke again.

"Tess, you have done a very bad thing. Go sit down and think about mending your ways!"

The children snickered as Tess sat down in disgrace. Ellen just shook her head. Several minutes passed.

Maybe just this once Ellen won't lecture me.

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But that was not to be the case.

“We’ll never get adopted if you keep upsetting Miss Carsdale,” warned Ellen. “I promised Mama that I’d keep us together, but you’re not helping.”

“I’m *trying* to help,” Tess argued.

“Then try harder,” said Ellen testily.

During the next few days, Tess took Miss Carsdale and Ellen’s advice to heart and stayed on her best behavior. Miss Carsdale began to notice Tess’s efforts and even smiled at her occasionally. Ellen gave fewer lectures and stopped mothering her so much. By the time the train reached Dayton, Ohio, Tess felt that both Miss Carsdale and Ellen had forgiven her.

As she got off the train with the other orphans, Tess wondered if Dayton would be her new home. Tess knew any children not adopted that day would have to return to the Orphan Train. They would ride to the next town where they would go through the same painful experience all over again. Tess was tired of traveling. She dearly longed for a place of her own.

Miss Carsdale instructed the orphans to stay together as they moved through the noisy bustle of the station. Tess, however, soon lagged behind to investigate the jets of steam that shot out from the locomotive. Ellen ran back to get her.

“You’re too curious, Tess,” she scolded. “Let’s go!”

When the sisters caught up with the others, they saw Miss Carsdale talking with two women. The poorly clad children waited in the cold, rubbing

their arms to keep warm. Finally Miss Carsdale turned to the group and clapped her hands to get their attention.

“These nice ladies have a hot breakfast waiting for you at their church,” she announced. “We will walk there right now. Ellen and Tess, go to the end of the line and don’t let anyone wander off.”

The sisters took their place in back and the band of orphans started their trek through the center of town. They passed a grocery store, a print shop, a bicycle shop, and a hardware store. Several shopkeepers were sweeping autumn leaves away from their entryways.

When Tess and Ellen passed an emporium, they stopped for a minute to gaze at the fancy Victorian hats displayed in the department store window.

“Look at the ostrich plumes on that purple hat!” exclaimed Tess.

“And what lovely beaded handbags,” added Ellen.

Miss Carsdale’s voice interrupted their window shopping, “Keep moving, girls!”

“That woman has eyes in the back of her head,” whispered Tess, running to catch up with the group.

Soon they came to a gray, stone building with a tall steeple. A sign on the lawn read, “United Brethren Church: Bishop Milton Wright”. The children went inside the church and trooped downstairs into the fellowship hall.

The large room was filled with round tables set for breakfast. A lectern, a table, and several chairs

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stood on a wide stage at the front of the room. When everyone was seated, a bearded man stepped to the lectern and raised his hands for silence.

“Welcome to our church. I’m Bishop Wright. In a few minutes, you’ll be served breakfast. Then you’ll have a chance to meet people from our community who are interested in adopting.”

“Each of you has much to offer,” the bishop continued. “Remember that God is always with you. Now, let us bow our heads and give Him thanks.”

After the children feasted on scrambled eggs and sausages, the church ladies cleared away the dishes. Miss Carsdale began organizing the children on stage. She placed the older children in back and the younger ones in front. Bishop Wright opened the double doors of the hall. Prospective parents began to file in and sit down.

Miss Carsdale stepped behind the lectern and the crowd quieted down to listen.

“I’m Miss Carsdale, chaperone for The Children’s Aid Society in New York City. I’ll get things started by introducing the children. Then you’ll have the opportunity to talk with them. Should you make a decision to adopt today, please fill out the necessary papers at the table to my left.”

Miss Carsdale began calling the children’s names. As their turn approached, Tess felt a huge knot in her stomach.

“Ellen and Tess Raney,” announced Miss Carsdale. Ellen pulled her through the line so everyone

could see them clearly. Tess's heart pounded so hard she was sure the audience could hear it.

"Ellen Raney is thirteen and her sister Tess, is twelve," said Miss Carsdale. "They would like to be adopted together. Ellen is respectful of her elders and good with children. Tess is . . ."

Tess held her breath as Miss Carsdale paused, searching for words to describe her.

Then smiling, Miss Carsdale finished, "Tess is a fine girl who is curious and has a lively imagination."

Relieved their turn was over, Tess and Ellen melted back into the line. Finally Miss Carsdale finished her list. The orphans clattered down the steps and awkwardly mingled with the crowd. Most people were drawn to the little ones and lined up at the table to sign the adoption papers.

Tess and Ellen stood with fixed smiles on their faces like wallflowers at a dance. An hour dragged by but no one approached them. Tess noticed Ellen's eyes filling with tears, so she took her to a chair at an empty table. Ellen put her head down and began to weep quietly.

"Don't give up hope, Ellen," said Tess, giving her sister's hand an understanding squeeze. "I'll figure something out. Papa always said 'God helps those who help themselves'."

As Tess comforted her sister, she glanced around the room. She noticed a plump, matronly woman sweep into the hall. The lady carried a wicker basket over her arm. The face of a fluffy white cat peeked out.

"Stay here, Ellen, I've got an idea!" said Tess.

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She walked straight to the lady with the basket.

“What a precious kitty!” declared Tess.

“Her name is Fluffy,” replied the woman, pleased to meet another cat lover. “She goes everywhere with me. Would you like to hold her?”

“Oh, yes!” replied Tess, carefully removing the cat from the basket. “Fluffy is the perfect name for her.”

“Speaking of names, I’m Miss Harriet Hamilton. I’m late getting here because of a problem at my boardinghouse. Let’s go sit in that corner. While you pet Fluffy, you can tell me about yourself.”

Tess followed Miss Harriet and the two sat down. The lady was a good listener. Tess described her adventures on the train, leaving out the most damaging details of her escapades. Then she told Miss Harriet about the death of her parents. Tess finished her story by saying, “. . . and now my sister Ellen and I are trying to find a new home together.”

“I came here today looking for one child,” said Miss Harriet, “but I would very much like to meet Ellen.”

“Of course!” cried Tess. “I’ll go get her.”

After carefully placing Fluffy back in her basket, Tess brought Ellen over to Miss Harriet. The woman’s big smile put Ellen at ease and soon the three were deep in conversation.

“Girls,” Miss Harriet said, “I’ve lived in Dayton all my life and when my parents died, I inherited our family house. There’s a lot of upkeep on it, so I take in boarders to help pay expenses. But boarders come and go and frankly, I get a little lonely at times.”

“I’ve given serious thought to adopting for some time now,” continued Miss Harriet. “If you come to live with me, you will attend school. I believe education is very important for young women. You’ll also be expected to help with chores around the house. If you agree to these things, I think we’ll get along just fine.”

She wants us! We can stay right here and become a family.

Tess looked at Ellen who grinned back at her and nodded her approval.

“Miss Harriet,” said Tess. “We accept your offer!”

THREE

CARRYING FLUFFY IN HER BASKET, MISS Harriet showed Tess and Ellen the way to the boardinghouse. As they turned onto Hawthorn Street, Miss Harriet pointed out a narrow house with a Victorian-style porch.

“That’s where Bishop Wright lives with his two sons, Wilbur and Orville, and his daughter, Katharine. You saw Bishop Wright this morning at the church,” explained Miss Harriet. “The Wrights are a talented family. Katharine teaches high school history and Latin. Her brothers own a bicycle shop, and in their spare time, they are building a motor-powered flying machine.”

“A flying machine?” asked Tess. Her eyes twinkled with excitement. “Do you think I could see it?”

“It’s not here in Dayton,” explained Miss Harriet. “Wilbur and Orville have taken the parts and assembled their machine at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. They’ve named it The Wright Flyer and they’re conducting experiments with it on the sand dunes there. But since you’re obviously interested

in flying, Tess, I'm sure Bishop Wright would gladly tell you about his sons' hobby sometime."

By now they had reached a white picket fence. Miss Harriet paused at the gate and swung it open.

"This is my boardinghouse, your new home," she announced proudly.

The girls gaped at the two-story white structure with green shutters at each window. Compared to their old apartment building in New York City, this house was a mansion!

"Leave your bag here in the foyer and I'll show you around first floor," said Miss Harriet, ushering the girls inside. Ellen put down the tattered carpet-bag that held their few belongings and the girls began the tour.

Gesturing to the left, Miss Harriet explained, "The boarders usually come here to the parlor after dinner."

The girls glanced into a room filled with overstuffed furniture arranged around the fireplace. Tess noticed a man in a wing chair reading a newspaper with the headlines, "Local Men Test Flying Machine". She also saw Fluffy had already found a warm spot to nap by the fire.

"Let's go on to the kitchen," Miss Harriet continued. "My cook, Bertha, can heat you some chicken soup."

Miss Harriet turned to the right and led the girls through a dining room where a crystal chandelier sparkled above the oval table. Ellen followed at Miss Harriet's heels, but Tess slipped back into the parlor.

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She wanted to read the article about the flying machine.

Tess walked up behind the chair where the man sat deeply absorbed in reading the front-page article. She leaned over the man's shoulder to get a closer look and accidentally bumped him.

The tall man stood up and glared down at Tess. His brown eyes narrowed into slits.

"What are you doing?" demanded the man gruffly, whipping off his gold-rimmed glasses.

"I just, I . . . I . . ." stammered Tess. But before she could explain, the middle-aged man slid the newspaper inside his gray suit coat and stomped out of the room.

All I wanted to do was see the article about the Wright brothers. Why did he have to act so mean?

Just then she heard Ellen calling. Quickly she headed toward the kitchen, putting the upsetting incident from her mind.

After a late lunch, Miss Harriet showed Tess and Ellen the upstairs floor.

"This will be your room," said Miss Harriet, pointing to the first door on the right. "The room next to yours belongs to Miss Selena Van Borg, an actress at the Victoria Theater."

Pointing to the door directly across from theirs, Miss Harriet continued, "Mr. Wendell Oppenheimer lives here. He's the mathematics teacher at the same high school where Katharine Wright works. The next door down is the lavatory. Our newest boarder, a friendly man named Mr. Thaddeus Hardwell, occu-

pies the last room on the left. He makes his living as a photographer.”

Miss Harriet showed the girls their bedroom. The good-hearted landlady opened the window to rid the room of its musty smell. She took two extra blankets from the high bureau and began spreading them on the wrought iron beds.

“You’ll probably need these tonight,” she said. “Fall evenings in Ohio can be chilly. What was the November weather like in New York City?”

Ellen immediately reached for an edge of the blanket and helped Miss Harriet.

Tess sat down in the rocking chair beside her bed. She listened as her sister told about their crowded tenement building where the pipes leaked and the wind blew through the cracks in the walls.

When Ellen finished her story she asked, “Miss Harriet, is there anything else I can do?”

“Actually, Bertha could use some help in the kitchen,” said Miss Harriet. “I’ll take you down the back stairs. It’s the quickest way to get there.”

“And I’ll unpack our things,” volunteered Tess from her chair.

As soon as they left, Tess opened a deep drawer in the bureau. She tossed in the contents of the carpetbag. Then she shoved the bag under Ellen’s bed. Satisfied that her job was done, she wandered to the end of the hall and looked out the window.

Tess daydreamed for several minutes and then decided she’d better get back to the bedroom. As Tess passed the door of the photographer’s room, she

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noticed that it was ajar. A book with a glider on the cover lay on a table by the door. Tess picked it up and flipped through it, immediately recognizing diagrams of various gliders. She had studied pictures like that in a book Papa had once borrowed.

Pushing the door open a little wider, Tess saw that no one was there. Like a magnet, her curiosity drew her inside. She picked up the book and began to thumb through the pages.

Mr. Hardwell must be interested in flying, too. Maybe he'll let me borrow this sometime.

Just then Tess heard Ellen coming up the stairs. She closed the book and returned it to the table. She left the room and hurried to meet her sister.

The next day was Sunday. Miss Harriet took the girls to the United Brethren Church for the eleven o'clock service. Afterwards, the congregation stood on the church steps greeting one another. Miss Harriet introduced the girls to a number of her neighbors, including her good friend, Katharine Wright, a woman in her late-twenties.

"Harriet, you and the girls must come for Sunday dinner," insisted Miss Wright. "It will give Father and me an opportunity to get acquainted with Tess and Ellen. Do say you'll join us."

Miss Harriet accepted the invitation and soon they were all seated at the Wrights' dining table. Bishop Wright said grace. Then Carrie, the servant girl, brought in a heavy platter filled with roast beef and vegetables. After a few minutes of adult talk, Miss Wright turned to Ellen.

“What do you enjoy doing, Ellen?”

“I love to read,” replied Ellen. “My favorite author is Louisa May Alcott.”

“She’s one of my favorites, too,” agreed Miss Wright. “I’ve read all her books.”

“And Tess, what are your interests?” asked Bishop Wright.

“Kites!” replied Tess enthusiastically. “I think it would be wonderful to soar up in the air like a kite. Maybe one day I’ll be able to do that!”

“My sons, Wilbur and Orville, are also fascinated with flying,” said Bishop Wright. “They built lots of kites when they were about your age. In fact, right now they are camping near Kitty Hawk and working on a flying machine.”

“I’ve told the girls a little about your mechanical sons,” said Miss Harriet. “Have you heard from them lately?”

“Wilbur writes that the flying experiments are going well,” replied the bishop, “but the weather in the North Carolina Outer Banks has been cold and blustery. High winds and blowing sand are a real problem. In spite of the weather, though, I think Wilbur and Orville might be close to putting a motor-powered flying machine into the air. Of course, others are also competing to be the first to fly, but we have faith in Wilbur and Orville.”

“I hope Wilbur and Orville will be the first ones. They’ve both worked so hard,” said Miss Harriet.

Then turning to Katharine, she asked, “When do you expect them home?”

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“By Christmas,” answered Miss Wright, “but it all depends on the weather. To get home, my brothers must hire a boat from Kitty Hawk and travel 35 miles across Albemarle Sound to Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Sometimes, especially during the winter, they’re delayed by storms. Once they reach the mainland, they have a day and a half train ride from Elizabeth City to Dayton.

Tess listened carefully to the conversation. The subject of flying intrigued her and she wanted to memorize every detail of the Wrights’ experiences.

“I do hope they’ll get back in time for the holidays,” said Miss Wright wistfully. “It’s so quiet around here without them.”

“Well, some quiet must be nice after teaching all day,” said Miss Harriet with a smile. “Speaking of school, I ‘m taking Ellen and Tess shopping for clothes tomorrow. On Tuesday, I’ll enroll them.”

“Would you like me to tutor the girls every afternoon to help them catch up with their lessons?” offered Miss Wright.

“How nice of you,” said Miss Harriet. “I’m sure the girls would like that.”

Ellen and Tess nodded their heads in agreement.

As the apple pie was being served, Miss Wright suggested, “Girls, let’s start the lessons tomorrow at four o’clock.”

When the meal was finished Bishop Wright excused himself to go upstairs to his study. Miss Wright took her guests into the parlor.

“Oh, Tess, look at all these wonderful books!”

cried Ellen, rushing over to the bookcase. "Here's one of fairy tales and here's one of poetry."

Tess went straight to the set of encyclopedias. She pulled out the "K" volume and sat at a table by the window. She opened the book to the section on kites. Ellen finally selected a book of short stories and joined her sister.

While Miss Wright and Miss Harriet visited over cups of tea, both sisters read avidly for the rest of the afternoon. All too soon, it was time to return to the boardinghouse.

Later that evening, the boarders sat around the fireplace in the parlor talking and listening to music on the phonograph.

When Tess and Ellen entered the parlor, Miss Harriet began introductions. First she introduced the actress, Miss Van Borg, who was dressed in a flowing evening gown.

Next Miss Harriet introduced Mr. Oppenheimer, a short, balding man who was setting up a game of checkers on a small table between the winged-back chairs. Tess moved closer to examine the game pieces on the board.

"Why don't we play a game?" suggested the mathematics instructor. Tess took the other chair beside the table.

Just then a tall man wearing gold-rimmed spectacles entered the parlor. Miss Harriet motioned for him to join the group. He crossed the room and sat down on the sofa. When Tess looked up from the checkerboard, she stared into the same brown eyes

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of the stranger with the newspaper!

“This is Mr. Hardwell, the nice photographer I told you about,” said Miss Harriet. “Mr. Hardwell, this is Ellen and Tess Raney. They’ve come to live with me.”

He’s Mr. Hardwell, the nice photographer? But he was mean yesterday, hiding his newspaper from me.

Tess heard her sister say, “We’re pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Hardwell.”

Mr. Hardwell greeted Ellen warmly, then gave a curt nod to Tess.

She crossed her fingers behind her back hoping Mr. Hardwell would not mention the newspaper incident.

Suddenly Tess remembered the book in Mr. Hardwell’s room.

“Mr. Hardwell, you’re interested in flying, aren’t you?”

“No, I’m not interested in flying at all,” said Mr. Hardwell firmly. “I’m a photographer. I’m only concerned with taking pictures.”

“But you have a book on gliders, don’t you?” blurted Tess.

“You’re mistaken, young lady,” denied Mr. Hardwell strongly. “I have no such book.”

Turning to the other boarders, he flashed a big grin. “My interest in flying is strictly limited to bird watching.”

Everyone laughed but Tess.

That’s not true! He claims he’s not interested in flying, but I saw him studying the newspaper article about the Wright brothers and I found his book on gliders. Mr. Hardwell is lying, but why?

FOUR

LATER THAT EVENING WHEN TESS WENT to bed, she snuggled under her thick blanket and thought about Mr. Hardwell's lie.

Why did he tell the others he had no interest in flying when he has a book on gliders? Is he hiding something?

For an hour, Tess restlessly tossed and turned. Unable to relax, she began her favorite daydream about flying kites with Papa. Tess thought about the unfinished kite she and Papa had been designing right before he died.

Maybe I can still build that kite. I'll need money for materials, though. Tomorrow I'll ask Miss Harriet about finding a part-time job.

With that decision made, Tess soon drifted off to sleep.

On Monday morning Miss Harriet opened the girls' bedroom door and announced, "Breakfast in fifteen minutes."

The boarders had already eaten in the dining room, so Bertha invited Tess and Ellen into the cozy

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kitchen. Fluffy was curled up in her basket by the stove. Miss Harriet came into the room and began to pet Fluffy while she outlined plans for the day.

“As soon as your chores are done, we’ll go to Owen’s Emporium to buy school clothes,” said Miss Harriet. “Then we’ll come home for lunch and later in the afternoon you’ll go to Miss Wright’s for your tutorial.”

After breakfast, Miss Harriet assigned Ellen to sweep the dining room floor. She gave Tess a feather duster to clean the parlor. In Tess’s haste to finish her job, she knocked over a floor lamp near the fireplace.

Ellen came running when she heard the clunk of the long metal pole against the floor.

“Look what you’ve done!” cried Ellen. “There’s a rip in the lampshade. Miss Harriet won’t like that.”

Tess thoughtfully studied the tear. Then she turned the lamp around until the tiny hole faced the wall.

“Now, no one will notice,” said Tess with a satisfied smile.

“Well, I hope you’re right,” said Ellen doubtfully. “You must do your chores carefully so Miss Harriet won’t be sorry that she adopted us.”

“Oh Ellen, you worry too much. She chose us and . . .”

At that moment Miss Harriet came into the room to check on the girls’ progress.

“We’re finished with our chores, Miss Harriet,” said Tess, moving away from the lamp. “Where should I put this duster and broom?”

Miss Harriet showed Tess a little closet under the back staircase where the cleaning supplies were kept. While Tess was putting the things away, Miss Harriet sent Ellen upstairs to get their cloaks.

Tess took the opportunity to ask Miss Harriet about getting a part-time job.

“I’d like to earn some spending money.”

“Why?” asked Miss Harriet.

“I want to buy materials to build a kite like the one Papa and I were designing before he died. Do you think I could find someplace to work on Saturdays?”

Miss Harriet paused a moment to consider Tess’s question. Then snapping her fingers she said, “I know! Last week, Mr. Owen at the Emporium told me that he’s looking for someone to help in his millinery department during the Christmas season.

You could talk to him while we’re shopping this morning.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Tess excitedly.

Soon Miss Harriet and the girls were walking briskly to Owen’s Emporium. When they entered the store, a man in a pinstriped suit came forward to greet them.

“Good morning, Miss Harriet,” said the man pleasantly. “And who are these lovely young ladies?”

“Mr. Owen, this is Ellen and Tess Raney. They’ve come to live with me.”

“I’m pleased to make your acquaintance,” responded Mr. Owen with a welcoming smile.

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Then turning to Miss Harriet, he asked, "How may I be of service?"

"I'm here to outfit these girls. They'll need everything from shoes to hats."

When Tess heard the word "hats", she nudged Miss Harriet's arm.

"Oh yes," Miss Harriet said, "speaking of hats, is the part-time job in the millinery department still available? Tess is interested in applying."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Owen. "Mrs. Wheeler, the supervisor, could use an assistant on Saturdays. It's our busiest day."

Mr. Owen spoke directly to Tess. "If you work here, you must follow your supervisor's instructions. Do you think you could do that?"

"Yes, sir," said Tess. "I'll try hard to do exactly what Mrs. Wheeler tells me and I'll be very careful with the hats."

"Fine," said Mr. Owen. "Report to Mrs. Wheeler Saturday morning. Your hours will be nine in the morning until six in the evening. How does that sound?"

Tess looked up at Miss Harriet, hoping she would approve of the arrangement.

"That sounds just right," said Miss Harriet. "Tess is most eager to earn some of her own spending money and she's a good worker."

Tess saw Ellen roll her eyes after Miss Harriet spoke.

I can do a good job, even if Ellen doesn't think so. I'll prove I'm just as responsible as my sister.

Tess thanked Mr. Owen and promised him that she would be there early Saturday morning.

Mr. Owen escorted them to the ladies' department, where they began to select school clothing. Tess chose a long navy skirt and white blouse. Ellen bought a similar outfit in green. They selected several other dresses before moving on to the shoe department.

Ellen found some dove gray high-button shoes. Tess chose a pair with hand-tooled flowers on each toe. They were much nicer than the hand-me-down boots from The Children's Aid Society. The high-button shoes made Tess feel like a queen as they walked home to the boardinghouse.

In the afternoon Tess and Ellen went over to the Wrights' house for their first tutorial. Miss Wright met them at the door and took the girls into the parlor.

After they were seated Miss Wright said, "Before we begin the lessons, let me tell you a little about myself. As you know, I live here with my father, Bishop Wright, and with my brothers, Wilbur and Orville. My mother died when I was about your age, so I understand how difficult it is for you right now. I, too, had to grow up quickly."

"I managed our household while finishing high school," Miss Wright continued. "Fortunately, my father believes in education for women so I earned my degree at

Oberlin College. Now I'm teaching high school, running the household, and overseeing the cycle shop when my brothers are at Kitty Hawk."

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Tess, her mind never far from flying, asked, "Have you seen the Flyer at your brothers' shop?"

"Oh yes, I've seen it, but only in parts. It's too large to completely assemble in the building."

"I wish I could meet your brothers and hear about their experiments," sighed Tess.

"I'll be sure to introduce you when they come home," offered Miss Wright.

Tess's face beamed with delight. It was exactly what she had hoped Miss Wright would say.

"Now, let's get started. Tell me what you've been studying," said Miss Wright.

The teacher listened as Ellen bubbled over with details of her favorite subjects, literature and history.

"I think I've found a kindred spirit," Miss Wright said with a smile.

Next it was Tess's turn to share. She told Miss Wright that she liked math and science.

"I'll check around the house a little later," said Miss Wright. "I'm sure Orville has some science books you'd enjoy, but right now, it's time to begin your lessons."

Miss Wright gave them a grammar exercise and the girls started their assignment. When they finished, Miss Wright sent them home for their evening meal.

On Tuesday morning, Miss Harriet walked the girls to school. Tess was nervous. She dreaded being the new girl in class. She knew Ellen was nervous too because she barely said a word the whole way.

Tess began to feel more comfortable when she was chosen captain for a team at recess. After

school, she waited on the steps until Ellen came out. They chatted about their day as they made their way to the Wrights' house for their tutorial. The rest of the week flew by.

On Saturday morning, Tess dressed in her new navy skirt and white blouse. Then she walked to Owen's Emporium.

A petite middle-aged woman was waiting for her in the hat department.

"Are you Mrs. Wheeler?" asked Tess politely.

"Yes, I am. You must be Tess Raney, my new assistant."

Mrs. Wheeler showed Tess the worktable covered with stacks of hats. Drawers mounted on the wall were filled with ribbons, feathers, and artificial flowers.

"After finishing the hats, I will put them here for you to wrap," explained Mrs. Wheeler. "Then take the packages to the back of the store for the errand boy to deliver."

Tess fell easily into the routine of working in the millinery department. She liked the busy store with shoppers crowding the aisles looking for Christmas gifts.

The next Saturday, Tess and Mrs. Wheeler worked hard from morning until night. It was dark outside when they finally finished.

As Tess walked home, her shoes crunched through piles of autumn leaves. Rounding the corner of Hawthorn Street, she noticed all the lights were off at the Wrights' house.

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*The Wrights must have gone out for the evening.
Maybe they're seeing that new play at the Victoria
Theater.*

Suddenly, she saw a man dressed in black crawl out of the second story window onto the ledge. He shut the window behind him and began crawling down the rose trellis!