

The door to the long room always screeched a little, but Emily was glad about that, for inside everyting was still as still, and the sque^aking hinge made her feel less lonely. No matter how chilly the upstairs hallway might be, the minute the long room door opened and she was inside she felt cozy and warm again. And she loved the smell of the old fashioned clothing, the magazines, boxes and trunks that crowded all about her.

Emily always went first to the windows clear down at the other end of the room. The chimney from the ~~living~~ ^{sitting} room down below went up between them, ~~war, as a ta;; stpve. and a ,ott,e gor; epi;d stpp; dpwm wot j jer bac~~ ~~agaomst ot. and ;ppl dpwm pm t je uard be;pw.~~ warm as a tall stove. Such a little girl could stoop down with her back against it and look down on the yard below, or straight across at the big pine tree that stood so tall above the ground with the wind stroking it graceful branches.

There was the old carriage shed out there--the one that a tangled trumpet vine clambered over in summer. It had a loft too, where the pigeons lived. And away out beyond the carriage shed and the barn she could see the Queen apple tree, where in springtime the violets spread a blue blanket over the ground and in late summer the bright red apples lay thick beneath the tree. At such times it was scarcely safe to walk there, so many honey bees came to drink the apples' fragrant juice.

But this time she didn't linger for Aunt Sadie was waiting for her downstairs, ready to begin the new spring dress she'd suggested they make for Helen. Helen ^{was} the doll she'd received for her sixth birthday, just before Christmas, #####

The scrapbag was full of lovely things and she knew just where to find it. It lay all in a heap on top of a big trunk back in a dark corner. But Emily wasn't afraid of dark corners. She loved every inch of the long room and she liked it best on ^{windy} ~~raining~~ days like this in springtime, and

2 when the rain made little pricking noises on the tin roof, ~~and~~ she could put her hands up against the ceiling down in the low corners and pretend she was catching the pearly drops.

She gathered the big soft scrapbag in her arms and then just because she so loved to do it, turned back to look once more out of the windows before going back downstairs. And then she dropped the scrapbag. It lay tumbled about her feet, forgotten.

Gypsies! Three wagons full! Coming out the lane!

She tried to call Aunt Sadie, but the words stuck in her throat and wouldn't come. What could she do?

Maybe they were coming to get her! Her cousins had told her they did; that they took little children and hauled them away in their wagons, and they never got to see their mothers and fathers again!

She drew back from the window as much as she could, though she still kept her eyes on the wagons. They were stopping now, and she watched while a woman wearing a bright swirly dress jumped down from the back of the first one and started running toward the house through the rain. As she came toward the back door she looked up, and Emily was sure the woman had seen her. Filled with terror, she thought of the big old trunk back in the darkest corner. She must hide.

But the scrapbag which had tumbled about her feet tripped her. She fell with a terrible thump that even the gypsies out in the wagons must have heard, and one ~~of her hands,~~ flying out, sent a pile of old dishes crashing all over the floor. She picked herself up, though, and crept behind the trunk. It is ~~are~~ hard to hear when you ~~are~~ crying, so even though her knee hurt she held her breath and listened.

Sure enough! The woman knocked. She heard Aunt Sadie hurrying to open the door, and then the woman talked in a high voice, very fast and excited. And she heard the soft murmur that was Aunt Sadie's voice, answering

Then the door shut. But she heard the gypsy woman talking again, louder. That meant she was inside the house! Emily's heart came clear up in her throat and started choking her. She couldn't even hear anymore. Her ears

buzzed and the pine tree outside the window grew all blurred and fuzzy through her tears.

Then at last the door downstairs banged shut again. #####
Emily held her breath again to listen, but she stayed right where she was. Maybe that woman would come back. She'd wait awhile.

Chapter 2

"Emily!" Where are you, child?"

Aunt Sadie's voice startled her, and when she sat up to dry her eyes she forgot she'd been hiding in the smallest, darkest corner of the long room and bumped her head on the sloping ceiling so close above her.

"Has she gone, Aunt Sadie?" Emily whispered as she scrambled out from her hiding place.

"Of course!" Aunt Sadie laughed as she hugged her.

Then she caught up the scrapbag and taking Emily by the hand said, "Let's go on downstairs to the fire. I have a story for you."

They went back out into the cold hallway and down the stairs. Emily always loved the stairway. The steps were pretty and white, with soft carpeting. And there was a railing all dark red and smooth and shiny, supported by white ^{balusters} ##### with a big newelpost at the bottom. It was fun to walk down very slowly, letting her hand come trailing along behind over the ^{glossy,} mahogany rail.

Grandma's room was dark and cozily warm when they opened the ^{hall} door. The fire in the grate made little frilly, purry whispers at her as they tiptoed through, for Grandma was having her afternoon nap.

Out in the sitting room Aunt Sadie put the scrapbag down on a chair and went to hunt the box of gingersnaps. Emily stood by the fireplace making wee, soft sounds with the tip of her finger on the Chinese gong which hung from one end of the mantle. Over in the corner behind Grandma's low rocking chair the clock started clearing its throat, and she turned to watch while the tiny door in the top flew open and the saucy little bird poked his head

out to call "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" *"Cuckoo!"*

Aunt Sadie came back with a whole handful of ginger snaps and two shiny red apples and pulled Emily down beside her in the biggest rocking chair.

"Why Honey," she said, "you mustn't be afraid of gypsies. They're people just like we are. Only they haven't any houses to live in. Just wagons. And sometimes, tents."

"But Aunt Sadie! Mary said they'd take me. That they always take little girls. That they paint their faces, and dress them in funny clothes...."

"Oh-h-h, she's mistaken," laughed Aunt Sadie. "And just think of this. That gypsy woman has a little girl of her own. ^{almost} ~~just~~ as old as you are. And she's sick. She asked me if I had any medicine to give her, so she could help her little girl get well."

While Emily nibbled ginger snaps and listened, Aunt Sadie told her how she had brought the woman into the kitchen to wait while she had hunted some things for the sick child. She had found a bottle of cough syrup, and some little pink calomel pills. And she had given her some apples too, because gypsies didn't have good things like that to eat.

"And then," Aunt Sadie added, "just because I know that sometimes pretty things are the best medicine of all, I went in to the sideboard in the dining room and hunted a piece of pretty red ribbon. I was going to give it to you. But then I knew you had lots of hair ribbons, and you wouldn't mind."

Emily sighed a little, and felt sorry for she loved hair ribbons. Then suddenly she laughed, for never before had she thought of them as medicine.

"I'm glad you sent it to her, Aunt Sadie. But I don't think I'd ever want to take one for medicine. They taste awful!"

"Oh, but that isn't the way. When someone is sick and she's given something pretty like a hair ribbon, she thinks, 'Now I'll have to hurry and get better so I can wear it.' And so she keeps looking at

the ribbon and thinking about getting better, and the first thing she knows she's well again."

Sitting there in the big chair with the glowing fire in the grate making her feel warm and drowsy, Emily nestled her head against Aunt Sadie's arm and thought about the gypsy child. Her eyes felt sandy and tried to go shut.

"I wish," she said, and then had to stop to yawn, "I wish I could see that little girl. I wonder...what...her name...is."

But Aunt Sadie didn't answer, for Emily had fallen asleep.

Chapter III

Emily awoke just as the cuckoo was clearing his throat again, but she was still too sleepy to open her eyes and watch him. And she didn't have to look to see where she was, for she knew. She wriggled more deeply into the soft old sofa and cuddled deliciously under Aunt Sadie's warm gray shawl. The scent of the rose geranium on the window sill at her head fell all about her, and she lay very still smelling it, listening to the ~~click~~ click of Grandma's shiny ~~needles~~ ^{clock} needles as she sat by the fire knitting, and waited to hear what the ~~clock~~ ^{clock} would have to say.

She heard the tiny door of the clock snap open, and began counting as the wee ~~bird~~ brown bird spoke: "Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, cu...." And then not waiting another second she threw the shawl aside, jumped up and raced for the kitchen.

"Oh Aunt Sadie! I'll have to go! Mother said four o'clock. Do you s'pose she'll be cross?"

She was peeling potatoes for supper, but Aunt Sadie quickly laid down her knife and ~~dried~~ dried her hands, ready to help Emily with her wraps. Together they pulled on her rubbers and buttoned her old blue velvet coat. Then after tying the ribbons of the blue hood under Emily's chin, she tucked in a curl that insisted on sneaking out in front of her ear and kissed her goodbye.

Emily was almost out the door when she saw her doll lying on a chair by the table. "Why Honey, W she cried. "Did you think I'd go home without you?"

Quickly, though tenderly, she picked Helen up and ran out of the house, still wrapping the pink blanket around her.

"Now tomorrow," she promised, "we'll make you that new dress, for sure !

Helen was a beautiful doll, still arrayed in her very best dress. It was of pink silk, all sprigged with tiny rosebuds and tied with a sash of pale blue velvet. Her curly brown hair was tied back from each side of her forehead with small bows of pink ribbon. It was no wonder Emily loved her for she had the sweetest of smiles and her brown eyes winked open and shut like a real baby's. Now as Emily came running around the corner of the house and down the smooth flagstone walk, she suddenly slowed down and walked with jerky little steps, watching the doll's face very closely, for when she walked this way, Helen blinked at her.

She was so busy watching the doll's eyes, that she forgot about the last stone in the walk being raised a little at one corner, so of course she stumbled. In fact she almost fell down. But it was a good thing something made her look up, for what she saw almost frightened her stiff!

The gypsy wagons!

There they were. Right across the river under the big maple tree at the end of the bridge! And a man--a dark, strange-looking gypsy man--was walking across the bridge right toward her!

The old state road ran along the north side of the river and Aunt Sadie's house sat in the corner where the lane, coming from the hills to the north, crossed that road, continued across the bridge and wound its way toward the other hills to the south. Emily's home was across the lane to the east.

Now, keeping her eyes fixed on the gypsy man, she ran toward the

lane as fast as her legs would carry her, splashing through the water in the gutter clear up to ~~###~~ the tops of her buttoned shoes, and not watching at all where she was going. The muddy road pulled at her rubbers and s~~l~~oshed ~~##~~ up onto her legs; once she stumbled and almost fell. But she put out her hands to balance herself just in time. Otherwise she'd surely have landed right in the middle of a big puddle. And that's exactly what did happen to poor Helen. But Emily never even knew it, so busy was she watching that gypsy.

Once she was across the muddy road and safe on the cinder path along the orchard fence she cast one final glance toward the man, and then ran for home at top speed. But never had the way seemed so long! The rain had made the path soft and spongy, and the picket fence left no place for a little girl to hide.

Finally she came to the white gate, but of course just because she was in such a hurry it stuck fast and wouldn't open. She made such a clatter however, that Shep started barking and came running around from the back of the house to see who was coming. When he saw it was Emily he barked excitedly, and wagged his tail in delight, for she was his very best friend. Now he was so eager to see her that he jumped up with his front paws on the top of the gate, and open it came!

"Oh Shep, get down!" she scolded. "Can't you see I'm in an awful hurry? Let me in."

Tugging the gate shut again and fastening it on the inside made her feel safe at last and with Shep beside her she stop~~p~~ed to catch her breath and to look back down the road once more toward the gypsy man. There he was, still walking slowly across the bridge. And all at once Emily felt silly and very ashamed.

"Why gypsies won't hurt you, Shep," she said. And then still feeling rather embarrassed at the way she had come running home, she walked slowly around the house toward the back porch.

Chapter 4

Emily's father was just coming in from the barn carrying the evening milk in two heavy buckets when she reached the porch, so she waited for him. She laughed at the way Romeo, her big tiger cat, was walking along so importantly behind him. The truth really was that Emily knew she had been very disobedient in coming home so late, and thought once her mother was busy straining the milk and setting it away in crocks for the cream to rise, she might forget what she had said about four o'clock.

"So there you are, Emily," her father called. "Want to go down to the river with me? The water's coming up pretty fast, and I'm going to put in a marker."

He entered the screened back porch and set the buckets of foamy milk on the table, then stepped to the kitchen door, opened it, and said to her mother, "The milk's ready, Kate. Emily and I are going down to the river a ~~#####~~ moment."

He came back off the porch carrying a yardstick, and together he and the little girl started for the river. This was something Emily loved to do, because she never was allowed to go to the river alone. High water was always fun, too, though she was probably the only one who thought so. She liked to watch it come lapping up around the trees below the barn, and to listen to the strange sound made by the rush and roar of the water out where the current was swift.

But this evening the rising water was almost frightening. The swirling yellow flood churned at the banks and washed angrily over the long grass which only yesterday had started turning green again in the first warm spring rain. Now, out in the middle of the river masses of fodder, logs, boards and other debris went racing dizzily along in the current.

Leaving Emily standing safely back on the bank, her father walked

~~down~~ to the very edge of the water and pushed the yardstick down into the soft clay until it stood firmly erect.

"There, now, " he said. "We'll leave it there until after supper and then we'll come down again and look at it."

Straightening up from pushing the stick into the ground, he glanced down the river toward the bridge, then stopped in amazement.

"My word! he cried. "Are those gypsies? And camped in a place like that?? Why they're liable to be washed away! You go on back up to the house and help your mother get supper, and I'll go talk to them."

He started walking rapidly down the road with Emily running breathlessly behind. "Oh Father! I forgot to tell you," she panted. "They stopped at Aunt Sadie's. Their little girl's sick. May I go too? Please?"

But her father was already half-way to the bridge and he turned only a moment to ~~say~~^{call}, "No. You go back with your mother. That's no place for you. And besides, I'm in a hurry!"

Emily stood ^{and} watched him a minute or two, ~~choking~~ choking back her tears. Then she turned and splashed back up the road toward home, kicking the mud defiantly and thinking to herself. "Huh! I don't care! I hope they all get drowned!"

Once through the front gate she walked on the grass, hoping she could rub some of the mud off her feet, but even when she took her rubbers off on the back porch, her shoes still had tattle-tale brown spatters on them. Her mother didn't scold her for being late but when she saw the muddy shoes, she told her to hurry and change them. And while Emily sat down on a chair to begin unbuttoning them, she started telling her mother about the gypsies, and of how her father had gone to talk to them.

"And Mother, Aunt Sadie said the little gypsy girl.... Oh Mother! Where's Helen?" She stopped in the middle of the sentence, her eyes wide with horror, and her voice choking.

Dropping her shoe, she rushed to look behind the pantry door where her coat had been hung. Frantically she snatched things off the table, off chairs, off any place where Helen could possibly be hidden. She was crying, and rushing around so much that she paid no attention to her mother who, too, was alarmed at Helen's sudden disappearance.

"Well Emily," she just isn't here!" Mrs. Fisher said. "Are you sure you brought her home? Maybe you forgot and left her at Aunt Sadie's. Don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, Mother," Emily sobbed, "for when I was carrying her around the house, her eyes were winking at me. I had her all wrapped up in her pink blanket."

Quickly her mother set the things for supper on the back of the stove so they wouldn't burn, and catching up a scarf to tie over her head said, "Well you stay here, and I'll go look for her."

Emily could scarcely see what she was doing as she hastily pulled her shoe back on, caught up the buttonhook and buttoned it to the top. Her throat still jerked with sobs and her hands were so clumsy that the shoe's buttons all went into the wrong buttonholes.

She ran to the window and saw her father coming up the road, and ~~###~~ her mother walking rapidly down along the orchard fence to meet him. Then he turned and went with her, both of them walking very slowly with their heads bent. All the way to the corner they went, and then her mother waited while her father crossed the lane and went over to Aunt Sadie's house. In a moment he returned. Then they came slowly back and Emily's heart sank lower and lower, for she knew Helen still was lost.

Chapter 5

Of course ^{Emily} ~~Virginia~~ could scarcely eat a bite of supper, although her parents did their best to cheer her and her mother had prepared ^{what} she liked the very best--fresh sausage, flannel cakes with maple syrup, and baked apples for dessert.

It seemd impossible for Helen to have disappeared so completely. Where could she be? Being a doll, she couldn't go running off by herself, nor could she answer when her mother called. ~~Virginia~~ ^{Emily} mother was thinking about it too, though she said nothing to recall it to the little girl's mind.

At first ^{Mr. Fisher} ~~Virginia's father~~ had been cross about her losing the lovely doll that she had had only since Christmas. But he ~~was~~ was so very worried about the high water that he didn't really scold her. Instead he tried to interest her with an account of his visit to the gypsy camp, and for a little while she almost forgot about her doll.

"I'm afraid that little girl is pretty sick," he said. "That's why they don't want to go on up on the hill tonight. They said she was in bed in the wagon and its jolting made her cry."

"Do you suppose the child should have a doctor?" her mother inquired. "Maybe we could get Dr. Hayes to come if we phoned right away."

"Oh, I hardly think so," he answered. "They probably have their own way of doctoring and wouldn't want people like us to interfere. They use lots of herbs, you know. They seem to be all one family. There's an old man and woman and a couple of younger men who must be their sons. It's one of the sons who has a wife and the little girl."

"Did you see her?" ^{Emily} ~~Virginia~~ asked.

"No," he said. "I just talked to the men. They had their horses tied behind their wagons under the big maple tree and were feeding them. The grandmother--she must have been the one who went into Aunt Dadie's--was cooking something in an iron kettle over the fire. I guess they'll be safe over there for a day or two. You know the river bank's pretty high right there at the end of the bridge. But I told them if anything

12
happened and they needed help, to fire off a gun and we'd hear them."

Dusk was gathering as they finished supper and ~~Virginia~~^{Emily} hurried to pull on her rubbers so she could go down to the river again with her father to read the marker.

"Hurry, ~~Virginia~~^{Emily}," he said. "It will soon be too dark to read the figures on the yardstick."

The air outside was still chilly and so damp that little drops of mist collected on ~~Virginia's~~^{her} hair where it escaped from the edges of her hood. They had gone only a little way out of the yard when her father stopped and gave a long, surprised whistle, "Whew-e-e-e-e! Just look at that!"

Then as he hurried forward ~~Virginia~~^{Emily} saw what he meant, for the yardstick which he had placed just at the edge of the water an hour ago now stood several feet ~~from~~^{from} the bank. It was only by stooping down and straining his eyes that her father could even read the figures.

"It's come up five inches," he cried. "If it doesn't stop soon we're going to be in real trouble!"

As they turned back toward the house ~~Virginia~~^{Emily} noticed where the first tight heads of violets and bluebells were pushing through the soft loam of the river bank and she thought ~~regretfully~~^{sadly} of all the lovely spring flowers whose roots were being carried away by the tearing current of the river in flood. And thinking of pretty things made her think once more of Helen...of her sweet smile, her winking ~~blue~~^{brave} eyes and her precious pink silk dress.

"Daddy, let's look just once more for Helen," she coaxed.

"Maybe you and Mother missed her, somehow."

Together they walked slowly down the road again, but Helen simply wasn't there. ~~Virginia~~^{Emily} thought of her lying somewhere in the mud and damp and couldn't hold back her tears any longer.

"I'll tell you what let's do," her father said when they reached the corner. "Let's walk out on the bridge a minute and see how the river looks from there."

Emily

~~Virginia~~ clung to his hand tightly once they were on the bridge for even when the water was low it looked very deep and frightening and tonight she was ~~#####~~^{so} terrified. she didn't even think of the game of sailing she'd invented one summer day. By standing ~~at~~ close to the ^{bridge} rail and looking down at the water flowing beneath it, she could imagine she was on a swift-moving boat which only stopped when she allowed her eyes to wander to the banks on either side where the ~~bridge was~~^{ends were} firmly anchored. Tonight, the water rushing beneath the plank flooring of the bridge sent showers of spray upward and frequently flung eddies of debris--fenceposts, ~~#####~~^{tree limbs,} broken fodder shocks--smashing against the middle pier where they'd bob for a time in the muddy water and finally dislodge and float free to continue their journey. The noise was almost deafening.

"Let's go!" she cried. "I'm afraid. I'm scared!"

She remembered the gypsy camp just as they were turning to leave and looked toward the ~~##~~ far end of the bridge where she could see the wagons with little squares of lamplight showing from their high windows, ~~and~~ the gaunt-looking horses ~~were~~ switching their tails and stamping their feet.

Emily's

~~Virginia's~~ father was very grave as they walked back toward home and ~~he~~ spoke seriously to his wife when he entered the house.

"I'm afraid we'd better get ready for trouble, Kate," he said.

"That river's climbing right up the banks. I'd better clean the lantern and fill it, in case it's needed before morning."

True

"Oh ~~True~~" her mother answered. "Surely it's not that bad, is it? Why we've never had a real flood since I can remember. Why don't you call Central and ask if she's heard anything from farther up the river?"

As he walked across the kitchen to the telephone on the way, he said, "Well, I can. But you know what the paper said today. If more rain comes before the river begins falling, there will be a bad flood. And it's starting to ~~rain~~^{pour} again, right now."

Emily
~~Virginia~~

hated to go to bed, though now ~~###~~ it was dark outside, and the kitchen clock seemed to grow louder and louder with its ticking as though it were doing its best to remind her it was time to be off.

Ever since Christmas she'd had Helen to go to bed with her, ~~to~~ ^{change night} remove her lovely dress and underthings, ~~to~~ ^{bring them} replace with a soft nightgown and then hold ^{ing her} tightly in her arms, ~~as she climbed~~ ^{who} the stairs ~~right after~~ ^{ed} ~~night~~ in the shadow of her mother, walking ahead and carrying the lamp.

Tonight, however, her mother was worried about the river too, and rather than settling down to sew or knit as she did at other times, she began helping make final preparations for the flood which surely would be upon them soon.

"The water will come into the cellar first," she said, "so I suppose we'd better get everything we can out of there."

^{Emily's} ~~Virginia's~~ father had the lantern ready by this time and she watched while he went down the steps from the kitchen, hung the lantern on a handy nail driven into an overhead beam and began carrying baskets and boxes up into the kitchen. Some he ^{put} ~~carried~~ out on ~~the~~ porch.

Finally things were piled so high in the kitchen that ^{Emily} ~~Virginia~~ wondered how her mother would ever manage to cook breakfast in such a clutter! There were rows of fruit jars filled with peaches, blackberries, cherries, vegetables and all kinds of pickles crowding the table, boxes filled with glasses of jellies and jams on the floor, and ~~###~~ underneath the table ^{Emily} ~~Virginia~~ had only to pull back the ~~###~~ oilcloth cover to reach into a basket and choose one of the last of the Northern Spy apples which had been stored in the fruit cellar since fall.

Great grandfather's sleighbells which had been kept in the cellar ever since he had built the house almost a century before lay in their box beneath the window with her ^{disseminated high} ~~broken rocking~~ chair piled on top.

The wooden washtubs had been put in front of the pantry door, along with the churn and the funny long ^{full of holes that was used} paddle for stirring apple butter. ~~###~~

15
Emily
2
All her parents' hurry was exciting and, ~~Virginia~~ thought ##### somewhat guiltily, almost fun. But just about that time, her mother suddenly heard the clock beginning to strike nine and cried, "Why ~~Virginia~~! ^{Emily!} Honey you ought to have been in bed an hour ago. You're so sleepy you can hardly ~~keep~~ ^{hold} your eyes open! Come on, let's go."

And before ~~Virginia~~ ^{Emily} even had time to remember that Helen wasn't there, she and her mother were on their way upstairs. Quickly undressed and tucked in bed, she lay listening to the ~~#####~~ ^{drowsily} noises--sheets of rain pouring against the windows and the bridge rattling frequently as whole trees such as she'd watched before darkness fell, were swept by the river's swift current and hurled against the stone pier in mid-stream.

And she was sound asleep long before the real crisis came. Too worried to think of going to bed themselves, her parents watched and waited anxiously and before long heard the first trickle of water pouring in little jets from cracks between ~~#####~~ ^{stones} of the cellar walls to quickly flow into ^{ever-widening} puddles and begin filling the basement. Frequently ~~Virginia's~~ ^{Emily's} father ^{through the sitting room} went to the front of the house, opened the door and walked out onto the ^{front} porch to peer toward the road and see if the flood was spreading.

Everything was dark, except for the light ~~streaming~~ ^{streaming} from their ~~own~~ ^{own} windows and those at Aunt Sadie's house where she and her family also would ~~be~~ ^{be preparing for} a sleepless night. ^{Luckily,} On one of those trips to the porch sometime after midnight he heard, above the rushing noise of the water, ~~a~~ ^a shot ~~that was~~ fired at the gypsy camp.

Quickly he returned to the warm kitchen, ~~denied~~ ^{pulled on} his hip boots and warm clothing and, taking the lantern and telling his wife not to worry, hurried off the porch and down the road toward the bridge. Already, the river's muddy water was beginning to reach long fingers along the ruts ~~where~~ where the road dipped to cross the culvert just ^{east} beyond the ~~house~~ house. ~~And when he reached the end of the bridge he saw~~ that the swirling current was almost touching the ^{loose} plank flooring, much of which might float away as the flood grew higher.

grove

Walter, Aunt Sadie's ^{grown} son, had joined him by this time and as they hurried out onto the bridge they realized that already the rushing water was lapping at the lower edges of the loose plank flooring. ~~Before long much of the floor might float away and no one would be able to cross it.~~ Running toward the gypsies, they ~~could~~ ~~see but the gypsies~~ could hear the frightened neighing of horses and as they drew nearer the ^{north} end of the bridge could see, in the dim light of their lantern, a ~~cluster of~~ ^{group} huddled ~~men and women~~ reaching toward them ~~frantically at the heads of the~~ and screaming, "Help ~~us!~~ ^{Save us!}" as they ^{fought} ~~struggled~~ to control the frantic horses. Water completely covered the place where they ~~had been~~ ^{had been} camped and not until it receded would one of their three wagons be found where the rushing torrent ~~had~~ ~~deposited it~~ deposited it against a stand of trees a half-mile downstream. ~~The three gypsy men and one woman~~ Only two wheels wagons remained and even the back of these were standing in the flood which inch by inch was eating away at the tiny spot of muddy roadway ~~remaining.~~ ~~remaining.~~

Help!

This was no time for talk! Quickly Mr. Fisher gestured for them to follow and began ^{running} ~~walking~~ toward the north end of the bridge, even now having occasionally to step across patches of roaring, muddy water where the first of the planks had ^{ripped} ~~floated~~ free and were already ~~floating~~ floating dizzily away.

Jumping into the wagons and ~~lashing~~ lashing with their whips to hurry the ~~horses~~ horses which threatened to rear out of control and upset ^{them,} them, the gypsies followed although the noise of the flood completely drowned the ~~usual~~ usual rattle of the wheels on the planks.

Once safely off the bridge the wagons halted and the older man leaned down, shouting to Emily's father, "Where can we go?"

"It'll have to be the knoll out there," ~~he~~ he answered, pointing toward the back of his farm where a small ~~grove~~ ^{grove of trees} crowned a

1920 the highest part of the pasture.

~~gently sleeping~~ until daylight and then we can decide what to do. Turn into the field on the right after you pass the orchard. It's high enough the water won't reach ~~it~~ ^{you} for awhile."

"Gracias!" the man called, as he slapped the reins and set the little procession ~~in motion~~ ^{down the muddy lane--} moving again ^N the two wagons, their windows now dark, with the two extra horses from the lost wagon plodding along at the rear of the second ~~one where they were hitched at the rear of the second one.~~

"I'm worried about those gypsies, Kate," Dave said when he once more entered the house. "Neither they nor their horses look like they've had enough to eat for a long time, and with that sick child.... I don't see what's to become of them!"

"Well they're safe until morning anyway," Emily's practical mother answered - "There's nothing more anyone can do now, so why don't you try to get some rest?"

"I'm not the least bit sleepy," he said. "And even if I were, I don't think I should go to bed, for that river may be in the house before morning. I'll read the paper here in the kitchen and you try to catch a little sleep on the sofa in the sitting room. I'll wake you if things get worse. I'm certainly glad Walter has that rowboat, ^{for} ~~all~~ ^{may} of us have to head for the hills ^a if this keeps up!"

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It was a strange world in which Emily awakened, shortly after ~~the next morning~~ ^{the next morning}. She sat up in bed and looked out the window, ~~the next morning~~.

Water was everywhere. The road had disappeared and only the orchard fence marked ~~#####~~ where it ought to be. ~~#####~~ The floor of the bridge was entirely covered and ~~#####~~ and the fringe of trees along the river bank swayed in the driving wind and rain, with only their tops ~~#####~~ showing.

Quickly Emily snatched up her clothing from ~~the~~ ^{the} bedside chair and hurried downstairs to the warm kitchen. Her father, ~~h#####~~ worried looking and tired from his sleepless night, sat at the table sipping from a cup of coffee as his wife prepared breakfast.

"Hurry and get dressed, Emily," Mrs. Fisher said. "There's nothing for us to do but hope it will stop raining and the flood won't get higher. But you'd better be dressed, just in case..."

She let her voice trail off without explaining ~~####~~ what "just in case" meant. But Emily, even though she was only six, knew she meant "just in case we have to leave our house."

Breakfast was an unusually ~~quiet~~ ^{quiet} meal for Emily was awed into silence at the thought of the watery world in which they found themselves, ~~and~~ ^{and} her parents, worried and anxious, had no words for each other beyond discussing what things they might still do to protect their lives and their possessions.

"I'm going to try to wade out to the barn," Mr. Fisher said. "I'm glad we moved the chickens in there yesterday, for they can fly up into the haymow and be safe. I'm afraid ~~the eggs~~ ^{some of the stock may} be standing in water, but at least I can put some feed into their mangers and maybe they won't suffer too much. I don't know whether it's any use to try milking but I'll take the buckets along and give it a try."

"Just do be careful," Dave," Emily's mother said. "I know you have to go but I'll be worried every minute until you're back again. And those gypsies! Will they still be all right?"

Just then Emily, looking out the window toward Aunt Sadie's house, cried, "Here comes a boat!" And hurrying to join her, Mr. Fisher said, "It's Walter. I hope nothing's the matter down there!"

He ~~hurried~~ ^{rushed} to the front porch as Walter rowed toward the ~~sw~~ ^{line} of ~~white~~ ^{white} picket ~~#####~~ tops jutting above the water where only yesterday Emily had had such trouble opening the gate.

"Our coal pile in the yard is under water," Walter explained, "Since your coalhouse is higher, we thought maybe you'd let us have some."

"We've moved upstairs," he continued. "There's water all over the downstairs floors and a little while ago the dining room chimney fell ⁱⁿ. You never saw such a mess. Mother's about frantic, but she's managing to keep busy, trying to get meals on the little pot-bellied stove in the front bedroom."

"Come on around to the back and I'll be out to help you," Emily's father answered. "After you take the coal down, why don't you come back and we'll row out to the hill to see how the gypsies are doing."

Having assisted Walter with filling several sacks with coal, Mr. Fisher ~~##~~ watched as his neighbor started rowing back toward home. Then he turned and waded toward the barn, stopping at the corncrib where the floor was still high and dry, to fill his arms with ears of corn to feed the chickens and cattle.

Meanwhile ^g Emily's mother, having washed their few breakfast dishes and put them away, began assembling things she hoped might be cold and ^{of} help to the gypsies out in their/rain-soaked camp. Even though their wagons might be dry inside, it would be impossible for them to find dry wood for a fire and she shivered, just imagining how cold-- especially that sick child-- might be.

When her husband entered the kitchen nearly an hour later, he was almost cheerful. "Maybe the worst is past," he said. "The water's not rising now, and the rain seems to be stopping."

He had brought two partially filled buckets of milk and as he set them down on the porch table, explained "I'm going back to hunt for some eggs. The hens seem to like their new home, for I heard some of them cackling while I was milking. When Walter comes back we'll take the gypsies some milk and eggs."

Chapter 8

Emily certainly hadn't forgotten Helen and her strange disappearance, and she felt sad every time she thought of that sweet face and ~~friendly~~ ^{those} winking eyes. Neither had Mrs. Fisher forgotten, and she tried to interest Emily in whatever she was doing to keep the little girl's mind too busy for remembering what had happened the previous day.

"Let's send them some of those cookies I baked yesterday," Mrs. Fisher said. "And we can spare a couple of loaves of bread since tomorrow's baking day, again."

"Why don't you run upstairs and get that red plaid dress you're outgrowing?" she suggested to Emily. "It's good and warm and maybe that little girl will like it just as much as you always did. And bring a couple of pairs of your warm black stockings."

She had already assembled several other things--a soft, padded wool comforter and an extra blanket from ~~the~~ ^{the} chest in the back bedroom. She folded them neatly, along with the dress and stockings Emily ~~had~~

brought from upstairs and then added a suit of Emily's long, winter underwear, ~~and~~ ^{with a smile of understanding, she also put in the} finally, one of the pretty pink flannel nightgowns ~~bundle~~ from the generous supply that various loving relatives always were sending ^{Emily} as Christmas or birthday gifts.

While Emily was helping assemble the gifts to be sent to the gypsies, her mother ~~and~~ had emptied the buckets of milk which Mr. Fisher had brought from the barn, straining some of it into crocks, as usual, for the cream to rise. But part of it she poured into a gallon jug and set aside, ready to be sent in the boat to their ~~strange~~ ^{new-} neighbors.

Chapter 9

By this time Walter had returned and Mr. Fisher, back from the barn with his basket of eggs handed them to his wife who immediately put most of them into the box of ^{supplies} ~~###~~ she had been preparing-- apples, potatoes, cookies, bread, ^{and} milk. She handed the box to Walter who had rowed his ~~boat~~ ^{craft} clear up to the steps of the back porch, and then brought out the bundle of warm clothing and bedding for ~~###~~ her husband to take with him as he stepped into the boat.

Then Emily and Mrs. Fisher watched as the two men ~~made~~ ^{flashed} away, Walter sitting with his back toward the ~~###~~ ^{bow, rowing,} while Mr. Fisher sat in the back, holding the bundle of clothing and gazing in awe over the sea of water on which they were embarking.

At the barn they stopped briefly, and the mother and daughter saw them tie the boat while both entered the building and emerged, carrying some of the pile of kindling and dry stovewood which Mr. Fisher stored there each autumn in preparation for the cold winter ahead. This they piled between them in the boat and as they saw them start once more toward the gypsy camp, Emily's mother squeezed her hand ~~#####~~ ^{lovingly} as she said, "I'm glad they remembered the wood. Now those poor folks will be able to build a fire to get warm."

Watching from the back kitchen window, Mrs. Fisher ~~watched~~ ^{flashed} anxiously as she saw the boat caught momentarily in a swift current flowing behind the barn where the water had a clear sweep across the open meadow. Then, little by little, she saw the boat draw nearer the grove of trees crowning the hill, and she smiled as she ~~watched~~ ^{saw}

the distant figures of the three gypsy men run toward the water, catch the bow of the boat and pull it up onto the ground where her husband and Walter could step ashore ^{and} walk up into the grove.

To Emily, the moments dragged endlessly until finally she saw her father and Walter returning to the boat ^{unconsciously} and she ~~caught~~ ~~herself~~ ^{waved} in response as she spied those distant figures raising their arms in a gesture of farewell.

Once more the boat seemed motionless on the flood of murky water and then, ^{slowly} ~~little by little~~, it edged closer under the steady rhythm of Walter's rowing. Finally it bobbed at the porch steps where Walter held it motionless while Mr. Fisher climbed out.

"Thanks, Walter!" he called. "I'm glad we went. And don't forget that message for your mother!"

"Message?" inquired Emily's mother, looking puzzled. Quickly, though, she noticed his secretive smile and ~~was~~ asked no further questions but waited patiently as ~~he~~ rather awkwardly, she thought, ^{he took off} ~~went about removing~~ his wet outer clothing ^{he stepped into} ~~and donned~~ his dry slippers ^{after removing} ~~in place of~~ his muddy boots, while he ~~asked~~ ^{then} talked about what a wet, cold trip it had been, and asked for a cup of hot coffee.

"But Daddy!" ~~What~~ ^{What} about the little girl?" Emily cried. "Hurry and tell us!"

"Her name is Rosita, and she's lots better," he reported as he settled down in his chair by the table and drew Emily toward him. "And just look what she sent you!"

As he spoke, he drew back his coat to disclose a bundle he'd clumsily clasped ~~been~~ ~~under~~ ~~his~~ ~~arm~~. "Don't drop it," he cautioned, as Emily took the rather grimy-looking package and started pulling away the crumpled newspaper in which it was wrapped.

"Mother!" she screamed, as the final ~~wrappings~~ wrappings fell away. "It's a gypsy doll! Just look! She's wearing a swirly dress just like

that gypsy woman was wearing yesterday, ### She has lots of beads around her neck, and her hair is all tied up in a red kerchief. And she has a smile just like Helen's," she said more soberly.

Then picking the doll up to examine her more closely, she screamed even more ~~loudly~~ ^{excitedly,} hugging the doll in a fierce embrace.

"Helen! It's really you!" ^{oh Helen, Honey!}
were

There under the doll ~~had been placed~~ Helen's mud-stained once white and garments--her/frilly petticoat, her dainty silk dress and her pink ~~blanket~~ blanket.

"How....where...?" "Emily gasped, turning to her father.

"Well," he said, "smiling as he pulled both Emily and Helen onto his lap, "I guess after Rosita's father found Helen there where you'd dropped her, ^{in the road,} Rosita's mother hurried last night while they still had a light in their wagon, and made her a new outfit. They intended to give ^{her} ~~it~~ to Rosita. But Rosita's father knew it was your doll and when he saw all the things we'd taken them, he sent her ~~##~~ back to you. ~~Now, tell me, are you still afraid of gypsies?~~

"Now, tell me," he concluded, "are you still afraid of gypsies?"

"Oh no!" sighed Emily. "And when the water goes down, will you take me to visit Rosita?"

