

## And So Goes the Story

—Nancy Sink

"With love that scorns the lapse of time and ties that stretch beyond the deep."—Thomas Campbell.

Following are the words spoken by Monsignor John M. Murry in memory of the late Annabelle Susan Givins:

"The memory of Annabelle Givins will long remain in the hearts of all her neighbors. Annabelle Givins died yesterday morning at the ripe old age of ninety-four years, two months and three days. Each year held a score of happiness which incidents were retold to her friends who gathered in the rambling old house at the corner of Birch and Elm Streets at least once a week to beg Gramma Givins for another story, for each was sweeter and more elegant than the one before it, etc."

No eye was dry in the tiny church that day, for everyone had pleasant memories of the little old lady so often seen about her flowers in the spring, treating each one with her own infinite tenderness, and who, in the winter, so often welcomed strangers at her door—the little old lady in her long black dress with a crisp white apron tied neatly about her petite waist. How sweet her life had been for her and for everyone who loved her so much.

In the congregation, where stillness prevailed except for the frequent sniffling of one of Grandma Givins' friends, sat a woman whose mind was on one of the old-time stories. This woman was Mary Arnold, and the following story occupied her thoughts as she sat in the tiny country church with all her neighbors to pay homage to the best neighbor of all.

Come! Gently roll the calendar back for only three days. It was an ice-beaten, snowy evening when the wind made the huge birch trees tremble with cold and the hardened ground crackle with the weight of the few people who were forced to be out on this so hectic a night. Only one visitor ventured to the old house that night. This was young Mary Arnold. She had been welcomed at the door by Grandma Givins, and they had gone together into the little den where an easy chair was waiting on each side of the large, antiquated fireplace in which crackled a welcoming fire. On the hearth sat a tiny teapot with two cups of tea already prepared.

When the two were seated comfortably in the big easy chairs, Grandma Givins, in her calm, sweet manner, recounted the following story:

"'Twas in the spring of 1872 that the love story of Martha Bedford began.

"There was to be a husking bee in the neighborhood, and everyone was preparing for the big event from Mama down to little brother Joe. Martha dressed in her Sunday-go-to-meeting dress, for she knew full well that Sam Carter would be there with 'bells on.' And he was, too. Sure, and they were a handsome couple—Martha and Sam; he the handsomest man about town, and she 'the belle of the ball.' That was the night he stole the first kiss. That was the last time that Martha Bedford ever saw Sam Carter, for it was rumored thereabout that he had left the little town in the heart of Alabama, gone North, and was married. But Martha knew better. He wouldn't have done a thing like that, not Sam."

And here the story ended, for the little old lady in the big brown easy chair closed her eyes and was heard no more.

The story ended for Martha Bedford, who in reality must have been Annabelle Givins, for on a tiny, marble-top table which sat beside Gramma Givins' easy chair lay a diary and a pen. The diary contained the authentic story with the real characters, Annabelle Givins and Sam Carter.

And in the tiny church the service was over, and the crowd thronged to the graveyard just outside the church. The men slowly lowered the body of Annabelle Givins into the ground, and the shovels of cold, hard clay made a thumping sound on the big steel box.

If one could have been in the big white house that afternoon about two-thirty o'clock, just before the big black

carriage came to take the body of Annabelle Givins away from her friends, he might have seen the sweetest, most sentimental part of Gramma Givins' story. There came an elderly, white-haired gentleman, who must have been at least ninety-five, dressed in a simple black suit, majestically carrying a cane in his left hand. The cane was laid slowly aside, and the black top hat lifted in reverence as the old man raised the cold, withered hand of Annabelle Givins and placed on the third finger of her left hand two diamond studded rings.

And he now fully understood the lines of Robert Browning as he recalled to his still clear memory the words:

"There, that is our secret; go to sleep!  
You will wake, and remember and understand."

And so goes the story of Annabelle Givins—deceased.

### THE HAPPY ENDING

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where.

The first morning that Eva had made her way through the thicket and opened the big iron gate that enclosed the cottage, John Whitcomb was seated on the front porch carving, which was his only trade now that he had become very old. He suddenly looked up from his work when he heard the gate click. But when he saw the small child he smiled and invited her to come in. This she did and very soon they were the best of friends, talking as if they had known each other always. Conversation between them was not as friends, but rather as parent and child. This was the beginning of a new life for the old man, who formerly lived in solitude. For the old man, each day was spent in newly found joy and happiness with little Eva. And each night was spent in complete peace because of the events of this day when his dreams came true.

Little by little Eva was drawn away from her Aunt Helen, who tried in vain to persuade her to stay at the big house and play with her twin cousins, Margaret and Martin. At first, when the three went to play, everything went along well. Then after a few weeks, the twins began to become envious of Eva. Before long they were arguing and fighting over the many playthings they had. They called her "Mother's pet". A few days later they began playing pranks on her.

The day was dreary because of rain. It was not a hard rain, but rather a constant patter on the windows. Toward the latter part of the day it had practically stopped raining. Martin had almost persuaded Margaret and Eva to go down to the old barn to play sliding down on the hay. The girls did not want to go. But finally Martin won, and the three went running through the mud and wet grass. The barn had been built several years ago and was used only to store hay and other feed for the animals. It was located only a short distance from Uncle John's cottage.

After playing quite a while, the twins got tired and, being very mischievous, sought a way to play a prank on Eva.

While Eva was sliding merrily down on the hay, Martin meekly ducked around the corner and went to the supplies room. Here his father kept the farm implements. Having looked over the collection, Martin picked up a mole trap. When he went back to the hay pile, Margaret and Eva were on the other side playing. He set the trap at the foot of the hay pile and called to the girls:

"Hey, let's slide down once again before we go home."

"But, Marty, we're tried," replied Margaret.

"Just once, then we'll hurry home," he answered. "Come on, Eva; you can be first."

Eva scrambled to the top and went sailing downward. Just as she landed, there was a scream.

"Ha, ha—can't even take a little ride without getting hurt! Mama's little baby!" ridiculed the twins.

"Get up and come on; we'll race you to the house," called Margaret

## Now I'll Tell One

—James Tate

Some forest rangers of Delta River National Forest were talking in front of the big fire place in the main bunkhouse. There was a new fellow among them. His name was Johnny Lister. He was listening to the men talking. They were discussing the things that had happened to them since they had last seen each other. One fellow in particular interested him. He later found that his name was Gus McIntyre. He was christened Gustavias McIntyre, but he never liked the name, so he took "Gus" as an alternative.

Gus was telling of how he had been trapped by a forest fire over near Bald Rock. He had been checking a story of smoke being seen near there. "Walking along, I decided to get my bearings and climbed a high tree for a look around. I saw that I was not far from a creek and, smelling smoke, I turned and saw at my back a great billow of smoke. Practically falling, I came down the tree and headed toward the creek. All the while the fire was getting closer and closer. I soon came to the creek. It was too shallow and too narrow to offer much protection from the fire. After wetting myself thoroughly, I waded downstream. The smoke was getting thicker and thicker. I heard a great roar close by. There was a waterfall just in front of me. It was falling about ten feet to the bottom of a small ravine. I slid down one side. Upon reaching the foot of the waterfall, I saw the fire downstream on both sides. I couldn't go through that. Looking around, I found a narrow shelf about halfway up the waterfall. I had nothing to lose and climbed up to it. I walked along its narrow width until the water blew into my face in the form of a fine mist. The water was peculiarly getting warmer and warmer."

At this point he stopped and lit his pipe. Johnny was very intent on the story and paid no attention to the others.

Gus looked around and then continued to tell his story, "The wind began to blow harder until it blew the water back on me, and pretty soon I was drenched with very warm water."

At that moment the cook crept up behind Johnny and poured a bucket full of water all over him. Everybody roared. Johnny blushed deeply.

Then the Captain came over and said, "Don't ever get too interested in Gus' stories. He is always telling a big tale. None of them can be true, because he is the mechanic and never leaves the grounds except to go to the village."

as they ran off.

But Eva could not move. Her leg had been caught in the clamp, and the force of her fall had pushed the spike deeper into the ground so that she could not even move the trap. She screamed and she called, but no one heard her. It was growing late. Night was overtaking her alone. The clamps were cutting the flesh deeper, and she had fainted from fatigue.

Uncle John had made a visit up at the big house. Since Eva was not at home, he was returning to his cottage. As he passed the barn, he heard a faint whimper. He opened the door and went slowly toward the hay pile. He shined his light around, and there at the foot of the hay pile lay Eva. He murmured angrily to himself while unfastening the clamps. It was all the old man could do to pick up the child and carry her to his house, where he washed her wound and bound it. It was not cut as deeply as he had feared.

The very next morning he went to town to carry Eva to the doctor. After that he made arrangements to have her adopted. The man at the desk said, "But you can't adopt this child. You're an old man! Don't you understand? You could never care for her."

But Uncle John quietly said, "I am her grandfather. Her father was my only son." He reached to his vest pocket and gave the attorney the papers to prove the situation.

"Well, now, this makes the whole thing possible," was his reply.

## Betsy

—Don Snider

There he goes on past the house, down the road on to the sound side where his little old barnacle-eaten boat was tugging at its anchor's end. Old Jim stooped down at the water's edge, reached in the bushes, and pulled out his old pole-and-paddle, also a little bucket in which he kept old rugs to burn at night to keep the sand fleas and mosquitoes from carrying him off.

Well, he was off, and the night was perfect. Across the sand dunes and Marsh grass he could hear the loud rumble and roar of the waves dashing gently against the white beach sand. Old Jim did not appreciate the hot jazz of the younger generation nor the symphony orchestra of the rich, for he was a fisherman, and to all good fishermen the waves played the only music they could understand and appreciate.

Yes, tonight was a special night for old Jim. He was not going floundering as usual; besides it wasn't dark nights. Instead, a full moon was reflecting its silver rays off the white beach sand, and in the distance he could hear a marsh hen shriek shrilly, as the old hoot owls do in the northern woods on a clear night. Instead of fishing tonight he was on his annual visit to gather his white gold, as he called it. No, it wasn't white gold nor any kind of metal, but he was going to fill his basket with the one thing he loved above all, Betsy's turtle eggs. He knew just when and where to find these eggs. Not just anyone could find turtle eggs like old Jim, for he knew the secret and indeed it was a great secret.

Across the sound and very shortly he was anchored at the foot of the old familiar sand dunes. He pulled the bow of his boat up on the shore and pitched out his anchor, smothered his little smoke bucket out, got his egg basket, and strolled up the side of the dune, then he paused and looked around. The stars, the white sand, the blue waters, the cool breezes blowing softly from the northeast and the beautiful moon, truly the creator was a great God!

Hark! What was that he heard yonder to the right—no, it could not be—yet, but it was. There she was as every year at the same time; there was Betsy, the most wonderful animal in all the land or in all the sea. No other man had ever experienced the turtle love old Jim did for this old sea turtle; nor had a turtle ever had the affection that old Betsy had for old Jim. Betsy was a real turtle, and what a turtle! Old Jim said to his best judgment she would weigh at least two hundred pounds. Betsy was covered with barnacles from bow to stern, and she even had some on her toenails, so Jim said. Betsy was getting pretty old, for it had been many years ago when old Jim first met up with her, but there was still that old gleam in her eyes and in old Jim's too.

Old Jim went down to the nest and instead of the usual two hundred eggs there were two hundred and fifty white eggs all neatly piled up. He reached in his basket and pulled out two large trout and gave them to old Betsy; in response she gave a loud whine. Old Jim gathered the eggs, all but a few which he always left to hatch. He bade old Betsy farewell until next year when the moon was again full in June, then he again would see her.

John Whitcomb's wife died several years ago, leaving an only son. Then the small town in which they were living had been flooded, and all the relatives had been drowned. Through fortunate means John and his son were the only ones to escape. His son later married. Eva was their only child. A year later both were killed in an automobile accident, leaving Eva with Aunt Helen.

For twenty years John had tried in vain to trace his granddaughter. Only two years ago had he succeeded in his efforts. Now the rest of his life would be spent in peace, knowing that little Eva was living with him for the rest of his life.