

Warmer With Snow

It was the last of January, and yet there had been no snow. Even Christmas had been warm and dry. Now dusk was gathering, quickly and stealthily enshrouding the town in darkness. The wind grew more biting as it whipped around buildings and down alleys, leaves and papers fleeing like animals before an oncoming fire. Trolley captians shivered at their stops as frigid gusts blew in at the doors. Here and there housewives darted out for evening papers and rushed back in, locking the doors securely after them; for no sane person would venture out tonight.

Tom Greene, lawyer, came in from racing the car motor, removed his coat and muffler, and went in to where his family awaited him at the table. ". . . and bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies." He paused instead of saying the usual "Amen," adding, "Look down, Lord, on all those who are less fortunate than we. Bless them and keep them. In His name we ask it. Amen."

Up on the Ridge, Mrs. Olivia VanStory was presenting tonight her charming niece from Miami, and Olivia VanStory's parties were the height of everything elite—or so the papers said. Now, after making last minute inspections, she paused before a mirror on the landing, highly pleased with her reflection. The ballroom dazzled the naked eye, the orchestra was imported from New York, and in the kitchen the hors d'oeuvres looked divinely delectable. Ah, that new French maid was priceless! She was a gem!

A slight commotion outside announced the arrival of guests. Adjusting her pearls, Mrs. VanStory meticulously pushed back in place a single stray hair; and, winking smugly to herself in the mirror, she glided with practiced poise to meet her guests.

At 224 East Main Street, Marie Carter emptied the last lumps of coal into a bucket. For a moment she stared with disbelief at

the empty burlap sack; then, dropping it to the floor, she picked up the bucket and carried it inside. Lifting the iron lid of the stove, she carefully laid one lump down in the glowing embers. Then methodically she unfolded the battered ironing board and hooked up the iron. Outside, the wind groaned, and the cheap apartment house seemed to shudder under the impact. A tree limb scraped the side of the building. Marie shivered. Getting her shabby grey coat from the closet, she stole into the children's room. Tenderly she stretched out the little arm that was being lain on and cramped. Then spreading the coat over the twins, she gently tucked it around them. Striking her foot against an object, she stooped and picked up a little shoe, muddy, scuffed, and run over at the heels, with the soles worn thin as paper. She looked at



By

Elaine Gibson



it long with tired eyes, then let it fall to the floor with a soft thud.

In the Green living room the grandfather clock struck twelve. Setting out the forgotten milk bottles, Nora Greene paused to check the oil gauge and turn the thermostat up one degree before she crept back to bed.

Olivia VanStory was in her glory. The orchestra was magnificent; the food, superb; and the guests, tipsy. In the library a radio was turned up for the one o'clock forecast; and served and servant alike paused, eager for news of the threatening blizzard, as the sleepy forecaster announced that the blizzard had turned and that the weather would be warmer with light . . . The radio clicked off.

"Another confounded month of July!" swore a highly cultured personality.

"No snow?" wailed a coquetish voice from the deep South.

She was answered, however, by a careless arm thrown around her dimpled shoulders and a reassuring drawl, "Don shu worry, baby. The weather manish my besh frenn."

Marie Carter turned out the fifty watt bulb, tucked the still warm iron to the feet of the twins, and stood looking out into the night, the heavy darkness shutting off the garbage cans and dingy back alley. She stood there a long minute, remembering . . . a rose garden in June . . . hunting for green paint for the cottage shutters . . . monogrammed towels . . . a battered gray convertible . . . Jim's first bonus . . . and then Salerno. A single tear slid down her cheek and splashed on the drab sill. In silent prayer, she lifted her face to the sky. Then softly, silently, almost stealthily, the snow began to fall.



Youth

My heart sings!
It's springtime!
The world reawakens,
And with it, my spirit.

Welling up within me
Is a desire to dance,
To lift my face and be swept clean
By crisp breezes.

The smell of new earth
Makes me overflow.
The sight of daffodils, nodding
gaily,
Makes me smile.

I want to feel the heat of the sun
To walk in woody lanes,
To lie on my back on a starry night
And see destiny in the skies.
This is youth!

—Blenda Huneycutt.



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