"FINDERS KEEPERS"

By Alva Joyce Ringold

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The Gardners were poor people and they were poorer than ever after the county fair had come and gone. That was late in September. The grounds used for the great annual exhibition were only half a mile away from the humble little home. It was the first time they had been used for that purpose, so Ruth Gardner, the mainstay of the family, devised, as she thought, a sure way to make some money out of it.

"Yes," her crotchety grandfather had agreed, "it looks likely and I'll supply the $200 to stock up, although it's my very last cent."

"I am sure I can pay you back and make a nice, tidy profit," enthused the optimistic Ruth.

There were four in the family—old Mr. Gardner, his widowed daughter, Mrs. Warren, Ruth's mother, and Ruth's younger sister, Netta. Ruth had been working as clerk in the big store of the town on extra rush days when the farmers came to the county seat. It was a poor pay that she received, but it helped to fill out.

A vast splurge, to her modest way of thinking, was possible when the fair came along. Her mother was a wonderful cook. Her pies, doughnuts and cookies were famous. Ruth got a new idea in her mind—to start a little lunch booth on the fair grounds. She was awarded a most promising spot right near the entrance gates. It took $200 to secure a coffee steamer, knives, forks, spoons and the cooking outfit, and the day the fair opened she and her mother took in $50.

Alas, for their simple hopes and fond calculations! That very night a fire caught in a building next to their little booth and equipment, eatables and all they had were licked up in the flames.

Ruth went back to her erratic employment at the town store. Grandpa Gardner fumed and fussed and fretted over his loss. It was harder work than ever getting along now. Mrs. Warren, however, made a little supplying homemade cakes and bread to a few village families, which Netta delivered, as well as caring for quite a brood of chickens.

It was just after the county fair closed that Netta came running into the house one morning and startled the helpless, brooding old grandfather into a state of irritability by

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betraying vivid excitement of manner and voice.

"Oh, Ruth!" cried Netta, "what do you think? Come, quick! There's a great, beautiful turkey has flown into the chicken yard!"

"Eh! What's that?" exclaimed Grandfather Gardner, spurting up the energies of acquisition and appetite, "a turkey? Don't let it get away. Pen it up. Feed it up. Why, I haven't tasted turkey for a whole year. It will make a famous feast."