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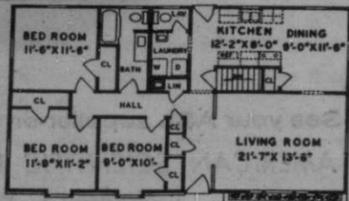
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## Christmas Spirit

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gave; and his piping baby voice drummed on Ma's heart like a small invisible hammer from the edge of the crowd as he was dragged away—"an I be'n a good lit-ta boy."

He was earnestness and innocence combined; and for the moment he stole the show.

There was a smile on Ma's lips and a lump in her throat. The moment passed, but the message lingered—echoed—and mingled with the night.

Ma felt a mitted hand in hers. It was the brown eyed moppet, stars and all. The other mitten clutched her treasured gift from Santa.

AN AGED MAN, who Ma knew lived alone, stepped in front of her.

"The Christmas Spirit is certainly with us this night, Mrs. Robison," said he. "A fine thing it is for the young ones!" His cheeks and ears were red from the frosty air and his old eyes shone with the un-accustomed excitement.

"Yes—uh yes—Merry Christmas Mr. Barker," she tried to match his conversational mood. But the words were barely spoken when the thought occurred: how could he be merry, this solitary old soul in his humble cabin?

But he glowed, as though she had just handed him a gift. "Thank ye Ma'm he smiled, "and may the Good Lord bring the same to you." Then he shuffled busily away, as though to absorb enough merriment to sustain him to the end of the season.

The crowd had divided into little visiting groups; and these in turn, began to move toward the warmth of their cars.

"Merry Christmas" rang out from all directions, and became lost in the roar of exhausts. Mary Ann handed over her other two youngsters saying, "They want to ride home with Grandma."

SHE AND THE three tykes went to warm their hands at the dying bonfire.

"Grandma," piped the brown eyed one.

"What dear?"

"Did you see the 'Kwissmus 'Pirit?'" Ma was somewhat taken a-back.

"Why a—yes dear—yes I did."

"What did it look like?" persisted the moppet.

"Well," Ma thought hard and fast, the events of the evening passing in review before her.

"Well," she began again, "sometimes it looks like a very small girl with stars in her eyes."

"Like me?"

"Like you," affirmed Ma.

"And sometimes it looks like Grandpa, or Mike, or Bernadine—or even an old-old man," she finished.

It was true as she knew how to make it. Each was a symbol of Christmas, the spirit was little boys and girls, youth and age, friendship, and doing in his name, for those we love.

"I hope I see the Kwissmus 'Pirit sometime," said the dreamy child.

"I hope," answered Ma, staring into the embers, "that you never lose it." "All abo-a-r-d!" It was a bellow from Pa.

"OHMYSTARS!" Ma came out of her reverie, gathered her grand-babies and headed for the Robison sedan.

Pa flipped the lines over the horses' backs and headed back to the Robison ranch.

He had discarded the mask, and under the rakish red cap his face wore a grin of honest pleasure, for he had exchanged his pack of sweets for a cargo of happy youngsters hitching a ride—their first in Santa's sleigh.

## Little Lifts In Living

by EMELINE

OUR LITTLE DEBBIE keeps busy these days wearing out the Christmas catalogs. Old Santa will probably have one hard time filling her order. Every day she picks out a different doll.

Two times we were wakened in the night by the brassy sounds from a radio up-stairs—our son's radio. Going up to shut it off, or just listening to the blare, sleep is gone for sure. Tonight as we went wearily to bed, Billie's dad layed down the law. "If that radio isn't shut off, and wakes me just once more, it is going down the basement and it is going to stay there!" "Well," our son replied in an injured tone, "Since you put it that way, I'll shut it off about nine or nine-thirty."

Getting Debbie out of mischief is almost a full time job. I can't always dash off to see where she is, so I call to her saying, "Debbie, what are you doing?" Invariably she answers in the gravest little off-hand tone, "Anything!" Yes, it is ANYTHING, that's for sure.

Dear Joyce: Now you know. Santa Claus is make believe. Your discovery affected me more than it did you. Having known your imaginary friends "Shevie" and "Maldo," it was an easy transition slipping away from the Santa Claus myth. It was another milestone for me, and passing milestones are always just a little sad. Adults have fun playing the Santa Claus game. My deepest happiness though, comes from the sure knowledge that you know the Christ of Christmas and his Love and Kindness, is not make believe, but real and ever lasting. May His Love and Kindness reign forever in your heart. Love, Mama.

"Your daughter was so sweet and dignified at the 4-H meeting!" My motherly heart warmed at the compliment, but my mind had a different picture, a picture of our dignified daughter bracing her foot against a wall as two of her dignified friends tried to push her out of bed! So what wall can withstand three determined sweet seventeeners? So it caved in a big gapping hole. Ah, sweet dignity, where art thou? Well, of course, they'd hung it up for the night!

Poison is pretty potent stuff. We adults label it and treat it with the deference due it. Have you ever thought that poison comes in word form too? People that consciously or unconsciously plant seeds of suspicion about others are certainly dealing in poison. A few words can churn around in the mind and stir up enough disturbance to wreck homes and alter lives. Perhaps a few imaginary shelves in our minds would help. A place to lay away and forget the poisoned words we have had handed to us, or those we might be tempted to hand out ourselves.

Arlene was a candidate for queen last month for Homecoming, and for the Harvest Ball. Of the four candidates for each, she made it for one, and one of her friends made it for the other, so she was very happy. Of course you know what happened. With some crowns I made for my Sunday School class, plus a couple of old curtains, Joyce and Debbie were all set. We've had two little queens around here ever since.