

A GRANDDAUGHTERS' ADVENTURE

"Few people are blessed with a backyard that ends where a beautiful woods begins, and I've always wanted to share this very special walk with you girls. I walk this way almost every day. Barney and I have some secrets to share about our woods."

"Secrets, Grandma? What secrets?"

The group of four girls and their grandmother made a colorful splash of red and orange sweaters against the backdrop of a thick belt of black fir trees.

"Come along and see. Everyday it is different, and who knows what will happen on this walk today. The trees are turning such lovely colors, the sun is warm, and we may find a rock up along that ridge to sit and enjoy this day which may be the last one before the cold weather moves in.

"You see this spot between these two spruces? I call it 'The Gate.' Right here the branches seem to be in a tangle, but when you push up against them, they part easily so you can get through."

"I've been in your yard lots of times, Grandma, and I never knew there was a path back behind these thick trees," the youngest spoke.

"From the yard you can't see it at all. During a heavy rain a year ago, the whole side of that hill slipped down, and that fat fir tree just slid right across the path so even if you get through the first barrier, you would never know a path was here at all. It kept its roots in the ground, but lost its balance. Barney can still get under, but we must push back its prickly, needled arms to get by. It completely hides what's beyond."

"But, a gate, Grams, it sounds like we're entering someplace - a gate opens to somewhere."

"Exactly! You're right, Ruth. You're my mystic and already sense that on the other side of these two trees and just beyond the little spruce everything is different, but not just into someone else's yard, but into a whole new world.

"A new world? We're like Columbus."

"Yes, Susie, we are going on an adventure into a place where things happen that never happen in the world we live in. I want you four dears to experience this so that you will come back with new eyes. Then you will be able to see things in the real world that you never would see without first having had your eyes see what is yonder."

"That really sounds strange. New eyes and all that. I don't see how. And 'yonder', Grandma that's a weird word - it sounds old-fashioned to me."

“Maria, my pet, I know. You’re from Missouri.”

“Missouri? No, Marshall, Minnesota.”

“Well, that’s what we used to say about people who only believed what they could see - nothing else. And you’ve always been a “show me” kind of kid. You didn’t even like me to read you Grimm’s Fairy Tales.”

“No, because they were silly, too. Dwarves, talking animals, witches, and things that just aren’t real.”

“I’ll be especially curious about what you will think about this adventure. I’ve been waiting for you to be ten years old, Maria - you sound like you were already forty, maybe I’ve waited too long. Susie at eight is a little young, but Nancy’s twelve and Ruth is nearly fourteen, so I couldn’t wait much longer. What I want you to know, you must know before you’re all grown up, besides, not many adults would be able to have this adventure. Now here, you four - I’ll hold back this stubborn branch, Barney has gone ahead; you’ll see him on the other side. I’ll be right behind you.

“Oh, dear, it is so beau...utiful!” Susie sat down on big flat rock with her arm around the big dog’s neck. On the other side of the trees lay a broad flat path grown up with goldenrod, and bordered by red oaks glistening in the sun.

“Do you see how at one time many years ago this was a road that led into what was farm land?”

“Doesn’t look a bit like farm land to me. My Dad would laugh if you compared this to our farm.”

No. Of course, in the past seventy or more years what people worked so hard to make into fields has grown back into forest. But along that side, Nancy, if you look at the big oaks you will see a barbed wire fence that goes right into their centers and out the other side. Some poor farmer, trying to take some short cuts used those trees as fence posts when they were very young. Now they are very old, and the ancient fencing runs right through them.”

“Now, girls,” Grandmother continued, “stretch out those long swimmers legs. Follow the path that you see right in the middle of this old road. In fact, Barn and I have names for different places along the way, and that is the name of this early part of the track; I call it “The Old Road.” Down beyond the first bend you may wait for us.”

“Come along, Susie, you and I will bring up the rear.”

A this point the path was broad with a brambly woods on one side and a small bank covered with young trees and bright red sumac running along the other. Up beyond the banking through more trees and brush the large black pieces of flat traprock lying at the foot of the stony ascent of hills were being

showered with golden leaves every time a breeze played through. The scent in the mild air was sweet with the odors of dried fern and berry plants crushed beneath their feet as the group, enraptured by beauty, moved along.

“Now, let’s stop right here. I’ve told you this is a very special place - well, it can be another world. I’ve prayed that when I finally brought you four here it would reveal to you all of its secrets. I believe that it may be a crossing to the very threshold of heaven; a place where we may meet, if we are very blessed indeed, with a saint, or maybe even an angelic being. I’ve been communicating in my meditations in this wood with a very special friend who no longer lives in that worldly world outside. I believe that, God willing, she may meet us here today.”

“Gosh, Gram! I don’t want to meet any ghosts!”

“No, dear, not a ghost. Nothing like that.” Grandmother reached out for Susie’s hand. “But a woman, a real woman who just happens to be very alive in the Communion of Saints, and not visible anymore in the worldly world.”

“Why do you call it the “worldly” world? It sounds funny.”

“Maria, the Bible calls it the “worldly “world to distinguish it from the world that God created.”

“We live in the world that God created.”

“Well, yes, sort of, but not quite. But let’s leave that for a minute. If all goes well, by the end of the day when we are safely back in our own yard, I’ll see what you think, Maria. Are you ready to meet my friend if God should allow it?”

“What’s her name, Grandma?”

“Her name is Edith, Ruth.”

“And you mean she is dead, really?”

“I suppose that is what the people out there think, but in here you will see it is different. She’s quite alive, even though she died out there in 1942.”

“Wow, over fifty years ago. That’s a long time. And I’m not sure. Maybe some other day?”

“Oh, come on, sissy. If Grandma’s here, it is just one of her stories that is sort of like TV in this woods. I’m not afraid.”

“Good girl, Suz. Here, climb up on this ridge on your right hand - it’s steep right here, but if you take hold of that little birch you can pull yourself up to the crest. Steady! Just stand still there till we’re all up. Be careful, there’s a big hole at your feet!”

“Grams! what is down there?”

The two youngest girls were the first to gain the top of the rise and were looking down into a deep depression while their grandmother labored up the bank more slowly helped by Ruth and Nancy.

“It’s an old cellar hole. See the sides are all lined with stone the way the early farmers built with the materials at hand. Trap rock made a good cellar when, with lots of hard work, those huge stones were shaped to fit each other and then mortared together.

‘You mean a house used to be here. Now there’s all these bushes and trees growing in the old walls, and all those old bottles and stuff.’

“That’s right. Maria, step down those rough steps along the side. Be careful, hang on to the walls, there. And now help Susie down.

“Why do we want to go into that hole?”

“Well, I’m not sure, but it may be what I’m looking for. There must be some way to bridge over to where my friend is waiting for us. Yes, I think this may be it. See over there, in the middle, isn’t that another wooden stairway up? Wait, I’ll go first.”

“But it’s so dark. What has happened to the sun?”

“It’s just that we are in the cellar and the trap door above our heads is closed.”

“Trap door? There wasn’t any house over our heads a minute ago, how did it get here?”

“I don’t know, but, unless I am mistaken, this is where you will meet St. Edith.

“Why do you call her St.?” Ruth asked

“Well, she may soon be called saint, but at this point the Holy Father has given her the first honor before naming her a saint, and that is to call her blessed. Who will be first up the stairs? The house itself may not look quite like what you’re used to because St. Edith lived in Germany years ago and her surroundings are sure to be what she was always used to.”

“I don’t like this Grandma, it’s too much like Grimm’s.”

“Not really, Maria, it is a mixture of things to bring what might otherwise be too much like cold facts into your head, and not enough into your heart and your imagination. I have prayed for a way to teach you some things so that you would never forget. I wanted to immerse you in them, not just tell you about them. God is answering my prayers; he seems to have sent angels.”

“Well, I never saw prayers answered like this before, and I’m not sure like it. Down somebody’s old basement, somebody that lived in Germany over fifty years ago. It’s well. . . not exactly dumb. . .but bizarre.”

‘Bizarre, where did you ever pick up that word?’ Grandma was catching her breath.

“I read a lot.”

“I know, and someday I hope that you will read everything St. Edith ever wrote.”

“Well, are we going up, or what?”

“We’re going up. Ruth you go first, you’ve got the longest arms. There. Can you push that trapdoor up? Then climb out holding it so it won’t just flop over and bang?”

Just then, the long panel in the ceiling that was the trapdoor in the floor above, swung up with a life of its own, and dark eyes in a pleasant face framed with black hair pulled straight back, looked into the faces of the adventurers.

“Welcome to Threshold House!” The voice was pleasant with an accent the girls recognized as German, or were they understanding German? The possibility did occur to their grandmother.

The five clambered up into a room lined with bookshelves. Dark wood paneled walls, and heavily draped windows made the edges of the room blend into an undefined darkness. But a lamp with a patterned, fringed shade hanging low over the central desk filled the center of the room with a welcome light. Overstuffed brown velvet furniture with afghans, and clusters of different patterned cushions invited the girls, and each timidly found a comfortable place.

“Oh, dear St. Edith, thank you, thank you!” Grandmother was clasping the woman’s hands.

“Don’t thank me! Prayers are answered, but not by me. And these are the lovely girls. Aren’t they beautiful? And just as beautiful in spirit, I’m sure. Ruth the thoughtful, Nancy the gentle, Maria, ahh, Maria the proud, I see, very like a young Edith I once remember, and Susan. Susan, the childlike. What do you want to know, Susan?”

Susan was looking intently at her hostess who now seemed to be wearing a nun’s veil and habit.

“I’d like to know all about your house, why is it here, and all about you. Why did we first see you with hair?”

“Is that all?” The woman laughed.

“Well, you must know something quite wonderful or Grandma wouldn’t have ... I don’t really know how we got here. Why are we here?”

“Do you know about your namesakes? I love your names. Each one has come from the Bible.

“Ruth is the quiet heroine. Yes, you look very much like her. She followed God with her whole heart even though it led her away from her home country, far from all she knew and loved.

“And Nancy, your name is the French diminutive form of Anna, the St. Virgin's mother's name. Anna is our spiritual grandmother. Another Anna, too, lived out her daily life in the Temple patiently waiting and watching for seventy years for the birth of Jesus. Besides being gentle, you are also patient?

“Maria, you are so tall and straight, and just ten years. Is that right? You know, of course, that your name is a variation of the name of Mary who is our mother because she was the holy mother of Jesus our Lord and Our Brother. He gave her to each of us as our real mother, even more real than our earthly one. But because of her sorrow, her name also means ‘bitter.’”

And Susan, your name is a form of Suzanna, another beautiful Old Testament woman whose purity and honesty was vindicated by God because of her trust in Him.

“Vindicated? What does that mean?”

“Well, Sue, it just means that she was falsely accused of doing something bad, but God defended her and showed everyone that she was, in fact, very good. What a legacy of goodness you have in your names! And I can see in your faces the potential to be like your name sake, each of you has that breath-catching beauty and purity. May nothing ever change that!

‘You are growing up in the Church of Jesus Christ. That fact alone makes it possible to keep your glow of innocence right into old age. Being close to Jesus in the sacraments renews that glow even when our faces grow wrinkled and our chins grow double. Just as the Father and the Son created you and breathed into you the Holy Spirit at your baptism, so the Holy Trinity's ageless beauty lives within each of you.’”

“I remember each one of them in their parent's arms,” Grandmother looked at each proudly, “And now its time for you girls to know your hostess. St. Edith gave her life to God for her people.

“How? I mean how did you give your life?”

“Have you ever heard of the Holocaust, Nancy?”

“Holocaust? Like the museum they just opened in Washington?”

‘Yes, like that. Do you know what is in that museum, what it commemorates?’”

“We saw a video in school and it was gruesome. All about a war a long time ago, and how this man in Germany.

"It was Hitler."

"And he hated Jews. Is that it, Miss Edith, were you one of the Jews?"

"That's right, Ruth. But don't speak in the past tense, I am one of the Jews. You can see I'm still every bit alive."

'But, but, that means that you ... oh, it's too horrible! Nancy covered her eyes with her hand. Sometimes when I can't sleep and I pray for the poor souls, I think about what really happened in those cottages. Didn't they call them cottages where you. . .'

Susie was looking puzzled, "What about a cottage could be so bad?"

"They were really places where they ...they gassed whole lots of people."

"My dears, my dears. . . If ever you imagine such a scene again, remember to put angels into it; every second of it. And I must tell you, I have another name besides Edith. I joined a religious order and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross."

"That sounds Catholic, not Jewish."

"And that's why we also can see you in nun's clothing?"

"Oh indeed, it is Catholic and not Jewish. But I prefer to think the two are joined. The one is just the flowering on the stalk that is the other. There would be no "Catholic" if there had not been this sturdy plant named Israel that God had grown just for this purpose."

"I never heard of that at school."

"What do they teach in these Catholic schools?"

"That's what Grandma is always saying. We learn lots of stuff - and she thinks ...well, she doesn't like most of it. But what people did you die for then? For Catholics or what?"

"Maria!"

"Ruth! You want to know too, but won't ask!"

"I died to this world for God only. And I prayed that He would use my pitiful gift for His people and my people, Jews, yes, and Christians, too. And Susan, your tears . . .they are precious to God and are an added gift to Him right now. In fact, when Nancy lies awake and prays for the poor souls, she is doing a spiritual work of great importance."

"Poor souls, poor souls,' what in the world can that mean? From what I see there are lots of souls around that couldn't care less if you prayed for them or not."

“Enough!” Grandmother spoke firmly. “I brought you four to St. Edith because she is a school teacher of girls. What she taught is no longer to be found in any school, not even at Holy Redeemer School. It is certainly true that despite much that is good there is much lacking in your education. I’m so hopeful that after today you will take her seriously and make her a friend and teacher all your grown-up days. There probably will never be another day like this one, but her books and writings are available - they will be too difficult right now, but I’ll see that you each have a set and I think you will remember to open them when you are older. St. Edith?”

“Yes, to make sure of that, seeing we are in a sacred and mysterious mode, I’m able to take you to another part of this wood that looks back on a happening that totally changed the world. If you can understand what you see, it will explain everything else that I’ll teach you today. Your grandmother is right. Even in our faith, the teachers seem to be lost in a fog that has been breathed upon them by the enemy, and it will be up to girls like yourselves to recapture the truth, live it and be ready to pass it on. The future of your families, and importantly, the family of God, the Church, will depend on letting the Holy Spirit bring you into full readiness. Of course, these truths that I will show you are His, the strength to live them, and the vital timing of their reemergence are all in His hands. So, all you need to do is be willing - the rest of the work is up to God. Do you understand?”

“I understand.”

“Yes, Susie, I see that your heart is open, ready to absorb like a sponge. I will help you protect it so it will not be overcome. And Nancy, you need have no fears, this will be enjoyable and exciting. With your gentle disposition, fear and lack of confidence is your weakness. You remember learning to swim, how at first you were afraid, and then found that floating was easy. Today is meant to be like that - just float along. How about it, Maria, are you ready? God needs your keen, critical mind and, of course, with a mind like that your weakness is being impatient with people who don’t see things as quickly as you do; and you, Ruth, can offer him your intuition. Are you ever blue or feel moody and helpless? That’s one of the weaknesses of being intuitive.” She smiled at the four. “Just remember, God gives weaknesses along with strengths so that you will stretch out, work to overcome them, and grow. Well, if we’re all ready, then, let’s go!”

Maria added softly, “And grow.”

“I don’t see a way out.” Ruth peered around in the dusky room, and moved hesitantly back toward the open trapdoor.

“No, just walk straight ahead, my dear.”

“Straight ahead is the book case?”

“Yes, right into the book case, and when you are outside, look around for a stout walking stick. If each of you can find one, it helps when the way gets rough. Barney is still out there waiting for you.”

As the six walked toward the wall of books, the image of black Barney snuffling at the base of a tree emerged from the shadows, and he cheerfully greeted them, his warm breath smelling doggy in the autumn air.

“Good grief! That wasn't a house at all. Look behind you, there're the stones in the old cellar, with the bottles and tins and all.”

“I liked it; I'm sorry it isn't there. I wish it would always be there and I would come and read in that room every day and every day. There was something there that just said, ‘study and learn. . ideas are wonderful.’ And I never really knew that before.”

“Well, Nanny, perhaps you can make yourself a reading corner like that in your room - some big old pillows, a bookcase, and some good books. Of course, you'll need to find the right lamp that sheds light over just your corner, and let the rest of the room be darkened.”

“Here's a good stick!”

“Well, come on then. We have a good hike out of the Lower woods into the Upper woods. This lower part has a little stream running through it; we'll soon have to hop over it and then begin the climb. The name of this part of the trail is Raspberry Run, and there are still some fall raspberries on the brambles,. . there's one, ummm delicious, but watch out, they're really sticky with briars.”

“Oh, my gosh, what are those? Barney come back!” Ruth missed at her attempt to grab his collar and off the dog ran after a flock of big, long necked creatures that moved surprisingly fast.

“He won't chase them long - one thing about a heavy dog, he tires fast, long before those turkeys.”

“Turkeys? Like Thanksgiving?”

“Yes, wild turkeys. Isn't that lead one big though? He's almost as tall as Susan. And it is good to have the dog because those old Toms can be pretty nasty.”

‘Grandma, where's St. Edith? Isn't she coming with us?’

Yes, I noticed she's gone, but remember, this is all very different from anything we could know how to expect, so we'll just trust everything is all right and go along. Anything can happen today. There will be comings and goings, no doubt.

“Now this passage right here, do you notice that the banks on both sides make the path seem to be down in a depression? I call this Transition Trough because it is the way out of the Lower Woods into the Upper Woods. At the top of that ridge you will be able to see the whole panorama of the next stage of our walk. There! Susie and Barney are nearly at the crest. He likes to gain the top with the hope that his silhouette rising out of the back of the bank will startle a deer into a run.”

“Grandma, there’s something strange Out there! Some people or something.”

“Well, take hold of Barney’s collar, Susie, I don’t want him barking or scaring anybody. I’ll be with you in a minute. Ruth, help her. Barney! Stay! There, that’s a good dog. Let’s see! Ummm, that is strange. This isn’t the Upper Woods! No, this certainly is not the Upper Woods. Here, girls! Over here! Now, that log - can we all sit along it? Let’s be still a minute. . .shhhh.”

“What do you think it is, Gram? It’s all like Hawaii or something.”

“Yes, definitely tropical looking. I’ve never seen all those mossy hillocks before. You, see, I told you that you’d be given a look back at something that totally changed the whole world. And, I believe, this is it. Edith!”

“Traveling on foot is no longer my way, so I may not always be along on the walks, but I’m not far away, you can be sure of that. That is, until He recalls the favor of this visit. But what you are looking at is, of course, like a mirage. It is a more or less a spiritual moving picture imposed upon what you call Upper Woods. But for all intents it is quite real. What is to be replayed for you girls is what I call in my writing, the Original Order. When you see those words hereafter you will have the picture come to mind of what you are to experience right here, right now.”

“Original Order? I thought it looked like the Garden of Eden. I’ve never seen trees like those, and the fruit on them is so beautiful and really strange! Everything is so lush and the light so, so, light!”

“My, my, Maria, the Original Order is exactly that - the Garden of Eden!”

“Why not just say that? It’s simpler.”

“Well, in the course of the day, we will see three separate times and the rules governing them by God are different in each case, therefore I call them “orders.” I’m really rather happy that you asked me, because I see that sometimes I take things for granted. “Original order” is so well known to me that I forget it sounds strange to you children. And for all of you it is necessary to describe “an order.” Let’s see. .

“St. Edith, perhaps this might help,” Grandmother turned to the four. “You girls just saw the Lower Woods, it has a stream and is full of brambles, and thickets. So the order of the Lower Woods is

quite different from the Upper Woods, especially today! But even normally the Upper Woods has more open spaces, the trees are larger, mostly oaks, and the open ground is covered with little oaklings trying to get a start. The order of the two woods is quite different, conditions bring out plants that are not the same in each; and the feel of the two is unique to each place even though they lie next to each other and both are "the woods." What St. Edith is telling you is that this scene before you is of a different order than the one you live in now even though it is on planet earth, just like my house is, and just like this woods is. Still it operates by other laws for a reason that you will soon learn."

"When I think of order, I think of organizing my drawers."

"Maria's forever organizing her drawers!"

"Well, I always know where things are that way."

The other three girls were giggling.

"You can never find anything! I just keep things organized, that's all."

"Good! That will help, Maria. You can change the order in your drawers, and find things in a different place - you are the boss over that order. What you are looking at over there is the order that God intended this world to have in the beginning when He created it. That's why it is called the Original Order, and that's why it really is the Garden of Eden. You see this Original Order won't last very long; something will change it. Susie, if you understand this, then I'm sure your sisters will."

"Oh, I understand, Miss Edith. It looks different, but I know it is my world. And it must be lots stranger and very, very long ago, even before they made clothes, because that man sleeping over there doesn't have any clothes on at all. So the rules here certainly aren't the rules that are at home; that means that the order of things must be different here."

A lovely, mystical music beginning very softly and rising in a slow crescendo, carried on waves like those of muted violins seemed to rise out of the surrounding fronds and rills. A man, muscular and lean, lay stretched out on a soft hillock. There seemed to be a movement in the air around him that lifted the tree branches unlike a wind; gently and quietly they made way for some Great Presence that also saw the small shrubs bend and the grasses flatten out. The man's shape grew rather misty and seemed to waver like things do in the strong heat of the sun.

"Is it hot over there? Why does it seem so steamy, or something?"

"Shhh. Just watch," Grandmother whispered.

"My eyes are blurry."

“It’s not your eyes, you will see enough.”

Rising from the man’s body a misty, shapeless vapor was gathering and becoming denser. At first it was narrow like a lazy vent of steam from a teakettle rising from his chest, then gradually expanding it lay along the length of the man gradually taking on his shape with some important differences; it wasn’t quite as long and was developing a more rounded, budding form even as it grew more dense. The limbs, instead of muscled and angular, were smooth and curved, and two breasts, lovely, delicate and fruit-like were soon unmistakable.

“Look! Ohhhh! Its a woman. .a perfectly bea ..autiful woman.”

The grass still flattened out all around the man and woman, the shrubs still bowed, and the tree branches lifted and spread out their limbs to fan their leaves in an attitude that was unmistakable - Praise. There was Someone Else with the man and woman. The woman was holding out her hand to Someone, who took it, and while raising her, put it into the man’s hand.

He was scarcely awake. His eyes blinking, he staggered up holding the hand as though thoroughly stunned.

Just like a man acts when overcome by surprise, his eyes bugged and his mouth gaped slowly open. He, too, seemed to know The Someone Else was present, but his full attention was upon this new presence that had just emerged from himself. He simply couldn’t get enough of her, looking at her every aspect with awe, turning her arm, raising it, running his hand over it carefully, and finally grasping both of her hands in his. He brought his face close to hers and breathed in her breath while seeming to sink into her two eyes. Her attitude was amusement.

“She has sweet breath,” whispered Susan. “Like perfume.”

The woman’s eyes looked down, then followed up his legs, taking in all the male parts of him, while he tentatively touched her breasts.

“They really were made for each other, weren’t they, Grandmom? And aren’t they just too sweet.” Ruth glowed at their touching.

“I’d say they are both wonderfully holy,”. Maria ,too, was lost in the beauty before her. “So this is what it was like for Adam to first see Eve.”

“Ahh, yes, I’d say that you are getting a firsthand look at what is told so briefly in Genesis.”

“So God is there! Though we can’t see Him, I can feel something so very electric all around; it makes the hairs on my arm stand up. “Nancy held out her arm. “It’s a wonder we can still sit up straight, don’t you feel it? Like a terrible electrical storm is in the air.”

“God must have lowered his great power or these two he has made would not have been able to be so near him.”

“Perhaps it is God in the form of Jesus, you know, the Son who is there with them, but before he became Jesus. Then they could be near him without harm.”

“That’s very interesting, Ruth. The Bible does tell us that God called Himself “we” and “us” when he was creating man and woman, so there is a hint there that the Trinity of Persons were all involved somehow. The Holy Spirit is said to have given them breath. And perhaps the presence they grew to love as a friend was the Second Person who would come as the new Adam, our friend, when the right time came.” St. Edith went on, “Now what can you say about what you have just seen? Maria?”

“It’s strange, I suppose, but I never realized that sex, you know, that they are different sexes is so plain, and that it was made by God for each other - not so much for themselves, but for the other one. And I thought it would be embarrassing to see them so fascinated with each other when they are naked like that, but here, it seems so ... so beautiful. In fact, I don’t think I’d want to talk about it back home, but here it is just perfect.”

“I love it, their sexual bodies. I love it because it is so obvious that they are just exactly what God wanted. In our world, Grandmom, isn’t it so, sexual bodies are . . .well, why does sex seem ugly and disgusting? Why do they snicker about it all the time on TV programs as though it was so naughty? I actually hate to see men and women in bed in those shows and dreaded that that was what marriage was all about - red bedrooms, mirrors and all. Ugh!” Nancy went on, “I don’t even know why it is so easy to talk about it here, especially with two older women and my own sisters; it wouldn’t be easy at all at home.”

“I think you’ve probably just hit on what different orders means,” said Maria. “We’re in a different order where sex is wonderful - the way it was in the beginning. Whatever the order is at home, it isn’t this one.”

During this interval, the two in the glade had slowly walked into the shade of one of the bowing trees, and the man had reached up pulling down a great golden fruit which he broke open, then helped his companion with utmost care and tenderness to sip a flowing drink from its bowl-like half. For her part, she took hold of his forearm to steady the bowl to her mouth. His strength seemed to surge at her touch; he was obviously delighted to be depended upon.

“I can’t imagine them ever, ever saying anything mean, or doing anything bad to each other. I think if he even accidentally stepped on her toe, it would nearly break his heart; he would probably just fall down immovable until she forgave him.”

“And I can't imagine that she would ever be angry with him, no matter if he forgets the anniversary of this day when she arrived.” Maria giggled. “She would probably just cover him with kisses, no matter how forgetful he got. That would make him a total wreck of repentance.”

“Again, he'd fall down immovable until she forgave him.”

“And forgiving him would be quicker than a finger snap,” commented Ruth.

“I think it is because of the three of them. You know it is not just Adam and Eve, but we could tell it is God, too. It is like a different kind of Love is right there; that just has to be God even if we can't see him. Sometimes, if you watch carefully, you can tell that they are aware of Him - see how she seems to be looking so intently over his shoulder? Her head is tilted as though she's listening. It has to be that they can hear God in some way. I think I remember that the Bible tells us something like that; you know, friends walking in the cool of the evening, or something.”

“That's very perceptive, Nancy. Though we can't see God there, we are all of us knowing a third Someone Else is in the picture. What do you remember from religion class about God? One of you already mentioned .

“Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God in Three Persons.”

“Yes! One God in Three Persons. And you have just seen the creation of Man, one Man in two persons. Made in God's image, says the Bible.”

“Man, Miss Edith, Man? You mean human being, not Man,” Susie said softly. “Our teacher has us change it in CCD when we read out of the old Bibles. Sometimes we say 'mortal.'”

St. Edith looked at the four with her clear brown eyes, “I see. Even in English this undermining is going on. How hard it will soon be to teach the truth anywhere. So before we can tackle the basic thing we must deal with this red-herring. But it is not your fault.”

“For now I shall continue to call this human unit of male and female 'Man', later we can try to sort out why your teacher is changing it. But we must focus on two things. First, “made in God's image,” and second, “two in one.”

“Wait a minute!” Maria was watching the pair now reclining under the bowering tree, Adam with his head propped up by one elbow, still fascinated with his companion, intent on whatever she was saying. And she was looking at him full in the face with such trust it fairly dripped. The Someone Else, invisible perhaps, was still plainly present with them. His presence had more to do with an atmosphere of charged Love than the continuing adoration toward the Invisible that went on by all the natural things

around them. But it was impossible to be unaware of this Other One when your arms still prickled and the hair on your head wouldn't lie down.

"Made in God's image, but a three in one, just like the Trinity! It has to be! Can you imagine these two without the Third? I can't. I'm afraid if it ever boiled down to just the two of them - well, everything would be out of order."

"Maria! You continue to amaze me! Do you three see this, too?" St. Edith turned to Nancy, Ruth, and Susan. But she needn't have asked. It was obvious from their faces that this was just as plain to them as it was to Maria.

Even Susie said solemnly, "It has to be three in one, not two in one, when they are made in God's image. Two in one would just be wrong."

"Yes," said Ruth, "and thinking ahead in the story in the Bible, I'm afraid that just what Maria said is going to happen; when they lose this Third Person . . . they are going to sin aren't they? Then it will just be the two of them. It makes me so sad!"

Nancy interrupted. "Isn't that what you mean will change the order? It won't be the same order, will it? Not when God has to leave them on their own."

"Well! You girls are just so keen you don't need a teacher! Though we must credit the work of the Holy Spirit on this special day." And turning from them, St. Edith looked toward the far scene, "I wonder if there will be any more shown of this lesson."

"I really don't want to see their special love spoiled. Why does it have to be spoiled? They have everything that anyone would want, but they are going to do something so dumb!"

"Me, too, Ruth. Let's go. I don't want to see that horrid Satan-snake talk to Eve. I'd want to cry out, 'Don't listen to him! Don't listen to him! Plug your ears and run away back to Adam! Only do what Adam has told you!'"

"I want to see it."

"Oh, you would, Maria. But Ruth and Susie and I don't!"

"We have nothing to fear ... safely in the hands of God. And as I told you when we entered the wood, whatever you see today will make you able to interpret the world rightly - the world where you will live and bring up your own children. You will make a great difference to the world if you will absorb the truth, soak it up into your very bones. This sacred story is not like Grimm's Fairy Tales; it has something vital to do with every decision you make all your lives. You do need to see it all, isn't that right St. Edith?"

"I don't think we have a choice; it's too late to leave. Look there!"

A deep mist was creeping in around our group. No longer could they see the way leading on through Upper Woods, and the lush scene of a few moments ago was being blotted out by what was like the slow lowering of a gigantic white towel.

Maria laughed, "This must be how God changes the scenery for the next act." "But that way is open, down there!"

Looking around, they noticed that St. Edith again was not with them. "That means we should walk that way, I'm sure. Come on, Barney." The big dog had been resting at their feet, but was eager for more go.

"I have a name for this part of the path, too. You see how it slopes down into that rather barren low area. Now, it may be that the name I've called it has been appropriate all along - "Descent to the Vale of Tears."

"I'm really scared of that snake, Gram."

"Susie, you know that this is what St. Edith called a big mirage - some kind of a viewing imposed upon the woods. But on the other hand, it isn't wrong to be afraid of the snake. or at least wary and careful about him when he appears in much more attractive forms in the world where you live. If you understand his tactics here in this form, you will be better armored against him when he seems so very winsome."

"Mr. Arogent says there is no devil."

Gram stopped. "And who is this Mr. Arogent?"

"He's our Social Studies teacher, Ruth answered. "He says the world's problems can be traced to one thing - human beings, and that we should have fewer of them."

"Better to call him Mr. Arrogant, it sounds to me, exactly spouting what this enemy wants us to believe," her Grandmother's face was stern. "I'm speaking to your mother about getting you out of that school! I'll help her teach you myself!"

"If we could have field trips like this one, we'd love it, Grams," said Nancy. They were inching down the descent when Barney in the lead had stopped, his head up and his tail held high. He bristled and began to growl.

“See that fallen tree, Maria? Head for that.” And the three followed her quietly, Grandmother at the last holding Barney by his choke-chain. It was with difficulty because he was behaving more belligerently at every step.

Reaching the great tree which lay across the path in the Vale of Tears, they found seats on its great branches which were still engulfed in its burgundy dress of fall leaves. The top heavy tree had fallen recently, pulling its roots out of the shallow soil.

“Oh, my goodness, oh, my goodness’ what is that ugly mess! Let’s get out of here” Susan was almost screaming.

There not far from her perch was a great pile of something that was dark and slimy. Approaching, it had looked like a small bush, but now its wet textured pattern was evident. A steam-ish vapor was rising from it, and a rank odor grew stronger.

“Yuck! I want to gag. Gram, we have to get out of here!” Nancy was pushing through surrounding branches toward to the others.” Ohh, Miss Edith, you’re here! What is that awful stuff?”

“I’d say that if we waited just a few more minutes it would be gone, and that we’re just too late to see the event that caused it. But, that is as He wills.”

“It reminds me of when Dorothy threw water on the witch in the Wizard of Oz and she sizzled down into nothing,” Ruth observed. Look, it’s like that, just melting away.”

“Well, what was it anyway.” Nancy was calmer.

“I think it was a giant snake skin that the creature who was in it has just shed. He no longer needed it, and the damage is done! Look over there, isn’t that our Adam and our Eve?”

“It doesn’t look like them.”

“Not in those ugly things they have on. They were so sweet and beautiful before, now they look like some characters from a punk rock group, all done up in weird costumes that it looks like it’s supposed to cover their sex. What’s happened to them, anyway? Those coverings make them look awful. Is she ashamed of her breasts? She wasn’t before. And he’s acting so weird, turning his back while he arranges that little clutch of leaves.”

“It’s their faces! What has happened to their faces? When they look at each other - don’t they love each other anymore?” Ruth was nearly crying. “Before they just shone and made me want to shine, too. Now . . .”

“They’re all dark. The light has gone out.”

“Yes, Miss Edith. It’s so very sad.” Susie was sniffing

Even Maria wiped a tear, “It’s like they’ve died, only its worse than that. They could have died beautiful, but now they are so miserable looking.”

“Softly blowing her nose, Nancy’s voice wavered, “Yes, that’s the saddest thing - everything is limp and wilted. The Someone Else isn’t here anymore either, is He?”

“Do you all know what happened to cause all this? How much of the Genesis story to you recall?” St. Edith looked from face to face.

“I know. Somewhere around here there is a tree. It has a special name and they were not supposed to pick its fruit or eat it. If they had just obeyed God in that one thing they could have continued to be young and beautiful and in love forever with God.”

“That’s right, Ruth. I suppose you’ve had more Bible than the others. I just hope that in these so-called religion classes they didn’t tell you that this terrible thing was not a fall but a rise. I’ve even heard that taught by a priest, God forgive him. But you can see for yourself that it was a great fall, there was nothing edifying about it?”

“Edifying?”

“It means ‘building up’” stated Maria. And the tree was called The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I never understood why eating something that made you know about good and evil was wrong. Why not know good and evil so that you would chose the good?

“I’ve been looking at that drooping tree over there. It has fruit and just since we’ve been here the whole thing has changed. At first the fruit was a beautiful deep magenta, sort of like Mom’s petunias, but in the past few minutes . . .look, they’ve turned to greyish-purple, and almost as slimy as that icky skin.”

“I’d call the color iridescent - like something spoiled. They’re falling off the tree in globs.”

St. Edith was standing very much like a school teachers just ahead of the girls as they still perched along the big tree’s branches. “Let’s think about the question of good and evil a moment. It was a good question. When you think back when you first saw Adam and Eve together. . .”

“In the Original Order.”

Their teacher smiled, “Yes, Susie, in the Original Order. What about good and evil then?”

“There wasn’t any evil. Isn’t that right? Whoever got into that snake skin to trick them wasn’t anywhere around, so there wasn’t any evil so they didn’t have to know about good and evil.”

“There you have it! An exceptional class! As long as they listened to the words they heard from The Someone Else, and obeyed, which certainly wasn't hard because they were so happy with Him, why did they have to know anything about good and evil?”

“You mean everything was more than good. . . everything was perfect. I think it was a lot better when they let God tell them what was best for them. Now, maybe they can decide what is good and bad for themselves - not even asking The Someone Else, but they are just like the rest of us and make a lot of bad decisions even when they think they are choosing wisely. They have been so stupid - just look at them!”

“Maria, are you different from them; are we different from them?”

“I feel different from them in this woods, but when I'm back at home I don't see things clearly either. This woods is a different order than the order we live in out in the world, isn't it?”

“Yes, and you will have to concentrate very hard when you are back there if you are to remember anything you are learning. There will be infinite distractions to keep you from remembering. What you have seen here, with the change in those two over there, is the beginning of the Fallen Order that we all live in. But do just one thing for me. Pray, Pray, Pray, especially ask the new Eve, The St. Virgin Mary, to help you. Will you try to remember that?”

They solemnly nodded.

“Yes, Miss Edith, Nancy replied. “And we will try to help each other.”

“We say that now, but in the order out there - that's the Fallen Order, isn't it? We forget to help each other all the time,” Ruth shook her head. “I wish we could remember clearly and do the right thing.”

That's why St. Edith has told you to Pray, Pray, Pray,” said Gram. “And I'm there to remind you, too. You won't mind if I remind you?”

Susie hugged her, “Oh, Grandma, please, keep reminding us.”

Her Grandmother patted her head, “You may not always appreciate it, but I'll try to do my part. See, over there, they don't seem to like each other's company any more.”

The two viewed each other coldly, and the woman with an angry gesture turned and walked away from the man who looked after her with a sour grin.

“I suppose they would wander off away from each other as far as they could get if God didn't do something to glue them together. The Bible tells us that He *commanded* them together by a law; she to

bear his children and he to work hard to provide for his family. But it will never be the way it was in the beginning until God establishes a Third Order.”

“A Third Order? What’s its name? I know the Original Order is the way God really made things to be, and the Fallen Order the way the world is now, right?”

“Can they ever get back to when God’s love was like the sun, lighting and warming everything, making things so lovely and bright? And how they loved each other.” Ruth’s voice trailed off.

And this awful Fallen Order is because the snake brought in such ties and Eve believed him rather than God,” Susie’s face was sad, “Why was she so easily tricked?”

“I’d say it was because she ignored what Adam told her - you know, she found out what God wanted by listening to Adam. He told her not to eat of that tree or they would die, and when the snake began talking to her he built all kinds of suspicions on that.”

“Maria, remember when our gym teacher told us girls to make up our own minds and never depend on a man for anything? I sort of believe that, too. Mom has to run the house and not ask Dad about everything.” Nancy looked at her grandmother questioningly. “Gram, you don’t check out all you do with Grampa do you?”

“Hold up! Hold up! You are getting too many questions going at once. We were supposed to keep walking. The Vale of Tears ends here. We are to continue up that next hill. There is a Third Order around here someplace and these questions will wait till then. Where’s the dog?”

“He’s over there! What do you call this hill, Gram?”

“It’s the Ascent to the High Way, Susie, two words, high . . . way. With the sun out again, there will be a spectacular clump of birch up there whose trunks against the blue sky can be breathtaking. I’ve given them a name too, Angel Guardians, and look there! There they are shaking their golden heads, all alive in the breeze!”

“Oh, Gram! aren’t they wonderful?” Nancy had stopped in the path, watching up ahead of her the wind toss the yellow leaved tops a-swaying on their vibrant, graceful, white trunks. “Guardian Angels! I love it!”

“There needs to be a Guardian Angel right there! Be careful! There’s quite a surprise only a few feet ahead.”

In front a few yards, Barney had made a sharp left turn and was lopping away from them at a right angle. Then Maria stopped and gasped - the four behind her could hear her breath intake clearly.

“Whoa! A canyon!”

The other girls went running up. “Yikes! Look down there. The path goes right to the very edge before it turns!”

“What if it were night? Then where would we be?”

“At the bottom and bruised, I’d say,” said Nancy. “You can’t even see it until you are at the brink.”

“And that’s its name,” said Gram, “the Brink. Dangerous, but beautiful, too, don’t you think?”

Suddenly, St. Edith stood beside them. “I want you to look down there carefully, at the very bottom. What do you see?”

Ruth was the first to answer. “I think there are people there, sort of coming out of the shadows, strange looking people.”

“I think there is a black place - it’s hard to see, but something white is in the middle - oh, I see, it’s a cave. See? Over there!”

“Keep on looking,” said St. Edith. “It is all coming into focus now.”

“I see better now,” said Ruth, “it is a big cave, with a beautiful lady sitting there holding a baby. A bright light is growing behind them, they’re clearer and clearer.

“Oh yes, and see the man and the cow. It’s a manger scene.”

“You call it a crèche,” said Maria. “Those other people are like shepherds or the town’s people or something. They’re there to worship Jesus.”

“Why is there a Christmas thing here, Gram? It isn’t winter.”

“Well, Susie, that isn’t just a Christmas scene, you know, it the beginning of the Third Order. Without Mary, Joseph and Jesus there is no Third Order.”

“Oh, it is a man and a woman and God again, isn’t it? Just like the original order, only God is a human baby this time, not just a mysterious electricity.”

“My gosh! Gram, what a woods this is!”

“Well, it isn’t always like this, though it is always quite wonderful even on an ordinary day. I’ve always loved the Brink, but I never thought to see anything like this down there amongst the rocks.”

“So we are seeing the beginning of the Third Order, and we’ve walked out of the Fallen Order? What do you call it this order?”

St. Edith replied, "This is the way the Redeemed Order began, but to really get into that order there is much more than just seeing and believing the birth of Jesus, though that is the first step. From here on the Fallen Order and the Redeemed Order flow together. You have to decide which one you will live in until the Redeemed Order swallows up the Fallen Order at the end of time."

"I just love it here, St. Edith, I would stay here forever," Susie had sat down on the edge of the path with her feet dangling down over the steep bank. "The mother is so sweet holding her little one; she looks so young, and I didn't know that Joseph was young, too. But they love each other just like Adam and Eve."

"Yes, they do love each other, but not just like Adam and Eve. They have given themselves to God rather than to each other. And the real beginning of the Redeemed Order is the new Adam, who is Jesus, and the new Eve, who is Mary. Not man and wife, but Son and mother."

"So, God is starting over? Is that what it means - redeemed?"

"Redeemed means that God is buying back his creation by paying the price of the sin of Adam and Eve and all the rest of us. You know, it is like when someone takes his ticket with whatever he owes, and redeems the TV he has left at the pawn shop. In this case the pawnshop owner is Satan – he holds the two in bondage until the debt is paid."

"Is it always man and woman who are the signs of the orders? So far that's all we have seen, but the Bible has stories about lots of other people, not just husbands and wives."

"That's right, Nancy, but this man and woman relationship is key to understanding the orders." St. Edith turned toward them. "Do you remember what the big sign of the Redeemed Order is, when everything is restored like it was in the beginning?"

The girls looked puzzled. Grandmother waited for them for a moment, "I would guess that it is the wedding feast - rich foods, choice wines and all. Jesus used it as the base of a lot of his parables, he even called himself the Bridegroom, and the last pages of the Bible describe this great wedding. It is one of the images for the Eucharist, too, this giving of Himself to us, and at that moment we are all the Bride, men and women, who give ourselves to Him."

"Wow! That is very, very heavy, Grandma." Ruth took a last look down into the ravine. "And they are all gone. Did anyone see them go?" A cool breeze had risen, and some clouds were threatening the sun which had sunk lower in the sky.

"Come on, we want to make the most of what is left of the afternoon. This kind of a day will probably never happen again, and there is more, I'm sure of it. I see St. Edith has gone on again."

Grandmother started along the path that skirted the Brink continuing along its edge which was curving slightly as it followed the contours of the great chasm that lay just inches to the right of their feet. Then there was an abrupt turn in the path away from the chasm, and as they turned they found themselves looking up at a little rise which when ascended proved to be just the entrance to a higher elevation upon the top of which rising at awkward angles were three slim trunks of dead trees whose tops had broken off in a wind storm long ago. Grandmother knelt down and bowed her head. The girls said nothing, but puzzled, followed her lead. Barney had even reappeared, and waited for them patiently, his tail slowly wagging with that kind of wise smile on his face. Then Gram got up using his broad back for leverage.

“It’s not so easy getting up and down, Barn, you’re a help.” And turning to the girls, “I know it is nothing but dead tree trunks, but this I’ve called ‘Golgotha Hill’ from the first day we discovered it. At first, there was a large branch still sticking across like the crossbar of the Cross, it has since fallen off, and it just struck me to remember Jesus and His suffering and death each time I make that turn on the path.”

“It is awesome, Grandma. It does look like three old crosses that have decayed over years and years, and what are all those little white flowers?”

“They have the sweetest fragrance for Jesus but are usually only here in the spring - proof again that this isn’t an ordinary day, and Susie, you will see what lies beyond is perfect for these crosses, because if we follow Jesus in the Redeemed Order that He has made possible. Well, you’ll see soon. We skirt Golgotha on the right side, just along over there,” she pointed. Barney again took the lead and was soon out of sight around the hill.

Susan followed him and was the first to find the path dropping sharply away at her feet.

“Be careful there! I have almost slipped myself on the hard packed dirt, but that tree half way down is handy to use as a stop, as long as you don’t reach it going too fast. And there is a slower way around that doesn’t slope quite so quickly, but I usually come right down this way.” And their grandmother in her sneakers came slipping and sliding behind Susie, reaching out to encircle the tree with her arms as she came upon it abruptly.

“Ouch! But it is just a small ouch.” She rubbed her hands. “Now look ahead, and you thought you had seen all the beauties of this wonderful world?”

Stretching out at the base of the hill the path became absolutely all there was! On the right and on the left the sides fell away down into steep wooded gullies. The trees that were able to grow next to the path hung on with exposed roots, and several had toppled lying on their heads nearly perpendicularly down the slope.

"It is like walking across the top of the world," Nancy ventured cautiously out along the narrow ridge. "What's the name of this, Gram, it must have a name?"

"What do you think of 'The Narrow Way That Leads to Life?'"

"The Narrow Way That Leads to Life? That's a good name for it, all right. Because one wrong step and you are either down there or . . . down there."

"To stay in the Redeemed order It must be like this - awfully easy to step off and find yourself falling into the Fallen Order if you don't pay attention."

Maria was stooping to get under two trees that unlike the others had fallen over into the hill and were propped at a steep angle right across the path. They were too high to get over, one had to stoop to crawl under. It was no problem for Barney, he was under and out of sight.

"It makes sense, too, Gram, that the Narrow way comes after the Cross, doesn't it?"

"Ruth, you do see into these things, don't you? It makes me really happy that the four of you have been so understanding of all this. I don't think every child would be capable, but of course, I would hope it for all my grandchildren. Maybe I will get a chance yet to take the rest... but there may never be a day like this again. Speaking of that, have you glimpsed St. Edith anywhere?"

The girls followed by their grandmother continued across the land bridge that was the Way that Led to Life, and finally reaching the far side, they encountered a sandy hill that in the clambering up filled their shoes uncomfortably. "When we get to the top we'll sit down and empty them," said Gram.

They had barely found spots to sit, when St. Edith was sitting with them. "Now, are you ready for the last lesson today?"

"No, Miss Edith, not if it means that you will go away and we won't see you ever again!" Susie looking very sad poured the sand slowly out of her shoe.

"My dear, my dear, those whom you love in Christ are near you even in that world out there. Prayer is talking to them, just like you phone up your friends. We do believe in the communion of the saints, don't we? And that is just not only for the saints that the Church has named saints with a capital S. One of the wonders of belonging to the Kingdom of God is this lovely kind of communication that is love. I can't talk to you again just like this, probably, but, you'll see, there are ways of doing it. Ruth, you look like you know something about this already, and the rest of you will, I promise you. It may take until you are as old as your grandmother, but you can see that she knows something about prayer and having communion with the saints."

"Now, you haven't even looked out from where you are sitting, just look out there."

“Wow! We are high up!”

“Most of the walk we have been climbing, Susie.”

“What is that river down there, Grandma? Maria stood up. “Let me guess, it must be the River of Life that flows from the Throne, or something!”

“Not a bad guess, but that is merely the St. Croix River that flows right through our little town back where your Grandma’s house is.”

“You mean we are already at the end of this adventure?”

“Not quite, but almost.” St. Edith answered. “There is one more visionary experience, and if you look out over the river, in those rising mists I think you’ll see it emerging. And you will not be surprised if it is the final picture of the Redeemed Order.”

“We have seen Adam and Eve before and after, we have seen the New Eve and the New Adam, it must have something to do with that - with Adam and Eve. Are the three orders just about man and woman all the time?”

“Well, what others are there, but man and woman? And wouldn’t you expect them to be indicators of the whole condition of the world?” St. Edith looked at them closely. “You saw perfection on their faces and in their bodies and in the way they loved each other in that first scene back in the Lower Woods; then, you saw. . .

“How miserable they were,” Nancy interrupted, “and the whole world with them, drooping and sad, in the Vale of Tears... just like most people’s lives are now.”

“Yes, what a bitter place,” said St. Edith. “But then, you saw a new start, but the Fallen World would not let it happen and the new Adam died, the new Eve, too.”

“But we know that was not the end,” Gram added. “That is why we are here looking out into that great glass room.”

And to their surprise, the rising mists from the St. Croix had become a huge hall with glass walls, a glass floor, through which the river could be seen flowing on, and best of all a great Cathedral ceiling of glass over which the clouds continued to stream out toward a lowering sun catching all the colors of the bright day and burnishing the sky and the room with reds, golds, pinks and purples.

A great, “ohh” came from all lips. Even Barney stood transfixed, his perpetually moving tail, raised high, had stopped.

Into the glass court slowly moved celestial creatures dressed in silver and white, men and women, mingled with angelic beings, and all in the interweaving of the glorious colors which moved like those in a giant kaleidoscope slowly and majestically through the spectrum.

At the back of the hall, against the setting sun, a gleaming shape gathered form, a great cross of glass, through which, as it opened like a door, a great white horse and rider emerged. Though far away, the face of the rider was clearly apparent to those who stood upon the hill. His was the most beautiful man's face they had ever seen, glorious in every angle with eyes that could not be humanly described, so filled with command and joy they were. So filled with authority and love they were.

"Adam, a thousand times Adam pure and strong," whispered St. Edith.

Then those assembled to greet Him arose from their knees where they had fallen upon his arrival, and to the amazement of those on the hill, became at once one feminine figure all dressed in brocaded gold.

"The gold of Ophir,' grand mother was the whisperer this time. "The Queen."

Yet, the Queen though one, was still the many. They could see both easily and at the same time; it was rather like viewing a constellation, a one made of the myriad. And the rejoicing in the hall was like nothing known on earth for the whole assembly was being lifted higher and higher by sheer joy, while the King came forward, his glowing arms wide open, to embrace the Queen. Then from high over their heads there was a sudden burst of phosphorescent light and the observers were surrounded with silent bits of transparencies which floated down, each bit swimming with the image of King and Queen till they fell upon the sandy ground and disappeared. Down to the west, the sun was sinking, and the last golden clouds were spanning out from south to north while the river now turned into a molten stream wending its way between darkening banks to the south.

The woods to their backs were growing dark when the four girls and their grandmother turned to retrace their steps. Barney seemed to sense a need for his protection and sharp-eyed guidance, and went ahead just a length or so, no longer racing around on his own sniffing adventures. They walked silently from youngest out front, to eldest behind, hurrying before the woods became completely black. Their thoughts were filled with the visions of what they had experienced, including the sight of St. Edith who had at one point become one of the celebrants in the crystal hail - floating out away from them without a backward glance her face full of celestial beauty. No she wouldn't be going back to that cellar hole.

Hopping over the little stream in Lower Woods, the path became harder to see, especially when under Arbor Aisle the branches of the trees met overhead. They were relieved to reach the Old Road because the openness allowed more vestiges of the last light to see by, and the stars above could be seen

coming out of the deep blue of the night sky. Then they were pushing by the prickly branches of the little fir tree, and through the spruce, right into Grandmother's backyard. A light shone out on the porch from the kitchen, and through the window they could see Grandfather bending over the stove.

They came stumbling into the room in a bunch.

“Where have you all been? My word! That was quite a walk, I'd say. What do you think about some scrambled eggs and toast? Thought it might do for a supper. Come on, let's eat and you can tell me all about it!

THE END