

**EARLY
CANDLELIGHT
STORIES**

By
STELLA C. SHETTER

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Bobby and Alice and Pink drew their stools closer and waited eagerly for Grandma to begin

EARLY CANDLELIGHT STORIES





Grandma's Room ready for the housewarming

GRANDMA ARRIVES

Grandma had come to spend the winter, and Bobby and Alice and Pink were watching her fix up her room. It was the guest room, and the children had always thought it a beautiful room, with its soft blue rug, wicker chairs, and pretty cretonne draperies. But Grandma had had all the furniture taken out, and the rug, carefully rolled up and wrapped in thick paper to keep the moths out, had been carried to the attic.

Then Grandma—but Mother called Bobby and Alice and Pink to come and get their wraps and go out to play a while.

Grandma, seeing them edge reluctantly toward the head of the stairs, said cheerfully, as she bustled about unpacking the great box that held her “things,” “Never mind, dears. Run out and play now, and tonight we’ll have a regular housewarming. Come to my room at seven o’clock and we will have a little party.”

Just as the clock in the hall downstairs struck the first stroke of seven, Alice rapped loudly on Grandma’s door.

Grandma opened the door immediately and the children stepped in—then stared in astonishment. They had never seen a room like this before. In place of the blue rug was a gayly colored rag carpet. The bed, to which had been added a feather tick, was twice as high as any they had ever seen. It was covered with a handmade coverlet of blue and white. Patchwork cushions were on the chairs, and crocheted covers on bureau and chiffonier. The windows were filled with blooming geraniums, and in one window hung a canary in a gilt cage. On a round braided rug before the fire lay a gray cat,

asleep. By a low rocker stood a little table that held a work basket running over with bright-colored patches, bits of lace, balls of scarlet yarn, knitting needles, pieces of velvet, silk, and wool. On the chiffonier stood a basket filled with big, red apples, polished till they shone, and beside the apples was a plate covered with a napkin.

“Well, well,” said Grandma, “here you are, every one of you! Just on time, too. Come right in and see my house and meet my family. This is Betsy.” She touched the cat gently and Betsy lifted her head and started to purr. “I raised her from a kitten and brought her here in a basket all the way on the train. One conductor wouldn’t let me keep her in the coach with me, so I went out and rode in the baggage car with Betsy.”

“Did you bring the bird, too?” asked Pink, smoothing Betsy’s fur.

“No, I just got the bird a little while ago. He hasn’t even a name yet. I thought maybe I’d call him Dicky. That’s a nice name for a bird, don’t you think so? My baby sent me the bird and the flowers, too. Aren’t they lovely?”

“Have you a baby, Grandma?” asked Alice, looking around the room wonderingly.

“Yes, I have a baby, but he isn’t little any more. Still he is my baby all the same, the youngest of my ten children. Wasn’t it thoughtful of him to send me the bird and the flowers?”

Alice and Bobby and Pink looked at one another. They knew their daddy had sent the flowers, for they had heard Grandma thank him for them. The idea of their big, broad-shouldered daddy being anyone’s baby seemed funny to them, and they giggled.

“Say, Grandma, he’s some baby, all right,” Bobby remarked.

“You can’t rock him to sleep the way I do my baby,” observed Pink.

“Not now, but I used to,” said Grandma. Then she brought three stools from the corner—low, round stools covered with carpet. “You children sit on these stools and I’ll sit in this chair and we’ll spend the evening getting acquainted. You must tell me all about yourselves.”

The children told Grandma about their school and their playmates, their dog and their playhouse, about how they went camping in summer time and what they did on Christmas and Easter, and about the flying machine that flew over the town on the Fourth of July, and about the Sunday school picnic. When they finally stopped, breathless, Grandma looked so impressed that Bobby said pityingly, “You didn’t have so many things to do when you were little, did you, Grandma?”

“Well, now, I don’t know about that,” Grandma answered slowly. “We didn’t have the same things to do, but we had good times, too.”

“Tell us about them,” Alice begged.

“When I was a little girl,” Grandma began, “I lived in the country on a large farm. All around our house were fields and woods. You might think I would have been lonely, but I never was. You see, I had always lived there. Then I had six older brothers and sisters, and one brother, Charlie, was just two years older than I was. And there were so many things to do! The horses to ride to water and the cows to bring from the pasture field. On cool mornings Charlie

and I would stand on the spots where the cows had lain all night, to get our feet warm before starting back home. I had a pet lamb that followed me wherever I went, and we had a dog—old Duke. He helped us get the cows and kept the chickens out of the yard and barked when a stranger came in sight. And when the dinner bell by the kitchen door rang, how he did howl!

“And the cats! You never saw such cats, they were so fat and round and sleek. No wonder, for they had milk twice a day out of a hollow rock that stood by the barnyard gate.

“And birds were everywhere. Near the well, high in the air, fastened to a long pole, was a bird house. Truman and Joe had made it, and it was just like a little house, with tiny windows and doors and a wee bit of a porch where the birds would sit to sun themselves.

“Then there were the chickens to look after, often a hundred baby chicks to feed and put in their coops at night. And in the spring what fun we had hunting turkey hens’ nests! In February we tapped the sugar trees and boiled down the sap into maple sugar and sirup. We had Easter egg hunts and school Christmas treats, and in the fall we gathered in the nuts for winter—chestnuts, hickory nuts, walnuts.”

Grandma paused a moment and glanced at the clock on the mantel.

“Dear me,” she exclaimed in surprise, “see what time it is! We must have our refreshments right away. Bobby, will you pass the apples? And, Alice, under the napkin are some ginger cookies that I brought with me. You may pass them, please, and Pink and I will be the company.

“These apples,” went on Grandma, helping herself to one, “are out of my orchard. I sent two barrels of them to your daddy, and every night before we go to bed we will each eat one. ‘An apple a day,’ you know, ‘keeps the doctor away.’”

When they had finished and were saying good night, Bobby said, “Lots of things did happen when you were a little girl, Grandma. I wish you’d tell us more.”

“Not tonight,” said Grandma, “It’s bedtime now, but come back some other night. If you still want me to tell you more about when I was a little girl, tap on my door three times, like this, but if you only come to call, tap once, like this.”

Next time we’ll see how often they tapped on Grandma’s door. Can you guess?

A WHISTLING GIRL

The next evening as Grandma sat before the fire knitting on a red mitten, she was startled by three sharp knocks on her door.

“Why, good evening,” she said, when she had opened the door to admit Bobby and Alice and Pink. “Here you are wanting a story, and I haven’t thought of a thing to tell you. Now you tell me what happened at school today, and by that time I shall have thought of something to tell you.”

So Alice told Grandma about chapel that morning. She told her about the recitations and songs by the children and of a lady who had whistled “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “America.”

“Well, well, wasn’t that nice!” Grandma said. “I should have liked to hear that. I always admired to hear any one whistle. I believe I’ll tell you tonight about the time I whistled in meeting.”

The children drew their stools a little closer, and Grandma began:

“When I was a little girl, I wanted more than anything else to be able to whistle. I kept this ambition to myself because it wasn’t considered ladylike for girls to whistle. My mother often said,

“A whistling girl and a crowing hen
Always come to some bad end.”

“So I never told anyone, not even my brother Charlie, that I wanted to whistle. But when I hunted turkey hens’ nests, or went after the cows, or picked berries, I had my lips pursed all the time trying to

whistle as my brothers did. But, though I tried and tried, I never succeeded in making a sound.

“One Sunday in meeting I got awfully tired. To a little girl the sermons were very long and tiresome in those days. For a while I sat still and quiet, watching Preacher Hill’s beard jerk up and down as he talked and looking at the queer shadows his long coat tails made on the wall. But it was warm and close in the church, and after a while I grew drowsy.

“‘Oh, dear!’ I thought to myself, ‘I mustn’t go to sleep. I must keep awake somehow.’ Then I thought about whistling. I would practice whistling to myself—under my breath.

“The seats were high-backed and we sat far to the front. I could not see any one except the preacher and John Strang, who kept company with sister Belle. John sat in a chair at the end of the choir facing the congregation, and several times I noticed him looking curiously at me as if he wondered what I was doing. I would draw in my breath very slowly and then let it out again. Of course I never dreamed of making a sound, and no one could have been more surprised than I was when there came from my lips a loud clear whistle as sweet as a bird note.

“The preacher stopped talking. Mother looked embarrassed. Father’s face turned red with mortification. Sister Belle put her handkerchief up to her face, and Charlie sat up as straight and stiff as if he had swallowed a ramrod.

“As for me, I wished I could sink through the floor and disappear. I thought everybody was looking right at me. I was sorry and I was frightened, too. What would Father and Mother say to me?

“When preaching was over, all of us except Mother went right out to the sled and wrapped up in comforts and robes for the cold ride home. Mother stayed behind to visit and invite people home to dinner just as she always did. I was glad when we started. It was a dreary ride. Father drove, and he sat so stern and silent that no one dared to speak.



“I drew in my breath very slowly and then let it out again”

“I hurried right upstairs to change my dress as I always did. Then, because I was so miserable, I threw myself across my bed and cried. I had disgraced Father and Mother. Nothing that they could do would be bad enough for me. I was aroused by sister Belle’s voice. She was complaining to sister Aggie, who had stayed at home to get dinner.

“I don’t see why Charlie can’t behave himself once in a while. Now our whole day is spoiled, and I had asked John and Isabel for dinner, too. You know how sad it always makes Father if he has to punish one of the boys, and the worst of it is that Charlie denies

doing it. I could shake Charlie good myself. You can't believe, Aggie, how everyone looked at us. I was that ashamed!

“Charlie being accused in place of me! This was something that I had never dreamed of. I jumped up and rushed past the two girls downstairs, through the empty sitting room into the kitchen, where Mother stood looking out a window, still in her gray silk dress. I caught her hand.

“‘Charlie didn't do it, Mother,’ I said. ‘I did it.’

“‘Oh, Sarah, you cannot whistle, dear,’ said Mother reproachfully. She drew me to her and smoothed my hair and tried to comfort me, but I broke away from her and ran into the kitchen chamber where Father sat talking to Charlie. Father looked stern and Charlie sulky and cross, and no wonder, poor boy, for he was guilty of enough things without being accused of something he did not do.

“‘Father!’ I cried wildly. ‘Charlie did not whistle in meeting. I did it.’

“Mother and the girls had followed me, and they all, even Charlie, stared at me in amazement. It was plain they did not believe me. They thought I was trying to shield Charlie.

“‘I did whistle,’ I said, crying. ‘I can whistle. I tell you I can whistle.’

“‘Then whistle,’ said Father sternly.

“And how I did try to whistle! I puffed my cheeks and twisted and turned my mouth and blew and blew, but I couldn't make a sound, not a single sound.

“Father looked so hurt and sorry that I longed to throw myself into his arms and make him believe me. You see, it looked to Father as if Charlie and I were both telling stories. Father said we were only making things worse and ordered us all out of the room.

“In the sitting room we found Truman and Joe, who had been tending the horses, and John and Isabel Strang, who had come around past their house to let their family out of the sled before coming on to our house for dinner.

“The minute I saw John I drew Mother’s head down and whispered to her, ‘Ask John. He knows, he saw me do it;’ and Mother in a hesitating way said, ‘John, do you know who whistled in meeting this morning?’

“John turned as red as our old turkey gobbler and looked at me.

“‘Why, I feel pretty sure,’ he said, ‘but I’d hate to say.’

“‘Oh, never mind that!’ I burst out. ‘I’ve told, and they won’t believe I can whistle. They think it was Charlie.’

“Then, of course, John told all he knew. He had been watching me all the time, as I had thought, and was looking right at me when I whistled. Father was called in, and you may be sure he was glad to find that both his children had been telling the truth.

“‘It’s all right, Sarah,’ he said, ‘if you didn’t mean to.’ But Mother made me promise not to try to whistle any more.

“Well, I declare! I finished just on time. Mother’s calling you to bed. Here, don’t forget your ‘apple a day.’ Now run along like good children, and some other time I’ll tell you another story.”

CHASED BY WOLVES

“Seems to me you kiddies go to bed earlier than you used to,” their father remarked one evening when Bobby and Alice and Pink interrupted his reading to kiss him good night.

“We don’t go to bed,” Pink explained. “We go to Grandma’s room. She tells us a story every night.”

“Why, of course, I remember now. Isn’t that fine, though? A story every night! Did she ever tell you a wolf story? Grandma knows a pippin of a wolf story. She used to tell it to me when I was a little boy. Ask her to tell you about the time she was chased by wolves.”

And a few minutes later Grandma began the story.

“It was in the spring. Father was making garden, and he broke the hoe handle. All the boys were away from home helping a neighbor, so Father wanted Aggie or Belle to take the hoe to have a handle put in at the blacksmith shop at Nebo Cross Roads a mile away. But the girls were getting ready to go to a quilting, and I begged to be allowed to take the hoe to the blacksmith shop.

“Mother was afraid at first, but Father said there was nothing to hurt me, and Mother finally gave in. So right after dinner, carrying the hoe and a poke of cookies to eat if I got hungry, I started out.

“I was to leave the hoe at the shop and go on down the road to Strangs’ to wait till the hoe was mended. I can remember yet how important I felt going off alone like that. I picked wild flowers and munched cookies and sang all the songs I knew.

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