

**Jimsy**  
**The Christmas Kid**

**By**  
**Leona Dalrymple**

**Jimsy**  
**The Christmas Kid**

**By**

**Leona Dalrymple**

**Author of "The Lovable Meddler," "Diane  
of the Green Van," "Uncle Noah's  
Christmas Party," etc.**

**Decorations by**

**Charles Guischar**

**New York**

**Robert M. McBride & Company**

**1915**

**Copyright, 1915, by  
Robert M. McBride & Co.  
Published October, 1915**

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

I [The Invasion](#)

II [The Biscuit Link](#)

III [The Chain Grows](#)

IV [The Chain Clanks](#)

V [The Proving](#)

VI [The Triumph](#)

VII [The Downfall](#)

VIII [The Chain is Locked](#)

**Jimsy**  
**The Christmas Kid**



# I

## THE INVASION

His name was Jimsy and he took it for granted that you liked him. That made things difficult from the very start—that and the fact that he arrived in the village two days before Christmas strung to such a holiday pitch of expectation that, if you were a respectable, bewhiskered first citizen like Jimsy's host, you felt the cut-and-dried dignity of a season which unflinching thrift had taught you to pare of all its glittering non-essentials, threatened by his bubbling air of faith in something wonderful to happen.

He had arrived at twilight, just as the first citizen was about to read his evening paper, and he had made a great deal of noise, yelling back at old Austin White, whose sleigh had conveyed him from the station to the house, a "S'long, Uncle!" pregnant with the friendliness of a conversational ride. He had scraped away his snow-heels with a somewhat sustained noise, born perhaps of shyness, and now, as he stood in the center of the prim, old-fashioned room, a thin, eager youngster not too warmly clad for the bite of the New England wind, Abner Sawyer felt with a sense of shock that this city urchin whom Judith had promised to "Christmas," detracted, in some ridiculous manner, from the respectability of the room. He was an inharmonious note in its staid preciseness. Moreover, it was evident from the frank friendliness of his dark, gray eyes that he was perniciously of that type who frolic through a frosty, first-citizen aura of informality and give and accept friendship as a matter of course.



"What—what is your name?" asked the first citizen, peering over his spectacles. He wished that Judith's Christmas protégé was not so thin and a trifle larger.



"Jimsy," answered the boy. "An' Specks, he's me chum; he goes to Mister Middleton's, next door."

Specks and Jimsy! The first citizen helplessly cleared his throat and summoned Judith.

She came in a spotless apron no whiter than her hair. She was spare—Aunt Judith Sawyer—spare and patient as the wife of a provident man may well be who sees no need for servants, and her primness was of a gentler, vaguer sort than that of Abner Sawyer. Jimsy glanced up into her sweet, tired face and his eager eyes claimed her with a bewildering smile of welcome. Then because Jimsy's experience with clean aprons and trimly parted hair was negligible almost to the point of non-existence, it became instantly imperative that he should polish the toe of one worn shoe with the sole of the other and study the result and Aunt Judith with furtive interest.

"Judith," said the first citizen, not wholly at his ease, "Mr.—er—ah—Mr. Jimsy has arrived."

Jimsy snickered.

"Naw, naw, nix!" he said. "Jimsy's the handle. I'm a stray, I am. Hain't got no folks. Mom Dorgan says ye have to have folks to have a bunch-name. I'm the Christmas kid."

"To be sure you are," said Aunt Judith gently, "to be sure. And where are your things?"

Jimsy's thin little face reddened.

"Hain't only got one rig," he mumbled, "an' that warn't fitten to wear. Mom Dorgan borried these duds fur me. She—she's awful good that way when she's sober."

There was wistful eagerness in his face to do his best by the one friend who helped him.



Quite unconscious of the scandalized flutter in this quiet room whose oval portraits of ancestral Sawyers might well have tumbled down at the notion of any one being anything but sober, the boy moved closer to the fire as if the ride had chilled him.



"Gee!" he said with a long, quivering breath, "ain't that a fire, now, ain't it!" and because his keen young eyes could not somehow be evaded, Abner Sawyer accepted the responsibility of the reply and said hastily that it was. Then feeling his dignity imperilled in the presence of Judith, though why

he could not for the life of him explain, he moved forward a chair for the Christmas guest and returned to his paper.

Aunt Judith went back to a region of tinkling china and humming kettle. The room became quiet enough for any one to read, but the first citizen somehow could not read. He was ridiculously conscious of that tense little figure by the fire with the disturbingly friendly eyes. How on earth could a boy be noisy who was absolutely quiet? Yet his very presence seemed to clamor—the clamor of an inherent sociability repressed with difficulty.

Jimsy glanced at the checkerboard window beyond which snowy hills lay beneath a sunset afterglow.

"Gee whiz!" he burst forth. "*Ain't* the snow white!"

The first citizen jumped—much as one may jump when he has waited in nerve-racking suspense for a pistol shot. The boy had done exactly what he had expected him to do—broken that sacred ante-prandial hour with the *Lindon Evening News* which Judith had not broken this twenty years.



"Snow," he said discouragingly, for all he had determined to ignore the remark, "snow is always white."

Jimsy shook his head.

"Naw," he said. "N'York snow's gray an' dirty. Specks said the snow we seen on the hills from the train winder was Christmas card snow, and with that the minister he up an' tells Specks an' me 'bout reg'lar old-fashioned country Christmases, fire like this an' Christmas trees an'—an' sleigh-bells an' gifts an' wreaths an' skatin' an' holly—Gee—"

"That," said Abner Sawyer with cold finality, "will be quite enough."

"Sure," agreed Jimsy. "A Christmas like that 'snuff fur any kid."

Irritably conscious that his reproof had been misinterpreted, the first citizen riveted his gaze upon the *Lindon Evening News*. But he could not read. Jimsy's irreverent air of friendliness was not the only disturbing factor in his Christmasing. Jimsy, plainly, was cherishing expectations.

Conscious-driven, Abner Sawyer laid aside his paper.



"James," he began primly, "I must take this occasion to inform you that Mrs. Sawyer and I spend Christmas quietly—very quietly. We have never had a Christmas tree, and personally I consider that holly is most suitable and decorative where Nature planted it. Christmas," finished Mr. Sawyer, slightly disconcerted by Jimsy's attentive stare, "Christmas is merely a day and a dinner. Let the frivolous make of it an orgy of sentimentality if they will."

Jimsy's face fell.

"Gee!" he said, "your Christmas ain't just an extra Sunday, is it?"

Shocked, Abner Sawyer glinted over the tops of his glasses.

"No," he said with an effort, "it—it is somewhat different."

"How's it different?"

"I"—the first citizen froze—"I hardly know."



"What d'ye have that ye don't have Sundays?"

"I—I believe it's turkey," conceded Mr. Sawyer desperately, and feeling his dignity hopelessly compromised by a dialogue of such pronounced informality, returned to his paper.

"Gee!" said Jimsy, with a sigh of relief, "that's mos' enuff itself to make a Christmas. Hain't never tasted turkey." He was silent a minute, in which the clock ticked loudly. It was purple now beyond the old-fashioned panes and the lamp seemed brighter. Jimsy's shrill young voice broke the quiet, as it would, of course, be sure to do.

"Say," he said kindly, "don't you worry none about that there Christmas tree an' no holly. We'll have a thump-walloper of a day, anyhow!"

It is conceivable that Abner Sawyer's experience with thump-wallopers had been limited. There was something in the boy's words, however, that brought his gaze over the top of his spectacles again and over his paper. It was disconcerting to note that Jimsy still bristled with faith and friendliness and cheerful expectation.

"My remark," he said coldly, "about the absence of a tree and holly was a statement—not an apology."

"Don't get ye," admitted Jimsy. "Come again." And there was danger of a mutual dead-lock of comprehension. Aunt Judith saved the day. Arriving in the doorway with a flutter, she said that supper was ready and that James had better wash his face and hands. And James, who was Jimsy, meeting Aunt Judith's gentle eyes, turned scarlet, and stumbling to his feet, he stepped, en route, upon the stately toe of Lindon's pride.



"Gee!" he burst forth contritely. "I'm awful sorry, honest Injun I am. Spoiled yer shine, didn't I? An' it was a beaut, too!"

Could even a first citizen rebuke such eager apology? Better to stay within the certain shelter of a chilling silence.

Abner Sawyer rose, but even as he did so his world of law and order seemed to rock in chaos about his feet. He was going out to supper—and he had not read a single line in the *Lindon Evening News*!



## II

### THE BISCUIT LINK

It was at supper that the terrible realization came to Abner Sawyer that Jimsy liked everything and *every one* rather too well. He liked the ham and he liked the biscuits, he accepted alarming quantities of marmalade with utter confidence in his digestion; his round eyes swept every nook of the prim old room and marveled at old-fashioned china and silver that might have come over in the *Mayflower*, and then again might not, and he continued irreverently unaware that the first citizen was president of the Lindon Bank and therefore not a person to be liked indiscriminately by urchins. Thanks to something in Aunt Judith's eyes, furtively concessional to boyhood, Jimsy had mislaid what little constraint and shyness he had had at first. His at-homeness might be gauged at a glance by the way he gazed at the biscuits.

"Dear me," said Aunt Judith, glancing from Jimsy to the biscuits to see which most threatened the other, "I—I scarcely think—I hardly know. Abner?"

Time, Abner, now to impress this urchin once for all with a show of power in terms he can understand!

Mr. Sawyer settled the trivial question of biscuits with dignity.

"James," he said. "You may have just *one* more biscuit."

And Aunt Judith nodded:

"Just as you say, my dear!" as she had been nodding effasively for thirty years.

Jimsy's eyes were very grateful and it came over the first citizen with sickening conviction that Jimsy, misinterpreting again, had regarded the biscuit as an overture instead of a show of power. Ridiculous indeed to have thrown about your neck the unwelcome chain of a boy's regard and then unintentionally to cement that chain—by a biscuit!

Abner Sawyer departed hastily for his lamp, his fire and his paper.



Jimsey followed Aunt Judith to the kitchen and here, in the shining quiet of an old-fashioned kitchen whose spotless rows of pans and its rocker by the window reflected nothing of first citizenship, the memory-making mystery of child and woman in a homely setting drew taut an age-old chord of sympathy. Out of the hum of the kettle and the fire-shadows of the grate it came, out of the winter wind that rattled the checkerpaned windows—that eternal something that is only given to women to understand. Jimsey did not know why Aunt Judith smiled or why the smile made his throat hurt a little. He only knew by her eyes that she liked him and that was enough.

"Aunt Judith," he blurted, "lemme—aw, lemme wipe your dishes."

But Aunt Judith, with the wisdom of women, knew that the best-behaved china is perversely given to leaping without warning out of the hands of any boy, to his utter consternation, and she patted him on the back.

"Bless your heart, Jimsey," she said, "there are so few I can do them myself in no time."



Jimsey!—not James! Jimsey felt that he must do something for Aunt Judith Sawyer or his throat would burst. So finding one leg at liberty, he furtively kicked the leg of the stove and hurt his toe, even as his eyes fell upon a depleted stock of kindlings in the wood-box.



"Well, then," he burst out in a glow of good-will, "lemme—lemme take Uncle Ab's job to-night an' get the wood."

Aunt Judith's horrified glance made him redden uncomfortably.

"Jimsy," she whispered hurriedly, "you—you must never—never call Mr. Sawyer—Uncle Ab. Nobody does."

"But," mumbled the boy, "ye—ye said folks call ye Aunt Judith, an'—an'—"

"It—it's different," faltered Aunt Judith. "I—I'm nobody in particular. Mr. Sawyer's a bank president, Jimsy, and I—I always get the wood myself." She opened the door and pointed to a woodpile glimmering out of the darkness with a rim of snow. "The kindlings are split and piled in the shed. And hurry, child. The wind's sharp."



Jimsy set forth with a noisy whistle. When presently he returned with an armful of kindlings, his eyes were shining. And holding the door ajar, he coaxed into the warmth of Aunt Judith's kitchen a shivering dog, little and lame and thin.

"Aunt Judith," he shrilled, dropping his kindlings into the box with a clatter, "look! He was out there under the woodpile, shiverin,' an' he won't go away. He's a stray, too, like I was afore Mom Dorgan gave me a bed with her kids." He patted the dog's head. "Gee, watch him duck, poor mutt! That's cause he's been walloped so much. Aunt Judith," he blurted, his gray eyes ablaze with pleading, "can't ye maybe jus' let him sleep behind the stove? He's so sort of shivery I—I feel awful sorry fur him."

"No, no, no!" said Aunt Judith in distress. "I can't. I can't, indeed. Mr. Sawyer—"

"JAMES!"



Aunt Judith and Jimsy jumped. The first citizen stood in the doorway, the *Lindon Evening News* in his hand, still unread. Nor could he have explained why, save that a boy's absence may, queerly enough, be as clamorous as his presence. With the biscuit still upon his mind, Abner Sawyer felt impelled to discipline.

"Put the dog out!"

Jimsy stood his ground. He was used to that. And Abner Sawyer wondered with a feeling of intense annoyance what there was about this ragged, noisy child that injected drama into incident. There was a tenseness in the silence of the trio and the cringing dog.

"Aw, have a heart!" pleaded Jimsy finally, and there was faith and optimism in his steady glance.

Abner Sawyer cleared his throat and looked away. He wondered why he felt defensive.

"I am fully equipped with the organ you mention," he said drily. "Put the dog out."

Jimsy reluctantly obeyed, and as the door closed upon the shivering little waif who scratched and whined at the door of his lost Paradise, Jimsy's face, sharpened by disappointment, seemed suddenly thinner and less boyish. Bent upon making the best of things, he reached for his cap.

"Well," he said casually, "guess I'll go out and look the burg over."

It was queer how Jimsy's conversation seemed to bristle with verbal shocks. Aunt Judith gasped. Mr. Sawyer fixed a stern eye upon the clock.

"It is eight o'clock," he said in what seemed to Jimsy's puzzled comprehension a midnight tone of voice; "you will go to bed."

Dumfounded, Jimsy followed Aunt Judith up to bed. Here in a great, old-fashioned bedroom he forgot everything in an eager contemplation of a whirling, feathery background to his window.

"Aunt Judith," he called excitedly, "it's snowin'. Gee, that's Christmasy, ain't it! I don't mind the snow at all s'long's I got a bed cinched." His eager face lengthened. "Wisht Stump had a bed," he finished wistfully.



"Stump?"

"I jus' called him Stump, Aunt Judith, 'cause he didn't have no tail." Aunt Judith's eyes were sympathetic.

But an embarrassing difficulty arose about Jimsy's bed attire which drove Stump for a time from his mind. It was solved by a night-shirt of first-citizen primness, which trailed upon the carpet and made him snigger self-consciously behind his hand until he heard Aunt Judith's step again beyond the door, when he vaulted into bed, shivering luxuriously in the chill softness of unaccustomed linen.... And then Aunt Judith blew out the lamp and tucked him in with hands so tremulous and gentle that his throat troubled him again, and he lay very still. Meeting her eyes, he suddenly buried his face in the pillow with a gulp and a sob, and clung to her hand. Aunt Judith, shaking, caught him wildly in her arms, cried very hard, and kissed him good-night. Jimsy, Stump and Aunt Judith Sawyer knew variously the meaning of starvation.



## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

