

Susie And The Red Devil

MARY ANN MOFFETT

An odd shade of dingy red is reminiscent of summer to me, recalling the Red Devil and Susie.

Susie was my Moth, and her red sail flamed against the sky when it was new, but months of hot sun and salt water dimmed it to the faded, ugly color I remember still. Susie's hull gleamed white and clean in the muddy river, but she wore the old sail for luck and continued to win a cup in the regatta as long as it could be patched together. She was like a fourteen-year-old girl, learning to be a lady. Her lines were trim and tidy and she was usually well-behaved, but there was no escaping the wide streak of hoydenish, temperamental misbehavior, evidenced by that blatant sail like the first smear of lipstick.

Built for one person, Susie cheerfully accommodated four or five on her deck if they ducked the boom. She submitted with perfect equanimity to being capsized in the middle of the river in order to be scientifically righted, and occasionally she would start the game of her own accord. She hated the oars shipped alongside her mast, and she would search out any faint stirring or breath of breeze and sail gaily before it, spurning the help of the oars when everything else on the river lay becalmed.

I paid for these virtues with several heart-breaking and back-breaking hours. With her mast unstepped and removed, Susie had been beached one night to be scrubbed and scoured. In the night she grew restless alone on the beach and started off by herself down the river to the Chesapeake Bay. We discovered the loss in the morning and followed her

down the river in a canoe, anxiously inquiring for her in every cove. Someone had taken her in at Sherwood Forest and we fell upon her there, tied her to the canoe, and paddled six miles back up the river, against the wind and coping with the additional burden of her hull dragging dead weight behind us, with difficulty and mounting wrath. Susie's barnacles were scraped off with vicious energy and never again did she fall so far from grace.

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The Red Devil's original color never was defined clearly. When he came into our hands for thirty-five dollars, he was streaked and faded, a little too orange to match Susie's sail, but much too pink to be pumpkin-colored. Viewed impersonally, he was worse than abominable and little better than a booby-trap—a model A Ford with no fenders, no bumpers, one running board, a rumble seat, and no top at all—but he ran. He ran constantly and everywhere, although he never was hitting on all his cylinders. A four-passengers-at-the-most model, he was customarily loaded with fifteen precariously perched, whooping and howling adolescents, whose activity contributed materially to his disintegration. The Red Devil was a rattletrap, but he ran an incredible number of miles on fifteen cents' worth of gas and survived ordeals to make a Cadillac blanch.

His day started early. About four-thirty his own grumblings were lost in the clatter of dozens of milk cans until he coughed his way around to the last stop on the milk route. Free of the cans, awake and warmed up, he clanked home contentedly, and by nine o'clock was ready

for the grueling routine of the day. Loaded with the whole gang, he roared down the asphalt road, screamed around the last curve, and hurled himself and all his crew at top speed onto the "double Z," a terrifying, one-lane, viciously rutted old cow path which served as a road through the cabbage patch to the club. Every day as we hurtled along we unconcernedly risked our necks, throwing our weight against every curve, scarcely avoiding decapitation by low-hanging branches, and crashing to a stop at exactly the same crazy forty-five degree angle.

After days of carrying milk-cans, fishing tackle — and fish, bathing suits, tennis racquets and sneakers, sweat shirts, wet towels, paint, glue, and all the paraphernalia necessary to a summer day, the Red Devil's rumble reeked, at first with a small, inoffensive, rather companionable smell, but gradually with a smell which grew to the proportions of a stench. As

we procrastinated about washing him, we were often spared the job. Parked as usual while we read and played cards in the clubhouse, the Red Devil would get caught in the rain. Without a top, he was at the mercy of the sudden squalls which came without warning and with blinding force and gallons of water. The Red Devil filled up to the top and ran over like a bathtub more than once. After the storm it was a simple matter to turn him over and dump the water out, set him back on his wheels, mop up a little, and go on our way. We delighted in his comparative cleanliness and always made excursions to civilization then to exhibit him.

The Red Devil hated Sundays, because we were constant companions except — and here our parents drew the line — at church. He always looked lonesome when we left him on Sunday mornings.

Grace

MARGARET BYRAM

*I stood upstretched upon a mountain peak
And flung my being toward the rising sun,
And with a loud voice cried, "That which I seek
Is found! My soul is lost in Universal One."
—"What a lovely pose." A small voice spoke.*

*The night flowed darkly in a velvet stream,
Wrapping my soul in the soft velour of sleep,
When through my tear-drenched heart there stabbed a dream
Of light revealing the mysterious Deep.
—But someone slammed a door and I awoke.*

*And so, my dear, in endless search I strove
For that which others said would make me free,
But when I lost my all in that great love,
Demanding neither joy, nor light, nor anything but thee,
My soul had peace, because I wore thy yoke.*