

Sleigh Bells Ring

JOANNA JENNINGS

"Jimmy! Jimmy! Come quick! It's snowing again." Immediately two freckled noses were pressed into mere buttons at the window, as two pairs of eyes gazed rapturously at the whitening world.

"It's coming down in sheets. Do you suppose Paw will let us go now?" the owner of one speckled button asked of the other.

"Sure he will! Why, it'll be ten feet deep in about an hour. Here he comes. Let's ask him." The buttons disappeared as two yelling children dashed madly in the direction of the door, flinging themselves at their father.

Paw, anticipating their question, shouted, "Whoa now, yes, yes, if it keeps up we'll go right after supper."

Amid the clamor of joyous voices, Paw could be heard saying, "Call the rest of the young 'uns, and tell 'em to get the bob-sled out of the hay loft. I'll get the box-bed."

"I'll get Ramie and Joe," shouted Francis, the youngest, as she raced through the door.

Soon preparations were under way with Francis and Ramie gaily piling straw in the box-bed to keep out the cold, while Jimmy and Joe each polished a runner of the bob sled.

"Supper's ready," Maw yelled out the back door. "Come on while it's hot."

All promptly dropped their respective tasks to mingle in the wild jam of flying soap suds at the wash basin on the back porch. Then, emerging shining and clean from the ordeal, they all trooped into the kitchen in order of age. Jim, the oldest, was first, and Francis, the smallest with the largest freckles, was last.

Supper was an unusually quiet meal, excitement smothering any small talk. When the last biscuit had disappeared, Paw said, "Everyone into his warmest."

It wasn't long until the old bob sled was skimming over the snow while the sleigh bells around the bays' necks jangled merrily. It seemed to Francis that they were jingling strictly for her benefit, as she gazed timidly at the beautiful moonlit scene. Mother Nature had succeeded in weaving her magic spell over all of them, for no one spoke. It was too lovely. As Francie looked up at old Mister Moon he seemed to wink slyly and say, "Follow me to my land of make-believe." She saw the old bob sled transformed into a beautiful white and gold sleigh drawn by ten white horses. She was a charming princess clad in gorgeous white satin with—"Ooooh, here we are at the Folses!"

Bundled from head to toe in mufflers and blankets, the five Folses burst out the door shouting gay greetings to the group in the sleigh.

It was a gay picture they presented singing their way over the glistening snow. The road was discernible only by the tops of the fences which could be seen on either side as they went skimming past. No one seemed to mind the cold, though noses turned a bright red, and ears an ice blue.

Slowly a faint light could be seen sending its flickering rays through the darkness. "There it is! There's the Herd's house. We're almost there."

Before the last shout had died away, the smallest of the Herds were out the front door to greet the sleigh. "We knew you'd be here, 'cause it's the first big snow-fall," Mrs. Herd laughed. Everyone piled

out thankfully, beginning to realize just how cold he was.

Amid a stamping of boots and blowing of noses, Mrs. Herd shouted hospitably, "Now, sit right down to this cider and cookies I have fixed. Just make yourselves at home."

Everyone responded with enthusiasm, gossiping about the newest quilt patterns, and the number of hogs killed at slaughter. At the height of the merry-making old

Father Time took it upon himself to remind the farmers that it was way past time for all good little children to be in bed. Each Paw and Maw, taking heed, reluctantly gathered their flock together and prepared to leave.

As the last good-byes were said, and everyone settled back in his seat for the long ride home, the jangling bells seemed to say, "See you again next year."

The Blades That Severed Two Lives

WILLIAM HARDMAN

The snow was still falling, as it had done during the past three days. The wind was gaining momentum, as the flakes glistened in the light of the shell-bursts. This was a new obstacle for the men who had fought through the rain and mire of France and Belgium. Although the defensive position was just inside the land-boundary of Germany, the climate had not changed with the borderline. Winter had set in.

It was the same war, fight ahead and wait patiently for supplies. We had been waiting for four days. It seemed like months, just waiting for the order to attack. Patrols were active every night, penetrating the enemy lines and estimating their potential strength.

The men had been well-seasoned in the functions of combat. The long and difficult maneuvering through France and Belgium had kept them closely affiliated with death. They had been acclimated to the sight of dead bodies, mutilated remains, and the more familiar sight of the seriously wounded. I, myself, had become accustomed to the pungent odor of dead bodies,

and the everlasting call of the wounded, "Medic, over here, I'm hit."

Another day had passed. The silence of the brisk night air was interrupted by the rumbling noise of a troop convoy, fresh troops. The men sensed the situation. It would only be a matter of a few hours before we departed to acquire more German held land.

The Lieutenant was busily preparing his maps and making a check of the men and their food rations. He was no longer called "Sir," as he had been in the previous months of training. For his own personal safety, he was known as "Jim" since the first day of combat. His uniform had lost its ornate character. The deep respect that the men had acquired for him and his characteristics of leadership stayed, although outwardly he could not be distinguished from them. Sharing his rations, helping the wounded, and his militaristic virtue of deploying his troops most advantageously to cope with the situation, composed the basis of the admiration.

The night was quiet once more, as the last truck deposited its' occupants in