

Meeting

MITZI GRAHAM

I was waiting for a train when I saw them—the young woman and the child. They were standing just a little apart from the others as if they were a little shy—perhaps, a little frightened. Two petite red bows clung precariously to the ends of two ash blond pigtailed that protruded at a rakish angle from under the child's bonnet. Her pixy face and heavily lashed blue eyes were shining with excitement.

"Daddy's coming! Will I know him, Momee?" she asked the slender woman beside her.

"Yes, dear," she replied looking down into the anxious, upturned face.

"Will he look like his picture, Momee?" the child queried.

"Yes," she answered.

A train rumbled over-head. The child became momentarily absorbed in the rush of the station. She stared fascinated at the heavily laden, rumbling baggage trucks, her mouth pursed, her eyes as large as saucers.

Suddenly her brow began to pucker, and two large tears formed in the corners of her eyes and threatened to fall momentarily. A look of horror crossed her face.

"Oh, Momee!" she shrieked. "Will Daddy know me? Maybe he'll think one of the other little girls is me. He's never seen me, Momee! How will he know?" she blabbed as tears streamed down her face.

"He'll know. Daddies always know which is their little girl," the mother assured her.

"Are you sure, Momee?" she asked still doubtful. "He's been away a long time."

"Positive," replied the woman dabbing at two elusive tears on the earnest face before her.

The child blinked her eyes thoughtfully and suddenly smiled. She seemed to smile all over. The pigtailed perked up.

"Do I look pretty for Daddy, Momee?" she asked as she ran two pink hands down the front of the stiffly starched white pinafore that showed below her unbuttoned coat.

The young mother scrutinized her daughter as though she had never seen her and then replied, "Yes, dear, lovely."

"How long before Daddy will be here?"

"Soon."

"How long is soon, Momee?"

For a moment the woman's eyes ceased to rove the crowded room.

"Soon can be a very short or a very long time," she finally answered. Her eye lashes were wet, and she turned her head so that the child would not notice.

"Is this a long soon or a short one?" the child persisted.

"A short one, dear," the woman answered smiling.

A porter descended the stairs from the train level above and propped open the doors of the glass enclosure.

"Daddy coming, Momee?"

The young woman grasped the child's hand and nodded.

"Daddy . . . Daddy . . . Daddy . . ." chanted the child wiggling all over with anticipation as she scrutinized the first passenger to descend the stairway.

"Not Daddy," she murmured, her face clearly showed her disappointment.

"Not yet," the woman comforted as she strained her eyes to see the upper level of

the stairway.

The child watched each figure as it appeared—first, the feet; then the torso; and finally the head. Suddenly her features lighted.

“Daddy! It’s Daddy!” she shrieked.

“Yes, darling, it’s Daddy!” the woman whispered as she released the moist hand and watched the tiny figure scoot across

the tile floor and be scooped up in a massive khaki-clad arm. She stood there for an instant motionless. Then, as if she could stand still no longer, she sped forward and was enfolded in the safety of a strong, brown arm.

As I turned to leave, the high, sweet babble of “Daddy . . . Daddy . . .” drifted after me.

The Old Soldier

GEORGE FULLER

The old soldier asks very little from the world.

He fought and died

And asks only to be free

To choose his private drive,

To determine its length and breadth,

And to enforce his own speed.

And then he laughs at his own absurdity.

He fought and died and lived again

To be crucified on an antique cross of gold.

Merchants thump him playfully on the chest,

Cutting themselves where the knife came out.

He fought and died for a cloudy cause,

Preserving a merchant’s life no less than his own,

But with eager cups they take from him

His last drop, however thin, of saleable blood.

The old soldier asks very little from the world.

Nothing would seem less sane to him

Than an attempt to encompass it

With a white picket fence

Or a request to pretend to believe

That the world is enclosed by the fence and not himself.

He would rather barter in the open market

His inconsiderable power for a comfortable ivory tower.