

Kip

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THE clatter and clank of tray carts in the hall recalled to Kip another clash, sounding like all the Lord's judgment, that had sucked him into oblivion. An equine nurse, as unyielding in appearance as her stiffly starched uniform, crackled toward the bed. It was then, when Kip reached out eagerly for the tray, that he realized both arms were gone. His left shoulder articulated with empty space; his right elbow sought in vain for something to clutch to the upper arm bosom. The trolley that had lunged upon this four-year-old and his tricycle had put an end to the closest existing cooperation—that of the human machine. Still, being only four years old, Kip did not contemplate the difficulties that would soon face him. In that narrow room on that skimpy bed, Kip had, of course, shed tears—not tears of remorse or realization but tears of immediate pain. He had no life ambition to be a pianist or even a baseball pitcher. His only regret was that he could not be an efficient garbage collector.

Kip's mother was a sympathetic person, unfortunately for him. She felt that it was her duty to patronize, amuse, and protect her son. She cautiously excluded all former playmates from his life, afraid of their childish cruelty. She restricted her son's more violent activities, though the irrepressible Kip still slid down the banister at opportune moments. After long continuance of this practice, the little

fellow became passive and insipid, dogmatically accepting service and morbidly accepting inactivity. Then, fortunately, Kip contracted the measles—fortunately because a wise family doctor diagnosed also the disease of dissatisfaction. He stressed the importance of Kip's independence and personal pride to his mother, who unwillingly responded. When she asked Kip to hang up his jacket, her attitude was on the road to normality.

Doctor Pearson also convinced Kip's mother that Kip should attend a public school rather than the SunShine School for the Handicapped where he was enrolled. She promised to allow him to try it for a semester.

Hurrying home from "Old P. S. 28" in the first heavy snow of the season, he tried to ignore the squeak of several pairs of foreign galoshes behind him. When the icy needles of a snow ball pelted his cheek and bellows of "Hey Hooks!" pelted his dignity, he could ignore them no further. Stepping back and swinging wide with the hook appliance on his left arm, he downed one abuser into a snowdrift. After retrieving their comrade, the awe-stricken lads suggested true negotiations over a chocolate soda. Eventually, Kip graduated from P. S. 28.

In high school Kip was outstanding. He was president of the student council, a member of the dramatic club, editor of the school newspaper, and salutatorian of his class. However, he still had never begun to date. Girls just did not want to be seen with an armless cripple. At least, that was Kip's opinion, and so none of them were asked to undergo the experience.

The only girl he had ever dated was Myra, and she was the only girl he was ever to date. She was no beauty. Her finer points were short-cropped auburn hair and eyes "that had little candles in them" according to Kip. She was not simperingly sympathetic; she honestly felt romantic about Kip. After a courtship of five years, they were married. The groom did not drop the ring.

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The man behind the massive desk took one look at the pig skin gloves and waggled his head. "Sorry, no positions at all."

He was embarrassed. Kip was amused. He was also disappointed, but had no dreams of selling pencils at street corners. He had Myra, and he had his dignity.

Finally, he managed to get a job on a local newspaper. After a while, he had made a name for himself, but not enough money to support his family.

At last he found refuge in the field of his own disability—and ability. Today he is the executive vice-president of the largest artificial limb company in the world. These are good times for Kip and Myra. Some people call Kip a worker of miracles; some, a hero. I? I call him "Dad."