

scientist to the most poorly educated man on the street, all men have become aware of mankind's power to destroy on a mass-production basis.

And yet there is hope. Great thinkers of our time—men such as Albert Einstein and Kirtley F. Mather—have caught the gleam. Their writings on the future of mankind furnish us with the evidence that hope still exists. These men speak in terms of faith, honesty, and good will. So long as the leaders of men's thinking see the need of these fundamental spiritual concepts, there is hope.

Long before Hiroshima's atomic blast, long before a man flew faster than the speed of sound, columnist Arthur Brisbane commented on mankind's ability in these words: "What men can imagine, they can do." Perhaps we may adapt this phrase to the atomic age. If modern man, who can create instruments of wholesale destruction, still has the power to think in terms of faith, honesty, and good will, he also has the power to achieve a way of living and sharing that will be in the best interests of all mankind.

## A Woman I Shall Never Forget

Carol Fidler

ONE Saturday evening last winter, I was sitting in the waiting room of a downtown parking garage feeling very weary and disappointed after a long, futile search for last-minute Christmas gifts. To occupy my mind while I waited for the car, I gazed through the large plate-glass window across the room, absently observing the activity outside. Suddenly my attention was focused upon a woman whose face I shall never forget. She was an exact replica of a witch from a children's fairy tale. Her face was wrinkled like a prune, and her long, beak-like nose accentuated the thinness of her drawn, toothless mouth and the hollowness of her cheeks. In spite of the cold wind, her face was devoid of color. To add to her witch-like appearance, her head was bare, showing a scraggy mat of straight gray hair which was blown in all directions by the merciless wind. She was thin beyond belief, and I was certain that the strong, cold wind would soon carry her off her feet. Her clothing was also pitiful. In places, the irregular hem of her cheap print dress hung below her straight black coat, which was very ragged and weather-stained. On her feet were a pair of broken black shoes which looked as antique as her wrinkled face. Tightly against her chest she was clutching a battered old purse as if she were afraid someone might try to seize it. When I saw her eyes, I was very sorry to have compared her to a witch, for in her eyes was mirrored a life of hardship and misery. Those pale blue eyes were filled with defeat and loneliness.

As she came closer, I realized that she was searching for something. Her steps were hesitant as she passed the door to the waiting room. After looking inside and seeing that I was the only per-

son in the room, she turned back to the door. As she stretched one clawlike hand toward the door knob, a look of indecision crossed her face; she drew her hand back, seeming to be unsure whether it was all right for her to enter. She glanced at me questioningly; when I smiled, she carefully opened the door, entered, and quietly closed it behind her. Seeking a place to rest, she looked very apologetic as she sat down beside me, as if she thought she were being offensive. After she had settled comfortably, she reached into the torn pocket of her coat and drew out something wrapped in a piece of newspaper. In the paper were two little, crumpled cupcakes which, I supposed, were to serve as her supper. Gently, even tenderly, she lifted one to her mouth and started to take a bite; instead, she put her hand down again and looked at the little cake for a moment as if it were the only thing she would have to eat for a long while. She again lifted it to her lips, and this time she took a very small bite. It must have taken her five minutes to eat that one small cupcake. When she had finished, she looked at the other cake in her lap. I could sense the struggle within her. Should she eat the other cake now and go hungry in the morning, or should she save the cake until morning and suffer hunger pains during the night? The woman finally gained control of her desire to eat the other cake, folded it carefully in the newspaper, and put it tenderly back in her pocket. For perhaps a minute she leaned her head back on the couch and closed her eyes, enjoying the quiet and warmth of the room. Then, squaring her lean shoulders, she picked up her purse, slowly got up, and walked to the door. When again outside, she took one last look into the warmth of the bright room and then vanished into the darkness in an almost magical way.

On Christmas Eve, as I gaily opened my gifts, my thoughts once again centered on the desperate old woman whom I had seen in the parking garage. I wondered where she had gone that night. What was she doing now? Was she celebrating Christmas tonight, or did she even have a warm place in which to spend the night? All these thoughts suddenly made me realize how very fortunate I was. They also made me realize that there were people in this world, some of them very near to me, who were actually wondering where their next meal would come from, while I was selfishly wondering whether or not I would receive the alpaca coat I had asked for. This realization made me feel very shallow and ashamed. I only wished that I might share part of my Christmas joy with those who had no occasion to celebrate, those who thought of Christmas as just another long, cold night to be spent in the darkness.