

hide it?

ALBERT: It's all over now. We can all forget it. Let it die. We'll survive.

MARY: Survive? Is that all? There's more than that. To expect her to forget you as if—if you had died or something. I can overlook the affair—to an extent excuse it. But Madge still isn't yours. Madge belongs to a world of fantasy, of music, roses, and love.

ALBERT: So all of this is suddenly going to be my fault? I should have seen it coming. The point is that woman has to leave this house today—now.

MARY: Why? Why the sudden change? You made advances, too. Perhaps you are as much to blame for trying to invade her world with your own. Tell me, Albert, will it be just as convenient to have me 'out of the way' some day?

ALBERT: You're talking in riddles. And you delight in twisting all I say, don't you? It gives you some perverted pleasure, doesn't it? The woman's sick, Mary. She needs someone to look after her—

MARY: Sick? Did you just realize the fact? But I wanted to tell her what you never could.

ALBERT: Tell her what?

MARY: That I was leaving. That I understood. That I was going away with her. That when she left, I would go to help her—

(There is the loud shot of a gun. Mary sits horror stricken. Albert stands frowning. He recovers quickly, dashes from the room, and runs up the stairs.)

The Field

Barbara Taylor

WE HAVE been thinking about selling the field. We really do not need it, and we could use the money. It does not serve any purpose at all, and because of its location we could probably realize a comfortable profit from it.

Every spring, somebody here decides to raise a garden on it ("It is silly to let that ground go to waste"); however, very little ever gets planted—mostly a handful of pop-corn, a few pumpkin seeds (carefully saved from the Halloween jack-o-lantern), some water-melon seeds, and once, some carrot seeds which produced six hard, short stubs with bushy green tops because the ground had not been dug deeply enough. Then later on, somebody says that it would have been silly to raise a garden out there; about the time we would have been able to harvest, the vegetables are so cheap in the stores it would not have been worth the effort involved. Another thing, if we plowed up the field for a garden, we would plow up all the strawberries. And if we plowed up all the strawberries we would never see all our relatives and friends because everybody is busy until about June the first, when the berries start to ripen. Then

here they come with buckets, boxes, and sacks, wishing that they had paid us at least one visit during the winter so we would not think they were here only for our berries. Fat babies love to sit in the sun on the grassy paths and stuff their rosy cheeks full of red, juicy strawberries. The field is really a productive place.

I have never told these people what interlopers they all are when they go out to pick berries in the field. They do not know that the field is for little children and not for grown-ups. When they step into a deep, hidden hole they call, "You should fill this leg breaker before someone gets hurt." But it actually is not a "leg breaker." It is the start of an abortive trip to China. There are several of those holes out there. In fact, there are many things people do not know about the field. The field is a mysterious place.

About three-fourths of the way out, over at the far left of the field, quite a distance from the house, is a huge tree. It is just about the busiest tree I know. It has boards nailed onto it for steps; it wears a place to practice knife carving; it supports a half-finished tree house; it suffers with a space for chopping with a toy ax, and down below, hidden under a big root, in a wooden box and wrapped in aluminum foil, it shelters two old pipes and a package of tobacco. There is a tiny dump yard not far from the tree. Careful investigation reveals candy wrappers, chewing-gun foil balls, empty tuna fish cans (the contents of which some stray kitten has enjoyed), a pair of "lost" sneakers, and a board that has "GIRLS STAY OUT" printed on it. The field is an adventurous place.

Closer in, halfway between the tree and the house, is a miniature grave-yard. Here lie some good friends and some mere acquaintances. All of them have been reburied several times after having been dug up to be examined in various stages of decomposition. Here rest (well, I guess they do not exactly rest) the old family pets and also many mice the cat has murdered in cold blood. Goldfish occupy the next place, as far as numbers go, followed by birds and wild rabbits. The place of honor, the grave with the cross on it, was given to a big white Easter bunny that lived with us for years and was so soft that when a person stroked her he could not even feel the fur on his hand. The violets grow thickly over the graveyard. The field is a solemn place.

In the summer there are all sorts of flowers in the field. Nobody here knows their real names, but we know them by others. There are "Too Blues," found in dark moist places; "Curtsies," which grow tall and nod continually; and "Love-me-nots," huddled in clumps of bright yellow. The field looks like an old-fashioned bouquet in the summer, sprinkled with "Queen Anne's Lace," spiked with "Holly-hocks," and tied all about with black raspberry and wild rose-bushes, needling and scratching each other for a prominent position. I almost forgot about the black raspberries. They ripen later than the strawberries. No sooner is the red stain on all the "T" shirts nearly gone than the purple stains appear. And oh, those smiling purple mouths!

The field can be a delightful place.

Once somebody saw a snake in the field. It was talked about around here for some time. It was "that long" (about eighteen inches), and it was black the first time I heard about it. But later, it was blue and then it went through all sorts of color changes—from green to pink with yellow stripes. About one year later we learned that it had had a rattle in it too! There is a roll of barbed wire out there also that can catch a person by surprise, and over by the fence is a nest full of crotchety bumblebees. So you see, the field is a dangerous place.

One of the best best things of all about that old field, although it is so very far back in it that a person has to take a sandwich, some cookies, and a bottle of water with him to make the trip, is the creek. In the spring it overflows its banks and the water gets almost two feet deep. Later on, in the late summer, it is just a mud hole, but it has strange creatures in it. Some of them jump, but most of them just wiggle or squirm. The creek is important for several reasons. First of all, a person has to have a creek to build a bridge over. Second, a person has to have a creek to fish in. The water itself is much more important than fish. A person can fish in a creek without fish, but he cannot fish with just fish and no water. And last, you need a creek to provide mud. The field has some natural resources.

I cannot think of anything else important to tell about the field. It has a hill, but it is not high enough for sledding. It has several trees, but they are all too little to provide shade or to support a swing (except the big one, and its lower branches are too high). There are many quail out there, but they frighten a person when he is just walking along by starting up so fast. Somebody said we should eat them, but that does not sound like a very good idea. And if we did, what would the dog chase and bark at? In the fall, the thistles have beautiful lavender flowers on them, but they are too sticky to pick. We could raise another bull out there. On the other hand, when the one we had grew up everybody was afraid of him. Besides, he ate all the flowers and corn we had planted.

There is no reason at all for us to keep that field. It is simply a waste when someone else could have it to build a house on. There are houses built on all the other fields around here. Next year we will probably put a "For Sale" sign on it.

Possession

Anna Monahan

STANDING behind a curtain in the upstairs bedroom, he watched Jeannie come down the street, smiling a little . . . must be a reason; met someone, maybe . . . saw Danny run across the yard, their quick kiss and impetuous hug, a sharing of confidences as they continued hand in hand toward the house . . . couldn't read their lips, the angle was wrong . . . heard her steps cross the porch