



Anybody Can Do Anything
By Betty MacDonald

Original Copyright Page

COPYRIGHT, 1950, BY BETTY MACDONALD

COPYRIGHT, 1950, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FIRST EDITION

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PARTIALLY SERIALIZED UNDER THE TITLE,
“IT ALL HAPPENED TO ME”

PALE HANDS I LOVE (KASHMIRI SONG) by Lawrence Hope By
permission of William Heinemann & Company, London, England

AT DAWNING by Charles Wakefield Cadman
From the song “At Dawning” published and copyright (1906) by Oliver Ditson
Company. Words reprinted by permission.

LESS THAN THE DUST by Lawrence Hope
By permission of William Heinemann & Company, London, England

THE CONGO by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay
From The Congo and Other Poems, copyright 1914, 1942 by The Macmillan
Company and used with their permission.

JUDY by Hoagy Carmichael
Used by permission, Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc.

1: “Anybody Can Do Anything Especially Betty”

The best thing about the depression was the way it reunited our family and gave my sister Mary a real opportunity to prove that anybody can do anything, especially Betty.

Mary’s belief that accomplishment is merely a matter of application, was inherited from both Mother and Daddy. Mother, who has become, through the years and her own efforts, a clever artist, inspired cook, excellent gardener, qualified midwife, skillful seamstress, reliable encyclopedia of general information, book-a-day reader, good practical nurse, dependable veterinary, tireless listener, fine equestrienne, strong swimmer, adequate carpenter, experienced farmer, competent dog trainer and splendid stone mason, was working for a dress designer in Boston when she met my father, an ambitious young mining engineer who, though rowing on the crew, working all night in the Observatory and tutoring rich boys during the day, graduated from Harvard with honors in three years. The union of these two spirited people produced five children, four girls and one boy, all born in different parts of the United States, all tall and redheaded except my sister Dede, who is small and hard-headed.

Mary, the oldest of the children, was born in Butte, Montana, and indicated at a very early age that she had lots of ideas and tremendous enthusiasm, especially for her own ideas. I, Betty, the next child, emerged in Boulder, Colorado, and from the very first leaned toward Mary’s ideas like a divining rod toward water.

When I was but a few months old, Gammy, my father’s mother who always lived with us, sent Mary to the kitchen to ask the cook for a drink of water for me. Mary returned in a matter of seconds with the bathroom glass half-filled with water. Gammy, suspicious, asked Mary where she had gotten the water. Mary said, “Out of the toilet.” Gammy said, “Mary Bard, you’re a naughty little girl.” Mary pointed at me smiling and reaching for the cup and said, “No, I’m not, Gammy. See, she wants it. We always give it to her.”

The rest of the family proved to be a little firmer textured, not so eager to be Mary’s guinea pig, so she has always generously allowed them to choose between their own little old wizened-up ideas and the great big juicy ripe tempting ones she offered.

My first memories of being the Trilby for Mary’s Svengali go back to that winter in Butte, Montana, when each morning Mary marched importantly off to the second grade at McKinley School while my brother Cleve and I, who could already read and write, shuffled despondently off to Miss Crispin’s kindergarten, a gloomy institution where all the crayons were broken and had the peeling off.

The contrast between Miss Crispin’s and real school, in fact between Miss Crispin’s and anything but a mortuary, was heartbreakingly obvious even to four and five year olds, but the contrast between Miss Crispin’s and the remarkable school that Mary attended and described so vividly to us, was unbearable. Nothing ever happened at Miss Crispin’s except that some days it was gloomier and darker than on others and we had to bend so close to our coloring work to tell blue from purple, brown from black that our noses ran on the pictures; some days Miss Crispin, who was very nervous, yelled at us to be quiet, got purple blotches and pulled and kneaded the skin on her neck like dough, and on Fridays to the halting accompaniment of her sight-reading at the piano, we skipped around the room and sang. Miss Crispin taught us all the verses of “Dixie,” “Swanee River,” “My Country ‘Tis of

Thee” and “Old Black Joe,” and for-the bottom rung on the ladder to enjoyment, I nominate flapping around the room dodging little kindergarten chairs and singing “Old Black Joe.”

Compare this then to the big brick school that Mary attended where everyday occurrence (according to Mary and Joe Doner, a boy at school called on so often to prove incredible stories that “If you don’t believe me, just ask Joe Doner” has become a family tag for all obvious untruths) were the beating of small children with spiked clubs, the whipping of older boys with a cat-o’-nine-tails in front of the whole school, the forcing of the first graders to drink ink and eat apple cores, the locking in the basement of anyone tardy, and the terribly cruel practice of never allowing anyone to go to the bathroom so that all screamed in pain and many wet their panties.

Naturally Cleve and I believed everything Mary told us, but also naturally, after a while, we grew blasé about the continual beatings, killings and panty wettings that went on in the second grade at recess school, so Mary, noting our waning interest, started the business about the “sausage book” and for months kept us feverish with curiosity and acid with envy.

One snowy winter afternoon she came bursting in from school, glazed with learning, but instead of her usual burden of horror stories, she was carrying a big notebook with a shiny, dark red, mottled cover, like salami. “Look at this,” she announced to Gammy and Mother. “I call it my ‘sausage book’ and I put everything I learn in it. See!” Carefully she brushed the snow off her mittens, turned back the shiny cover and with great pride pointed to the first page. “That’s what we did in school today, all by ourselves, without any help,” she said.

“Why, that’s beautiful, dear,” Mother said. “Just beautiful!” Gammy echoed and Cleve and I crowded close to see what was beautiful. Immediately Mary grabbed the book, snapped it shut and put it behind her back. “Hey, we want to see in your sausage book,” Cleve and I said. Mary, in a maddeningly sweet, sad way, said, “I’d like to show it to you, Cleve and Betsy, I really would, but Miss O’Toole won’t let me. She said it’s all right to show our sausage books to our mothers and fathers but never ever to our little brothers and sisters,” Mother and Gammy laughed and said, “Nonsense,” so Mary stamped her foot and said, “If you don’t believe me, just ask Joe Doner.”

Day by day Mary built up the importance of the sausage book until I got so I dreamed about it every night and thought that I opened it and found it full of paper dolls and colored pencils. But no spy was ever more careful of his secret formula than Mary with that darned old notebook. Sometimes she did her homework in it but she guarded it with her arms and leaned so far forward that she was drawing and writing under her stomach; she slept with it under her pillow, she even took it coasting and to dancing at school. She never was cross or mean about not letting Cleve and me see inside it, but persisted in the attitude that she was only obeying her teacher and trying to protect us, because she realized, even Mother and Gammy didn’t, that seeing into her sausage book might lift the veil of our ignorance to us so quickly and send our feeble minds off balance. Our only recourse was not to show her the pictures we made at Miss Crispin’s, which she didn’t want to see anyway.

Then one day Miss Crispin ordered her kindergarteners to draw an apple tree and as not one of the little Butte children had ever seen an apple tree, she told us each to find a picture of one and bring it the next day. We told Mother and Gammy about our kindergarten assignment and Mother found us a very nice colored picture of an apple tree in our *Three Little Pigs* book. Mary looked at it critically for a minute then said, “I’ll show you a much better one,” and to Cleve’s and my absolute joy opened up her sausage book, Hipped over some pages and showed us a large drawing of what looked like a Kell

green Brussels sprout covered with red dots and with a long spindly brown stem. "This," said Mary, "is the way they draw apple trees in real school. Here," she said, generously tearing out the page, "take this to Miss Crispin and just see what she says." We did and Miss Crispin looked at it a long time, pulled at her doughy neck and said, "Mmmmmmm."

The next winter, when we were six and eight, I started to real school and because of a shyness so terrible that I was unable to speak above a faint whisper, it took them several months to discover that I could read and write and really belonged in the second grade.

When the terrible ordeal of reading, in my faint whisper, before the principal and writing my name and several sentences on the blackboard in front of the whole giggling class, had been completed and I had been told that I was in the second grade, my first exultant thought was "Now I'll get my sausage book." But the whole morning went by and I didn't. I peered from under my eyelids at the other children and they didn't seem to have them either. Finally in desperation I raised my hand to ask the teacher and she, misinterpreting my wants, said, in a loud voice, "Number one or number two, Elizabeth." I said, "When do we get our sausage books?" She said, "Your what?" I repeated a little louder, "Our sausage books." She said, "I don't know what you're talking about, now open your reading books to page three."

I got up and went home. I didn't even stop for my coat or rubbers but ran sobbing through the streets and burst in on Mother and Gammy who were having a cup of coffee. "We don't get them," I shrieked. "Don't get what?" Mother said. "Sausage books," I said. "I'm in the second grade and I asked the teacher and she said she didn't know what I was talking about."

Mother explained that I had a different teacher from Mary's and that she probably didn't use sausage books. I refused to be comforted. School had come to mean but one thing to me. A sausage book of my very own filled with secret things that I'd let Cleve but not Mary see. I bawled all afternoon and finally Mother, in desperation, went downtown and bought me a new Lightning Glider sled.

When Mary came home from school, I was out in the back yard, a steep slope about a hundred feet long, reaching from a woodshed and toolhouse at the very back of the lot down to a small level place behind the house, still red-eyed and snuffling, coasting down our little hill on my new sled. When I told Mary about my second grade teacher not giving us sausage books, Mary was so outraged she was going right back to school and mark on the desks and put paste in the inkwells, but to her relief I pleaded with her and finally talked her out of this dangerous act of loyalty. So as a reward she tried to invent perpetual motion and knocked out all my front teeth.

The back yard was a dandy place to slide and for a while, until Mary had her inspiration, we happily climbed up the little hill and coasted down again, climbed up and coasted down, on the brand new shiny sled. Then suddenly at the bottom of the hill, Mary jumped off the sled, dashed into the cellar and came out brandishing the clothes pole.

"Betsy," she said. "I have a wonderful idea. We'll both get on the sled at the top of the hill, I'll hold this pole out in front of us [the pole was about eight feet long] and when we slide down the pole will hit the house and push us back up the hill again. Then down we'll go, then up, then down, then up and we'll never have to climb the hill."

It sounded like a terribly good idea to me so when we had pulled the sled back up the hill to the woodshed, I climbed on the front and put my feet up on the steering bar and Mary got on the back and

we both held the pole out in front of us in a direct line with my mouth. Mary gave us a big shove ~~send us off and wheel how we flew down the little hill.~~ Then everything went black and I began spitting blood and teeth onto the white hard-packed snow, for the pole, when it hit the house, had been forced well back into my mouth. "Oh, Betsy," Mary said, her face so pale her freckles looked like brown moles, "I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm so sorry," and I knew she was because she gave me her old sausage book. Anyway they were only first teeth.

The next victim of Mary's ideas was my brother Cleve, then a sturdy little boy of five, with red hair and a deep mistrust of his sister Mary and her Ted-haired friend Marjorie.

It was a Saturday afternoon in the spring and we were playing circus, or rather Mary and Marjorie were directing a circus which had all the neighborhood children as paid admissions and Cleve and me and Snooper, our dog, as the reluctant performers. Mother and Gammy had gone to a tea and let Sarah, our maid, to "keep an eye on us," but Sarah, who loathed children, especially red-haired children, was in the kitchen ironing, with her back to the window and the back door locked. As it would have been her great pleasure to see one or all of our lifeless bodies laid out ready to be carted away, she paid absolutely no attention to the bloodcurdling yells and piercing screams which arose from our back yard, as Cleve and I, for the benefit of the assembled neighborhood and after a great deal of persuasion, performed whatever daring feats Mary and Marjorie thought up.

We had already jumped off the woodshed into the sandpile backward, put lighted matches in our mouths, drunk castor oil and heart medicine (bitter cascara), and ridden around the yard on Snooper but the biggest act was yet to come. Cleve was going to walk the two-by-four which supported our cellar doors. The two-by-four was only about six feet long but the cellar stairs were dark and steep and there wasn't anything to hold on to. It was a daring and dangerous feat and one which Cleve was nervous and anxious to perform.

"I don' wanna," he kept saying stubbornly. "Now, Cleve," Mary and Marjorie said, "don't you want to be known as the bravest child in this whole neighborhood?" "No," Cleve said, patting Snooper. "Look, Cleve," Mary said, "I'll walk it first," and she did with light dancing steps, back and forth back and forth. It didn't look too hard. "Why don't you do it for the circus?" Cleve asked. Mary said, "Because I'm the announcer. That's why." Cleve said, "Why doesn't Marjorie do it then?" "Because Marjorie's the ticket taker," Mary said. "You and Betty are the performers. Now come on." Cleve said, "I don' wanna." Then Mary and Marjorie said they would give him twenty-five cents of the gate receipts and that clinched things. Twenty-five cents would buy thirty pieces of "pick" candy (peppermint candy), six picks for a nickel, and we'd do anything for it.

"Ladees and Gentlemen!" Mary announced in a loud voice. "Come and watch this brave little child walk the tightrope across a deep black hole full of live snakes." She pointed dramatically to Cleve, who had crawled up and was standing on one of the folded-back cellar doors, clutching the twenty-five cents and looking suspiciously first at Mary and then at the narrow two-by-four. Mary's sudden inspiration about the black hole full of live snakes hadn't helped his courage any. All eyes were upon him but Cleve, suddenly deciding that he wasn't going to walk Mary's tightrope, sat down and started to slide down the cellar door.

Mary said, "Look, ladees and gentlemen, see how brave he is. That little tiny child has turned around so he won't have to look at those wreathy writhy snakes. But he is the most famous tightrope walker in the whole world and he is going to walk that dangerous tightrope, or you won't get yo

twenty-five cents,” she hissed sotto voce at Cleve. Cleve looked at the twenty-five cents and then ~~the two-by-four and finally stood up and started across. His fat little legs wobbled and when he tried~~ get his balance his arms went around like windmills and at the exact center, and just as Mother came home, he fell and landed on his back on the cellar stairs.

Mother carried him into the house and put him in a tub of hot water and when the doctor came he tested his reflexes and said Cleve wasn't hurt at all, but it was a long time before he would take an active part in any of Mary's and Marjorie's schemes, particularly when he learned that he had dropped his twenty-five cents when he fell and some little ghoulish had stolen it.

As I look back on it, I couldn't have been too bright, because only one year later when I was seven Mary and Marjorie got me to jump from the loft of a neighbor's stable on to a very small armful of straw, which they had carelessly thrown on top of an upturned rake.

We were playing vaudeville this time, because Mary and Marjorie had recently been taken to the first vaudeville, whose wonders, substantiated by Joe Doner, had included a human bird and a man who balanced steel balls on his ears. I couldn't balance steel balls on my ears but I could be Betty, the Human Bird, the Greatest Jumper of All Times, which was why on that bright summer morning I was standing shivering in the little doorway of the unused loft. It was only about a ten- or twelve-foot jump but I'll never forget how high up I felt.

Big Butte, an extinct volcano which had always seemed to us to be the highest mountain in the world, was right in front of me. The big M-1915, painted in white on its black rock side by the daring School of Mines boys, was now at eye level. I could see the School of Mines where Daddy taught. I could see Mary the Cook hanging out washing in our back yard. I could see hundreds of great big blue mountains. I could see Mary marching around the yard with a stick pointing at me and shouting “Ladees and Gentlemen! Look up at her, Betty, the Human Bird, the bravest child in the whole world! Just a little girl of seven who will jump from that terribly high building down onto this little pile of straw!”

I looked down at the pile of straw and it certainly was little. “That's not enough straw,” I said backing away from the edge of the doorway. “Sure it is,” Mary said. “Anyway that's all Mr. Murphy would let us have. Hurry up, Betsy, it'll be fun,” she called running a few wisps of straw through her fingers to prove it.

My stomach felt ice cold and my heart seemed to have moved up into my head. “Thump, thump, thump,” it was hammering just behind my eyes. Mary had promised me on her word of honor that if I jumped off high enough things often enough, I would be able to fly like the man in the vaudeville show. She had started me jumping off fences, the woodshed roof and our high front porch and as I jumped more and more I was less scared but I hadn't noticed that I landed any more gently.

Mary had said that some day when I jumped from a high enough place it would suddenly be just like a dream and I would float to earth. This was to be the big test, and if this dream came true and I floated, then there was a good chance that my dreams of having jet black curls down to my ankles and an entire Irish lace dress over a bright pink satin petticoat like the night watchman's little girl, might come true. Anyway it had been Mary's best selling point.

“Come on, Betsy, dear,” she was calling. “I'll count for you and when I get to ten you jump.” I looked down at the upturned admiring faces of the neighborhood children as Mary began counting in loud ominous tones. “One-ah, two-ah, three-ah.” I took a deep breath, closed my eyes and jumped

when she got to ten-ah. I did not fly. I landed hard on the pile of straw and two tines of the hidden rake went through my foot. ~~Mary and Marjorie, truly appalled by their carelessness, carried me all the way home.~~ At least Mary carried me and Marjorie held up the handle of the rake.

When we got home Mother called the doctor and while we waited for him I soaked my foot in a basin of hot Epsom salts and water and Gammy comforted me by saying, "Cheel-drun are nothing but savages. It won't surprise me at all if they have to cut off Betsy's legs."

"Not both legs," Mary said. "Only one." I had been very brave up to this point but now I began to bawl. "I don't want to have my leg cut off and only wear one roller skate," I sobbed.

Mary said, "Never mind, Betsy, dear, we'll make a little tiny roller skate for your crutch and in winter I'll pull you to school on the sled." Which, to her dismay, only made me bawl louder.

Then the doctor arrived, examined my foot and gave me a tetanus shot; Daddy came home and examined my foot and gave Mary a spanking with the bristle side of the brush; Mother wiped away my tears, said of course my legs weren't going to be cut off and called Gammy an old pessimist which immediately cheered Mary and me because we thought pessimist was a bad word like bastard.

My next memory of being Mary's test pilot was the following summer, while visiting friends who lived in a small town in the mountains near an abandoned mine. "Don't ever go near the mine," we were cautioned. "There is no place as dangerous for children as a mine. Any mine. Particularly an old one with deep, dark, rotten shafts and rusty unsafe machinery." "We won't go near the mine," we promised and we didn't.

We went wading in the creek. We went fishing. We stuck leeches on our legs because Marjorie believed it purified us. We picked Indian paintbrush and Mariposa lilies. We took our new pocketknives and made willow whistles. We watched out for rattlesnakes and bulls and we did not go near the mine.

Then one lovely hot summer's day, Mary and I decided to go huckleberrying. Dressed in overalls and straw hats and each swinging a little lard pail, with a lid, by its wire handle, we started off. It was a wonderful day. The sun was hot and the air was filled with the delicious smell of hot pine needles and huckleberry juice. We found a big spruce gum tree and pried off mildewed-looking hunks and chewed them. We found the bitter pitchy flavor of the gum mixed well with the tart huckleberries. We also found that we could lie on our backs under the huckleberry bushes and scrape the berries into our buckets. The berries went plink, plink, plunk, and it was as easy as shelling peas. We moved from bush to bush by sliding along on the slick brown pine needles. Chipmunks chattered at us and bright green darning needles darted around our heads. We chewed our big wads of spruce gum and were happy.

Then Mary saw the flume. "What's that big thing over there?" she said, rolling over on her stomach and pointing below us on the mountainside. It looked like a long gray dragon slithering down the side of the mountain. We decided to investigate. We put the lids on our little lard pails and started down the hill.

The flume, used to carry water down to the mine, had once been up on high supports, but just at this point, a small rock slide had knocked the rotting supports away and the flume had broken in two and the bottom part now sloped down the mountainside like a giant clothes chute. The inside, stained a cool green (by the water it used to carry) was actually very hot and as slippery as glass with the d

pine needles that had drifted into it.

Side by side, Mary and I knelt down and peered into the flume. I could taste the salty perspiration on my upper lip as I chewed my spruce gum and wondered if the flume was endless. From where we were it seemed to go on forever, growing smaller and smaller until it was just a tiny black square in the distance. Mary shouted into it and her voice came back to us with a hollow roar, "Ahhhhh,ooooo!" Then Mary said, her voice tight with excitement, "What a wonderful place to slide. Just like a giant chute the chutes!"

I said nothing but my stomach had a funny feeling. I backed out of the mouth of the flume and sat down on the rock slide in the hot sun. Little rocks, loosed by my feet, went clattering off down the mountain. Far overhead in the bright blue sky an eagle circled in big lazy circles. Then Mary, still kneeling, pulled herself into the mouth of the flume but holding on tight to each side. "You'd have to go belly buster," she said speculatively as she measured herself with the opening.

"What do you mean 'you'?" I said. Mary didn't answer. "Daddy said flumes are dangerous," I said edging still further away from it.

Mary said, "He didn't mean this flume, Betsy dear, he meant flumes that go into dams or end up as waterfalls. Of course, those flumes are very, very dangerous, but this old thing," she patted the flume like an old dog, "is perfectly safe. Just look at it, Betsy."

Cautiously I again knelt and peered down into the long green tunnel and it did seem much safer. At least it was perfectly quiet and I couldn't hear the roar of any waterfalls.

"Let's just slide a little way in it and then crawl out again," Mary suggested.

"You go first," I said.

"Now, Betsy, dear," Mary always called me "Betsy, dear" when she was going to will me to do some ghastly thing. "I'm the biggest and strongest so I'd better stay outside and hold your feet and help you."

"You go first," I repeated stubbornly.

Mary said, "This is going to be more fun than anything we've ever done. We'll slide down just like a train in a tunnel. Zip and well be at the bottom. Crisscross your heart you'll never tell anyone about our secret chute."

As I crisscrossed my thumping heart, I had a sudden fleeting feeling that all this had happened before. Mary's eyes sparkled. She said, "We'll bring Cleve and Gammy up here and when they aren't looking well jump into our chute and when they try to find us well be at the bottom of the mountain." We both peered into the flume again. Referring to it as "our chute" seemed to make it less dangerous and it didn't seem quite so bottomless and scary now.

Mary said, "If a bear or anything should chase us we could jump right in this chute and it'd never catch us." I said, "But where does it come out?" Mary said, "Oh, probably in a big pile of sand." One summer when we were camping in the mountains we had played on an old ore chute that ended in a pile of sand, but I didn't think of that at the time, and thought that maybe Mary really knew where the chute ended. "How do you know?" I asked.

She changed the subject by looking up into a tall pine tree close at hand. "I wonder if we could find

some kind of a rope that would pull us back up the hill?" she said. I said, "We could fix one of those pulleys like we fixed to send notes on." Mary said, "Oh, Betsy, you're so smart!" That's just what we could fix and then we'd slide down, pull ourselves up, slide down, pull ourselves up. Up, down, up, down. Why we could even charge like the merry-go-round at Columbia Gardens," she added as a final persuasion. Why didn't all that up-down stuff make me remember the experiment in perpetual motion? How could I have been such a dupe and a dope?

Mary said, "Come on, Betty, hurry and get in before Gammy and Cleve get here. You know Gammy said she'd walk up this way before supper."

I climbed in headfirst. "Grab my feet," I yelled at Mary. But it was too late. The hot dry pine needles were very slick. In a second I had slithered out of reach. Down I went into the long, endless green tunnel. "Help, help, Mary, help!" I shouted and the words came roaring back at me, "Hulp, hulp!" as though I were shouting into a giant megaphone. The flume grew steeper and steeper and gained momentum until I was whizzing along, my lard pail bumping the side, my straw hat over one eye. "Help, help, help!" I called again and again to Mary but there was no answer.

Once I slowed down and got stuck in a flat place where there were no pine needles. With my swimming motions I tried to get started again but only succeeded in getting a large sliver in my thigh. I pulled my legs up under me and tried crawling. It was slow and I banged my head quite often but my only alternative was spending the rest of my life in the flume, I kept on. Then suddenly the flume took a sharp plunge downward and I flattened out again, took the hill belly buster, rolled out (the flume was broken at the bottom) and stuck in the crack between the two parts. Slowly and shakily I got to my feet. Directly below me was the dangerous old mine. From high up the mountain I could hear Mary calling, "Betsy, Betsy, are you hurt?" as she ran toward me down the OUTSIDE of the flume.

I grabbed my bucket and started toward her voice, determined that she was going to slide down that flume if I had to kill her first. Then from down in the valley I heard Mother calling us. "Coming!" I yelled and from up the mountain Mary answered, "Coming."

The sliver in my thigh was about three inches long and as thick as a darning needle and by a series of clever questions, Daddy finally found out how I had gotten it and sternly forbade our ever going near the flume again.

From then on, as I remember, my life was reasonably safe except for a few minor things, such as the time Mary convinced Cleve and me that she had learned witchcraft and drew large quantities of blood from our veins and fed us smashed-up worms mixed with toenail parings.

And the time after we had moved to Seattle that Mary and I, then ten and twelve, were dressing after swimming and she suggested that I stand naked in the window of our bedroom and wave to the President of the Milwaukee Railroad, who with his wife was being shown the garden by Mother and Daddy. When I seemed a little reluctant to extend this evidence of Western hospitality, Mary tried to convince me and somehow in the course of the convincing she pushed her head and shoulders through the window pane and we both rolled out on the roof into the heap of broken glass, stark naked and yelping like wounded dogs.

The President of the Milwaukee Railroad and his wife, who didn't have any children, believed our story about my catching my foot in my bathing suit and falling against Mary and forcing us both through the window and were very sympathetic to us when we appeared for tea, swathed in bandages.

Daddy, however, waited until his guests had left, then assigned us each a quota of five thousand stones to be removed from the orchard and dumped into the old well back of the barn.

We had just dumped our five hundred and seventy-second stone into the wheelbarrow and were morosely trying to subtract 572 from 10,000 when Mary had her idea. "I'll get all the kids in the neighborhood in the summerhouse, you tell them 'Nancy and Plum' [a continued story about two little orphans I'd been telling Mary in bed at night for years and years] and when you get to the most exciting place you stop and I'll tell them you won't go on until they each pick up a hundred stones and put them in the well." It worked loo. That afternoon we got 1,100 stones dumped in the well. The next day the smarter children didn't show up but, by stopping twice in the story, we got the six that do come to gather two hundred stones each so we actually fared even better than the day before.

By the end of the week, over six thousand stones had been dumped in the well, Nancy and Plum who had made a harrowing escape from the orphanage, had been captured by Gypsies, kidnapped by bank robbers, lost in an abandoned mine, weathered a terrible storm in a haunted house, adopted a baby who turned out to be a prince, stowed away on a boat to China and finally come to rest with dear old farmer and his wife who had an attic full of toys, and I felt like my bath sponge when I squeezed it dry.

Daddy's cultural program with lessons in piano playing, singing, folk dancing, French and ballet added further proof to Mary's theory that anybody can do anything and, in her case, without practicing.

Our favorite piano teacher among many, and the one we clung to longest, was a Miss Welcome, very temperamental Kuropean who calcimined her arms dead white up to within an inch of her shoulder sleeves, dressed entirely in fuchsia color, wore turbans with flowing veils when she taught, always had fish breath, counted on our backs with her strong fingers digging into the flesh, "Bun and boo and bree and bour!" screamed, "Feel, f-e-e-l, FEEL IT!" as she paced around the room her veils flying, her calcimined arms beating out the rhythm like big plaster casts, often produced real tears (to our delight) when we made mistakes. "Oh, dear God, no, not B flat!" she'd moan, covering her face with her hands and sobbing brokenly.

Miss Welcome never bored us with scales or exercises or any of those stupid little Pixie-in-the-Glen or Lullaby-for-Tiny-Hands type of thing. Everybody studying with her started off the very first day on some great big hard well-known piece by some great big hard well-known composer. If, by our third lesson, we couldn't manage the full chords or the fast parts in say, Rachmaninoff's Prelude in Sharp Minor, Miss Welcome cut them out. She cut the bottoms off octaves and the tops off grace notes without turning a hair. "Now try it," she'd say and if we still couldn't play it she'd take out her ever-ready pencil and x out the whole hard part. "Now," she'd say, "let's hear some feeeeeeeeling" and with the fervor of relief we'd bear down and pound feeling into what was left.

Because I had long, thin hands and was so scared of Miss Welcome, I bawled at every lesson, she told me I was very very sensitive and gave me long sad selections with enormous chords and huge reaches. "Bun and boo and bree and bour, now come on Betsy, play, play, PLAY!" she'd yell at me and I'd begin to cry. "I can't reach the notes," I'd sob, my long, unyielding hands trying to reach the two keys over an octave so unreasonably demanded by Schumann. "You must reach it. You CAN AND YOU MUST!" Miss Welcome would hiss spittily into my tearstained face. I tried and tried. I practiced one and two hours every day on my sad, great pieces but my heart wasn't in it. I didn't want to play.

slow, sad things with huge chords that gave me bearing-down pains. I wanted to be like Mary, who talked back to Miss Welcome, hardly ever practiced, played entirely by ear (she didn't learn to read music until after she was married), chose her own loud, showy pieces and whose small freckled supple hands flew over the keys like lightning. Now that I think about it my sister Mary was really one of the pioneers in the field of the medley.

When Daddy and Mother had company we children usually performed. First Dede, who had perfect pitch even at two, sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee," then Cleve, until his clarinet playing had progressed to solos, recited, then Mary and I played the piano.

I would give a sweaty-fingered uninspired performance of my latest piece exactly as it was written and exactly as Miss Welcome had taught me even to the lowered wrists, high knuckles and leaning forward and pressing heavily on the keys for depth of tone. I always knew my pieces and never made a mistake but nobody cared, I could tell from the bored rattle of newspapers, nervous scraping of chairs and even snores, so audible during the long, long waits between notes required by the dramatic Miss Welcome. "That's very nice Betsy," Mother would say when at last I finished one of those interminable D.C.L. Fine pieces where you keep playing the same thing over and over with a different ending.

Then it was Mary's turn. Up she would flounce to the piano and effortlessly dash off Grieg's "Carnival," "*Danse Negre*" "Anitra's Dance," "*Le Papillon*" "*Solfeggietto*" or "Rustle of Spring" and everyone would say, "Isn't she talented?" and only I, in my envy, noticed that each was seasoned with the other and they all reflected strongly the influence of composer Mary Bard.

Miss Welcome openly adored Mary even when Mary was talking loud and trying to force her to believe that Grieg had written in that Chopin passage in Beethoven's Sonata *Pathétique* and she always eventually gave in to her.

When Mother and Daddy took us to hear De Pachmann Mary and I were so entranced with her playing of Chopin's Third Ballade that Mary decided that she would play it in the spring recital, which was only about a month away. Miss Welcome said, "Mary, darling, you are terribly, terribly talented but the Third Ballade is too difficult and there is not enough time." Mary said, "I'll practice four hours a day." Miss Welcome said, "Not enough." Mary said, "I'll practice eight hours a day, twelve, sixteen," and finally Miss Welcome gave in and with only slight encouragement sat down at the piano and played the Third Ballade for us. She couldn't hold a candle to De Pachmann in technique but she had it all over him in dramatics. For the soft parts she stroked the keys as though they were tiny dogs and when she came to the dut-dah—dut-dah—dut-dah, dah, dada, dah, dah . . . she lifted her hands over the keys about four feet and came down on the wrong notes but the effect was very brrrrright and certainly staccato. For the loud passages she used full strength and full pedal, topped off with grunting and heavy breathing. While she played, Mary and I, to keep from hurting her feelings, stifled our laughter in her purple velvet portieres that smelled of mildew.

For the next month I read the notes and Mary memorized them and by recital time we both knew the Third Ballade, but Mary played it, giving a brilliant performance if you discounted her omission of several runs and that entire, most difficult, interval near the end where the left hand is supposed to race up and down the keyboard while the right hand pounds out the original melody. Miss Welcome, to whom omission didn't mean that much, shouted, "Bravo, Bravo," from the back of her stuffy little parlor where the recitals were held and then rushed forward, kissed Mary on both cheeks and said

“Oh, Mary, Mary, I didn’t think you could do it.” To be perfectly honest, I wasn’t sure she had.

We both took singing from our Sunday School teacher’s sister, or rather Mary took singing and played her accompaniment, but we always referred to it as our singing because it took both of us for performance.

Mrs. Potter, our teacher, had an enormous contralto voice and was a thick singer and always sounded as though her throat was full of phlegm. She was supposed to be a very good teacher and I know Madame Schumann-Heink, which fact she just happened to mention at least ten times during every lesson. “Watch my diaphragm,” Mrs. Potter would demand as she sang, “Caddy me bok to o. Vugiddy. Deeahs wheah de cottod ad de sweed bodadoes grrrrow. Deahs wheah de buds waughb. sweed in de sprrrring tahb”

At first Mrs. Potter wanted me to study singing too but Mother thought that, as I had once had very bad tonsils, it would be better for me to be Mary’s accompanist, which was fine for a while.

“Pale hahnds I loved beside the Shalimah . . . ah, wheah ahhh you now, oh wheah ahhh you now” Mary wailed at Cousin Reginald Coxe, who was painting Mother’s portrait and had to endure the form of reprisal. “When the dawn flames in the sky, I love yewwww. When the birdlings wake and cry, I love yewwww. . . .” Mary’s rendition of “At Dawning” was to me the most beautiful thing in the world and always brought tears to my eyes. Mary’s soprano voice was clear and true but not too good, so probably adolescence had something to do with it.

We were about twelve and fourteen then and loved romantic things but Mary’s love of romance took a different turn from mine. While I wanted her to sing “At Dawning” every time we performed and I could get tears in my eyes, she wanted to swathe herself in Mother’s Spanish shawl, clench her teeth and sing, “Less than the dust, beneeeeeth thy chaddiott wheeeeel, Less than the rust, that never stains thy saw-word.” Not only that, but having by this time ceased all pretense of practicing, she often made up her own tunes and words and her unimaginative accompanist, often a page behind, after frantically changing keys and turning pages, would finally stop dead and point out to Mary where she was and where I was and what she had sung and what she should have sung. This infuriated the great artiste and she would assume a tortured expression and sigh heavily as we got ready to start over.

It was during this cultural interlude that my brother Cleve, who had begun ominously to refer to Mary and me as “those darn gurls” and to fill the baseboard of his room with shotgun shells, put an enormous automatic bolt on his bedroom door, spent all his free time with the Laurelhurst bus driver and ate Smith Brothers cough drops by the box. One day Gammy interrupted one of our best recitals to show Mother a large armful of empty cough drop boxes and to tell her that it might interest her to know that while her daughter was traipsing around in her naked strip (her interpretation of the Spanish shawl) singing those lusty songs, her son had become a dope fiend.

Then Mary entered and won an elocution contest.

“Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table . . . !”

she shouted as she sagged and reeled around the kitchen, pounding on the table so hard her fist stuck to the oilcloth.

“Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able, Boom, Boom, Boom,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, Boom.”

she roared. Then suddenly half-crouching, with eyes like slits, she reached behind her and got her right arm and thrust it directly at us, the stiff index finger appearing suddenly at the end like a knife blade on a cane. Still crouching, her squinty eyes on the pointing finger, she slowly moved the arm in a half-circle and hissed through clenched teeth:

“Then I saw the Congo, creeping through the black,
Cutting through the jungle with a golden track.”

That’s the one she won the contest with and it was usually her encore and my favorite. Cleve and Gammy liked “Lasca” best.

“The air was heavy, the night was hot,
I sat by her side, and forgot—forgot;
.
Was that thunder? I grasped the cord
of my swift mustang without a word. . . .”

For Lasca, Mary wore her high laced hiking boots, her fringed Campfire Girl dress tucked up to her knees, a riding skirt, a green velvet embroidered bolero that belonged to a Bolivian costume a friend of Mother’s had left at our house, a cowboy hat of Cleve’s, and carried Mother’s quirt, which she flicked against the hiking boots when she sighed “for the canter after the cattle” or “the mustang flew, and we urged him on.”

“That girl ought to be on the stage,” Mrs. Watson, our cleaning woman, said, the first time she heard Mary do “Lasca,” and I thought so too. I thought all her recitations were absolutely marvelous and was delirious with happiness when she offered to coach me.

After studying me from every angle, Mary decided that I was the “cute” type. Why she made such a decision I’ll never know because at the time I was painfully thin, pale green, wore a round comb and had a mouth filled with gold braces. Perhaps it was kindness, perhaps wishful thinking, but whichever it was, it was most gratifying to me and gave me a lot of self-confidence.

My first cute recitation was “Little Orphant Annie.” Mary taught me to stick out my lips like a Ugandi, wrinkle my high forehead, roll my eyes, waggle my forefinger and say in a kind of baby talk

“An’ the Gobble-uns ‘ll git you, Ef you Don’t Watch Out!” Then came “The carpenter man said a ba word, he said, ‘Darn,’ “only Mary had me say “corpenter” and “dorn” as being cuter.

The family were openly nauseated by my performances, but when I recited at school the girls thought I was cute and begged for more so I learned, “Elthie Minguth lithsps the doeth, the liveth wi croth the threet from me. . . .” Mary, terribly proud of her handiwork, took me down and showed me her elocution teacher, who said that I should study, which we took as a compliment.

As elocution was very popular and most of our little friends studied, some of them reciting from memory, and at the drop of a hat, whole chapters from *Daddy-Long-Legs*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Rebecca Sunnybrook Farm*, I probably would have studied except that Daddy died that year and we stopped all of our lessons but piano and ballet. Mother could have stopped these too, as far as I was concerned.

“One, two, three, LEAP!” shouted our ballet teacher, as she pounded her stick on the floor. Mary leaped so high they had to pull her down off the ceiling but I, who had also seen Pavlova and the Duncan Dancers, rubbed my ballet slippers in the rosin and dreaded my turn.

When anything was sewed with small, hard, unrippable stiches Gammy said it had been “baked together. I felt “baked together” at dancing class. The other girls did arabesques that made them look like birds poised in flight. I wiggled noticeably and the leg that was supposed to point up toward the ceiling hung down like a broken wing. When we stood at the bar I pulled and strained and kicked but my bones were as stiff and unpliable as pipes and I seemed to have fewer joints than the rest of the class. In spite of it all I finally got up on my toes and appeared in many recitals.

In one recital our class, clad in short silk accordion-pleated skirts with pieces of the same material tied low around our foreheads and cleverly arranged to go over only one shoulder yet cover our budding bosoms, were supposed to be Greek boys, leaping around, pretending to be gladiators and drive chariots. We were very advanced ballet students by then and the dance was such a success that we were asked to repeat it at some sort of Army-Navy celebration in Woodland Park.

We were glad to, of course; but just after we had come limping in driving our chariots, the top of Mary’s costume came off and it immediately became apparent to the audience that at least some of these dancers were not Greek boys. “Hey, Mary,” I hissed at her, “your costume’s broken.” Mary ignored me. She leaped and whirled and stamped through the entire dance and not until we were taking our final bows did she deign to fix the shoulder strap. I was aghast. “Mary Bard,” I said, “do you realize that you were dancing out there in front of all those people with part of your bust exposed?” Mary said, “My dear girl, did you think that Pavlova or Isadora Duncan would have stopped to fix a shoulder strap? After all, no matter what breaks, the show must go on.” Our teacher, as well as the Army and Navy, was very pleased with Mary. In fact, the Army and Navy asked us to repeat the dance again, which we didn’t, and our teacher held Mary up before the entire dancing school as an example of a true artiste.

Then we started to public high school and Mary gave up ballet and went into girls’ club work, school plays, vaudeville shows and the opera. She had leads in everything and she dragged me along with her whenever she could. Once I stumbled out of a giant grandfather clock and did a scarf dance and another time I was in the dancing chorus in an opera.

As time went on I became more and more convinced that Mary was right and that anybody could do anything, but I had sense enough to realize that it was a hell of a lot harder for some people than for others.

2: What's a White Russian Got?

When we were eighteen and twenty I married and went to live in the mountains on a chicken ranch, and Mary plunged headfirst into a business career, which eventually resulted in her being fired from every firm of any size in the city of Seattle.

Mary's being fired was never a reflection on her efficiency, which was overwhelming, but was always a matter of principle, usually involving the morale of the entire firm. "I don't give a damn if you're the biggest lawyer in the city of Seattle, you can't control by bladder," she shouted at the head of a large law firm, who had suddenly arbitrarily ruled that all his stenographers had to go to the restroom at 10:30 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.

"Labor Day is a National Holiday and I'm an American citizen and won't work if you call in the Militia," Mary announced to the front office of a legal firm whose senior partner was anti-labor and got even with the A.F. of L. by making all his employees work on Labor Day.

"Go pinch somebody who can't type," she told a surprised and amorous lumber exporter.

"Henry Ford has proven that a rest period and something to eat in the morning and afternoon raises efficiency two hundred per cent and as Henry Ford's got a lot better job than you have, I'm going out for coffee," she told the personnel manager of an insurance company.

"If you want to say 'he don't' and 'we was,' that's your affair," Mary told a pompous manufacturer, "but I won't put it in your letters because it reflects on me."

Even though Mary's jobs didn't last long, she never had any trouble getting new ones. All the employment agency people loved her and she enjoyed applying for new jobs.

"There are only two ways to apply for a job," she said. "Either you are a Kick-Me-Charlie and go crawling in anxious for long hours and low pay, or you march into your prospective employer with a Look-Who's-Hit-the-Jackpot attitude and for a while, at least, you have both the job and your self-respect." Anyone could see that all Kick-Me-Charlie's kept their jobs the longest but they didn't have as much self-respect or meet as many people as Mary.

While Mary changed jobs and met people, I raised chickens, had two children and didn't meet anybody. Finally in March, 1931, after four years of this, I wrote to my family and told them that I hated chickens, I was lonely and I seemed to have married the wrong man.

It was the beginning of the depression and I didn't really expect anything but sympathy, but Mary, who was supporting the entire family, replied in typically dependable and dramatic fashion by special delivery registered letter that she had a wonderful job for me and that I was to come home at once. I wrote back that I didn't know how to do office work and it was five miles to the bus line. Mary wired back, "Anybody can do office work and remember the White Russians walked across Siberia. Your job starts Monday."

It was late on a rainy Friday afternoon when a neighbor brought the telegram but I checked the bus schedule, dressed the children and myself in our "town clothes," stuffed my silver fish fork, my graduation ring and a few other things into a suitcase, wrote a note to my husband, and leading three-year-old Anne by the hand and carrying year-and-a-half-old Joan and the suitcase, set off across the burn toward the six o'clock bus to Seattle.

It was not an easy walk. The road, following the course of an ancient river bed, meandered around through the sopping brush, coiled itself around huge puddles and never ever took the shortest distance between two points. When we made sorties into the brush to avoid the puddles, the salal and Oregon grape drenched our feet and clawed vindictively at my one pair of silk stockings. Every couple hundred feet I had to stop and unclamp my purple hands from the suitcase handle and shift the baby to the other hip. Every half mile or so we all sat down on a soaking stump or log to rest. The rain was persistent and penetrating, and after the third rest all of our clothes had the uniform dampness of a ironing folded down the night before.

The children were cheerful and didn't seem to mind the discomforts—I was as one possessed. I was leaving the dreary monotony of the rain and the all-encompassing loneliness of the farm to go home to the warmth and laughter of my family and now that I was started I would have carried both children and the suitcase, forded raging torrents and run that last never-ending mile with a White Russian on each shoulder.

Just before we got to the highway, the road had been taken over by some stray cows and a big Jersey bull. Under ordinary circumstances this would have meant climbing a fence and going half a mile or so out of our way, because I am scared to death of bulls, especially Jersey bulls. Not that day. "Get out of my way!" I shouted at the surprised bull and small Anne, brandishing a twig, echoed me. The bull, sulkily grumbling and shaking his head, moved to one side. If he hadn't I think I would have punched him in the nose.

When we finally reached the highway, I sat the children on the suitcase and listened anxiously for the first rumble of the bus. I knew that I would have to depend on hearing it because the highways had been braided through the thick green tresses of the Olympic Peninsula by some lethargic engineer who apparently thought that everyone enjoyed bounding in and out of forests, clipping down into farmyards and skirting small rocks and hillocks with blind hairpin turns, and at the intersection where I hoped to catch the bus, and catch was certainly the right word, the bus would be visible only for the brief moment when, having leaped out of Mr. Hansen's farmyard by means of a short steep rise, skirted his oat field before disappearing around a big rock just beyond his south fence.

I knew that I had to be ready to signal the driver just as he appeared over the brow of the Hansen barnyard and in my eagerness, I flagged down two empty homeward-bound logging trucks and the feed man before I heard the bus. When its gray snubbed nose peered over the hill, I rushed out into the road and waved my purse but the driver saw me too late and for one terrible sickening instant thought he was going on and leave us to walk back up the mountains in the rain. But he screeched to stop and waited at the big rock and I grabbed the suitcase and the children and ran down the road, and then we were aboard, in a front seat where I could urge the bus along and be ready for the city when it burst upon me with its glory of people and life.

The bus driver was not at all friendly, due no doubt to a large angry-looking boil on the back of his neck, the bus smelled of wet dogs and wet rubber, there were two drunken Indians in the seat across from us and a disgusting old man in back of us who cleared his throat and spat on the floor, but everything was bathed in the glow of gay anticipation and I smiled happily at everyone.

Down the mountains, through valleys, up into the mountains again we sped. We were going very fast and the bus lurched and swayed and belched Diesel fumes but we were heading toward home. I was going to live again.

Once when we went around a particularly vicious curve, the drunken Indian woman rolled off her seat into the aisle. The Indian man, presumably her husband, peered over at her lying on her back on the floor, her maroon coat bunched around her waist, her fat brown thighs exposed, and burst out laughing. The woman laughed too and so did the other passengers. The bus driver half-turned around and said, "For Krissake, you Bow and Arrows pipe down or I'll throw you out." The woman turned over and got up on all fours so that her big maroon fanny was high in the air and a tempting target. The other Indian reached out and kicked her hard and they both began laughing again. Anne and I laughed too but the bus driver stopped the bus, pushed his cap to the back of his head and said, "For Krissake, you two, do you want me to put you off?" The Indian woman climbed back into her seat and they quieted down to only occasional silly giggles. We started up again and after a while drove onto the dock and the big bus lumbered aboard the ferry and all of us passengers got out and went upstairs for supper.

Anne and Joan and I shared our booth in the ferry's small smoky restaurant with a Mrs. Johnson, a large woman in navy blue and steel-rimmed spectacles, whose eyes very handily operated on different circuits so that while her left eye looked out the window, her right eye was fixed on the waitress or on her food or on me. Mrs. Johnson told me immediately that her ankles swelled and everything she ate she talked back to her but she was going "upsound" to get recruits for Jesus. I told her that I was going to Seattle to work in an office.

She said, "The city is a wicked place full of the works of the Devil. Stay on the farm. Jesus is on the farm." I said that I had heard that He was everywhere but I hadn't noticed Him on our farm. Mrs. Johnson, who was busily fishing the lettuce out of her hamburger and putting it on a napkin beside her plate, said, "Praise His name! Praise His name! You can always count me out when it comes to green. Just like ground glass in my intestines."

I said, "I'm going to live with my family." She gestured with her fork and one eye toward Anne and Joan, who were quietly eating scrambled eggs, and said, "The Devil is in the city. Have those poor little tykes been babtyzed?" I said no and she said, "Throw them in. Throw them in! Wash their sins away. Praise His name."

Just then the waitress brought her apple pie a la mode and my coffee. Tapping on my cup with her spoon she said, "I like coffee but it don't like me. Binds me up tighter'n a drum. Without it I keep regular as clockwork, but let me drink one cup and I'm threw off for a week." She fixed her great big good eye on me and waited and I was not sure whether she expected me to say, "Praise His name" or to retaliate with a list of foods that bound me up, so I said, "Wasn't it funny on the bus when the Indian fell in the aisle?"

Mrs. Johnson swelled her nostrils until they were like twin smudge pots and said, "I am going to report that driver to headquarters. He took the name of the Lord Jesus our God in Heaven in vain." I said, "Well, he has a boil on his neck." She said, "Poison coming out of his system. Blasphemy is a stench in the nostrils of God and I'm going to report that driver."

I was pleased to note, when the ferry docked an hour or so later and we all climbed aboard the bus that the only scat left for Mrs. Johnson, who was late, was way in the back with the Indians, by the much drunker and much noisier and destined to be a stench in the nostrils of both Mrs. Johnson and God before we reached Seattle.

It was dark and still raining when we landed. The water was gray and rough and the ferry banged

into the dolphins and backed up several times before it was able to edge into the slip and the deckhands could let down the flimsy chain that had presumably kept the bus from plunging off the deck into the water.

As we rumbled onto the dock a train, bleating mournfully, and with the beam from its terrible fiery eye swinging across the water, came hurtling along the shore. The children, who had never seen a train before, were terrified. "What is it? What is it?" wailed Anne, as it streaked past, clackety clackety, clackety, woooooo, woooooo, its lighted windows a ribbon of light in the rainy evening. "It's a train, darling. A nice choo-choo train," I told her comfortingly. She said, "It is not. It's a Mickaboos full of Bojanes."

To Anne all frightening things were Bojanes and Bojanes lived in Mickaboos, which were nailholes or tiny cracks in the floor. Now apparently Bojanes flew through the night inside fiery dragons. Anne wailed, "Take it away, Betty, take it away." And I did. I shooed it around another curve and it went wooo-woooing off into the night, jerking its red tail lights along behind it. When the red warning light by the tracks stopped blinking and the gates were raised, the bus gave a lurch and we were off.

"Going home, going home," I hummed to myself as the bus nosed its way along in the thin evening traffic, its tires saying shhhhh, shhh to the nervous wet highway, its lights making deep hollows and sudden mounds out of shadows on the smooth pavement. We went slowly and carefully through the little town by the ferry landing, then for miles and miles the road was dark with only an occasional lonely little house peering out of the night, and we sailed swiftly along.

When we hit the main highway, small boxy houses with gas stations attached flashed by and showed cheerful glimpses of family life—mother, father and children eating supper in the breakfast nook—father reading the paper in the parlor—a baby silhouetted at the window watching the cars go by in the rain. On the highway small tacky grocery stores and vegetable stands, open late to catch an extra dribble of trade, littered the spaces between the gas stations. Every few hundred yards or so a palely-lighted sign pleaded "Bud's Good Eats" or "Ma's Home Cooking" or "Mert and Bert's Place."

Some of the gas stations also cozily announced "Wood and Coal," and I could just make out the untidy, uncozy outlines of wet slab wood and soggy sacks of coal stacked near the gas pumps. When the houses began to be closer together and neater and whiter, the dreary gas pumps became lighted gas stations, and finally once in a while the bus would stop and pant at an intersection while a traffic light geared for a busier time of day, stopped the hurrying impatient north and south traffic and kept teetering for a full minute at the edge of an empty highway.

At each such stop the Indians' pushing and shoving and giggling became audible but the bus driver, though he muttered angrily, kept the bus moving back and forth like a runner making false starts before a race and to my intense relief didn't take the name of Lord Jesus our God in Heaven in vain, at least not so Mrs. Johnson could hear.

Both children were now asleep, their bodies warm and soft like dough against me, and I must have dozed too, for suddenly we were in downtown Seattle and lights were exploding around me like skyrocketing on the Fourth of July. Red lights, blue lights, yellow lights, green, purple, white, orange punctured the night in a million places and tore the black satin pavement to shreds. I hadn't seen neon lights before. They had been invented, or at least put in common use, while I was up in the mountains and in that short time the whole aspect of the world had changed. In place of dumpy little bulb

sputteringly spelling out Café or Theatre, there were long swooping spirals of pure brilliant color. A waiter outlined in bright red with a blazing white napkin over his arm flashed on and off over a large Café Puget Sound Power and Light Company cut through the rain and darkness, bright blue and cheery. Cafés, theatres, cigar stores, stationery stores, real estate offices with their names spelled out in molten color, welcomed me to the city. The bus terminal was ringed in light. Portland, New York, San Francisco, Bellingham, Walla Walla, it boasted in bright red. How gay and cheerful and prosperous and alive everything looked. What a wonderful contrast to the bleak, snag-ridden, dark rainy, lonely vista framed for four long years by the farm windows.

The children had awakened and their glazed, sleepy eyes reflected the lights as they flashed by. Then the faces of Mary and Dede appeared right outside our windows and that was the brightest rock of all, the *pièce de résistance* of the entire show.

According to real estate standards Mother's eight-room brown-shingled house in the University district was just a modest dwelling in a respectable neighborhood, near good schools and adequate for an ordinary family. To me that night, and always, that shabby house with its broad welcoming porch, dark woodwork, cluttered dining-room plate rail, large fragrant kitchen, easy book-filled firelit living room, four elastic bedrooms—one of them always ice cold—roomy old-fashioned bathrooms and huge cluttered basement, represents the ultimate in charm, warmth and luxury. It's something about Mother, who with one folding chair and a plumber's candle, could make the North Pole homey, and it's something about the warmth and loyalty and laughter of a big family.

It's a wonderful thing to know that you can come home anytime from anywhere and just open the door and belong. That everybody will shift until you fit and that from that day on it's a matter of sharing everything. When you share your money, your clothes and your food with a mother, a brother and three sisters, your portion may be meagre but by the lame token when you share unhappiness, loneliness and anxiety about the future with a mother, a brother and three sisters, there isn't much left for you.

Two things I noticed immediately. Mother still smelled like violets and Mary still believed that accomplishment was merely a matter of will power.

"I hear that we are sliding into a depression and that jobs are very hard to find." I told Mary about three o'clock the next morning as she and Mother and I sat in the breakfast nook eating hot cinnamon toast and drinking coffee.

Mary said, "There are plenty of jobs but the trouble with most people, and I know because I've always getting jobs for my friends, is that they stay home with the covers pulled up over their heads waiting for some employer to come creeping in looking for them. Anyway, what are you worrying about, you've got a job as private secretary to a mining engineer."

I said, "But, Mary, I don't know shorthand and I can only type about twenty words a minute." Mary clunked her coffee cup into her saucer and looked directly at me with flashing amber eyes. "Leave the ninety words on the typewriter and the one hundred fifty words a minute in shorthand to the grubs who like that kind of work," she said. "You're lucky. You have a brain. Use it! Act like an executive and you get treated like an executive!" (And usually fired, she neglected to add.)

It was very reassuring, in spite of a sneaking suspicion I had that if put to a test I would always prove out the grub type, not the executive, and that only by becoming so proficient in shorthand that I could take down thoughts, would I be able to hold down even a very ordinary job.

"I have been planning to go to nightschool," I told Mary.

"Not necessary at all," she said. "Experience and self-confidence are what you need and you never find them at nightschool. Have you ever taken a look at what goes to nightschool? No? Well they aren't executives, I'll tell you that. Now go to bed and forget about shorthand. I'll always be able to find us jobs doing something and whatever it is I'll show you how to do it." That was Mary's slogan at home. Downtown it was, "Just show me the job and I'll produce a sister to do it." And for some years, until Dede and Alison were old enough to work and she had figured how to fit Mother into her program, I was it. That night I dreamed I was going to play in one of Miss Welcome's recitals and hadn't practiced and didn't know my piece.

From two o'clock Saturday afternoon until two o'clock Monday morning, the house was filled with people. Mary, who was very popular, was being intellectual so her friends were mostly musicians, composers, writers, painters, readers of hard dull books and pansies. They took the front off the piano and played on the strings, they sat on the floor and read aloud the poems of Baudelaire, John Donne and Rupert Brooke, they put loud symphonies on the record player and talked over them, they discussed politics and the state of the world, they all called Mother "Sydney" and tried in vain to convince her that she was prostituting her mind by reading the *Saturday Evening Post*. Mother said "Yes?" and ignored them.

One of Mary's favorite friends, a beautiful brilliant Jewish boy, played "With a Song in My Heart," on the strings of the piano and told me I had a face like a cameo and I grew giddy with excitement. Anne and Joan loved the laughter and the people too, and Saturday night when I was putting them to bed, Anne said, "Oh, Betty, I just love this family!"

Sunday afternoon, Mary's new boss, a Mr. Chalmers, who was coming to Seattle to instill some new methods into the lumber industry, called from New Orleans and talked to Mary for almost an hour. The conversation left her overflowing with enthusiasm.

"At last I've found the perfect job," she said. "Mr. Chalmers is much more of an executive thinker than I am. 'Don't bother me with details and hire all the help you need,' he said. He also asked me to find him a bootlegger, one who handles Canadian liquor, put his daughters in school, send for his wife, introduce him to the right people, have his name put up at the best clubs, get him an appointment with a dentist to make him a new bridge, open charge accounts with the Yellow Cab Company, a florist, stationery store, office furniture company and a catering service, and I'm to rent him a suite of offices in a building in the financial district."

We all listened to Mary with admiration and I asked her if in this new wonderful well-paid secretarial job, typing and shorthand had been requirements.

Before answering, Mary lit a cigarette, pulling her mouth down at one corner in true executive fashion, a new gesture, then said, "Betty, for God's sake stop brooding about shorthand. There were hundreds of applicants for this job, among them many little white-faced creeps who could talk shorthand two hundred words a minute and could type so fast the carriage smoked, but who cares? Do they know a good bootlegger?" "Do you?" someone asked, and Mary said, "No, but I will by the time Mr. Chalmers gets here. To get back to shorthand, the world is crawling with people who can take down and transcribe somebody else's good ideas. We're lucky, we've got ideas of our own." It was certainly nice of her to say we.

- [download Trick Baby for free](#)
- [Expert PHP and MySQL: Application Design and Development pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [read online Boethius \(Great Medieval Thinkers\)](#)
- [read Stuff \[UK\] \(December 2011\) here](#)

- <http://creativebeard.ru/freebooks/Trick-Baby.pdf>
- <http://www.satilik-kopek.com/library/Borges-y-M--xico.pdf>
- <http://serazard.com/lib/Louis-the-Well-Beloved--French-Revolution--Book-1-.pdf>
- <http://honareavalmusic.com/?books/Stuff--UK---December-2011-.pdf>