

Beautiful Day

By Marjorie Coughlin

(This story by Marjorie Coughlin, of Davenport, Ia., won third prize in the national short story contest conducted recently by the Catholic Press Association of the United States.)

Toddy opened her eyes and let the sunshine in. Only it wasn't like you opened your eyes when you played hide-and-go-seek, but just as if somebody opened your eyes for you slowly, so the light wouldn't hurt. Everything was bright and yellow and you couldn't see anything but sky and a little bit of maple tree through the window, so you could just lie and smell the summer without looking at anything. It was good. There was no school, and there wouldn't be for so long that you didn't even have to think about it. There was nothing to be afraid of today. No doctor. Mother said that was all over now.

Toddy got up feeling young and hounsy. She turned two somersaults in the bed, and on the last one slid onto the floor bumping her head against the post at the foot. It hurt almost enough to make her cry. But the long, beautiful day was ahead. It's good to be seven years old," she thought. "Daddy says when I'm as old as he is I won't feel like jumping on the bed. I don't want to be as old as Daddy; anyway, not for a long time."

On her way to the bathroom Toddy shed her pajama top, and when the sleep was washed out of her eyes, she crawled into her blue play suit. It was the prettiest one she had, and Mother had just washed and ironed it, so it felt cool and slippery. She jumped up and down twice—the way Ginger did when she was happy. It was nice to feel the breeze slide along your legs and just to have anklets to put on instead of being tugged into snow pants and long stockings that wouldn't stay up tight but always wrinkled around your knees.

Toddy ran downstairs with her shoes still untied, and slid into the

kitchen. Mother had cereal on the table but she had to pour milk, and when Toddy looked at her and started to laugh, Mother just smiled tired-like and didn't say anything. "You know, Mother," Toddy waved her spoon emphatically, "I'm going to start digging the garden today."

"Are you, dear?"

"Sure, so I can see the Sewers come up right away."

Mother didn't say anything.

"If you want to," Toddy encouraged, "you can help a little bit, but I want to do most of it so I'll be all mine—and then it's pretty hard work, and I feel like digging all day. Mother, do you ever feel like digging all day?"

"Not very often, dear, but I guess I used to."

Mother laughed sort of slow. "It must be a headache Mother has," Toddy thought. "It must be awful to be grown up and have headaches and not be able to laugh really hard. But then, if you were grown up you could stay up late, too. Maybe it's not so bad."

"Mother, are you sorry you grew up?"

Mother looked at Toddy, and Toddy thought she was going to cry. That was awfully funny, crying in the morning when nobody hurt you or anything. Then Mother turned on a quick, laughing smile, the kind that made her look so pretty, and said, "No, Toddy, I'm not sorry. Everybody grows up, even you will."

Toddy giggled. "But it's fun to be a little girl, so don't even think about growing up for a long time, and have lots and lots of fun because being seven years old is very nice."

Toddy decided that Mother was a little bit sorry she was grown up.

Toddy agreed with her, but all the

same it would be awfully funny if Mother were a little girl. Mother must have been very good when she was little because she never broke anything or tore her dress, or lost anything, or did anything wrong. Maybe it was just as well Mother was grown up after all.

Toddy cried a little when Mother brushed her curls, because they pulled, and it always hurt. After that she ran next door and called William. He was always up early, but his mother made him practice his lesson until Toddy called for him. Then they played in William's sand-box. He always let you build what you wanted, even if it took over half the box. Sometimes, though, he said what you built wasn't very good, and that made you feel bad because William was almost always right. But if he thought you were going to be mad, he'd tell you about something you could build even better than he could, and then he'd smile and you'd start playing all over again.

After a long time Toddy thought about the garden. William didn't want her to quit playing. Tomorrow he was going to his grandmother's all day, and you couldn't play in the sand-box when he was gone. So Toddy tried to forget about the garden, but nothing built right, and she was glad when William had to go in the house to practice once more. It was hot, and Toddy decided not to dig. You always got dirty digging, and had to be scrubbed; besides, when you'd kept your curls smooth until almost noon, there was a good chance they wouldn't have to be brushed again until supper.

Toddy ran down the sidewalk to the corner feeling the warm sunshine and smelling the hot grass. The trees were rustling but quiet, not as they did in winter. As she rounded the corner, she slowed down and started to hum. Out of the corner of her eye she scanned the wide front steps of the big brown house. No one in sight. She hummed a little louder and considered trying to whistle. Then he appeared around the corner of the house. "Here, Blue Boy, here, Blue Boy!" Toddy giggled. He looked so dignified with his brown eyes looking quietly out above the long, white fluffy fur at his neck. That was why she called him Blue Boy—because she always thought he should have a big, blue bow around his neck. He walked almost up to her and sat down. "Nice Blue Boy, nice Collie!" William said he was a Collie. Toddy sat down. Blue Boy and Toddy looked at each other. Once in a while Toddy would dig her fingers into the white fluff and rub the warm, vibrant throat. After a while Blue Boy got up and turned his head. Toddy slid both her arms around his neck and squeezed it, then she let his warm tongue find her cheek. Slowly Blue Boy walked back to the house and sat on the top step of the porch. Toddy's eyes followed him. Then a funny thing happened. Blue Boy wasn't there any more—and the house looked all fuzzy.

Toddy rubbed her eyes. Gradually things straightened out. She laughed and waved goodby. It was funny how different things were. At school when things got fuzzy, it was fun just to sit and pretend that you were at home with William and Ginger and Blue Boy, but when you were home you didn't want to miss a minute of the lovely day.

Lunch was waiting for Toddy when she got home. Mother still had her headache. It must be a headache. It wasn't anything Toddy had done because Mother didn't scold about anything and even said she would have a plate of cookies on the doll's table when Ginger came over.

Ginger had light brown straight hair and grey eyes, pale grey, like a kitten's fur. Whenever Ginger came over to play she always walked slowly up the front steps and jumped up on the high porch swing. Then she would sit with Martha Jane and wait for Toddy to come out and play. Toddy loved to see Ginger sitting with her long slim legs tucked under her and her dress smoothed out just like a picture with the window for a frame. Only when you looked close you could see the grey eyes weren't picture eyes because they danced like butterflies and you could almost never catch them still. Toddy rubbed her nose on the screen straining to see if Ginger had brought Martha Jane to play with Carolyn Lee. She had. Martha and Carolyn were the prettiest and best-behaved dolls in the block, and Ginger knew how to pretend better than almost anybody. She was even more fun than William because William always wanted real things to play with, and they were never so grand as make-believe ones.

When Ginger went home, Toddy sat and waited for Mr. Jim

name was Mr. Johnson, but he said it was Mr. Jim, and he ought to know. It was his name. Mr. Jim dropped his mailbag and picked up Toddy. He swung her way up over his head, almost dropped her, then set her down easy. Toddy decided when she was grown up she would marry Mr. Jim or somebody just like him. His eyes were so blue and his hair was so light and curly, and he was so very strong and talked so slow and laughed so deep. You could always count on Mr. Jim not to let you drop. Toddy started to think. It was funny the people you liked. They were the ones who laughed easy and talked as if you were grown up but who knew when you wanted to be swung in the air and sometimes even when you wanted to be held very tight on someone's lap. They were mostly people who had little girls of their own, but usually they hadn't time to play. Toddy wondered if Mr. Jim had a little girl. She would ask him tomorrow.

Daddy came home then for supper, and there was mostly grown-up talk, but Daddy asked her how Carolyn Lee was, and Toddy told him about her having the measles and divorce that afternoon. Daddy laughed. But Mother told him that measles and divorce were very serious things for a doll to have in one afternoon. So Daddy apologized and said he didn't know that before. Daddy was always very serious about Carolyn Lee when he understood about her. After supper Toddy dried the dishes. It was fun at night when there was nothing to do until bedtime.

When they were finished, they all went out and sat on the lawn. That was the nicest part. When everything was quiet, and it was almost too dark to see—just to watch the people going by, and Mr. Hanson sprinkling the lawn, and Mrs. Hanson reading by the little lamp on the porch. Ginger had said she hated to see the other people going places and the night coming, but Toddy loved it. You could always make up stories about the people, and sometimes Mother or Daddy would sing to you—always the same songs, nice quiet ones that sounded like the stars looked when they came out.

Bedtime. Toddy was sleepy. Warm and damp from her bath, she knelt beside her bed and asked God to bless everybody, especially Mr. Jim and to make Mother's headache better, and not to let Toddy grow up for a long time. After she crawled into bed, she lay for a while and thought about the lovely day. It was the nicest day of her life. There was nothing cross or sad about it, and Blue Boy was waiting for her. Toddy added a postscript to her prayers.

"Dear God, someday when I'm old, let me remember this lovely day because I know there won't be a nicer, brighter, happier day. Let me remember what it feels like to be little and very happy." Toddy laughed and wondered what Mother would say if she knew that Toddy knew it was better never to grow up.

But... it sounded like Mother crying. Maybe it wasn't a headache. Maybe it was something worse. Maybe Mother was going to die.

"Jim, she can't. She's too young. Not ever to be able to see any more. She's so happy and... and... Jim, her flower garden, maybe she won't ever be able to see it."

Mother was sobbing awfully... it... maybe it was Mrs. Marker's cats—cats—something or other... but Daddy would know what to say to make Mother stop crying. Daddy always knew... about the hard things.

"Mary... he said it would be a long time, maybe six or eight months... and the summer will be over... and she'll go to camp... and... and with us to California... Daddy sounded sort of like he was almost crying too. Funny... Mrs. Marker going to California with Mother and Daddy. The pillow was so soft and... comfort... a... ble.

After a long while, out somewhere in the black night, Mother's voice sounded cool and soothing.

"Night Toddy, sleep tight." Mother's lips slid along Toddy's cheek.

Gently Daddy's big, warm hand brushed back Toddy's curls.

Fordham Priest Marks Golden Anniversary

NEW YORK.—The Rev. Joseph T. Keating, S.J., Treasurer of Fordham University for the last 32 years, has just observed the golden anniversary of his entrance into the Society of Jesus.

A native of Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada, Father Keating was named Fordham University.

Hot Water Heated Cars
O'NEIL'S TAXI
 109 State St. Dial 9128
 ELMIRA, N. Y.
 Cars Equipped with
 uncture-Proof Tires
 WEDDINGS—FUNERALS
 Out-of-Town Trips

**Bucky's
 TERMINAL GRILL**
 Specializes in
 STUFFED PEPPERS
 SPAGHETTI, STEAKS
 and CUBED STEAKS
 Opposite Erie Depot
 515 Railroad Ave.
 DIAL 2-9472 ELMIRA, N. Y.

WAR COSTS MONEY
 OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
 U. S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS
 Taxes Will Increase
**NOW is the
 time to SAVE**
 Start today with \$1 or more

**CHEMUNG VALLEY
 SAVINGS & LOAN ASSN.**
 "The Brownstone Front"
 220 E. Water St.
 ELMIRA, N. Y.


*Irresistibly
 Desirable*
 ALL STERLING SILVER
**MIRACULOUS
 MEDAL
 AND CHAIN**

**\$1.95 COMPLETE SET
 TERMS**
 IT IS A NATIONALLY KNOWN
 LOURDES MEDAL
RAY

LE VALLEY, MC LEOD, KINKAID COMPANY, INC.
 ELMIRA, N. Y. OLEAN, N. Y. SCHENECTADY, N. Y.
 DISTRIBUTORS
 Plumbing and Heating Supplies—Industrial, Water Works,
 Contractors and Oil Well Supplies and Machine Tools.

Charles F. Hughes & Son
 FUNERAL HOME
 Charles A. Hughes, Prop. Established in 1896
 311 Lake Street ELMIRA, N. Y. Dial 4324

H. J. SHEEHE SALES COMPANY
 Dealer in
**ARMSTRONG INLAID LINOLEUM
 and FELT BASE RUGS**
 PHONE 2-1795 112 LAKE STREET

"Exclusive Not Expensive"

BERGER & RADIN 137 EAST WATER ST.
 men's WEAR
 OPEN FRIDAY and SATURDAY 11:30 P. M. ELMIRA, N. Y.

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR WINTER FUEL EASY now to change from Oil to Coal!

 RATHER THAN GAMBLE ON OIL HEAT NEXT WINTER, I'M SWITCHING TO 'blue coal'
 GOOD IDEA, MR. CAMP, YOU'LL HAVE BETTER HEAT THE SAME AUTOMATIC CONTROL, AND YOU'LL SAVE MONEY
 ASK YOUR FRIENDLY 'blue coal' DEALER!
CHEMUNG COAL CO.
 299 E. WASHINGTON AVE. DIAL 6268
 ELMIRA HEIGHTS YARD DIAL 24500
 DOWNTOWN OFFICE 110 BALDWIN ST.
 JOHN KEAYH IERVIS LANGDON