

All in the Family

Art of the Impossible

By Sarah Child



I was reading in a woman's magazine the other day about all of the people who think that there is nothing to writing a children's story.

Publishers of children's books are, according to the article, bombarded with manuscripts by would-be writers from all walks of life who would not dream of trying to break into any other writing field.

But children's stories, they reason, are so simple. Certainly, you yourself at a bedtime hour have spun something for the kids every bit as suspenseful as "Goldilocks" or "Tom Thumb".

Unfortunately, such classics as the aforementioned are deceptively simple. I know, for I've tried my hand at the art of weaving magical, mystifying, marvelous tales for little people.

Trouble was the fabric of my stories came out minus color, featuring weak characterization and over-familiar plots.

These are the same problems, I understand, that other novice children's authors experience. We have all been taken in by the art of simplicity.

I have duped myself hundreds of other times on other projects.

For example, how many times have I watched a TV talk show and been absolutely convinced that I could handle the host duties with every bit as much aplomb, polish and witty intelligence as the present star?

The truth of the matter is that I was on television a couple of times in interview shows — once as an interviewer and once as an interviewee.

In the latter capacity I became tongue tied, grew red in the face, ran out of breath and generally comported myself like an idiot. As an interviewer, more my line, I did somewhat better. I monopolized the show but the video tape later showed that it was my legs that captured the camera. They were engaged in a frenzied St. Vitus

dance the entire half hour. The camera never missed a beat.

It doesn't matter that I have started at least 50 sewing projects that I have never finished because of frustration, ignorance and general incompetence. Just let me see someone with a charmingly simple shift she has purportedly put together "in an hour" and off again I am to the fabric shop knowing full well in my heart of hearts that the dress will never materialize.

Somebody else's antiqued chair, sculpted statue, crewel embroidery can send me into ecstasies. When I try those "simple instructions" I am cast into despair.

Perhaps the answer is never tackle anything that looks too simple. If it doesn't look impossible to begin with, forget it.

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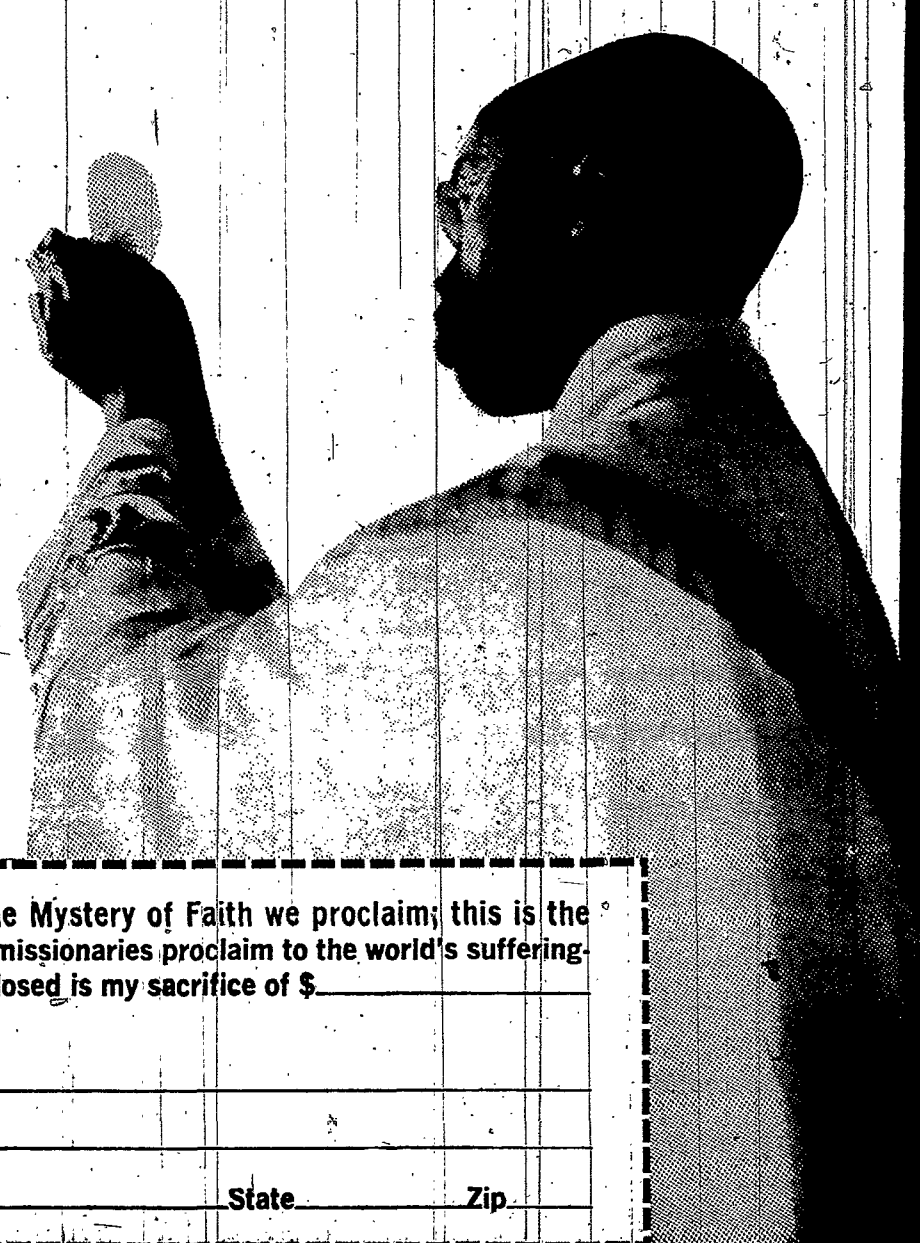


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