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Goldilocks

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"Honest, shan't she?" she questioned, doubtfully. "Honest, won't you let her?"

"Honest, she shan't," comforted Aunt Remson. "It's quite yours until father comes, and I'm sure he'll let you have it."

Rosa was silent a very long time. "Aunt Remson," she said, timidly, "do you love folks—folks who aren't pretty?"

"Um-m," murmured Aunt Remson, her mouth close to the hot cheek. "And folks who are pretty and sweet and who go to bed right away quick when their aunty says bed-time. Good-night, dear; I've got to tuck the twins in or we'll have double croup."

Long after the others were asleep Rosa lay wide-eyed and tried to forget the homely little face of the mirror and remember only the pretty new mother. She did not cry about it any more.

"I guess," she thought, as she grew blessedly drowsy, "I guess the Lord wouldn't have been so good to a regular pretty girl and sent her this locket. He must jus' know how I needed you." She kissed the locket. "Course he couldn't love me very lots, father couldn't, after having you—but I want him to!"

During the rest of Aunt Vance's visit, and indeed long after she had happily terminated her stay, Rosa was quiet enough to satisfy the most exacting aunt. She moped over her books or sat lost in day-dreams. Once, to be sure, she convulsed them all with one of her old-time pranks. She floated to bed chuckling, her head covered with grotesquely lumpy spots, "kids" borrowed from Sadie Atwater and laboriously adjusted according to the profuse directions upon a box.

The before-breakfast frolic the morning following was hilarious. They were not successful curls that the "kids" had produced on Rosa's head. Her fine locks were hopelessly tangled in unaccustomed coils; they stood out facetiously at the wrong places and were wickedly straight in sections. Aunt Remson found the girl and her cousins in gales of laughter. Without an obliterating shampoo school was out of the question. Of course it was all very funny, but somehow there was a nervous strain in Rosa's laughter.

"I s'pose," she said, soberly, with her head over the radiator in a frenzied

attempt to get properly dried before school, "I s'pose, Aunty Rem, that if the Lord hasn't time to make you curly you can't do it yourself. Probably Sadie's hair is a weeny bit curly anyhow."

After all these sober days Aunt Remson sighed with relief one afternoon when she heard Rosa's little gurgle of laughter and watched her race excitedly into the house with the others. The absurd cause of the children's glee brought tears of mirth to her eyes.

"The bottle man is coming!" shrieked Billy. "Us four is going to get miller-yuns of bottles for him!"

"Two cents for big ones this year!" cried Rosa, with shining eyes. "I know where there's a whole raft of 'em!"

"'Nd a cent for mejum sizes!" panted Elsa.

"Teenys a cent 'nd two for a cent, mamma!" Eloise screamed.

Whence came the mysterious rumor no one seemed to know, but the entire neighborhood engaged busily in the absorbing pursuit. The Remson children ransacked the attic, the medicine chest, the pantry shelves, and even the stable. They pleaded with Jake, the stable boy, to put his liniments and oils into tin cans; they prowled behind the garden fence, they tramped miles to rumored dump-heaps. For two exciting days the hunt raged and then, perforce, for lack of game, the hunters gave up the chase.

Coming back the last afternoon from a hunt that had yielded only two small "painkillers" and a cracked fruit jar, Billy and Rosa added and counted as they trudged along a cross-lots path.

"Gee whosh!" said Billy, stopping abruptly. "I know a bully place!"

"Where?" demanded Rosa.

"Miss' Thompson's house."

Rosa snorted her disgust. "Couldn't go there," she objected. "Aunty wouldn't let us. She'd be awful 'shamed if anybody saw us."

"Women make me tired," grunted Billy, "all knocking her all the time. Promise not to squeal? Honest? Well, I've been there!"

He gloated over Rosa's horror and went on, boastfully: "Yep, twice. She called me in to fix her birdhouse up on her stoop, and then she let me hear her funnygraft, and she let me run it myself, too; gee, I think it's a peach-erino. I don't see why ma's so down on funnygrafts."

"Oh!" gasped Rosa, in dismay. "You

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"Father, dear!" cried Rosa. "Please, please go away till it is dark."