

"Come along and read *this*, will you? It's regularly spooky!"

"This," proving to be a large card tacked to the little battered door.

They read it separately, over each other's shoulders, in concert. The miracle—for miracle it must be—took away their breath. They eyed each other askance, as though each had suspicions of the other. But, neither of them had left the barn until they went together. The thing took on mystery unfathomable.

"I told you it was spooky," remarked Kit in an appropriate undertone.

"Kit will know," quoted the other. "Where's v-o-e-f-s s-v-h, Kit? I want that key! We may as well take what the gods provide." But Kit did not know. It was not his brains, but his big feet that solved the puzzle after a bit, by scuffling aside the rug on the tiny porch and bringing the key to light. He caught it up with a shout.

"Queer, though, I can't remember that Rooshian combination of the alphabet," he commented dryly. "It sounds so familiar!"

"Probably you forgot it when you put on long trousers—hold on, I see light, myself—Georgy knows! There was a gibberish the girls at home talked. You took the next-to-the-right letter every time—listen, will you?—u(v)n(o)d(e)e(f)r(s), r(s)u(v)g(h)—under the rug! Didn't I tell you Georgy knew!"

Inside, the battered little house held further surprises—further miracles. For one thing, there had been nothing outside to suggest luxury or daintiness or, as Kit put it, a soul. But here were all three! Here were gay cushions thrown about at random, dainty draperies at windows and doors, bits of rather good sketches and altogether bad watercolors, and one or two rare prints, pinned to the walls on all sides. Here was a banjo, there was a violin; here a chafing-dish had a small shelf to itself, there somebody had draped a college flag over an unsightly blotch in the wall-paper. The effect of all things as a whole was surprisingly harmonious and pleasant. To come, wet, hungry, disgruntled, out of the storm into such a place, was a thing as agreeable as it was miraculous.

"We've died and gone to heaven," rumbled Kit, solemnly. "But where are the angels? I always supposed we should find no end of an—"

"Kit, will you read this?" There was startled awe in the other's voice. He was pointing dramatically to another placard on the wall, that they had mistaken at first for some sort of a poster. A raggedly-sketched herald flaunted a ragged banner, on which appeared these mystic words:

"Ye hungry, listen! A mince-pie waiteth!—doughnuts!—tarts that your mother used to make! Take your first door and go straight ahead. Don't stop till you get to the last crumb!"

"Spooks!" ejaculated George Holland.

"Angels!" murmured Kit, "and we're on their trail, old man." As, indeed, it seemed they must be. Who but angels could know how hungry two great boys could be? how mince-pie, doughnuts, tarts that their mothers used to make, could appeal to them?

"This is great!"

"We're in luck, Kit, for sure. Come on. Think we're going to refuse any of the goodies the gods provide!"

"Never!—not when they're mince-pies and such!"

On the kitchen door was a placard, announcing that there were kindling and dry sticks in the wood-house, long-ing to be useful. "Keep warm!" urged the placard. And what could two shivering, damp youths be expected to do but obey? Probably the angels knew how it felt—er—that is, probably they could appreciate, being angels, how it felt to be caught out in a driving rain with the Old Girl. Next to "mince-pie and such," a warm fire would be agreeable. If Heaven had sent it, why wonder and question and waste time?

On a door that might be—that was, the cellar-door—they found the most astonishing poster yet.

"Oh, I say, Kit!" expostulated George, in tones of remonstrance.

"Don't say anything. Come on down,

old man, and take their advice. They're the right sort of angels!"

For the poster read: "Strawberry jam downstairs, Kit. Have some. Suppose we've forgotten your strawberry jam tooth?" Could angelic intuition—inspiration—knowledge—go further? From his kilt-days up Christopher Dill had pined for strawberry jam—more! more!

"But," reflected Christopher Dill, "I never mentioned it in my prayers; now, how did they get hold of it?"

A hearty meal and a thorough drying by the little well-polished kitchen stove, and the two collegians felt refreshed indeed. With true philosophy they had settled down into calm acceptance of their good fortune—their not to question why. The embarrassing possibility of the angels' return at any moment was spared them, since the angels had so explicitly stated that they would not be back until to-morrow. Between now and then stretched a com-



Two long, shadowy figures slipped over the windowsill and dropped to the ground beneath.

fortable interval of rest and luxury. Theirs to enjoy and make the most of; then sudden flight with the Old Girl, and forever after firm belief in the kindly guardianship of the angels. Forever after they would believe in miracles; the supernatural would henceforth hold for them no foolish terrors.

"This, now, is my idea of great!" purred Kit enjoyingly. "But, oh, I say, old man, wouldn't it be greater still if we could have a smokel. But I don't suppose angels approve of smoking."

"Look there and see!" George Holland commended oracularly. He had discovered this fresh notice some time since, but had kept his find for just this moment. Kit was to be relied upon to arrive at this moment.

"Smoking Allowed!—I'll be hanged!" ejaculated, as one dazed, Christopher Dill. The gracious permission beamed benignantly down upon them from the old-fashioned mantel. It had been tastily and hastily framed in splashes of vivid paint that the angels might have applied with more economy if not with greater effect.

"Smoking Allowed!—looky here, old man, that sure scares me! I feel cold chills beginning to creep."

"Oh, go ahead and smoke 'em off; I'm going to."

The question of sleeping had hitherto not troubled them in any wise; but the matter was brought into sudden prominence by a new discovery, and, as it proved, the last one to be made. Kit had been pacing the queer, bright little room, smoking comfortably, when his big strides were arrested at a door that might—that did!—lead upstairs. It was in the shadow a little, which was doubtless the reason of the discovery not being made earlier.

"My uncle, if here isn't another spirit communication!" cried Kit. The other strode across to him and read it over his shoulder. Because they were by this time wonder-proof, they read it with stolid calm.

"To whom it may concern—and you needn't pretend it doesn't concern you both!—the bed in the right-hand front chamber is the softest, also the springiest, also the conducive to sound and refreshing slumber. Kit always did want a feather bed. Better choose the right-hand front!"

They faced each other with fine imperturbability, but each was distinctly conscious of the other's lurking amazement.

"Well?" muttered Kit.

"Let's go to bed," George said. "why not? In the right-hand front. No use refusing a good thing when it's offered to you as polite as that! We can—er—get up early, you know. It's healthy to get up early."

The storm without showed not the slightest inclination to abate its fury. It was intensely dark—even the Old Girl with her keen, bright eyes that defied the ordinary night, could not safely travel through this inky void. No; the Old Girl was vastly safer out there in her comfortable quarters, and the two young men were vastly safer in here, in theirs. It would be folly to tempt fate by leaving all this comfort and safety behind and sallying foolhardily out into the night.

"Resolved: That it is wiser to be dry philosophers than sopping wet fools," declaimed Kit to the much-decorated four walls of the gay little room. With a final wave of his hand he caught up the lamp and flung open the stairway door. "Fall in line for the right-hand front!" he cried, and led the way.

It may have been midnight—may have been later—when sundry noises below stairs woke the lighter sleeper of the two and sent him up on his elbow in haste. The shaft of pale moonlight across the bed showed that it was George Holland. He listened intently, dismayingly. For sure, Voices were down there, and if Voices, then—angels! The angels had got home.

"Kit—Kit, you!" he whispered in sudden panic, "wake up; I tell you they've got back! 'S, for the Lord's sake!"

The Voices were by now distinctly audible. The stairway door must have been left ajar.

"Do light something quick, Georgy; I think I'm going down cellar—no, it's 'er cellar!"

"How can I light a banjo or a teakettle, and I haven't found anything else yet! I say, supposing this is the wrong house, Kit—"

"It won't be if you ever get anything lighted—everything's wrong in the dark. I'm afraid I'm going upstairs."

"Good Lord!" sweated the listener above. His fingers clutched Kit's hair in desperation, whereupon Kit promptly growled remonstrance, but the growl filtered harmlessly through smothering fingers. With a jerk Kit came upon consciousness and the Voices. It was his turn to sweat.

"My uncle, they've lit!" he groaned. "We're in for it, old man!"

From below: "Georgy, where are you? Why don't you do something?"

"Great heavens, haven't I barked both shins, put out both eyes, run a violin bow into both ears—always had an ear for music—and stepped on a pin-cushion. What more—"

"I've found a match! I've scratched it! Oh, Georgy, you blessed, I feel like shaking hands, I'm so glad to see you again! Look, there's a lamp—bring it over here quick, before it goes out!"

"Hope you don't think it would go

out in that flimsy lace petticoat—not in this weath—"

The soft Voice put on scorn, but as quickly put it off. "Do stop jok— There, what did I tell you! There's Mig's violin. Perhaps now you think you're in the wrong house!"

"Is this Mig's overcoat?" the big Voice's turn now. "Nice long one, isn't it? And so many pock—hullo, here's a cigar spilling out of one of 'em!"

"Georgy!"—a soft Voice no longer—"put that coat back! I don't care whose it is, or anything about it! What I care for is, that my old Mig's asleep upstairs, and I'm going up and—"

"Hold on, Kit, not so fast! Don't you know people die of joy sometimes? We must slam something first and warn 'em. I'll whistle—no, see here, play something becoming on this banjo, will you? That'll bring 'em 'round easy."

"Oh, Georgy, what fun!" giggled the soft Voice. "What shall I play—'In the Good Old Summer Time'?—Oh, no, I know—'The Campbells Are Coming,' only it ought to be 'Have Come!'"

The gay little melody burst forth trippingly and ascended the stairs, two steps at a time. It seemed to dance elusively through the pale light and laugh wickedly in the faces of the two listening ones.

That it should have cleared off while they slept—that they might have been speeding the Old Girl toward safety now, instead of gibbering here like a choice pair of idiots!—that there was no way out of this trap!

"This is infernal!" ground out one in his throat.

"Did you hear what they called each other?" hissed the other. "Kit, 'Georgy—oh, my uncle!'"

"Your uncle?—mine, too!"

The elfin music tilted on, jibed on, laughed on. And down there below:

"Why don't they wake up, Georgy? Did you ever see such sleepers?"

"The poor things are probably all done up getting ready for us. All those things we spoke for, you know—I say, Kit, did you mention tarts, the kind that—"

"The very kind! Georgy, you think of it, at this minute while we famish and die, there are tarts somewhere near us!"

"Oh, now look here, and strawberry jam? Not strawberry jam, Kit?"

"Strawberry jam. Do you think Mig would forget how I adore that? Maybe you think she's that kind of a sister!"

"Come on, then. Stop making a noise and we'll tiptoe 'round till we tree 'em. 'Sh, 'sh, the Campbells Haven't Come! What's the use of disturbing the poor, tired things?"

It may have been fifteen minutes later when the Voices came back. They were now much more subdued, and the lapses into silence were suggestive of tarts and strawberry jam. The Voices themselves had a mumbly suggestiveness.

"Oh, Georgy, aren't we having a lovely time! Aren't you glad you married me?"

Strange there was no answer! Strange how breathless the soft Voice sounded next time!

"But I don't understand about the crumbiness and those crusts of pie—and the pies all cut into. Oh, Georgy, wouldn't it have been dreadful if there'd been tramps here and they'd eaten it all."

"They should have hung for it!" the big Voice growled.

"Well, they left us half, so I almost love 'em!" laughed softly the soft Voice. It was the soft Voice that did most of the speaking.

"Isn't this a lovely room?—if we only had a little better light to see it by! College girls are such fun—I'm going 'round to-morrow and read all those posters we found stuck 'round. Why couldn't you have let me stop to-night, Bad Boy? Georgy, I wish I'd gone to college; but then, of course, you couldn't have waited."

"Never!"

"Then—oh, wait, I'm all crumbly! Can't you wait?—then I'm glad I didn't go. Mig'll know enough for the whole family."

More silence, which might mean—it did!—more tarts. Then again the laughing soft Voice: