

during the day the boys were away at school, but at the evening meal David and Aunt Agatha fought as if they were both children together.

Agatha said, "The more I see of you boys, the better I like dogs." David said that?" asked David. His tone of voice was impertinence itself.

"What makes you think I didn't say it?" she said with absurd resentfulness. "Because it sounds like something I read somewhere."

Aunt Agatha said, "You did read it. Voltaire wrote it."

"He said a mouthful." Then Aunt Agatha turned about face. "How do you know? A boy your age!"

"It's not age. You can live to be eighty and never know anything in the world."

"Who said I'm eighty?" Aunt Agatha shouted defiantly.

The day before Christmas came. Every year the school gave a pageant of the Nativity, with reverence and charm. From the littlest child to the seniors, all took part. They designed their own scenery, made their own costumes, and while some acted out the story, the others sang the carols. The parents always came.

Bangs said at breakfast, "Are you coming, Aunt Agatha?"

"Certainly not—I've seen it before."

"It's not —"

But David said sharply, "Shut up, Bangs."

Bangs looked up at him, startled. Although the boys were not very close to each other, they were on amiable terms, and Eleanor was surprised at the sharpness in David's voice.

Bangs started to speak again. "David's —"

"I said 'shut up,'" David said.

"David's what?" Aunt Agatha said maliciously. "Come on, Bangs, tell on him."

David said irritably, "He only wanted to say I'm not in it."

Mrs. Harrington said in dismay, "Oh, David, aren't you taking part this year?"

Bangs kept his eyes on his plate. "Not even in the carol singing?"

Bangs looked up then and laughed. "His voice is too cracked."

David did not seem to resent Bangs' remark.

"I think I'll come after all, Eleanor," Aunt Agatha said. "I have a notion."

"There are no dogs in it," David said.

Aunt Agatha said tartly, "Don't you forget, young man, that it was the cows and the camels and the beasts that recognized our Lord first."

David said, "I didn't forget."

AUNT AGATHA had to have her special air cushion to ride in the car, and then Thomas had to go back and get her little bottle of Jamaica ginger, in case; and with all the fuss, they were late. She helped Aunt Agatha up the iron stairway of the school, and they opened the door of the already darkened gymnasium quietly and slid into seats near the door.

It was just beginning. Why, it was different this year. The girls were walking in at one side, carrying candles but wearing ordinary dresses, and the boys were wearing their white long-sleeved athletic suits with the school letter. They carried single files from the side entrances, their candles sweet and soft in the darkness, their voices young and gentle, as they sang, "Listen, lordlings, no me." No, David was not among them. The chorus took their places below the stage, and then the curtains parted

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# "What are they... SUPER women?"



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