

THANKSGIVING



A Thanksgiving Celebration

By ETHEL WEEKS

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WILLIAM sat on the bottom step, hugging his knee. This attitude in William's case was indicative of troublesome problems in the process of solution. Five minutes went by.

Suddenly a shrill little girlish whistle brought him up standing with a jerk. A little girl, consisting of a blue apron, a red sweater and a turned up nose, appeared.

"Did your ma get a duck?" asked William.

Suzy, hugging herself, shook her head.

"Nope; not yet she hasn't. She says maybe we'll have the doctor come if the baby don't get better, and if he comes he'll take the money that 'ud buy the duck. I ain't got up much enthusiasm for Thanksgiving yet. The twins has quarreled awful too."

"I ain't, either," sympathized William. "It's going to be just like Sunday. I just found out it isn't going to be any fun at all. Last year Aunt Amy got married to a jolly new uncle, and everybody was jolly too."

At a loss for words, William drew in a prodigious breath of satisfaction.

"Last year I had three pieces of cake and more'n sixteen dozen chocolate creams, and mother says that Aunt Amy ain't even going to be at grand-ma's tomorrow, and my new uncle and Aunt Lu is up visiting her, and she ain't going to come either."

"Why don't you have another wedding this year?"

William stared.

"Why, indeed?" he mused. "But who'll get married?"

"Who's there left in your family to get married?"

"There's Uncle Jim, but he wouldn't do it," said William. "He said at Aunt Amy's wedding he wouldn't dare ever."

"There's you!" burst out Suzy.

William looked dazed. Suzy's thoughts were soaring upward at a take-your-breath-away pace.

"Who'll I marry?" he asked.

"Me," answered Suzy.

William sighed heavily and rubbed the frost from the window with one finger and for the seventh time peered out into the drear out of doors. Why didn't Suzy come? It was most dinner time. After much discussing of Aunt Mary's new dress, grandma's rheumatism and the new family next door and William's ability for growth his mother and aunts were now gathered close in whispered consultation. His grandfather and uncles were talking election with William's father.

William flattened his nose still closer to the window. It looked like—yes, it really was Suzy. He bounded to the door and tugged at the knob with all his might. It opened with a jerk that nearly made him lose his balance. A cold, bedraggled trio, Suzy and the twins, stood revealed.

The twins stared. The whispered conversation of the aunts was, as it were, congealed by the sudden chill of out of doors. But grandma, after one startled look over her glasses, rose so quickly her ball of crochet cotton bounded gayly across the floor.

"Why, you poor little things! You're so cold. Come stand over the register."

Suzy's teeth were chattering, but she drew William into the corner.

"Ma wouldn't it let us e-c-come, so I

just had to sneak. I wa-wa-wanted to dress up."

William's father was looking at them.

"William, are these your friends?"

William nodded.

"Did you ask them to come here?"

"Not the twins, I didn't, but Suzy she knew she couldn't come without them, so I said they could be flower girls."

"Be what?"

"Flower girls. We're going to have a wedding. It's a surprise. I thought it up, like Aunt Amy's last year. Thanksgiving is so much more jollier with a wedding. Don't you think so, Uncle Jim?"

But the big, genial uncle who had never before failed his young nephew only stared, first at William and then at Suzy. The twins buddled over the register.

Now, he knew he was the only unmarried member of the family. He had been told that reproachfully many times. Therefore he continued to stare at Suzy, and Suzy was not attired in holiday grandeur. Uncle Jim said:

"Well, but don't you think she's rather young for an old codger like me?"

William could hardly control his temper now.

"She's going to marry ME! She promised me! Didn't you, Suzy?"

Suzy nodded. She couldn't for the life of her say a word. The staring uncles and aunts and even the kind little white haired lady were so terrified she felt like crying. Yet William had said a wedding was such fun. She took in a big breath and waited for Uncle Jim's next words.

"Why, excuse me! Excuse me! Congratulations, old man!"

"Jim!" It was William's mother.

"Jim, stop that nonsense. William, tell me what this means."

"I thought this was going to be such a slow Thanksgiving, dull, too, so I—so Suzy—so Suzy and I thought we'd get married today an'—"

"Well," said Uncle Jim, "I'm glad there's one bachelor in this family that has the spunk and the brains to secure such a ravishing bride for our Thanksgiving celebration. Right this way, my young lady. Now, Leonard (dragging a clerical looking individual toward William), do it up brown. This is going to be a joyful occasion or I'll know why."

Here he began to whistle the tune appropriate to such occasions.

"I'll have the honor of giving the bride away," said Uncle Jim.

William's chest swelled with pride. Uncle Jim understood. Even his mother was smiling faintly, and his father was chuckling audibly.

Uncle Jim's voice continued, evidently prompting Leonard in the words of the marriage ceremony, when interrupted by the telephone ringing.

Grandfather reached it first.

"Hello!" he fairly shouted.

"Yes, Eh? What's that? What? Well, I declare! I—mother!"

"What?" asked his wife.

"Mother, Amy's got a girl; born this morning. She's to be named after you, George says."

Grandfather was patting grandmother on the shoulder and trying to answer everybody's questions from what meager information he had acquired in two minutes.

The aunts were all talking at once.

"Did you ever?"

"Just think, grandma, a girl!"

William, very much puzzled at this abrupt interruption to his wedding ceremony, was trying to get some clew as to this new source of hilarity. But Suzy, though two months younger than William, was far wiser in some things. She burst into frightened, angry sobs.

"I won't! I won't! Even if I did promise cross my heart I won't marry you, William, so there!" She stamped

her foot and fairly shrieked her determination.

All were staring at Suzy—that is, all but Uncle Jim. He slapped his knee and roared with laughter.

William's wall broke forth without restraint. He felt the thing he had started had got beyond him.

"You have my sympathy, old man, my—ah—deepest sympathy," he could hear Uncle Jim saying. "It is indeed heartrending to be rejected by so fair and—er—fery a bride at the altar, and it would—ah, indeed—make a strong man weep. But I really think you must not blame her too much. She evidently feels this Thanksgiving cele-

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