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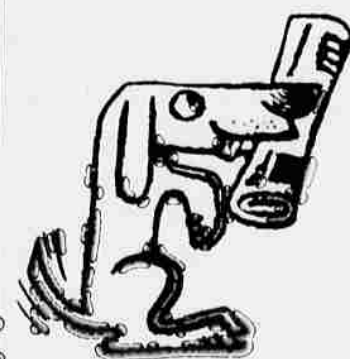
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even with buffering for
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HIGHWAY
TRAGEDIES**

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and price
announcements by
the local merchants
who feature
products
advertised in

**Family
Weekly**

Experimentally, Marcy
tested their tightness again.
They would snap
so easily!



A Moment

by Miriam F. Lander
Art by Vincent Guss

It was Leona, and the schoolroom
smelled of chalk and wet coats
and soap. The new pupil was
standing very still before the class.
That was the first thing you noticed
about her—that she stood so straight
and proud. The second thing was that
she was such a little girl. Her raincoat
was faded and sizes too big for her.
On her first day in a new fourth
grade she must have been both scared
and excited, but the only evidence was
the way her bright brown eyes moved
about, examining everything.

The teacher was at her desk talking
to the principal. Their voices were low,
but occasionally a phrase could be
heard: "... not exactly what they're
used to ... by our best ... nite
family, in spite of ..."
Looking at all these rows of neatly
dressed girls and handsome boys, the
girl realized suddenly she did not look
like them. Her hair was thin and wavy
curly, nor shining like the others', but
mousy brown and straight. Her
blouse had a patch near the collar and
one of the buttons didn't work. Her
skirt was cut down from one of her
sister Lily's.
A girl in a front seat wore a locket

on a gold chain. The light struck it and
made it burn with yellow fire. The girl
was wearing a pale-blue, fuzzy sweater.
Lily had pointed out sweaters like that
to her. "That's angora," Lily had said.
"It's very expensive, and it feels soft as
a kitten's fur."

The teacher came over to her. "I'm
Miss Kirsten, your new teacher," she
said. "I hope you like our fourth grade."
The girl pulled her eyes away from the
angora sweater and smiled shyly at the
teacher and the principal.

"I'm sure you'll be happy here," the
principal said. When she left, the door
clattered loudly behind her.

Miss Kirsten turned to the class and
said, "Class, this is Marcy Graham, our
new pupil. Say 'Hello' to Marcy, class."
"Hello, Marcy," the class chorused.

"Would you like to hang up your
coat, Marcy?" Miss Kirsten asked.

"Yes," she answered. A few giggles
rippled the quiet and Marcy flushed.
They stopped when Miss Kirsten said,
"Leona, would you show Marcy where
to hang her coat?"

The girl with the locket stood up.
"Yes, Miss Kirsten," she said. She was
taller than Marcy and her yellow hair
curled around her face. "It's out here,"
she said, leading the way.

Marcy followed eagerly. Maybe this
will be my friend, she thought, my first
friend in this school!

THE cloakroom was dark. There was
one window high in the wall.
Gray light showed the black iron
coat hooks stuck out like crooked
fingers. Marcy took off her raincoat.

"That's an ugly raincoat," Leona said.
And then, when Marcy didn't answer,
"What's the matter with you, are you
deaf? What do you say when I say
that's an ugly raincoat?"

"I say it isn't," Marcy answered in a
low voice, turning to face her. The ach-
ing hurt grew into a slow anger. Lily
had given this coat to her. It was the

Marcy turned once more to hang her
coat on the hook. She had to stand on
the shelf meant to hold rubbers and
books. Her foot kicked against some-
thing hard.

"That's my violin! Don't you touch
my violin case!" Leona said. She
grabbed the case and held it tightly.

Marcy's eyes burned. "I didn't see
it," she said, clenching her teeth.

For a moment they looked steadily
at each other, measuring. I won't let
you make me angry, Marcy was think-
ing, I won't, I won't, I won't. Her eyes
were bright, her cheeks flushed, but she
didn't move until Leona put down the
case and turned away. Marcy followed
her back to the classroom.

Miss Kirsten looked up as they en-
tered. "You may sit there, Marcy," she
said, pointing to a seat near the win-
dows. "Thank you, Leona."

As Marcy went to her seat, she saw
Leona whisper something to the girl
beside her and laugh.

"Class," Miss Kirsten was saying,
"remember what I told you about the
recital this afternoon." She looked at
Marcy. "We have recitals every month
at Brookwood. This afternoon our class
is presenting it. You'll enjoy hearing
your new classmates." Miss Kirsten
smiled. "Leona plays the violin very
well." Marcy saw Leona lower her eyes
and smile proudly. "And Mack is going
to recite 'The Charge of the Light
Brigade.' Perhaps next time you'll be
able to take part, too, Marcy."

THE BELL rang for lunch and Marcy
stood up to file out with the
others. Miss Kirsten called her
to the desk. "I want to give you your
books now," she said, taking some from
the cabinet. "These are yours until
June. You may put them in your desk
for the time being."

By the time Marcy came through the
line with her lunch tray, there was only
one seat vacant at her class's table.

tasted strawberry." She felt her anger
melting away. Maybe this boy could
be her friend!

Then she heard Leona call derisively.
"Look who's talking to Marcy Graham!"
"What's wrong?" Mack inquired.
"Nothing. If you want to talk to
her," Leona laughed.

"What's the matter with her?" Mack
said, sliding along the bench until he
was across from Leona.

Leona whispered behind her hand
across the table and Mack laughed. He
reached his hand back in front of Marcy
and pulled his tray over and then whis-
pered back to Leona and they both
laughed out loud.

Marcy's face burned. She concen-
trated on eating her lunch, but she kept
thinking, "I hate you, I hate you, I
hate you."

When the bell rang she was first in
line and when they lined up behind her,
laughing and pushing each other but
not talking to her, she felt the tears
start. She reached in her pocket for her
handkerchief, then remembered she
had left it in her coat. As they marched
along the corridor she bit her lip to
keep from crying and when they got
to the classroom she went into the
cloakroom first to get her handkerchief.

The hook where Marcy had hung her
coat was bare. She saw it in a small
heap on the floor. The coat was dusty
and wrinkled as if someone had walked
on it. "It was Leona," she whispered
in the darkness. "I know it was her."

Absently, she brushed off her coat
and hung it carefully. When she stepped
up on the shelf her foot touched the
violin case again. She sat down on the
shelf beside it and ran her hands over
the dark leather. The gold lock glinted
in the dim light. It felt cold and hard
under her fingers. When it snapped
open, the click startled her.

The violin was a rich, shiny brown
and lay in dark red velvet. The wood
was smooth and warm. The strings

of Strength



first real raincoat she had ever had.
"It is, too. And you're an ugly girl."
Leona stood with her hands on her
hips, legs planted far apart. "You can't
hang your coat here." She pointed to a
hook over from the others. "Hang it
over there."

Marcy bit her tongue, but she held
tightly to her coat. She looked at the
girl whose eyes were narrowed threat-
eningly, head thrown up, lips parted.
One tear spilled over, but she wiped it
quickly away.

"Cry-baby, cry-baby," Leona taunted.
"Don't call me names," Marcy said in
a tense low tone, holding the other
youngster with her eyes.

Leona was on the same bench, but
there were two girls between them and
Marcy didn't look her way.

"Hello," said the boy across from her.
He had a lot of freckles and a wide-
toothed smile.

"Hello," she said. She remembered
he sat in front of her.

"Where did you go before you came
here?" he asked.

"We lived in Albany," Marcy an-
swered. "I went to James Monroe."

He sipped noisily at his milk. "They
used to have strawberry milk last
year," he said. "Do you like straw-
berry or chocolate?"

"I like plain," she answered. "I never

stretched taut under her finger. They
would snap with a ping, she thought.
The strings made a thin humming noise
as she stroked them.

Experimentally, Marcy tested their
tightness. They would snap so easily!

But the violin was beautiful even if
it was Leona's. She stroked the wood
once more. The feel of it, the richness
of the velvet against the gleaming
wood, the way the lovely curves of the
instrument fitted into the matching
curves of the leather case touched and
softened the hard thing inside Marcy.

She sighed and closed the case. The
lock made a loud click in the quiet
cloakroom. Marcy didn't care.

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