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AT LEADING DRUG COUNTERS



## My Finest Mother's Day Gift

(Continued)

will be just as good to see you then."

But it really wouldn't be, I thought despondently.

"Happy Mother's Day," I said to my husband as he passed me in the hall on his way to work. My voice was bitter.

"The boys didn't get you a present?"  
"No."

He started to put his hand in his pocket.

"Don't," I said bleakly. "I don't want you to remind them or to give them money. Let it go."

At 11 o'clock, in my Sunday best, I went out our front door to catch the bus to San Francisco. Bobby and

Dick had just finished grooming "The Heap."

"I could drive you into San Francisco," the older boy offered generously.

I had a nightmare vision of myself—furred, fancy-hatted, and white-gloved—being propelled up Nob Hill in the monstrosity and jarring to a clattering stop in front of the elegant hotel.

"Oh, no, you couldn't!" I said crossly, "because I wouldn't go to a dog fight in that—that trap-rattle!"

"Rattletrap," Dick corrected absently, while Bobby looked wounded.

"At any rate," I begged, "please drive carefully."

Neither of them called out a happy Mother's Day after me, but it seemed to me forgetfulness was only what I justly deserved.

**B**UT I GAVE my speech as best I could. And my heart wasn't in it. It was across the Bay, with the mother who had made all this possible.

As I trudged back up our hill that evening, I was relieved to see "The Heap" back in place on our lawn.

I opened the front door, and there to greet me was my mother!

"Mama!" I hugged her joyously.

My mother was a tall, stately woman who always carried herself with great dignity. I noticed that she looked just a bit rumpled.

"Mama!" I said again, "what are you doing here?"

"It seems," my mother said placidly, "that I am your Mother's Day present. The boys came over and got me."

I pointed to the lawn. "In that? You rode down here in . . . ?"

"Bobby's car," my mother nodded. "Grandma sat between us," Bobby began.

"Like a queen," Dickie supplied. "And bowed to every car that passed us!" Bobby added.

"Chee," Dickie chimed in the final accolade, "is Grandma ever a good sport!"

"They let me pull the wolf-whistle," my conventional mother said, "all the way across the bridge!"

Tearfully, I looked at my sons, standing there beaming at my delight. I longed to reach out to those big, awkward, grinning boys, put my arms around them, and give them each a resounding kiss.

I caught myself in time, remembering the teen-ager's sturdy and touchy dignity. Instead, and true to the code, I thrust out my hand to be shaken. "Thanks. Oh, thanks."

And they laughed out loud, while they grabbed me. And they kissed me.

"Happy Mother's Day," they yelled in my ear. "Happy Mother's Day!"

And it was. The happiest.



*I was just thinking...*

**T**HROUGH the years, her shadow has fallen often across these columns.

I have recounted our chats about The Store. I have exposed her as a simultaneous painter of canvas and herself, as a secret drummer and a candidate for king on a platform of no more motorcycles.

Sometimes I have received letters from readers who feel they know her—or wonder if she isn't just a little peculiar.

All this enchants her, because she is less peculiar than honest and thoroughly unpredictable. It is she who laughs hardest at her own escapades.

You may have seen her in a grocery store, wearing an apron over her house dress and a petticoat that shows, or at White Sulphur Springs or at the Waldorf in an Oleg Cassini gown.

That is, if you're lucky.

It was a long time ago, but I have never been able to write seriously about her because I have read too many saccharine sonnets and also because a blinding devotion makes it impossible to see her clearly.

And how is it possible to write sentimentally of a woman whose hair won't turn properly silver and who talks to birds as though they were people? How do you communicate what it is which makes her neither pretty nor striking but strangely beautiful?

She's no Grandma Moses with a paintbrush. She's no Eleanor Roosevelt on the podium. She toils some, sews a poor seam, and does a thousand kindnesses for others which both they and she have long forgotten.

She always smells good. There's that.

And she has dimples because she smiles so much. She is never offended, only hurt, quietly by herself so that no one will be bothered by it.

She was born to give. Herself and the blessing of her humble, gentle spirit which forever underestimates its powerful goodness.

This is all I can write about this improbable, malapropable, wholly wonderful woman because the tears will come to my eyes and then, without even knowing what moves me, to hers also. For she bears all my burdens for me and therefore lightens my heart.

From her life to mine have come faith, hope, and love.

And the greatest of these is Bernie. My mother.

*Betty Johnson*