



... THE BRIDE surveyed her burned fingers ruefully.

"I've never done much cooking," she confessed. She applied a bandage tenderly to a cut.

"Even opening a can of beans, I don't have much luck."

She limped across the kitchen.

"Right here is where I sprained my knee. I was taking yesterday's garbage out to the incinerator. My goodness, what a mess that was."

She tried to smile.

"I fell down on the porch with all the coffee grounds around me.

"I couldn't get up for a while. Anyway, I didn't cry. Not very much..."

She poured the coffee. It was as black as the bruise on her arm.

"I'm not very good at making coffee yet. I've tried and tried, but somehow it doesn't taste like mother's. The bruise? Oh, that's what I got when I was cleaning last week. I got the vacuum sweeper cord tangled around the davenport. I don't understand what happened. And then a fuse blew, too, and the refrigerator defrosted all over everything."

She rubbed a tired hand across her forehead.

"A headache? Not really. Just a little, sharp pain now and then. I guess it's because I keep worrying about what to have for the next meal and remembering I have to send in the utility bill and wondering if I should get more milk today or wait until tomorrow..."

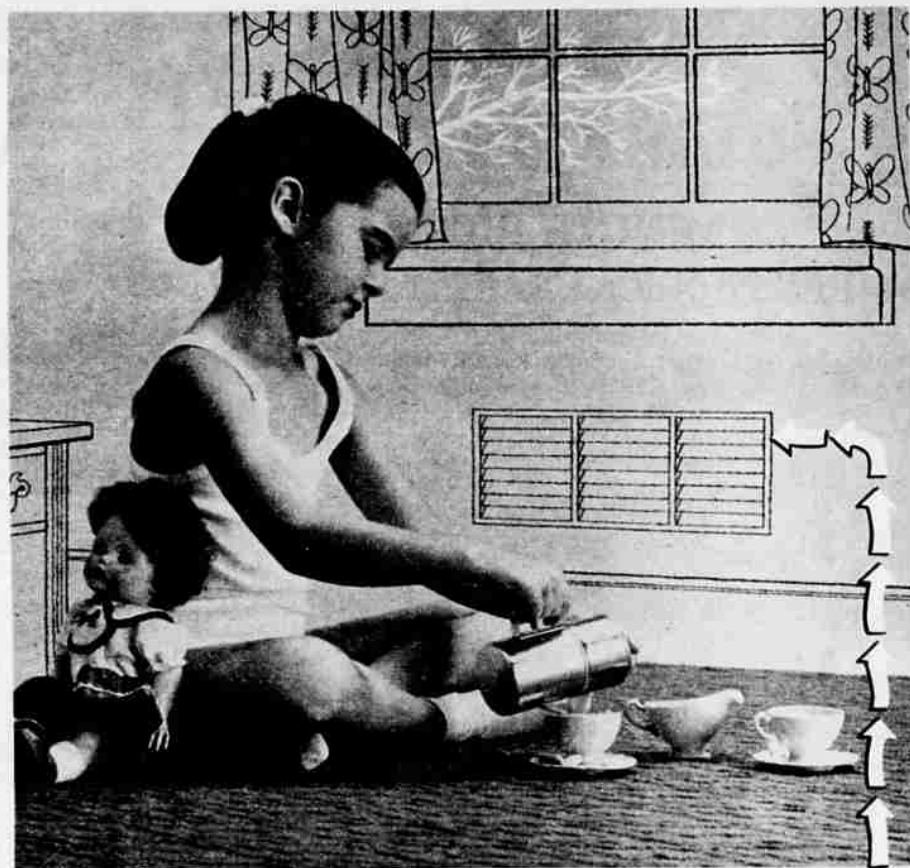
She watered the yellowing plant in the window.

"I don't know what's wrong with this thing. If it dies, he'll be so upset. It was his mother's. I water it every day and it never seems to do any better."

When the oven suddenly caught fire, she poured a pan of water into it, shooting the smoke out the window. She sank down on a chair. Her face was dirty and her limp hair hung in straggles, but her eyes were shining.

"I'm so happy," she said softly.

Patty Johnson



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