

Wanted— A Grandpa



By **RAYNE WOODBURY**
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WNU Service.

NANCY THRONE left the State road at the turn and gave the old truck all the gas it would take, for it was an uphill climb all the way home now, over a rough dirt road well strewn with projecting boulders.

SHORT SHORT STORY

The cold September night had brought a drizzling rain with it, and Nancy's thoughts were as dismal as the night; dismal in spite of thirty dollars tucked in a little wad in her jacket pocket, and the store of provisions that lay under a protective oilcloth in the back of the truck, together with the extra treat for the children—a cake of milk chocolate for each, a drawing pad that Nonnie had asked for wistfully, "when there's money enough, mother-r"; for Dick a miniature taxi, whose brave red color gave lie to the fact that it had cost but ten cents; a cuddly baby doll for Elsie, whose family of battered dolls were so dear to her three-year-old heart. She was so engrossed in her thoughts that she nearly ran over something ahead of her in the road. Her brakes jammed with unmerciful haste and she jumped out to investigate. Her lights showed the huddled figure of a little old man in the blue suit of a Union soldier, asleep in the rain. Nancy shook him.

"You'll catch your death of cold here. Where are you going?" Faded blue eyes peered sadly up at her from under mist-laden eyebrows.

"No place, ma'am."

"But where's your home?"

"Got no home, ma'am."

"Oh, nonsense," scolded Nancy. Her hand touched his forehead and found it unnaturally hot. "Get in beside me, here. I'll put you up for the night." She half shoved him into the spare seat and banged the door.

"Here we are," said Nancy, and genuine kindness rang in her voice as she helped the tottering old figure down. "You stop the night here."

But she was not wholly right. Before morning a high fever had developed and for three nights she stood faithful watch over her unwanted guest, lest the little spark of life be extinguished forever. When the fight was over there was no need to ask him who he was and where he was going. In his delirium he had poured out his pitiful story: How, after he had deeded his home and savings to his married daughter, she had made him see too plainly that the proper thing for him to do was to die. Unwanted. Nancy marveled that with his feeble strength he had been able to wander so far.

It was an irony of fate, she mused, that he had been delivered into her hands. Maybe the Lord had sent him to take the place of Dick, the elder, whom she had married in spite of everybody's protests, and with whom she had gone into the hills of New England to overcome his lung weakness. Dick had been gassed in the World war. Peculiarly enough, it hadn't been his lungs, but his heart, that had taken him a year ago.

Casually she laid her plans before the old soldier the first day he sat up.

"If you want to stay with us," she smiled, "I guess we can find plenty for you to do. Harvesting time's coming on and I'll be busy. I won't have much time for indoors, and there should be someone indoors to keep an eye on the children. In fact," she lied (but the old soldier never suspected the lie), "I was thinking of advertising for a grandpa just like you."

In the rush of work that followed for the next few weeks, hard, body-wrenching work that left her fatigued beyond belief at the end of the long days, Nancy was conscious of one outstanding thing, the children loved "grandpa."

Dollars accumulated slowly but

surely in the bank. She had wrested from the land the interest money and a little on the principal of the mortgage. After this was paid there would be but little left for the bare winter months, but Nancy was undaunted.

One night in early December she finished up her chores and dashed into the bright, warm kitchen. Nonnie and Dick were busy with their school books at the table, and Elsie was rapturously putting her babies to bed. Grandpa had just accepted a fat cigar from a stranger who sat beside him, his feet propped familiarly on the kitchen stove. He arose as she came in and she recognized him. It was Bestwick, who held the mortgage on the place. She started hurriedly for her check book and pen.

"Well, Mrs. Thorne," Bestwick said, and she could hardly believe her ears, "we're square now. Any other time you want to do business, I'll be happy to. I've given your grandpa the cancelled mortgage."

"Yep," grinned grandpa making a twisted taper of the paper he held in his hand, "I had some back pension money I didn't know what to do with, Nancy. And I figger the best use I can make o' this here paper is to light my seegar with it."

Commodore Perry Arrived Too Late to Save Seaman

Probably the only sour note in events surrounding Commodore Oliver Perry's victory on Lake Erie was the execution of Seaman James Bird, according to H. J. Carr, in the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

During the battle Bird was wounded, but instead of going below deck for treatment he stayed at his post until the firing ceased. After the fight he went to Gowanda, N. Y., on a furlough, and here he was betrayed by a man who told the seaman the war was over and thus there was no necessity to return to service. The betrayer wanted Bird to work for him.

Meanwhile Bird was charged with desertion and a reward offered for his capture. On the pretext there was money due the seaman for service in the war, Bird's betrayer took him to Erie, Pa., to collect.

Here he was seized and ordered shot, and the man received the reward for turning him over to the authorities. Perry heard of the seaman's plight and came to plead for his life—but he arrived in Erie just as the guns of the firing squad barked death for Bird.

SEA YIELDS LIVING



Here is twelve-year-old Miriam Flynn hard at work gathering "Irish moss" from the sea near her home at Scituate, Mass. Young Miriam has brought an old world industry to modern New England and is making money at it. She gathers moss each day from sea-swept rocks off the coast and hopes to earn enough for a college education.

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