

DEAREST MEG

By Margaret S. Hudnall

I stand at the window and watch you dance your morning dance, your breath puffing white on the not-quite-spring air. Now on tiptoe, now squatting on heels, now stopping in mid-whirl to listen for the school bus, you measure out the minutes. Then, with a sudden turn, you blow frantic kisses into the morning air and flash a smile that catches in my brain to follow me down the years.

I long to snatch you back, to hold you close to my breast.

But these are selfish thoughts. I cannot keep you to myself or shield you from your own life. How many times will you soar with happiness, I wonder. How many times will your heart hang heavy within you. And how long will you still turn your bright blue eyes to me in innocence?

I think of things to come and I am cold with fear. Fear that you will no longer remember how your arms would wind about my neck, how you would not settle down for the night until we had called to one another again and again, "I love you!"

I understand too well that it cannot always be so. Nor should it. Your life builds and grows upon your choices. I cannot freeze this time when you choose me. And so I write to you now

It is evening of another day. There was no sunshine in your face when you returned from school; only an odd, defiant look. No, you wouldn't play. No, you didn't want to watch that program! No, you wouldn't hang up your jacket!! You settle into a dark and sullen silence, turning away from me to clutch poor Bunny, ragged and matted and defaced by years of loving.

Finally the evening draws to a close and I settle you down beneath the pink blanket. Together we murmur the prayers that are part of our goodnight ritual, and I sit beside you for a time, stroking your tangled hair.

"How was your day?"

There is a long silence. And then from deep down in that place where hurts hide, a long sob breaks out. Then another, and another until pillow and hair are wet with an agony of tears. I do not try to stop them. They must not be stifled. Finally you are still and I coax: "What happened?"

Again the tears and with them a story of childhood injustice. Blamed for someone else's error; the disgrace of standing in the corner of the classroom, burning face turned toward the wall. But most humiliating, hearing the idolized teacher speaking angry words to you.

"She hates me. I won't go back to school!"

I sit in the darkened room and rock you slowly back and forth, whispering soothing words, aching with your ache.

“But she loves you still! She only misunderstood!” And there will come a day when we, too, will misunderstand each other. And who will hold you and tell you then that I do indeed still love you?

These times are coming, my little one. I fear the drugs and the sexual freedom and the unforeseen temptations that wait to lure you into ways I do not understand. Far more than this, though, I fear the silence that may some day come between us. I fear the day when you awaken and no longer feel my love; when you doubt, at last, that it ever really was.

And so I write to you, dearest Meg. I write in the fullness of my love, which can never lessen, can only grow as the wonder of you unfolds before me. You have been loved, you are loved now, you will be loved always. But one day, perhaps within a context that neither of us can foresee, I may find those words difficult to pronounce, and you, upon hearing them, may not trust them. That is the day when you must read this letter written in a golden time, and know that in a special place within me, incapable of diminishing, my love for you is cherished as a treasure.

With all my love

Mother