

Reading Article GP2

Article #2: Excerpt from "In the Shadow of the Pines"

by Karen K. Newell

The house was empty. Abandoned. His grandfather had died four years before. Alfred had returned home from the war as soon as he had heard of his grandfather's death, but missed the funeral by two hours.

"He was my best friend," the somber young man reflected. The door was ajar, and Alfred walked in. He sat down on the hearth where he had sat on his Grandpa Bud's lap and listened to stories so long ago. "My earliest memories, he thought. He heard the sound of small, wild animals shuffling through the pine needles in the yard, and thought of the goats. He thought of his pet goat, Nancy, and milking her and playing with her.

In the corner, the broken mirror of an equally dilapidated set of dressers stood. Alfred caught a reflection of himself in uniform in the mirror. "I think Grandpa would be proud of me," he thought.

The stillness made his heart ache. He got up and started down the path away from Grandpa Bud's homestead. So familiar and comforting are the sights and sounds of home to the returned soldier. But the heart has changed. He was restless and wanted to walk. And think.

As a young boy at his grandfather's lap, he had heard stories of battles long ago. There were stories about cowboys and Indians; Civil War stories of the Confederates and the Yankees. But he was no longer a little boy. He had seen the devastation of war. He had struggled with the great lesson those on both sides of most wars had trouble understanding – that one group of people cannot demand their rights while denying them to others. How many more wars would the world see before everyone would understand that?