

Reading Article GP2

Article #3: Excerpt from "In the Shadow of the Pines"

by Karen K. Newell

"Well, are ya'all just gonna sit there talking," interrupted Miss Annie, "or do you wanna see the toy room?" She dangled some keys in her hand. Kids jumped up with yelps of agreement. But now it was Grandpa's turn to look unhappy.

At every family reunion that Alfred could remember, Miss Annie let the children go into the toy room for a few minutes. On the north side of Grandpa Bud's house was a room that was always kept locked except for the brief tour every year.

When his own children were growing up, it had been the bedroom for one of his sons. When he had died, Grandpa Bud and his wife Lizzie grieved. They just locked the door with the child's toys and furniture still in it.

Over the years, four of Grandpa Bud's children had died and their belongings were added to the room. Some of them were only babies. Going into that room made Alfred feel as if he had stepped into the past.

Eagerly, the kids followed Miss Annie. Grandpa Bud never came along.

The door was unlocked and the children filed single-file into the room. Alfred remembered the row of children's graves. It was one thing to see the tombstones and hear stories of long-deceased children. But it was different to see the wagons, and tricycles, and dolls they had played with. It made their lives seem more real. The cousins looked longingly at toys that had been made for other children years before. Toys were a luxury few of them had. "You can look, but don't touch," said Miss Annie. As tempting as it might be to sit on one of the riding toys, they knew they dare not ask.