

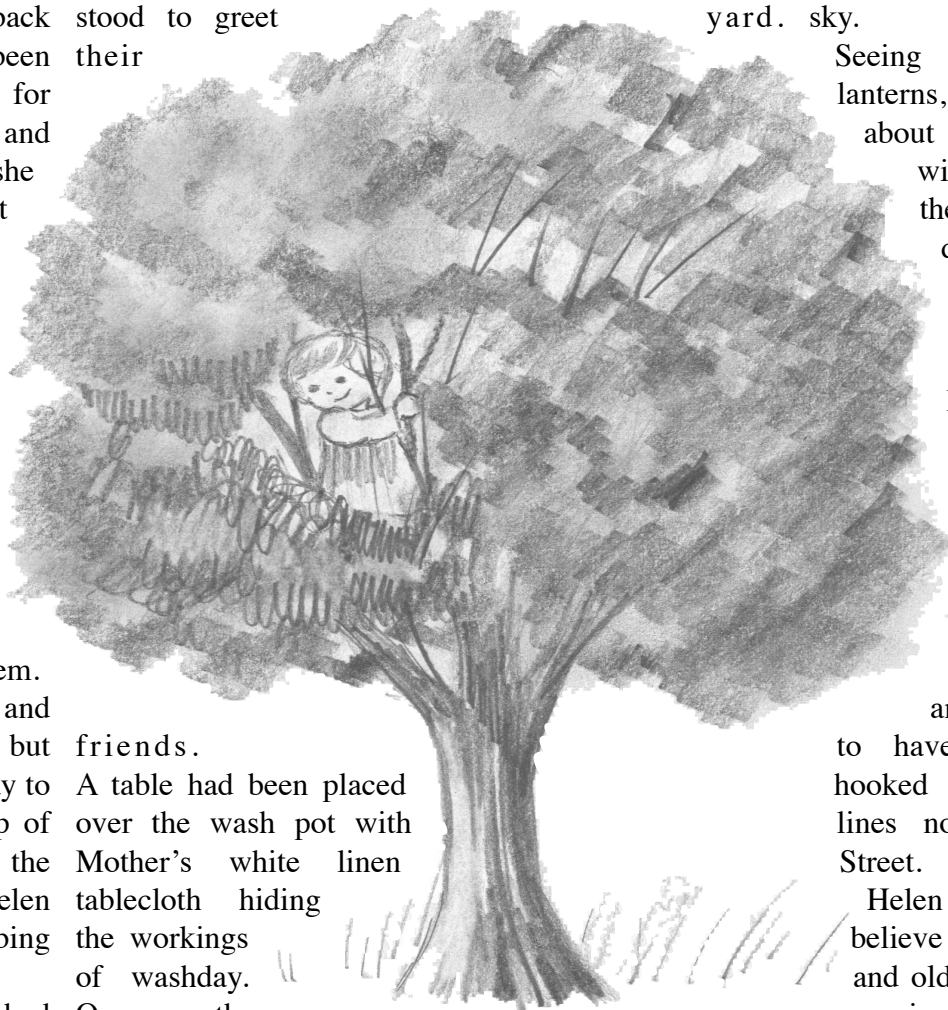
WINSTON, N.C., was covered with dark cream bowls and fresh the night air. In front of the fence were spikes of the gramophone, and she could hear his music from 1910—Helen couldn't remember when she had last come here to her favorite spot near the back porch roof. It had been her secret place to go for thinking, dreaming and wishing, but lately she had been too caught up in the life of the family to take time for herself. A year of healing had passed. Now, the time had come to celebrate Mabel's wedding.

Tonight's wedding party did not include the younger children. Aunt Emma had come to take care of them. She had gotten Jack and the other girls to bed, but Helen had slipped away to the window at the top of the stairway. Hearing the voices from below, Helen couldn't resist climbing out for a look.

Carefully, she had inched her way from the window to the edge of the roof and to the shelter of her apple tree. The snowy blossoms that had decorated the tree earlier in the spring were gone and had been replaced by a curtain of new green leaves. Through the leaves, she peered into the backyard and watched the guests as they gathered for Mabel's party.

Next to the house and under the tree the ground

was covered with dark green violet leaves. They made a thick mat where Helen looked to the middle part of the yard. Mabel and Bradley stood to greet their



Helen in her secret place

friends.

A table had been placed over the wash pot with Mother's white linen tablecloth hiding the workings of washday.

On the table stood tall glasses, a big pitcher of lemonade and a vase filled with daisies that the children had picked earlier in the day. Nearby, Alan and Harry had set two ice cream churns on the wash bench and were calling to their friends to help turn the cranks. Helen knew that later the guests would be served fruit from Papa's store. Cantaloupe halves would serve as ice

Cousin Jesse and Richard sat on the swing that hung from the big oak tree. They weren't getting as high a ride as she would have liked, but still they were laughing and having a fine time.

Across from the frame of the swing and against the high board fence grew a hedge of white flowers that added sweetness to

the night air. In front of the fence were spikes of larkspur in shades of blue that matched the evening sky.

Seeing the glowing lanterns, Helen thought about Alan who had wired the lights for the party. He had drawn pictures of the wires connecting the batteries to the lanterns and had talked about the wiring at the table at suppertime. He was fascinated by electricity and was anxious to have their house hooked to the power lines now on Spruce Street.

Helen could not believe her big sister and older brothers and cousins had become adults. Even Cal! He was on the porch just under her perch. She couldn't see him, but she

could hear his music from the gramophone, and she knew he was turning the handle to make it play. He had almost become a man during this year. He had fought a crushing illness and helped the family in ways he had never done before.

Perhaps the one who had grown the most was Helen herself. She was not the child she had been. She had known nothing of the difficulties the family would face when she and her sister played their way home from school just months ago. Now, she thought of the fortuneteller at Nissen Park who said that she might be a nurse someday. Of course, she could be; she would be. She wanted to help folks get well the way she and Cal had recovered. She wanted to give the comfort and support that Sis Nan had given her. She wanted to be like the nurses at the hospital who helped Papa when he lost his leg.

Now the lights were

shining on all of the people she loved most. Papa sat beneath the arbor under one of the lanterns, and Mother stood close beside him. Helen felt proud and happy as she looked at them. She was truly glad to be a part of the family.

Helen knew that Papa would rest tonight, for tomorrow the train would bring his parents and Sis Nan. Tomorrow the house would be filled with friends and family, young and old. And tomorrow Papa would walk Mabel into the church to be married.

THE END

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ACTIVITY: Do you have a special place where you go to read, write, think or gather with family members or friends? Is the place a location or is it a "virtual" space? What makes a personal or public space "special?" Find examples in the news.

HISTORY: Electricity enabled cities to develop, but nine of 10 rural homes lacked power until the 1930s. To spread electricity, the Rural Electrification Act passed in 1935 as part of the New Deal.