

"We'll follow you." They left the immediate environs of the mining camp and tramped down the road. Stairs carved into the steep hillside helped them climb up into the higher parts of Franklin.

They stood on the bluff with the tangled heaps of berry briars facing them. Winona picked from the three foot high brambles. John picked the middlers, and Aunt Matilda, the six foot berries above her head. Some berries went into John and Winona, but a lot made it into the pails. It did not take long to fill two three gallon pails. The berries were large and the pails were overflowing. Every once in a while, Matilda stopped and absorbed the local color of Franklin, Washington. She stopped and breathed deeply and stared at the scenery. The fresh morning breeze aroused a deep spiritual experience in the beauty of Washington State. It brought out the song in her soul, and the atmosphere echoed with the music of Aunt Matilda.

A social group of perching sparrows listened to her voice floating up to them on a tree branch. The chosen sentry bird leader of the sparrow group, always on the lookout, set up a furious chirping. Matilda took off her straw hat and with nervous energy waved it about to cool herself off. The birds understood the flapping to mean "to go and settle elsewhere," so they flew away.

"I love berries, Aunty." Winona grinned, showing purple lips and a dark purple smile. Someone else liked berries too. Sitting high up in a tree considering the day's events, a black bear sniffed the leaves and gnawed a little of the bark. The excellent climber had no trouble getting to his branch. He sat with his big furry bottom lodged in the fork of two large branches. For a while the bear watched the berry pickers, then he had an overwhelming desire to join them and have a juicy snack of berries. The black bear wouldn't really bite, only if his place was disturbed, or he became wounded. He was neither. How or why he was so close to the mining camp no one would ever figure out, except that every once in a while bears wandered close in. There were a lot of tall trees to sit in, but Black Bear chose the one near the mining camp. Whoever was there didn't seem to matter to him. With a shaking of the branches, he decided to climb down. Clinging with his claws to the tree bark, he climbed down backwards and found himself on the ground. He pawed the air sitting on his haunches. Aunt Matilda spied him from the corner of her eye. "Good Lordy!" She threw her arms into the air, the pail handle still clutched in hand. The bucket dumped a goodly amount of berries into the rim of her hat, and there the berries rested. The pail landed with a clank on its side on the ground. "Good Lordy," she gasped. Matilda grabbed for the arms of the two children. She got Winona's all right. "Black bear looking at us." Matilda was breathless, the words barely came out. With Winona's hand securely clenched in hers, she pulled her along until Winona's body left the ground and she was flying

free of gravity. Matilda looked down and realized she had only Winona and not John. John looked back and saw the berry pails getting farther away from him. He wasn't going to let any old bear get his envisioned piece of pie. John's mind worked in one direction — get the berries. He crawled on all fours to the berry pails and grabbed the handles of the pails. He stood up and with careful giant steps, he retreated to the safety of Aunt Matilda and Winona. They ran together to the dusty road and up the steps and into the house. "Lordy!" Annie almost dropped her flat iron. Matilda sank into the over-stuffed chair. "Lordy, Annie!" Annie laughed holding her hand to her mouth. "You look like a fruit salad with berries in your hat."

Winona pulled on her mother's skirt. "She has been saying 'Lordy' ever since the black bear looked at us." Annie found the nearest piece of wall to lean against. "Lordy," she said. After the pie making and everyone drank coffee to go along with the man size slices of pie dished up by Annie and Melinda, the bear story grew in proportion. Aunt Matilda only said, "Lordy," every once in a while when she thought of the bear. Winona got eaten several times in her sleep, and John flew away, leaving the bear to grow and snarl.

The berry season and the visit of Aunt Matilda had one more episode to remember. Matilda made the remark with clarity and finality. "I hear there is a camp meeting yonder; I heard it at the company store. We're all going to camp meeting Sunday morning to say thanks for not being eaten by that black bear yesterday." Annie and Matilda had all day Saturday to get the clothes ready for a Sunday meeting. Annie had a white dress for Winona. It was a little long, so Matilda took a needle to the hem. Sunday morning came, and another nice day was promised them. Alfred waited patiently at the door. He called, "camp meeting time!" "Got to go to the outhouse, Daddy." "All right, hurry right back." Alfred gave up standing by the door and poured the last cup of coffee in the pot. Winona strolled along the path until she arrived at the outhouse, barely visible amidst the blackberry bramble covering. Winona picked a berry and held it in her hand on the way in. She looked at her white dress. A small round spot of juice dropped on the front of her dress. She sat down on one of the places and spread out her dress. "Pretty polka dot." Very carefully Winona made a matching dot with the berry near the first stain. She forgot about the time. All around her white dress, up and down the front of her. Winona made matching polka dots. The purple stains stood out bright against the white material. She jumped down and stood on the floor. "Pretty!" Her dress had more color now. Winona was pleased. "Winona, hurry up." She heard her name called. "I'm coming." Winona came through the door and stood in the middle of the family members surrounding her. "Lordy!" Aunt Matilda held her