

A Night At the Elmdorph

phone: 758-1180

Kathy Leonard
7th Grade

Mrs. Sober

The kind, gnarled hand of the stagecoach driver reached out, and I jumped to the ground, kicking dust up into my petticoats.

As I shook out my skirts, the driver pulled my trunk off the top of the stagecoach and carried it effortlessly into the cheerful hall of the inn.

The freshly painted sign outside had read:

THE ELMENDORPH INN

Elmendorph sounded like a nice name to me. It had a lovely ring to it.

A slightly plump woman in a stiff, spotless, white apron wrote my name in a gold-bound book. Then she took a shiny brass key off a board hanging on the wall behind her and said, "I'm Mrs. Sharpe, Margaret. You'll have room number five. Dinner is served at six o'clock, and tonight's special is ham and scalloped potatoes." She smiled cheerfully, then continued, "Dirk will take your trunk upstairs for you."

I followed Dirk up to room five. The room seemed nice and cozy. There were two plump, feathery beds with rust-colored blankets and big, puffy pillows in white pillowcases with rust-colored trim. There was also a chest of drawers, made out of oak, and there were thin white curtains at the windows.

I decided to go downstairs and eat.

The diningroom was warm and welcoming. A

stone fireplace took up just about one whole wall. There were seven or eight tables spread about the room, each one covered with a spotless red and white checked tablecloth, with a candle in a pewter candlestick. The chairs had high backs with carvings of a pair of birds with vines and flowers around the edges. On the wall were portraits of previous innkeepers, done in dark, ominous colors. The curtains at the window were the same as in my bedroom.

A dark-haired girl stood in the corner of the diningroom dishing food onto the plates of guests. The food was in huge copper kettles which hung over a blazing fire in the fireplace.

The firelight flickered on her dark hair and tinted the roots a gold color. She reminded me of my sister, Martha.

I took my place in the end of the line. When it was my turn, I took some tantalizingly delicious chicken and dumplings, hot carrots steaming in their own juices, mashed potatoes with creamy melted butter on top, and a glass of apple cider from a large barrel.

I took a seat at a table near the window. Snow was beginning to fall, and it stuck in little star shapes on the windowpane.

As I began to eat, I looked around the room. Mrs. Sharpe was now at the fireplace. She was dipping a silver ladle into a kettle of gravy, and pouring it onto a bowl of potatoes. At the table opposite me six men were laughing and drinking large, glass mugs of beer. As I watched, they ate at least three whole chickens altogether! A young woman and a young man were at another table, eating their ham and potatoes, and not speaking a single word.

By the time I was done, the girl was back by the fireplace. She had a kettle of hot water, and was washing dishes. I picked up my empty plate, glass, and silverware, and went over to join her.

"Hi," I said. She looked up from the kettle of dishes and smiled.

"Hi," she replied. "I'm Emily Sharpe. Care to help with the dishes?" She gave a chuckle to show that she was only joking.

"I'm Margaret Potter, and I love to do dishes," I laughed with her.

For half an hour Emily and I had soapsuds up to our elbows. Their dishes were all so beautiful! The plates were china with a blue border of flowers, and only one out of about twenty-five plates was chipped. There were three kinds of glasses: glass mugs made of thick glass with wide handles, regular-sized glasses

like the one I had used, and teacups and saucers
matching the plates. The silverware was silver or
pewter, or something similar to that. All the pieces
had a weaving vine pattern on their handles.

When we had finally finished the dishes, there
was only a man in a rumpled brown hat left in
the room eating. I said good night to Emily and
wearily climbed the stairs.

As soon as I was in my nightgown, I brushed
out my hair before the little mirror on the chest
of drawers. Then I slipped contentedly under the
woolen blanket and the cool, white sheet and slept.