



As they passed the school, Tucker looked around at Teaberry, envying her; *she* never had to go to school a single day

# Afternoon in Deer Meadow

It is hard to tell who really won the battle that afternoon—Tucker, who found the courage to face his worst enemy, or the explosive Teaberry, who just tagged along and was suddenly there when he needed her

ATHER had driven the top-down Model T on up to the public road and Tucker had hopped out to open the big rusty iron gate when from behind them, whizzing across the meadow toward them, came Teaberry, looking less like a little Negro girl than, from that distance, a hornet trying to fly out of a skimpy checked dress, or a blackbird set flying with the injunction that periodically it must touch the ground as a guarantee it would not fly away and be seen no more.

Before Tucker could close the gate after Father had driven through, the figure had sailed across the quarter-mile of meadow and, with neither leap nor spring, had simply soared up into the back of the car and was sitting there; she was not even breathing hard.

"How do you do, Miss Teaberry," Father said broadly. "I gather that you're goin' with us."

"Yassuh," she said. "Kin Ah?"

Tucker climbed back into the front seat beside Father.

"Do you suppose," Father said to Teaberry, "that you could look after my son and heir up there in that big town?"

"Yassuh," she said.

"All right," Father said. "Stay put."

Tucker was a little annoyed with Teaberry. They were on their way to the upper farm at Deer Meadow and he wanted to make the trip alone with Father. He was ten years old—that age when a man likes to be with other men—but Teaberry who was only nine, still tagged at his heels, just as she had done since the day her mother had come to cook for them, six years before.

The clay-and-gravel road skirted the irregular base of Dunlap Mountain. As the car wormed over and around hills and low ridges, it left behind a yellowish column of Virginia dust. Now and then they passed a shanty with its log stable and two or three pieces of broken-down farm equipment standing out in the sun. That part of the valley was poor-man's country and moonshiners' country.

As they neared the village, Tucker looked around at Teaberry. She sat immobile on the seat, legs stretched out beyond the edge of the cushion, her left fist clenched upon something.

"What you got in your hand?" he asked.

"Ain't got nuthin' that 'mounts to nuthin' much."

"You have too. What you got—a cricket?"

"Ain't got no cricket. Ain't got nuthin' much."

She looked a little like a slightly oversized cricket herself. Her eyes had that wide-open but guarded, buggy stare, looking toward the excitement and mystery of the village to which she had been no more than a half-dozen times in her life.

"Tumblebug?"

"Ain't got no tumblebug neither. Doan 'mount to nuthin'."

Tucker knew by her extreme innocence that it was something important.

"All right, don't tell me," he said, turning back. "I'll get a secret from you too and I won't tell you for a couple of years."

Deer Meadow consisted of twenty-five or thirty dwellings, the flour mill, Mr. Walter Lange's store, the schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, Baptist church, colored church, and the big shed that the Holy Rollers used as a church. The village lay in the shape of an elbow, part of it along the Colonial Springs Pike and the other part along the Valley Road. A creek wandered down through the middle of it. At this season the creek was dry except for a stagnant pool here and there.

They passed the school. Immediately Tucker en-



vied Teaberry; she had never had to go to school a single day. He hated school, and hated the impression it gave him as they passed. His very first day at school had been cruel. Even now it hung obnoxious in his memory. He had a Teddy bear. He carried it with him a good deal and at night he slept with it.

He had gone to school with the Teddy bear stuffed in his shirt. When the bell rang for the first recess and he went into the schoolyard with the others, the very first thing he was aware of—as his initiation into play with his fellow pupils—was the shock and indignity of his face hitting the hard-packed earth. A burly, stumpy older boy named Pudge Mapes had jumped on his back, thrown him down, and pulled the Teddy bear from his shirt and committed upon him a series of indignities. During the next five days Pudge caught Tucker and pinioned him to the earth eight times. And Tucker, helpless and bewildered at the uneven terms nature had arranged, had to lie there in a kind of wilting and raging sickness.

Father turned into the pike and they drove a quarter-mile southward to the big frame semi-colonial house and high white fence that marked off from the ordinary world another possession of the Englishes'.

WHEN Father stopped before the front gate, the children hopped out and went through the broad, unmowed yard. Tucker conducted Teaberry around to the shed that contained the acetylene lighting plant. He opened the door and tried to get her to look at the complicated drumlike apparatus filled with acrid-smelling carbide. She would do no more than peek; she said it smelt bad and looked like it was going to blow up. They went on around to the side porch and climbed the outside stairs to the upper floor of the house, which was of unusual interest since it was absolutely bare because Mr. and Mrs. Gaylor, who looked after this, "the upper place," could not afford to buy carpets or furniture for it.

As they went along the bare upper hallway, an odd feeling came to Tucker. This house had once been his home—he did not know when or for how long. His memory of life in it was chaotic. There was an air, a faint echoing strangeness, about these barren rooms, the whole place, his previous exist-

ence there. He remembered he had been frail and ill and without friends. He remembered having made a practice of wandering off to a back field alone and watching and listening to the killdeer birds with their weird, unsociable screeching.

Now he pushed open a door and immediately he remembered Miss Hudson, who had been his first teacher in school and who had lived at his home that year. Frail, like himself, and lonely amid the mountains, she had been very fond of him; he had often come to this room and she had read to him from *Alice in Wonderland*; at times she had cried all of a night without apparent cause.

"You know somethin'?" he said to Teaberry.

"What?"

"Somethin' terrible happened right here in this very room."

"What happen?"

"My teacher went crazy right here in this room. She's in the asylum."

VERY slowly her head turned in inspection of walls and corners, as she looked for marks of violence, traces of catastrophe. The fireplace was empty and bare except for a little soot that had dropped into it out of the chimney. The small white roses on the wallpaper had almost faded out of sight. It was almost as if the room had never been lived in, as if Miss Hudson had been a shadow, an abstraction.

"Whuffor?"

"I don't know what for," he said soberly. "God just made her go crazy."

Teaberry's eyes came back from the cautious inspection.

"Ah doan like it in here," she said. "Le's us go down't that store."

"What for? We haven't got any money."

"Ah got some," she said mysteriously.

"You haven't got any money." He looked at her closely.

She nodded solemnly.

"Where'd you get any money?"

"Ah got some," she said.

"Is that what you got there'n your hand? You got some money in your hand?"

She nodded.

"Show't to me."

She shook her head.

"Come on—open up your hand and lemme see it!"

She held the hand tightly clenched. "Ah got it."

"You swear?"

"Hope t'die!"

"All right," he said incredulously, "but we get in the store and you haven't got any money you'll drop dead right there on the spot. You know that, don't you?"

"Ah knows it."

"All right then, come on. Beat you!" He ran through the hall and down the porch stairs and lit out around the house for the gate but she had overtaken him and passed him before he reached it and he did not catch up with her until he was at the blacksmith shop, where she had stopped and was watching Mr. George Barlow pounding a red-hot piece of iron into shape on the anvil. Mr. George was shirtless and the sleeves of his long union suit came to his wrists and he wore a dirty leather apron; he hit the hot iron with strong shaping blows that sent out strings of crimson and amber sparks like those from a Roman candle and made the anvil itself dance and sing. He twisted his head this way (Continued on page 46)

Concluding: *NEXT TARGETS FOR STALIN?*

# Showdown in the



ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION ADMINISTRATION PHOTO

In Turkey, American tractors and road-building equipment, obtained through ECA appropriations, are replacing the camels used through the ages

On Russia's southern flank Communist Yugoslavia and republican Turkey and imperial Iran form a bulwark against the threat of Soviet aggression. What must we do to protect our stake?

## II

**T**HE United States has a vital strategic stake in a trio of nations which may well be the strangest bedfellows ever produced by the threat of war. Grimly aligned along the southern rim of the Iron Curtain, standing virtually shoulder to shoulder—through no wish of their own—against the threat of Soviet aggression, are Communist Yugoslavia, republican Turkey and imperial Iran. All three are preparing desperately for a conflict they fear they cannot avoid.

Behind this forward echelon of the free world's Mediterranean defenses lie some of the richest prizes a war-minded nation could hope for: the oil of the Middle East; control of critical trade routes; a strategic strangle hold on a vital corner of the earth.

In an on-the-spot survey of these three countries Collier's European Team—Seymour Freidin, William Attwood and David Perlman—found much good news for America and its allies: a tough,

united, alert Yugoslavia; an equally spirited Turkey; an Iran striving desperately to build up its strength for the coming test. They also saw major shortcomings: a grave lack of war materials in Marshal Tito's stronghold; a worrisome shortage of time in Turkey; deep-rooted internal unrest in ancient Persia.

Our country and its friends have an interest in this part of the world which is hard to exaggerate. What are we doing to protect that interest, to make the most of our advantages there and to remedy the defects? Here is what Collier's Team learned.

### BELGRADE

*By Seymour Freidin*

Americans don't like dealing with Communists; they're trying to prevent the Soviet Union from forcibly imposing its system on the free world. Why then should they be even remotely interested in the fate of Communist Yugoslavia? I asked that

question of a man high on Moscow's black list who is as important as Tito in shaping Yugoslav policy.

"We're not threatening you," he replied tersely. "Stalin is. He also threatens us. If he attacks us, we'll fight him every inch of the way."

A veteran American diplomat, conservative in his views and wise in the ways of European diplomacy, sipped his Martini thoughtfully as we discussed the plight of Yugoslavia.

"This country is on our first line of defense," he said finally. "These people must fight and they will fight. With help from us they'll fight with fury." He paused. "It's a strange thing, but two of our biggest victories in the cold war have occurred only because a Communist government—Tito's—broke with Stalin." He listed these victories as:

1. Closing of the Yugoslav borders to Greek Communist rebels—which American military men in Greece termed a decisive factor in ending the civil war there.