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transplanted

Under The Lid

By Hope LaShier

I'm a grown woman now, and I have been taught not to worry about the loss of material things, but this adage didn't impress me the night the old barn burned to the ground.

I faintly remember snatches of conversation as the flames leaped high into the sky--"Every bale of hay is gone"--no insurance--Glad we got the horses and cows out safely--Oh we'll make out somehow; it isn't the end of the world.

I didn't voice my inner feelings as I stood quietly listening to the family and neighbors who had come to help. Little did they know--buried beneath that rubble and hot ashes lay a little piece of my heart--my little trunk.

I was twelve years old when my parents moved from Oklahoma to the Texas Panhandle. I remained in Oklahoma in a boarding school in order to finish high school with my classmates.

During the three following years, I spent summer vacations with my parents on the farm. The trips back and forth to school made it necessary to have some sort of luggage. My dream was a little trunk of my own.

Money for such an extravagance was not in the foreseeable future, not until Daddy decided to plant a few acres of cotton despite the warnings of the neighbors. "You can't grow cotton in these parts!"

When I came home that summer, the plants were just peeking little green leaves through the soil.

Mama had told Daddy of my desire for a trunk to take back to school in the fall. A deal was soon made whereby I was to help the hired hand hoe the cotton and in return receive some of the money collected at the cotton gin to buy a trunk.

Each day thereafter, before sunup, while the menfolk squatted on the ground talking of crops, trying to decide whether to Go-devil the south forty or go into town for a needed part for the threshing machine, I had donned my sunbonnet. I pulled long black stockings with the feet removed over my pale white arms, pinning them securely at the shoulders with large safety pins.

The hired hand sharpened the hoes to a fine hone and hung the water sack on the fence post. He said the water would stay as cold as if it had just been pumped by the windmill.

I was eager for my first lesson in being a farm girl. I had never worked in the field, although we had always lived on a farm.

In our family there was a very fine line drawn between what constituted "boys' work" and "girls' work", and many battles were fought among the seven children as we made the decisions.

The first morning in the field went slowly as I learned to leave the same distance between the cotton plants and also get all the weeds in the process.

I started out like a house a-fire--bending way over--chopping up the ground--spending too much time making the right decisions.

By mid-morning the hired hand taught me to stand up straight and use slow, lazy-like scraping motions.

At noon we sat under the only shade--the high weeds that lined the fence posts and ate the lunch that Mama sent to the field by one of the younger children.

The afternoon sun beamed down hot as the hours until sundown grew longer.

The weeks dragged by with every

day the same come sun-up, we'd start all over again.

The glow on my face changed to sweat, the blisters on my hands grew callouses, but I kept going, I wanted that trunk.

The rains never came--the wind piled the soil to the top of the fence posts--the ground cracked open--the cotton crop was a total loss.

In the fall, the night before I left for school, I was not the least bit "Journey Proud." I packed my clothes in cardboard boxes from the general store in town.

After three days on the road in an old model T Ford--many flat tires that had to be patched--we arrived in our former hometown.

As we neared the school, I was sitting on the edge of the car seat trying to figure out a way to get my boxes of clothes into the dorm without too much notice.

I was puzzled as Daddy passed the school, parked in front of the hardware store, opened the car door on my side, and said "Let's go in here."

After greeting the owner who was an old friend, they talked about how the crops turned out, the unusual weather in the Oklahoma Panhandle, the price of cotton, and goodness knows what else.

Finally, the owner asked, "What can I sell you today, Lon?"

Daddy thumped his white Stetson hat to the back of his head much like a person testing a watermelon for ripeness. Then with a twinkle in his eye and a quick wink in my direction said, "This little gal needs a trunk to keep her 'duds' in. Got any nice ones she might like?"

I began to look, opening and closing lids, caressing the smooth, shiney tin,

fingering the brads along the two brass bands that encircled the trunk, and finally very timidly said, "I like this one best."

When Daddy finished writing the check for fourteen dollars ninety-eight cents, the owner thanked him and handed me a small brown envelope. I felt doubly blessed when I discovered it contained a shiney key. I had a brand new trunk with a key all my own!

Over the years, that little trunk afforded me much pleasure. At home, I found the perfect niche for it in a

corner of the screened-in back porch.

I spent many happy hours storing my little treasures in the top tray--love letters from my first sweetheart kept in a special place to be brought out from time to time to be reread.

In more prosperous times, I made many trips on the train. I was always proud to point out my trunk on the platform as the one without the *ropes*.

One day as I stood outside the depot waiting to board the train, I noticed two men pacing the platform. They stopped at the huge pile of luggage that

would be placed in the baggage car. My little trunk seemed to pique their interest, so I edged closer within hearing distance. Suddenly one of them kicked my trunk and said to his companion, "If I didn't have any more clothes than *that*, I'd stay home!" Tears welled up in my eyes as I thought to myself, "If that stranger only knew the true story behind that little trunk!"

Maybe we're better off not to know the secrets below our associates' lids--as the man who kicked my trunk had no way of knowing me. ●

sorrowful soul-searching

Arnold Evans

By Sandra Soli

Remembering
the curl of wallpaper at the edge of the kitchen casement,
aware of October settling in the crescent of his thighs,
Arnold Evans sits in a front pew, staring beyond the
bayberry-scented altar, through the tidy composure of
his wife's hair. Arranged just so, no strand escaping.
There would be no place to go.

He does not hear the hymn,
nor the visiting sets of relations mouthing faith and angels,
giving thanks it is not their turn today. He thinks only of
wallpaper, acknowledges only his fifty-four years, achieved
in spite of himself, in spite of her, who complained
of such things. No matter. He need not think of it again,
this year or next.

But he wishes he had repaired at least
the place by the window. Her eyes would have thanked him.
Inside the church, the smell of history, the opalescence
of her skin. He had almost forgotten the glow of it.
Better

to think of sausages and cabbage ready at home, with the pint
chilled to accompany them. Willing to stay the hour,
but knowing it is overlong, this service for the dead.