SHORT STORY

The Runaway Boy

By SHIRLEY RAY

Someone was coming down the stairs. The still and darkened house seemed to amplify each soft footfall to Rhoda who hoped the sound of her own breathing would not give her away.

Now the steps, still guarded and cautious, were in the hall, and then only a few feet from where she stood. There was the sound of a hand on the doorknob and the door swung open. A small form slid past her. The door closed again and the sudden return of darkness stirred Rhoda into action. She grasped the knob and flung the door open.

"Where are you going, Jimmy?" she asked sharply.

* * *

The small boy stared at her from the bottom step. He lowered his eyes

and scraped the toe of his shoe in the soft dirt.

"Going away," he mumbled.

"Come sit down, Jimmy," she said. "We may as well have a good-bye talk."

Jimmy sat next to her, his bundle in his lap.

"Now," said Rhoda, "Where are you going?"

"Going to hitch-hike to the city." His eyes met Rhoda's for the first time. "Pinky Duggan hitch-hikes all over," he informed her.

"Pinky Duggan?" she repeated.

"You know Pinky's mother," Jimmy said.

"Oh, yes, I know," Rhoda replied.

"Pinky lives in the city. He goes to the movies every night," Jimmy continued. "In this old town we have only one movie."

* * *

Rhoda was thinking of saying exactly the same thing to Jimmy's father that Jimmy was now saying to her.

"There's nothing to do in this small town, Jim. We don't even have a choice of two movies."

His voice filled with enthusiasm, Jim went on.

"There are tall buildings and big electric signs that go on and off and double-deck buses and everything in the city."

"I tell you, Jim, this pokey town drives me crazy. I'm used to the city. I like the bright lights and the traffic and the noise!"

"Pinky says only jerks live in a town like this," Jimmy declared.

"I can feel the hayseed sticking out all over me. I saw Kay Duggan today—we used to work together in the city—and I realized what a bumphin I am."

Rhoda sighed. "Yes, Jimmy, the city is nice." She felt helpless. She was this boy's mother. She should know what to say, what to do. But she was at a loss for words.

There was a long silence.

"Mom, Pop doesn't let me do anything."

"Jim, I'm not old. I want to go places, do things, get out of this rut."

Jimmy reached into his pocket and brought forth two shiny cubes. "Look Mom. Pinky swapped 'em for my Boy Scout knife."

* * *

Maybe it was the sudden chill in the breeze. Maybe it was the sight of the white dice in the small hand. Suddenly Rhoda did not feel helpless any more.

"Jimmy," she said. "I used to live in the city in an apartment, the same kind that Pinky Duggan lives in now. There are lots of families in one big building. You can't run through the house or turn the radio on loud or make any noise. You can't even have a dog, Jimmy."

His eyes were wide.

"No dog?" the boy repeated.

* * *

The two sat in silence. The night was bright but not cold. There was a half moon and a few scattered but bright stars. At last the little boy rose and started up the stairs.

"Still going to the city Jimmy?"

"I guess not, Mom."

Rhoda sat for a long time. Then she got up and went into the house. Her hand groped in the darkness until it grasped the handle of a suitcase. She was glad that Jimmy hadn't asked her why she was up, fully dressed, at this hour of the night.

Inexpensive Gifts Can Be Made With Christmas Cards

MOST of us have stored away in attic boxes and desk drawers, Christmas cards from last year and the year before that we just couldn't bear to throw away.

These cards can be transformed into charming Christmas gifts with a little ingenuity and a minimum of time on your part.

Lampshades are always welcome — and here's a novel idea for designing a special gift for a special person. If your friend is partial to floral arrangements, town or country scenes, cats, dogs, or whatever, select the cards accordingly. Take a plain parchment shade, brush entire outer surface with clear shellac and let dry partially. Meantime brush the back of the cards with shellac and expose to air for several minutes until shellac reaches a sticky consistency. Apply cards to appropriate spots and press

EVEN THE FIRST . . . Since the first Christmas card was made, they have been saved and utilized for the making of artistic gifts. During and since the war the demand for the cards for those in hospitals has reached a new high. Our wounded have been supplied with thousands of cards which they use in making gifts.

down. Brush entire lampshade surface, including newly applied cards, with the shellac. Let dry. The shellacking process may be repeated any number of times as each application serves to increase the durability of the lampshade. Pierce holes, about an inch apart, around top and bottom edges; lace with ribbons.

Wastebaskets, too, make attractive gifts. The cardboard variety, either oval or square in shape, can be secured in your local 5 and 10 or department store. Cover with plain paper or gift wrapping. Shellac, mount cards. Re-shellac—as with the lampshade.

Another trick! Select three cards of uniform size and theme—either religious, scenic or peasant, etc. Place them in inexpensive cardboard or wooden frames. Take a long strip of heavy satin ribbon with sewn-on bow at one end. Attach frames to ribbon in Victorian manner, i. e., one over the other. Then sew a hook on back of bow so ribbon may be hung from the wall.

A useful and colorful gift for the man of the house—especially if he happens to be a pipe smoker—is the large box of kitchen matches artistically "camouflaged" so Mother won't object to its presence in her newly "done over" living room. Cover all surfaces, with the exception of the sanded striking area, with strips of colorful designs taken from Christmas cards. Paste the cutout Christmas card designs on one or both of the large surfaces—shellac, allow to dry, and repeat process.

One of the simplest to make, yet most effective small gifts, is the bookmark. Cut out, in rectangular shape, the Christmas card design of your selection. Then tape a strip of good quality ribbon—either satin or grosgrain—to the back of the card so that the ribbon extends about three or four inches beyond its bottom edge. Scotch tape can be bought at most stationery and gift shops in colors, now, and it lends a more festive air than the usual transparent tape. It's a good idea, too, to give the card a coat or two of shellac so it will resist fingerprints and smudging.

Two blocks of wood, painted in pretty pastels, mounted with Christmas cards and shellacked are just the thing for the guest room bookends. In similar fashion wooden boxes can be "dressed up" with cutout floral Christmas card designs to serve as cigarette containers.

Should Mothers Model?—The young lady posing so sedately above placed 3rd at the 1947 Royal Winter Fair, just a month or so after giving birth to a family of six. Last year she was acclaimed "best of all breeds" and her record at Dog Shows and Field Trials on both sides of the border is highly impressive. "Starlite of Barrimor" is her official name.

Shepherd Dog Scores 'Perfect' In Show Ring

Most people dream of winning an Irish Sweepstakes Grand Prize with the very first ticket they buy—but it's an experience which doesn't come to many. While the comparison may be a little far-fetched, George Taylor of 215 Brock Ave., a Toronto milkman seems to have done something rather similar in his first experiment at training a dog for the show ring.

"Starlite of Barrimor" is the official name of this beauty, who also bears the distinction of C.D. after her name—meaning Companion Dog. She is the daughter of an American Champion and started her impressive string of Show Ring victories at the age of ten months by rolling up a score of 98 points at the Port Colborne Show last year. A month later, at the German Shepherd Dog Club field trials at Clarkson she again topped a large field with a perfect score of 100; and at the 1946 Royal Winter Fair she was acclaimed best of all breeds with a mark of 99.

In March of this year, at the age of 17 months, she was top dog in her class at Detroit, placing second a few months later at the Buffalo Show. In her first trial at Companion Dog work she got slightly over 190 points out of a possible 200, defeating all dogs. This year, at the Royal Winter Fair—3rd was the best she could do—but the reason for this was no doubt the fact that she was less than a month in training after raising a family of six puppies. Altogether Mr. Taylor's experience with this dog has been one to encourage the small breeder. "Starlite of Barrimor" is the first shepherd Mr. Taylor ever owned or trained and is a great credit to both dog and trainer.

Headed by a 10-ton, 200-horsepower all-wheel drive truck, similar to the above on the left, two "flying columns" will be used by the Ontario Highways Department this year to hit the snow-blockade in the southern snow belt. Included in the column will be a rotary blower as shown on the right which will be used to widen the hole punched out by the 10-ton truck.

Want A Wife? Here's A Tip

Most of the lovelorn advice that we've ever seen (and we've seen plenty of it) was addressed to the girls, whereas it has long seemed to us that the boys are in far more urgent need of such advice. So we will introduce a novelty at this point by offering the hardest-headed and most constructive tip we can think of to the great majority of young men contemplating matrimony; to wit:

The thing to do, according to an article in Collier's, is to look around for a demanding, ambitions, energetic and goodnatured young woman, fall in love with her, and marry her as promptly as you can.

She needn't be beautiful, though, of course, beauty helps. She needn't be wealthy, because the above-mentioned qualities will almost guarantee that both you and she will be plenty well off in due time.

If you are the typical, rather indolent, happy-go-lucky, not too energetic male, this gal will furnish you the inspiration to effort that you need. She won't lead you into an easy life; but she will mainspring you into an exciting and satisfying one if you'll just stick along with her.

It was demanding, ambitious and generally good-natured women who stimulated the pioneering of this country from the Alleghenies to the Pacific—and who today stimulate American men to keep bringing home to the wife and family more and more of what it takes. That is one of the biggest factors in our success as a nation to date.

So if you're the easy-going type, as most of us men happen to be, just find yourself an up-and-coming young woman and marry her pronto. Leave the clingers and the droopers, the dumb beauties and the spoiled darlings to the exceptional self-starters and go-getters who can push ahead under their own steam exclusively.

The Arc de Triomphe was built in Paris in 1806 to commemorate the victories of Napoleon.

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