The Free Press Short Story

The Dominant Twin and the Burglar

MELCENA BUUNS DENNY

buried, the secret grease spots are hidden under pink and gray roses. Our diningroom is papered!"-

"And we've spent the price of six Walters!" music lessons," I reminded her.

hand, "Think what we've saved, Dor- your breakfast!" othy! A paper hanger would have nipped our musical career in the very bud. Wish we could paper the whole house It's hideous. But look at my ceilingnot a miss! It's beautiful! But, oh, my neck! How it aches!"

"I just adore this wall paper!" cried. "Aren't they the darlingest roses! too. This room will mellow him ed incredulity. "He'll miss the old wall

"And grimy and cracked!"

ing out at you—"

"The secret gun!" I shuddered. to the stair closet-"

"The secret portal!" grease where the Tobey baby pounded clearing-up.

inant twin. I fanned her.

thirteen hours proved Janet courageous because it was grandfather's economical manhood in you at all, stop acting like and me a coward. But during the whole habit to come home on the night train a sneak. Come out and show yourself!" to do except wait for the 'oor to be seventeen years of our lives I had said I and use a taxi to drive out before breakand mine while she said we and ours. I fast. The garage man owed grandfather robber thundering up the stairs, but there up together. It was plain that mother found it natural, somehow, to look out money, and that was the only way he was not a sound. The awful silence still had no idea of the real-terror of the for Janet and make up her mind for could ever get paid. her and keep her conscious that, though . We wanted to have the breakfast table I gripped the bedpost, pulled myself up and laughing, though his big arms felt

iob without a single lesson from a paper hanger? They'll be home for breakfast, place. and the paste makes the walls so damp

still hanging. It was these trees that had full of pride that for a few moments we hurried noises from the robber, as if he silver. Even as we stood in our first

coming-I feel it. We can't lose even the Janet at last. last of the crop, or grandfather will say we failed to face our duty like true That oak wood will burn all night. They front way. My courage began to come into mother's wedding silver. MacGregors. Come!"

were mortally tired, but the crop was delighted they'll be. What time will they under stockinged feet, ours. 'We had persuaded grandfather to be home?" let us have it on the same terms that he had offered to John, the Slavonian, ing. Wonder what time it is now?" We had done all the work ourselves, even | Faint, husky, almost inaudible, the old the marketing. And the price our pretty, living-room clock began to strike. Eleven leaf-lined baskets of perfect fruit brought o'clock!" Janet and I looked at each in the local market made grandfather other in dismay. We had completely and he shall not steal my mother's blink: I think he considered that we forgotten old Lady Walters! had got the best of him in a bargain. and he loved us the better for it.

Of course we had inherited no shrewd- much, but we promised mother! She's ness from dear mother. She is not what so deaf we could never make her hear grandfather calls "sensible." Her only now!" talent is to keep the heart of the home warm, bless her. And for seven years of Mrs. Tobey kept hearing noises all night I pulled her back, slammed and locked at breakfast, grandfather." her widowhood she had been doing that long and waking us up. Old Lady Walte s the door, and when she struggled for the in grandfather's house. Now he was re- would talk all night. When mother comes key T threw it out of the window. warding her with a fine trip to San home and finds us all right and the

like a wood nympth from her fig tree, be helped. So come to bed." "in our autobiography are you going to start in music?"

or an author.

that fig. trees have personality, poetry, crustiness are just a pose? Yes, I'm he'll pull the house down under us. thought was a robber-all alone?" tradition. Curses and blessings have almost sure sometimes that he's the kind- Dress." rested on them since Bible times. Only est man alive." one of our trees was cursed. It stood off wickedly by itself and refused to bear. But with scarcely a rest between the when I was suddenly awakened by two fall crops the healthy milk-filled startling crash in the dining-room. branches of our other trees put forth their hard little green figs! continuously. Firs come curiously without bloom and grow bigger and bigger till at last they open their little windows to pollen-bearing, fig-loving insects and ripen delicious-

Janet and I picked figs till it was so dark that 'we couldn't tell which were purple and which green. We were just it." carrying in the baskets when somebody came wabbling down the driveway on an old squeaking bicycle. It was Mrs. Tobey, fat and unsteady. We thought that she was coming to spend the night with us, because mother had refused to go to San Francisco till she had Mrs, Tobey's promise to protect us every night by her

HERE!" said my twin from the presence. But Mrs. Tobey came to stepladder. "The secret portal uncertain half and announced apologetic is sealed, the secret gun is ally that she had visitors and would

have to stay at home. have plenty of time to get old Lady

"Thank you so much for your trouble," Janet waved a lavish, paste-smeared cried Janet. "Here, take some figs for

My visitors were saying they liked door. fig. " said Mrs. Tohey gratefully. We watched her ride wabblingly away. and of course we weren't at all troubled. because we knew that old Lady Walters could come. She was deaf and lonesome

and loved to visit. We carried our baskets indoors, the horses, gathered the eggs from dark nests and restored to the roost a hen that insisted on sitting a this untimely "Hoot mon!" replied Janet with mark season. Then we came in and had hurried supper in the kitchen.

paper. He liked its grimness. Gray and Oh, how pretty the new paper looke at night! We had had some doubt about papering the ceiling, but now we we "With that old joint of stovepipe stick- more than glad that we could look up at roses instead of grimy plaster and ugly "And that mysterious papered door in paper gave to the upper regions of the dining-room, filled though the floor was with the debris of our amateur labor! "And that appalling picture done in We could hardly wait to begin the final

We stuffed ail the trash in the dining- threw open the door into the little Here my tired twin fell giggling from room stove topped it off liberally with We could see the blackness of the indainty, blond and soprano, while I am fire to dry the walls. Of course we dining-room. plump, literary and contralto. But it's opened the windows and doors, because because I'm brunnette, I think, that I the vapor, we thought, had to get out swer!" had always considered myself the dom- somewhere; and besides, the Yoom was too hot to work in. Then we scrubbed . It is true that the events of the next the floor and set the table for breakfast-

sweet, she was only a twin, and a blonde just perfect, so instead of using grand- and, reaching Janet, collapsed on her comforting and kind as he herded us out father's everyday plated silver we went shoulder. She prodded me with the of the bedroom. While I fanned her Janet gazed gener- down to the bottom of mother's trunk, curling tongs. said. "Won't grandfather and mother good to use, and brought out her elegant there's a man here." be astonished that we could do this fine wedding silver. The whole room seemed to be finer the moment the silver was in thin and high I scarcely could believe it

Jant went out into the moonlight and contralto. that we must build a good fire to-night picked an armful of lovely purple asters just the color of our figs. A lot of these "There's going to be a frost, I think." I arranged in an old yellow vase for a Janet and I walked to the west win centrepiece, and then I filled a big vellow dows and looked out on a clear Cali- bowl with the finest of our purple figs fornia sky. It was the third of Novem- and set little yellow bowls at each place. ber. The prune trees, stretching like a ready to be filled at breakfast time with perfect lesson in perspective as far as the peeled figs and yellow cream-um! That's eye could see, were already bare. But a dish that makes even grandfather rash near the house stood our group of fig with praise. Last of all, we hung our my husband!" trees, handsome as sycamores: white freshly ironed yellow scrim curtains. The barked, big leafed, with purple-black firs room was a dream! Janet and I were so

The sun was close to setting. We to see how perfectly dumbfounded and dining-room, like the protest of a board Her intrepid spirit was breaking. "They'll get here by six in the morn-

"Well, it's too late now," Janet said, conscience-stricken. "I wouldn't mind so

"We are better off without anybody, and be murdered? The man's a maniac!" dining-room looking so lovely-she'll be "Dorothy," called Janet, pepping out too happy to worry about what couldn't

To bed we went forthwith. I was as if the burglars, moved to fury, were still," describe the fig trees that gave us our almost asleep when Janet began to speak. tearing the house down. We listened to "Well, you two girls ought to take a "Of course." I said, and began immedi- she murmured. "A man is a great pro- with long periods of deadly silence be- ings you know nothing about. You've ately to plan how I should describe tection. I suppose a man's snore is like tween. The mystery and vollence of his ruined the dining-room, lost your money them. For I'm not quite certain yet his beard and big voice; to make him behavior seemed to have no effect on and been good and scared into the barwhich I shall be-a great concert singe. formidable. I wish he were here. Do Janet except to make her more and more gain. Where's Mrs. Tobey?" you know," she concluded, with the air angry and indignant, We really loved our corner of the of stating a startling theory, "sometimes orchard. It was mother who pointed out I think that grandfather's stinginess and "To throw the key out the window! Now girls have been shut up with what you

After that we slept:

I suppose it was four in the morning

sat up, clutching Janet. "What is it?" she gasped. "I don't know." "Where is it?"

"In the dining-room." We listened a long time.

"It was the cat," she said. "No. I put him out." "I don't hear a sound.

"Listen!" I commanded. "Creak, creak, snap! The sounds were stealthy, and far apart, as if made by some one walking cautiously.

"It's somebody," whispered Janet, "It's a robber!" I said. Janet began to get angry.

"The coward! What does he want?"

"The silver. He's gathering it up." "Well, it's plated. Let him have it." "It's mother's don't you remember?" I whispered. "We put on mother's wed- irascibly. "What tricks are you young-

Janet straightened like a lance whipped her yellow braids back so that she could listen better. It seemed an age before we caught another sound, and then—creak, snap, snap! The burglar was you buy me?" walking again.

Instantly Janet was out of bed. "Who's there?" she sried aloud. "What-

are you doing?'

For a second there was silence, and lar had fallen across the table. jangled and jumped, bowls crashed. sound was awful. Then-creak, rattle "But I came early to tell you, so you'll crash! If there were two burglars in our dining-room, they were now beating each other with their loot.

"The villains!" cried Janet. "I'll scare them away. "Where's something?" "Setzing my curling tongs, she made for the

"Don't you dare open that door!"

voice in a threatening soprano. "What are you after?" she challenged. "Now where's your robber?"

there in the awful gray of the dawn, a won't expect you to come that way. Just warlike little figure in a red kimono give the secret door a hard push-we With my heart pounding, and my back- had nothing but one nail to fasten bone strangely fickle, I got out of bed with. 'Be sure you are ready to shoot.' nd clung to the bedpost.

Let him alone." I implored in a cracks. What a sweet air of order the trembling voice. "Doesn't everybody say to let a robber take what he wants? He's desperate, or he wouldn't be here He'd shoot at the first alarm."

> But plainly Janet meant to alarm him. Disregarding me entirely.

"Who are you?" cried Janet. "An-.

"Shame on you!" exclaimed Janet in loud indignation. "If you've got any again."

"I can't." I quavered, in a voice so Come on."

"I can't." I whimpered. "You frighten me to death, Janet! Come back to bed!" In heat of our-terrific file that did it.

Janet seized the suggestion,

only a man in the house!"

"Shall we close the windows?" asked we didn't hear a door open or shut or rattle crash! Another crackling length "Yes. And I'll give the fire a poke. window to see if he were leaving the broke and fell with jangling violence and it is impossible to miss others. I will be cold when they get here. Oh, I slowly back, but after perhaps fifteen don't believe I can sleep a wink, waiting minutes we heard a soft creak in the

"He hasn't gone yet!" I said She shook me off.

"I'm going down," she declared.

"You are not!" "I am! He is a coward and a villain, grandfather,

The way she said "my mother" left me completely orphaned and disgraced by cowardice. But-I still opposed her.

"Do you think I'll let you go down there dows?"

"Are you crazy?" she cried. "The man's crazy! Listen to that!" Pandemonium reigned in the dining-

A dressed, with sharp reminders now rected Janet, beginning to laugh giddily. and then from Janet when I forgot essential garments. The darkness lifted somewhat, the roosters crowed. I took my station at the window. Sooner or you to be sensible, plucky country girlslater a car would come along the gray brave as they make 'em-" belt of road beyond the pepper trees. I

meant to call to the car for help. "Help! Help!" I called suddenly. For a car had appeared. Janet pushed in beside me!

"What is it?" she demanded. "Somebody's car: Help! Help!" "Hello there! Hello, . hello!" Janet loses," I suggested. shouted with a lustiness that made my

feeble outcry ridicuous. The car stopped beneath out windows. | ment. Down in the dining-room a loud crash warned us that the robber was still looting the house.

this house!" hissed Janet.

the car looked up at us. It was grand- But the man said it was properly bed-

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed go ahead and buy paper for the whole sters up to now?"

We could see mother lean forward in "Hello, mother." I cried, with the effort of my life to appear gay. "What

"Why don't you come down?" demanded grandfather.

"WE are accidentally locked in oom. Dorothy threw the key out window—there it is at your feet. up, grandfather." Here Janet floundered a minute and pushed me to the other window, which would not open, that I couldn't speak. "The house cold, so you had better drive mother to Tobey's and leave her there. Mr. Tobey back with you, and-a gun.

"A gun!"-exclaimed-mother.---"Some one is in our dining-room. He has been making the strangest noises Maybe it's a robber, and maybe it's crazy man, or it may be a cat. But you ought to have a gun."

"I . have one," said grandfather. But Janet opened it and raised her bought it to shoot hawks." He reached into the car and brought out a gun

Leave every single thing in this house "Unlock the front door, and go into the dining-room through the stair closet I was dumbfounded at Janet's ulti- We papered over the little low door matum, for she had nothing except my opening into the dining-room, the one curling tongs to fire with. But she stood we call the secret portal. The robber

"Shoot!" scoffed grandfather. "Shoo you mean. I'll shoot your cat." But h cocked his gun to shoot it with

Mother now sat up, looking dazed Grandfather disappeared, and in about the time that it would take for him to burst into the dining-room through the secret door we heard a loud ripping thud then two gun shots. The next thingsound that had reached us in many an the stepladder into my arms. She is pine and oak wood and started a big closed stairway leading down into the hour—we heard grandfather's loud, sarcastic "Ha, ha!"-

> -"What's there?" I screamed. "Who is it?" shricked Janet:

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted grandfather

For us two prisoners there was nothing I was sure that this would bring the unlocked. Mother and grandfather came continued, filling me with sickening feav. hight, and grandfather kept_chuckling

"Come down and see your robber," he ously at my walls. "You didn't make a where she was obliged to keep cartain "Brace up!" she said. "Talk to him. said jokingly. "He sand-bagged mesingle miss except in that corner," she things that grandfather considered too Talk deep-I can't. Make him think nearly knocked me over. Then's when I fired. But he is flat on his back now.

> It was all so maddening, so mysterious. was my own. For, as I've said, I'm Apparently mother was the most puzzledof us all. But grandfather led the way "Talk anyway. He'll know then there down the stairs and marshaled us into

> > Oh, what a sight met our eyes! At was

And then I sobbed, "Oh, if there were of course. Our levely paper had literally or two on account of illness, you are torn itself off the walls in the night, very much aggrieved to find your as-It had dropped from the ceiling in crack- sociates have not missed you. It seems "Get out of this house instantly!" she ed and brittle festoons. It cluttered the to you that this indicates a very serious shouted to the robber, "Or I will wake floor; it had peeled in ragged ribbons This preposterous threat from seven- demoralized table was a mess of figs. teen-year-old Janet was rewarded by spilled asters, broken bowls and scattered were indeed hastening to get away. But amazed and stupefied silence-creak, their hearts when your associates do not any noise outside. We watched at the of paper curled up on the wall, then

So this was our robber at his work!

almost sobbing myself. "O Janet, to there is only one person responsible and think it was our paper-our lovely paper that is yourself.

-all the time." "Who was your paper hanger?" asked

paste?" "Nobody."

"And who advised you to build "You foolish girl!" I said in a frenzy, great big fire and then close the win-"We didn't want you to get to sneezing

> Grandfather eyed us with still greater "And where did you get the money for

"It was part of our music money. room. Crack, rip, zip, bang! It sounded wailed Janet. 'That makes it worse

"I wish grandfather were in the house," the most incredible onslaughts of noise, lesson and ask advice about undertak-

"She had company and couldn't come "Silly!" she said to me scathingly. "Do you mean to say that you two "We thought it was a maniac." cor-

> Grandfather took a turn about the room, then came to us. "Your good sensible mother has raised

He turned away again, and we wen to mother, who was deeply embarrassed Grandfather had never called her sensible before. She clung to us, struggling for composure. I held out a scrap of our ill-fated wall paper aimlessly.

Mother glanced at the paper, then took it to the window in some excite-

"Why, father," she exclaimed, "This is the very pattern we chose ourselves for the girls' bedroom. Pink roses, little "Sh! Careful! There is a robber in gray buds, thorny stems, everything! I room paper, and then when you said to house-yes he did, girls! And rugs, and new curtains, and paint, and that

new car outside!".... "Why, grandfather!" cried my twl and I in concert. And Janet continued alone. "I knew it! I knew it! I always

"Knew what?" said grandfather curi-"Knew that you were the kindest man

with unthinkable courage. "Crops were good," said grandfather

TOSSED INTO FRIENDLY ARMS

Though his hand patted Janet, the

beautiful look on his face was meant for

mother, who had kept the heart of his

Once there was a happy Chinese home n the Yangtze valley. It was probably not very grand, but 't

home warm for seven years.

seemed very good to the son and heir of the house, aged eights - b. There was always Mother to give you food when you were hungry, tuck you up in bed-when you were tired, and bathe your bruises when you fell down. And there was Father, coming home each evening, who was so big and strong, and could put anything right if it went

It seemed as safe as houses, that home in the valley. But when a great river loses its temper, and comes pouring disaster over its banks, houses are not safe. One terrifying morning the waters came sweeping down upon them. The little family just had time to turn something (perhaps a door or a bit of roof) into raft. They were carried off on the flood. drowned like thousands of others in that fearful happening.

But the whirling river spared the little boy, and after carrying him for some miles threw him up like a bit of driftwood on to a bank near Hankow.

There a forlorn, bewildered, hungry sodden bundle was discovered by some British sailors. They could not leave a boy of eight to fend for himself, and though they could not understand his languague, they could guess his story. So they took him on board their gun-

boat, washed him, fed him, and made him new clothes. Then they presented him to the quarter-deck, and got permission to keep him. Now he is dressed like a real bluejacket and helps to peel potatoes and polish brass. He has lessons and can count up to 20 in English. As no one

The cruel 'river made amends, as far as it could, when it tossed him into the arms of the British Navy.

can pronounce his real name he is called

Able-Seaman Flood. Except when he

IF YOU ARE NOT MISSED

If you drop out of your Sunday School class or some other organization to which you belong and are away a month lack in them. On the contrary, it shows from the spaces between windows. Our a very serious lack in yourself. If you are not missed, it is because you have not been doing all you should.

It is no indication of the hardness of iniss you: Missing is spontaneous; it is impossible to help missing certain people. you are filling your place as you should doing your work as well as you can, and radiating kindness and helpfulness and good cheer as you go along, you cannot "You told him to go away, or you'd be away from your post for a day with-

PUT A COLLAR ON HIM

Husband "Now that I've lost everything in Wall Street, do you mind being

poor, dear?" Wife-"Not at all. Everybody thinks the wolf at our door is our police dog."

MAKES STUDY OF MOSQUITOES

Mosquitoes, 500,000 of them, are what Doctor Harrison G. Dyar, Curator of Cpidoptera, is showing at the National Museum. This is one of the most exhaustive studies ever made, showing 500,000 different breeds and many variations. From the total number only 150 classes are encountered in the United States, but most of us will probably say that is enough.

Bladder Weakness Makes Life Misery!

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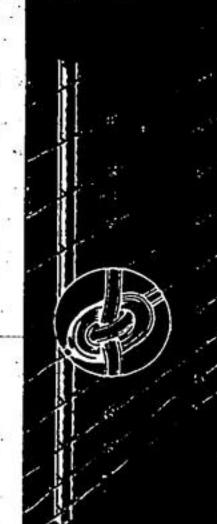


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