

Ode to Joy



Chapter Four – by Kay Hively

Alice could see that the face looking around the side of the hogan belonged to a little girl. But before Alice could speak, the little face disappeared. Alice waited but the face never came back into view.

Once more Alice turned back to watch the older woman weaving on her loom. After a short while, however, Thomas said it was time for them to go back to the trading post.

Mrs. Palmer grasped Helen's hand and thanked her for letting them visit. The older woman smiled at her guests. Alice curtsied to her hostess and turned to leave. That's when she saw the face once again. This time it was peering from behind Thomas' leg. One little hand was clutching Thomas' trousers. The other little hand held a doll.

Thomas bent down on one knee and put his arm around the little Indian girl. He invited Alice to come close. Thomas said the little girl was Sitsi, his daughter. He said her American name was Susan. He said Susan's mother had died last year. Now Grandmother takes care of Susan.

The little girl cast a tiny smile. Alice did not know what to say so she curtsied to the little girl. Then the shy little Navajo girl reached out and handed her doll to Alice. The doll was made of wood and its face was painted with a big smile. Alice had never seen a doll like this, but she took it and cradled it in her arms.

Thomas said he would bring Susan to the trading post one day so the two girls could play together. That made Alice very happy.

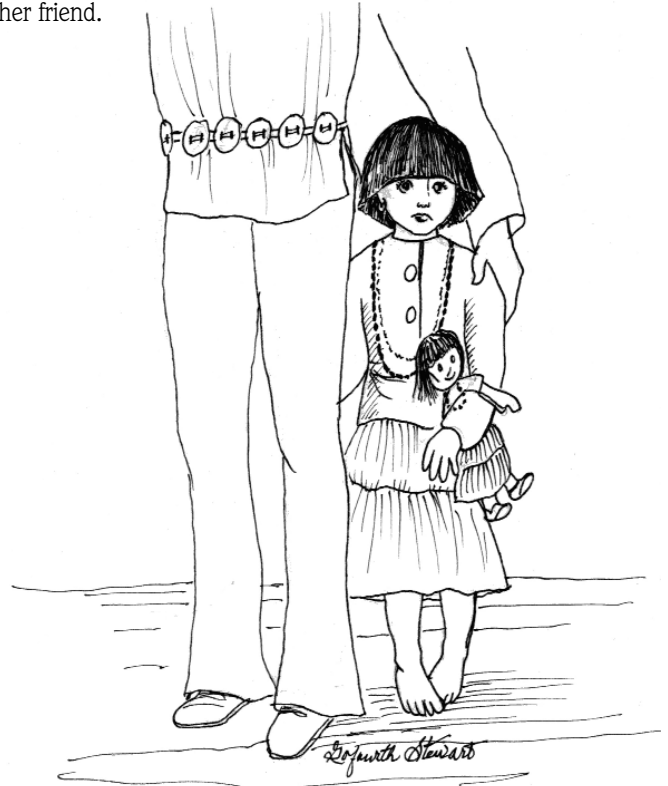
Alice returned Susan's doll and then, with Thomas and Mother, she started back up the trail to the trading post. Susan stood under the shelter beside her grandmother and waved good-bye to Alice.

After they returned to the trading post, Mother said it soon would be time for Alice to begin school. There was no school close by, but Mother had brought many books so Alice could learn at home.

After a week of lessons, Alice was glad when Saturday came. Saturday was always busy in the trading post. Alice liked to see all the people come to buy things or bring things to trade. Sometimes on Saturday, Pa gave her jobs to do.

Today Pa had asked her to sweep the front porch of the trading post. The porch was very dirty. Using all her muscles, Alice began sweeping. Just as she was finishing her chore, Alice heard someone call her name. Looking up from her work, she was surprised to see who was coming up the steps of the trading post porch.

It was Thomas' mother. Draped over the old woman's arm was a beautiful blanket. Alice dropped her broom and ran to greet her friend.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Copyright 2005, Missouri Press Foundation.

Things to Think About and Do

- Susan had a doll that had been carved from wood. Has anyone ever made you a wooden toy? Invite a wood craftsman to your class and let him show you some of the things he can carve out of wood. Learn about a Kachina doll and design one for yourself.
- Alice helped her father at the trading post. One of her chores was to sweep the porch. Do you have chores at home? Make a list of things you could do at home to help your family, then pick two of those chores and offer to do them at home.

STANDARDS: G1:1; G2:4; G4:8; FA:1; CA:6; SS:6

Next Week: Chapter Five – Lost and Alone