

Ode to Joy



Chapter Two – by Kay Hively

The first thing Alice saw in her new trading post home was the little piano that had been in her house back in Indiana. Quickly she sat down on the bench and placed her hands on the keys.

It had been almost two weeks since she had seen her piano. That was when a big truck had come to haul most of their furniture to Arizona. Alice did not mind sleeping on the floor for two weeks, but she did miss her piano.

And now, here was an old friend in a new world!

Even though she had not practiced for two weeks, Alice had no trouble playing her favorite piece, “Ode to Joy.” She could play that melody without any practice.

As Alice played her piano, Thomas stood quietly and listened to the music. Mother could see that he was intrigued by what he was hearing. When Alice finished her piece, Thomas smiled and said the music was beautiful. Mother asked their new friend if he had ever heard a piano before. He said he had never seen such a wonderful machine. Then Thomas said good night to the Palmer family. He said he would lock the door to the trading post, but he would be back in the morning to help Pa learn how to run the store.

Alice walked around her new home. All their furniture was in place. It was almost like being back home in Indiana. Quickly, she found her own bedroom and was soon in bed sound asleep.

But it seemed like only a few minutes before Alice was wide awake again. Morning had already come and it was her first day to live at the trading post. Alice dressed quickly and hurried into the kitchen for breakfast.

Pa was already at work so Alice gulped down her breakfast and opened the door into the trading post. Pa and Thomas were by the front door, talking to a man and woman. Alice knew she shouldn't interrupt so she decided to look at all the wonderful goods in the trading post. The first thing she looked at were the big blankets. Many of them were red, but they had colorful designs in yellow, green, black and white.

Thomas saw Alice admiring the blankets. He picked up one of them and let Alice look closely at it. He said it had been made by a Navajo woman who lived nearby. He said that many of the Navajo women sell their blankets to traders like Pa. The traders then sell them to people who stop at the trading posts.

Thomas said the Navajo women were very skilled and their blankets were the finest in all the world. He said many girls learned to make the blankets from their mothers.

Alice ran her hand over the beautiful wool blanket and wondered if she could learn to make one like it.

Mother had taught her to play the piano, maybe Mother could teach her to make a blanket, Alice thought.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri.
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Things to Think About and Do

- If you can play the piano, learn to play “Ode to Joy” and give a little concert for your family and friends or even for your classmates. What is an “ode?”
- Find pictures of Navajo blankets and, using crayons or colored pencils, create a blanket using your favorite colors. Find out about the designs on Navajo blankets.

Next Week: Chapter Three – Meeting a Weaver