

the Christmas tree

Chapter Eight by Kay Hively

Mr. Weaver looked out the kitchen window and then asked Mary Jo if she was ready to save the Christmas tree. He said there was still plenty of daylight outside. Mary Jo looked at her mother for advice. She nodded her head and told Mary Jo to go with Mr. Weaver.

On their way out to the Christmas tree, Mr. Weaver stopped at the tool shed and got two shovels. Mary Jo carried the smaller one.

When she and the old man reached the little tree, Mary Jo thought it looked sad. It also looked very dry. Mr. Weaver laid his shovel down and picked up a branch that was lying on the ground. The branch was shaped like a "Y." Mr. Weaver said the branch was from a peach tree. He said it would help him find water.

Mary Jo watched as the old man picked it up, holding one of the top parts of the Y in each hand. The bottom part of the Y stuck out in front of Mr. Weaver. Slowly he began walking around, staying close to the little tree.

In only a few moments, that part of the branch that stuck out in front began to jump up and down. It shook so violently that Mr. Weaver could hardly hold onto it.

The old man stopped and stuck the branch into the ground. Then he told Mary Jo that if they could dig down a few feet, they would find water. Not a lot of water, he said, but enough to keep the Christmas tree alive.

"Bring the shovels," the old man said.

Mary Jo picked up both tools and hurried to Mr. Weaver's side. Together they began to dig in the black dirt. Mary Jo could only dig a small amount of dirt, but Mr. Weaver dug up big shovelfuls with each effort. As they worked, the old man told Mary Jo that using a peach branch to find water was called water witching. Not everyone could do it, he said. Only a few people have special

powers to find water, he said. Not everyone had what he called "the gift."

As she dug into the earth, Mary Jo listened to Mr. Weaver tell about water witching. He said the peach branch was called a "divining rod," or a "dowsing stick." He also said that some people witch with a branch from a cherry tree or even with a piece of steel.

Mary Jo asked Mr. Weaver how he learned to water witch. He said he had been born that way – it was a natural gift. The secret to water witching, he said, is believing you can do it.

The hole was getting deep, but the two diggers found only black dirt. Then just as Mary Jo was about to give up, she saw mud on her shovel. Mr. Weaver thrust his shovel deep into the hole and water began flowing up out of the dirt.

Muddy old water had never looked so good, and there was plenty for the tree.

Mary Jo screamed with delight.

Mr. Weaver had kept his promise – he had saved the Christmas tree.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- A. Get a book and learn more about water witching. Do you think it works?
- B. Draw a picture of what you think Mary Jo's tree will look like on Christmas morning. What do you think will be under the tree?