

Silver and Gold



Chapter Eight – by Kay Hively

Every day the children worked on the Christmas Eve program. Some had trouble playing their instruments, but Mrs. Nelson encouraged them, and each day they got better. Because his father played the harmonica, that was the instrument Robert chose. In the evenings, he practiced at home with his father. Captain Hankins found a little silver bell in Cheyenne. He gave it to Molly so she could practice at home, too.

Not only did the children learn to play instruments, they formed a choir. That was the part of music Molly liked best.

Soon word spread around the fort that a Christmas program was planned. Some of the women asked Mrs. Nelson to help them form a choir. Mrs. Nelson agreed to include the women in the program. After that, when the children left in the afternoon, some of the ladies came to school so Mrs. Nelson could help them practice. Molly often stayed to hear the women sing. She thought her mother had the best voice in the choir.

As the weather grew colder, Molly worried about the Indian family. One Saturday, she asked her father about them. He said the family was doing fine. He said he had been to the teepee many times with the army doctor. The baby was happy and healthy, and the mother was much better.

Then Captain Hankins asked if Molly would like to visit the Indian family. Molly said she would like to go, so her father told her to get

her coat. In her room, as she pulled on her mittens, Molly noticed the little silver bell her father had bought. She slipped it into her coat pocket.

It was snowing when Molly and her father walked to the teepee. Black Feather came out of the stables to greet them. Captain Hankins asked to visit the family. Black Feather opened the flap of the tent and went inside. Molly followed her father into the teepee. She was surprised to find it very warm.

In the dim light, Molly could see the Indian girl, Sweet Flower, on a blanket playing with her baby brother. Black Feather's wife, Red Blanket, was cooking in a pot over a small fire. She smiled at Molly and invited her to see the baby. Molly dropped to her knees on the blanket. Sweet Flower was too shy to look at Molly, but the baby crawled toward her.

Molly took out the silver bell and rang it softly. The baby's eyes sparkled at the happy sound, and he began to laugh. Molly handed the bell to Sweet Flower. The shy little girl shook the bell. When it rang, Sweet Flower laughed out loud. Molly laughed, too.

For almost an hour the children played with the silver bell on the blanket. Then Captain Hankins said it was time to go. Black Feather told Sweet Flower to give the bell back to Molly.

Molly put the bell in her pocket and said good-bye to the family.

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Goforth-Stewart both live in Neosho, Mo. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2007.



Things to Think About and Do

- Do you play a musical instrument? Can you sing? Learn the definition of a folk song and then try to write one to share with your class or family.
- Sweet Flower was baby sitting her baby brother. Make a list of "dos" and "don'ts" for today's babysitters.
- Molly was concerned about the Indian family's welfare. Look through your newspaper for examples of people helping others. Maybe your class or family could be an example, and find someone or something in the newspaper that needs help you can provide, such as a canned food collection.