

the Christmas tree

Chapter Seven by Kay Hively

Mary Jo was shocked to hear her father say that Mr. Weaver was witching.

She had no idea what that was. It sounded spooky.

Just thinking about it made Mary Jo run into the house as fast as she could.

Mrs. Drake was putting away the food they had brought from town. Mary Jo asked her what witching was. But Mrs. Drake told her to stop asking questions long enough to change clothes.

Obedying her mother, Mary Jo went to her room. Out her window she could see her tree, and she could see Mr. Weaver. He was still out there carrying those sticks. Mary Jo closed the curtains and hoped that his witching wasn't hurting her tree.

After she changed clothes, Mary Jo went back to the kitchen. Her mother had put all the food away and was making sandwiches for supper. Once more, Mary Jo asked about witching. Mrs. Drake stopped her work and thought for a minute. Then she said she didn't really understand it. She told Mary Jo to ask her father. But first, Mary Jo had to set the table for supper.

Taking silverware and five plates, Mary Jo went to work in the little dining room. She liked laying out the plates and putting all the silverware in its place. Her mother had taught her how to make the table look nice.

When she finished, Mary Jo went back to help her mother. In the kitchen, she saw Mr. Weaver standing inside the back door. He stood quietly with his hat in his hand. Mrs. Drake invited him to sit down at the little table where a plate and silverware were already laid out.

As the old man took his seat, he asked Mary Jo if the little tree belonged to her. When she nodded her head yes, he told her it needed water. Mary Jo told him that she could not water the tree because the well was nearly dry.

It was more important for everyone to have drinking water than to have a Christmas tree, she explained. Mr. Weaver just nodded his head.

Mary Jo's mother filled Mr. Weaver's plate with sandwiches and fried potatoes. Then she set down a glass of milk for him.

At the big table Mary Jo sat between her two brothers. All through the meal, the boys talked about what fun they had in town. They told about the friends they had seen and about some of the things in the stores. Each brother had decided what he would buy with his cotton picking money.

Mary Jo got tired of listening to her brothers so when she finished her supper, she took her plate to the kitchen. Mr. Weaver was sitting quietly, smoking his pipe. As Mary Jo put her plate on the cupboard, the old man told her that he could keep her tree alive.

How could he do that, Mary Jo wanted to know.

"You'll have to help," he said.
"But I can do it. I promise."



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- Find a book on table manners and learn to set a table properly. Set a table for your family. Draw a picture of a table setting with everything in the right place.
- How is Mr. Weaver going to help keep the tree alive? Do you think Mary Jo will let him help? Would you?

Next Week: Chapter Eight – A Promise Kept