

The Sunflower Forest

(continuing on from printed ending . . .)

Wearily, I smiled back.

Just then Megan burst from her bedroom with a tremendous eruption of noise. She tore down the hallway to the bathroom. ‘Don’t spill it, Alison!’ she shrieked. ‘Let me get a towel. Wait, Alison, don’t!’

‘Oh dear,’ my father said in alarm and looked over his shoulder towards the doorway. ‘Now what?’

‘Megan! Hurry!’ Alison cried.

Dad rose up from the bed. ‘Just a sec,’ he said to me, ‘I’ll be right back.’

He never was.

I lay in my bed and listened. What my sister and Alison had been up to, I couldn’t tell, but they were hysterical with laughter. My father was asking Megan just exactly what she thought she was doing, making such a mess, and there was a familiar note of exasperation in his voice. Megan was hooting like a monkey.

Tears still in my eyes, I lay and listened. Conversation was drowned out by the noise of wildly squeaking bedsprings, and I knew someone was bouncing on Megan’s bed. Dad was telling them to stop, to get off the bed, to settle down for once. But his tone was only mockingly strict, and from the way things sounded, he was trying to catch the bouncers and they were taking turns at being caught.

Finally, when it became apparent my father was going to be in there for a while, I turned on my side to make myself more comfortable. Closing my eyes pushed out the tears that had rested there for so long and they slid over my face and down onto the sheet. I don’t remember falling asleep but I must have, very quickly.