

The winter was cold in Michigan it always hid and than you would go to the bathroom and realize the toilet was frozen. This year was no exception the toilet was so cold that it cracked; the toilet was a gift from my Great-Uncle Tom when he was on his deathbed and to us was a luxury that was not easy to replace the water was in a giant ice block in the middle of the floor. My mother was sick and my father was at work so me and my 11 brothers and sisters had to take charge.

Alice was the oldest and had the most experience so she was in charge. My four oldest sisters Alice, Lamina, Frances and Jeanette made all our meals. Casper and I were put on the job of cleaning up the mess first we grabbed a towel and slid it under the ice then we took a metal shovel and started picking up the ceramic shards, then we took the ice down to the kitchen and put it in the ice box the shards made good play knives once they were sanded down so Casper and I went into the parlor to get our jackets and caps

Over night we had gotten a foot of snow the ground was frozen solid and the lake was frozen too. Casper ran out onto the lake and started jumping he was crazy about trying to prove me wrong by saying that the ice was only thick enough for one person he continued jumping while I went to the pasture.

The cows were all cold and ready to milk I took Bessie out first and brought her to the barn to be milked. The milk pail was frozen to the ground and Casper was still on the lake so I was on my own, I thought about bringing Bessie to the pail but the corner was too small and I would loose milk so I unzipped my coat took off my bridges and peed around the edge right then Lamina came out and saw me she picked me up and tanned my hide faster than a car would she was pissed but I explained and she said that I was to wash the bucket and sweep the barn floor.

The pump was frozen so we had to use a hammer to break the ice and pump out the water it was super cold. The temperature was something that made you want to crawl home on your knees begging for mercy but I had to wash it I grabbed some soap and finished washing it.

The barn was pretty dirty so I had to shovel up all the poop and sweep the hay. I tried getting the tractor to start it was too cold so I went to get some blankets and some hot water. When I came back I poured the hot water on the hydraulics then I put blankets on it and tried starting

again the tractor buzzed to life and I started clearing the driveway and as I went down the road Bob our neighbor was carrying a deer back to his house it was a big 16 point buck I asked where he shot it “down by the pond he said.”

“Our pond”

“Yea I chased it there so it’s mine.”

“NO a that is our buck on my land.”

“You want this buck you’ll have to take it from me.”

“Okay” vroom I put my foot down on the gas and went after him he had to run in the snow and with a buck he was already slow so I caught up with him drove as fast as I could at him and right as he started begging for mercy I stopped He gave up the buck and agreed not to hunt on our property again.

I tied the deer to the tractor and drove home. Alice scolded me and said I should respect Mr. Bob and bargain not threaten him.

Alice prepared venison brisket and potatoes she said I was to invite Mr. Bob over for dinner. When I got there he was still very mad and he started throwing stuff at me but as soon as I was about to leave Alice showed up she trotted over to him in the happiest way he stopped throwing rocks and smiled he agreed.

At dinner Bob was quiet I said I was sorry and he said he understood. The venison was good and the rack would look good over the mantle.

After dinner we played euchre Mr. Bob and I were partners and Casper and John were partners, The game took a slow start but soon picked up and Bob got a loner he was the best player I had ever seen, My father had told me he won his farm in a euchre game but I had just assumed it was luck.

My father Seebo was a very smart man but he never did well at work he just didn’t like to take orders so whenever he was asked to do something he would retaliate just out of Reaction this got him fired a lot one time his boss told him to oil the grinder in his meet factory and he said why don’t you do it yourself fatty. The boss immediately fired him and told him to get off the property. Seebo was working on this and he had managed to keep a job for over a year now.

He worked at a sheet metal factory, which was very dangerous he was the only one on the floor with all his limbs and fingers. He had lost clothes to the machines many times one time he went by a giant cutter and a hook on the side shot up stripping him to his underwear.

At home the ice was thawing and the ground was wet so every time you took a step outdoors your foot would sink in mud up till your boot the ground was black so I had to wear my waiters and try to keep dry. The stream was starting to overflow and go faster the small bridge was under about 2 inches of water so I went with a rake to try to clear some of the leaves mud and sticks. It was disgusting but there were frozen frogs floating down to the mating spots. they somehow always lived even though they froze. The animals were all waking up and coming out there was a new family of rabbits poking out of the dirt pure white (at first).

There were thousands of squirrels it seemed like. Casper and I got our slingshots the small clay beads we shot didn't kill them they just broke bones and stunned the squirrels. If the squirrels were big enough we would skin them and make squirrels soup otherwise we splinted them and let them go they looked funny but their bones healed really fast. Today I shot ten splinted three killed six and found one baby the little guy was barely walking, I liked this one a lot he was tiny and cute so I asked Alice if I could take care of him she didn't like the idea but she loved the little dude he was probably only a few days old and looked like a little fuzz ball his tail was twice his size and long. I built a cage out of metal wires they were pretty thick and we sacrificed a little bit of milk and cream for him. He kind of thought that Bessie (the cow) was his mom he would follow her around in the barn when we were milking her and he would latch on to he udders and sucks out mouthfuls of milk, his chirps even started to sound like little moos. He was fat and ready to go on his own after a week so we let him go but we put a yellow rope collar on him so we knew not to hit him when we were shooting. My father had just got a promotion so we had a little more money and he bought a car it was a cool Ford Model A station wagon and it went 60 MPH! We all went for a ride one night and out to dinner the car had 11 seats and a small boot for luggage or gas.

Right when things seemed really good the stock market crashed, my father went in shock all our money was in stocks and now it was almost all gone he was sick he just couldn't believe it then as it seemed nothing could get worse he got laid off, he was starting to crack he was in his bed all day and he soon stopped talking. A doctor came and said he was just so depressed he was

going to die. This felt terrible because he was my only parent left, we sold the farm and all split up. I went with Alice and her new husband, we bought a small ranch and we started our new life the model A was with us too and Albert (Alice's new husband) liked having a car.

The days were long and boring the farm was sold so I had nothing to do. I got enrolled in school for the fall I had never been to school before and it was hard work. The days went by and life got easier, but I missed the farm the sound of cows and playing in the fields now we lived in grand rapids where we had neighbors on all sides and barely enough room for a vegetable garden.

Casper was living with us now and my one-year-old sister Mavis was living up the block with Jeanette. Casper Mavis and I all went to school one morning the school was called John Walters elementary and it was big. The auditorium roof was a hundred feet tall and even with the one mile walk enrollment was up to five-hundred students Alice walked with us since it was the first day and we met our teachers together Mavis and I were put into Miss Walters room she introduced us and told us that her grandfather John was the founder of the school.

Mavis was the only girl in the class and I was the biggest boy the others had all known each other for years so I felt very out of place. At lunch Mavis Casper and I all sat together than some girls came over and started to talk to Mavis at first they were mean but Mavis told them she was no different and that she had no problem with them so they shouldn't with her. They started to walk away than they came back and asked Mavis to sit with them. She asked Casper and he said she should they went off and then it was just Casper and I so we ate quietly and than a boy whose name I couldn't remember but I knew his nick-name was Buddy he asked if I knew how to play ball, truthfully I had only played can ball with my brothers but I said you kidding I'm American aren't I. We started a game Buddy and Will where captains. Bud was first and he picked me I knew it would be hard but when I got up to bat I was really hoping and wishing just to hit the ball I swung and connected the ball rocketed into the air like a bullet it went far and landed right between the outfielders Bud got home and after the game said I was not to bad for a country boy, this made me mad so I started yelling at him but he said it was a compliment.

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The next day I played again and did all right I could throw good just couldn't catch so Bud put me at pitcher after the game Bud told me where he lived and I said I would bike over some time. When I got home Jeanette and Alice were crying when I asked why Jeanette said she was pregnant and engaged. The next day Alice told me Mavis would be moving in. School started to make sense and life seemed normal as it would ever be.