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An Adjustment of Differences

The odor of the roses came to them from a flower bed and they heard the busy hum of the bees around the honeysuckle as they played in the sand one bright morning. She wore a little blue sunbonnet and he a little pink one.

"Let's make a big hole, Albert," said the little girl, brushing her hair out of her eyes with a chubby, sand-covered fist.

"All right, but I am going to use the spade. You can have the rake," and he began to dig with the spade.

"Now, Albert, it's my turn to use the spade and you're not a bit nice," and she sat back on her heels, the little blue sunbonnet hanging down on her back and her brown eyes objecting.

"I don't care if it is. I'm going to use it," and he threw the sand out of the hole with a little more energy.

Her lip quivered as she said, "I don't care, you're not a nice boy at all. I'm your company and you have to be nice to me—you're the hostess"—remembering what her mamma had told her the day she wouldn't let a little girl play with her very best doll.

He kept on digging, shoving the spade into the sand without a word. Silence does not always mean consent.

"I'm not going to play with you any more—I'm going right straight home," and a tear started slowly down her cheek as she began to get up.

"Well, take the old spade; I didn't want it anyway," and he threw it toward her a little harder than was necessary. Her hand was on the sand as she was getting up and the spade struck it, cutting the grimy little fingers painfully. Then the long withstood flood came and Helen ran home crying and sobbing as if her heart would break—a great deal harder than she would have cried had she hurt her own fingers.

Running into the house, she told her mamma between sobs that "Albert was the meanest boy," and she wasn't ever going over there any more, and he hurt her hand "awfully—would it ever stop bleeding?" and the little tear-stained face and trembling lips were turned up to the mother. Trouble had stamped them with his work. For childhood's sorrows and tribulations are just as big, just as hard to bear for the child as are the man's and woman's for them.

The mother wiped away the tears and bandaged the little fingers, but she couldn't wipe away the resolution to "never play with him any more." But even as she comforted the little girl the mother smiled gently as she remembered the mountains she, herself, had cried over, only to have them turned into molehills by time.

Meanwhile Albert was sitting in the sand alone, picking up handfuls of it and slowly sifting it through his fingers. He had started to get up and go over to Helen when the spade hit her, but she was gone before he could do it. For a long time he sat there sifting the sand, then he suddenly pulled his pink sunbonnet off and threw it as far as possible. The hot sun poured down on the back of his neck. Then he threw the rake in another direction and finally crawled over to the spade, and, picking it up, threw it just as far as he could—clear to the barn. Then he slowly got up and went into the house, the sand sticking to the knees of his pants.

His mother was kneading some bread as he came in and, pausing to brush a fly away from her face with her dough-covered fingers, asked him if Helen had to go home. Albert mechanically answered "Yes." Idly wondering if his mother knew she left a splotch of flour on her cheek when she brushed the fly away. Then he went into the parlor and sat down. He sat there until dinner time watching a big fly buzzing away on the glass, and his mother called him to dinner three times before he heard her. Then he slipped out of his chair and slowly walked into the dining-room.

"Why, Albert, why didn't you come to dinner sooner? Didn't you know your papa was here? Besides, we've got to hurry and have dinner and wash the dishes so I can give you a bath and get you ready for the party." Yes, there was the party this afternoon; he

had forgotten all about it. Well, he didn't care whether he went or not—he wouldn't have any fun anyway. And Albert ate his dinner silently, only saying "Hello" when his papa entered and whirled him up on his broad shoulders.

After dinner he went out to the barn and watched white-faced Ned chew the hay. Then he walked through the orchard and even looked up toward the sand pile, but he didn't go near it. Finally his mother called him and he went into the house. Here he was tubbed and rubbed and fixed up until he looked like a different boy, with his blue sailor suit and his cap marked "Oregon" in white letters.

"What makes you so quiet, Albert?" his mamma asked as she was cleaning his finger-nails.

"Nothing, I guess," he answered, swinging his foot back and forth just as close to the leg of a chair as he could without touching it.

"Now, I guess you're all ready and here is a pretty rose for you to wear," and his mamma pinned a deep-red rose bud on his blue waist. Then kissing him, she said: "Be a good little boy," and he started for the party.

The party was at a little girl's house and only a short distance. He didn't go past Helen's, so he wondered if she would go or whether she would stay away because her finger was hurt. He didn't care anyway.

The sun was pretty hot and the dust hung in the air after a team went plodding by, but up in the trees now and then the birds chirped softly, sleepily, and Albert walked slowly. Finally he reached the gate and went in. The little girl's mamma saw him and said, "Here's Albert, too," taking hold of his hand and squeezing it gently. "What a pretty rose you have, dear." The little girl herself, dressed in a white dress so stiff that stuck out all around, said, "Hello."

The little boys and girls were under a big tree playing and Albert went over there. They were running and laughing and having a big time, but he stood and watched them for a while. Then they began to play "Drop the handkerchief," and Albert joined them. While he was running around with the handkerchief he saw several little girls over by a pansy bed. One of them was Helen. She didn't see him, so he kept on playing. But he was glad when they quit and were called into the house.

The house was darkened and the long table was lighted by candles. The knives and forks and spoons shot flashes of light at you as the candles flickered up and down and the drowsy odor of roses hung over the table.

It was a jolly meal, all laughing and having a good time—laughing too much sometimes, Albert thought. He didn't see anything very funny. Helen sat on the opposite side of the table and her dainty white dress and the pink ribbons in her brown hair were as fresh and pretty as the roses on the table. By the candle light Albert saw the white cloth around her fingers, and he wondered if they still hurt.

Finally they were through and Albert got up from his chair. He noticed the fingers covered with a cloth as they laid down the napkin, and then all the children began crowding out of the room.

Albert slipped around the table to where Helen was, unpinning his rose as he went. When he reached her he stuck it out towards her and said: "Do you want it?"

Helen looked at him a minute, and then said, "You were a naughty, bad boy this morning, Albert—just so mean to me, but—it's awfully pretty," and she took the rose.

Didn't they have a dandy time playing "Ring Around Rosy" and "Needle's Eye"? And they skipped home together hand in hand, Helen wearing the deep red rose-bud.

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