

## **Little Lost Lizzie**

Little Lizzie, Joe, Pat, Barb and their mother had to move to the Poor Farm because their daddy had to go to war and they needed to be near those that loved them and could help take care of them. Now, if you know anything about poor farms you might think living in the Poor Farm would be a sad thing for four children, but you would be wrong.

The Poor Farm was wonderful for these children because their grandma and grandpa ran the poor farm and Aunt Helen and Emma lived there too.<sup>1</sup> There was a maple grove in the front, fruit trees, chickens, a cow and a vegetable garden. There was a pond in the back with a willow tree and down the lane was a one room school. Barb, Pat, and Joe liked to go to the school because they knew how to read and the teacher thought they were very smart. Little Lizzie was too young for school, but she didn't mind because she got mom all to herself.

When the children weren't in school and they had all their chores and homework done they could play the rest of the day, and there was so much to do. Their favorite game was Hide and Seek. There were two sets of stairs, one for the men and one for the women. Joe would stand where the top of the stairs met. He would hide his eyes and begin to count... 1, 2, 3, 4... Barb, Pat and Lizzie would RUN down the long hallway and Joe would peek as he continued to count. Barb, Pat and Lizzie would duck into Mother's room and hide under the bed where they felt safe. "97, 98, 99, 100, here I come, ready or not," Joe called out.

He went straight to Mom's room. The girls always hid there, but Joe had peeked just to be sure. He opened and slammed bed room door. He opened and slammed the large wardrobe door. "Not in here," he said and began jumping on the bed. "Not behind the bed!" and he left even though he could hear the girls giggling.

He went to the room across the hall and opened and slammed that wardrobe door as loudly as he could. "Not in here," he shouted and he continued down the hall to the sunroom. He relaxed on the couch and began reading the cartoons in the Saturday Evening Post. After he had finished he quietly went back down the hall, tiptoed into Mom's room, kneeled by the bed and lifted up the spread.

"Gotcha," and the girls screamed and laughed and came out of their hiding place.

It was now Joe's turn to hide, but Joe couldn't sit still long enough to hide so when it was his turn he hid little Lizzie. Barb and Pat hid their eyes in their arms and, never peeking, began to count ... 1, 2, 3, 4...

Joe picked up Little Lizzie, ran down stairs, down the long hall, out the downstairs sunroom door, around the house and in the back door leading to the pantry. A large flour bin was there from when many people lived at the Poor Farm, but now it was empty except for a dusting of flour and an unused mouse nest in the corner. Joe lifted the lid, put Lizzie in, touched his

finger to his lips and went “shhhh” and Little Lizzie did the same.

Joe ran back the way he came and leaned with one hand on the wall, one on his hip and his feet crossed. “98, 99, 100.... Here we come, ready or not,” Barb and Pat said, heading down the hall with Joe right behind them. They searched Mother’s room and Joe just giggled. They looked in the room across the hall and Joe laughed again, but more softly. They went down stairs and out the sunroom door to look in the sheds outback and Joe just yawned.

As the girls headed around to the front of the house they saw old Emma sitting in her Adirondack Chair. As they neared they noticed Emma was carving a peach pit basket. They stood quietly watching and hoping Emma would give them the basket. They waited, watched and listened to the screech, screek, screek of the pocket knife on peach pit. Joe wandered off looking for a fat grasshopper or green snake for a game with the girls later.

The sun lowered and Joe, Barb and Pat heard Mother holler, "Time for supper!" Joe hurried to the table while Barb and Pat helped Emma. They washed their hands and sat down to a table covered with bowls and platters of fried chicken, green beans, corn on the cob, and fresh apple pie.

Grandpa started to say grace, but Mother looked around and questioned, "Where's Little Lizzie?" Joe tensed only a second then said, "I'll find her," and jumped up, walked out of the dining room, ran down the long hall, out the sunroom door, around the house and in to the back door to the pantry.

He opened the flour bin door and there was Little Lizzie. She had been crying and Joe could see where the tears had run down her flour covered face and she had cried so hard she wet her pants, but she wasn't mad at Joe. She just reached up and smiled because Joe had found her.

Joe went back the way he came and walked proudly into the dining room with Lizzie in his arms. Mother, Grandpa, and Grandma thought Joe was a

hero; but Barb and Pat just looked at each other and shook their heads.

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