

Most of the stores in downtown Boone, North Carolina closed around 6:00 p.m., and Monday was a slow day anyway, especially during the cold winter months, so the cook at St. Sinner's Cafe closed the kitchen early. Soon after that, the cook and waitress finished their work and went home, so that the only person left in the cafe was the dishwasher, Stanley.

Stanley was in the middle of putting up the chairs when the cook and the waitress left. When they left, he stopped putting up the chairs, and went into the room where the tape player and the tapes were. I feel like mopping to Lester Young tonight, he thought. So he put the Lester Young tape into the tape player, and adjusted the volume a little bit. Then he went back to putting up the chairs.

While he swept the floor, Stanley listened to silence. But when he was ready to mop, he started the tape first. The first song on the tape was "Prisoner of Love," with Lester Young on the sax, and Stanley on the mop. Later, as he walked home from work, Stanley whistled music into the cold winter air, and the notes danced and floated up into the cold dark starry sky.

Stanley lived in a two bedroom apartment on Green St., with Laura, his wife, and their three year old son Story. Laura worked as director of the Hospitality House in Boone during the day, so during the day Stanley took care of Story. Then when Laura got home, Stanley went to work washing dishes at St Sinner's Cafe. Neither Lauza nor Stanley owned a car, and they spent money only on what they needed, so they were able to pay all their bills, and even have some money left over to save for when they might need to find other work. In his spare time, Stanley wrote poems. In her spare time, Laura played the violin. These things they did not do for money, but to make gifts to give to friends and relatives. They had a simple life, and most of the time they were happy. They were in love.

When Stanley got home that night, Story came running to the door to meet him, and said, "Laura said to ask you: What are my feelings?"

"Well... uh... just a minute... let me hang up my coat first, and then I'll tell you."

From the kitchen he heard Laura on the violin. Eek, haaw... she was tuning the violin. Stanley got an idea.

"C'mon Story," he said, "I know a game we can play with your mother...."

Laura was standing in front of the table in the kitchen, looking at some sheet music. "Hi." Eek, haaw.

Are you ready for your big performance tomorrow night?" asked Stanley.

"Close enough. They'll know what I'm playing anyway."

"Uh... Story's got to wondering about his feelings," said Stanley, "and I thought of a game we could play to sort of... give him some ideas, but we need you and your violin...."

Wheet, err.

"Remember that game," said Stanley, "with one person who puts their arms behind their back, and another person gets behind them, and makes their arms be the front person's arms?"

Soon Story saw Laura kneeling on the floor in front of him, but the arms that came from her sides looked funny. Stanley was kneeling behind her. Those were Stanley's arms holding the violin. Laura was laughing, and Story heard Stanley laugh. Story laughed too.

Laura then began moving her mouth, but Story heard Stanley's voice. Stanley's voice, but Laura's mouth moving. "First of all, Story, I want to tell you about feeling happy--click--feeling happy--click--feeling happy--click--" The hand holding the violin bow softly bonged Laura's head. She made a little hurt face, then laughed. Story laughed.

The arms awkwardly adjusted the violin to Laura's neck,

and she made a fish face. Story was now laughing and giggling without stopping. The hand moved the violin bow over the strings. Erk, Wheet, Wheet, erk, erk, Wheet. Then Laura's mouth moved again, but Stanley's voice. "When I feel happy, my face looks happy, my eyes are bright and cheerful, and my smile says that I have been up to--uh-- been having a good time." Laura's face looked happy. Then the hand put down the bow and covered Laura's nose. She closed her eyes and her head turned away a little bit. "ONK!!"

"Excuse me," said the voice politely.

Then the hand left Laura's nose and gently brushed some of her hair out of her face. Then one finger went to one of Laura's eyes, and moved like it was wiping away tears. Laura became quiet. Story stopped laughing.

Then the hand picked up the bow, and moved the bow over the strings again. Eet, err, Aww, eet, Aww. And the voice said, "And when I'm feeling sad, my face looks sad, my eyes, uh, sometimes cry, and, uh, there is no smile on my face." Laura's face looked sad, as if she was about to cry.

"And then there are times when I feel scared, AHHH!!, or when I feel tired-- Scaw, phweoo-- or when I feel hungry-- erdeley erdeley erdeley--erorwhen I feel philisophical--uh-- or even times when I feel just plain content--" The hand moved the bow over the violin strings again, Eeaww, wheet, err. Laura had been making different faces through all this, and Story, laughing and laughing. Now the hand set down the bow and made Laura's mouth into a fish mouth, and , while Laura's mouth moved, the voice spoke again, "I feel so happy that I feel I love everyone in this room!"

Then Stanley moved out from behind Laura, and said, "Okay, kid. That's all for tonight. It's bedtime. Maybe if you brush your teeth and put on your pajamas by yourself, both your mom and I will read you a story tonight-- do you think you can do that?"

Later, Laura lay in bed almost asleep, but still awake enough to be watching Stanley. He was sitting at the desk. He had been writing something. Now he was looking at the old deer hide that was held in a clear plastic case and hung on the wall over the desk. He sat back in his chair and his fingers played lightly with his beard.

"Do you ever think that the drawing of the mountains on that deer hide is a map, and that X there near the bottom marks a treasure?" Stanley looked at Laura.

"Only when I look at it." said Laura.

They laughed.

"So we're bringing two bottles of champagne... is there going to be wine, too?" asked Stanley.

"Yep." said Laura. "The professor said one of Jack's presents to Tom would be the wine for dinner."

"Maybe we'll even get that big snow they're talking about," said Stanley, "and we can all get snowed in...."

"That would be fun, wouldn't it?"

Tom woke up around 11:00 a.m. on the morning of December 31st. His face felt cold. The house he rented with two other guys was old and not well insulated. He pulled the blankets on his bed over his head, rolled on to his side, and curled up. Maybe I'll sleep some more.

But he didn't go back to sleep. He began thinking about what he was going to do on the last two days of 1985. Today'll be a great day, he thought. I can go hang out at Mary's house all day--maybe watch the tube for a little while-- and then come back, shower up, and arrive over to the Professor's around 7:00 p.m. By 8:00 p.m. everyone will be there, we'll have dinner and wine, and then-- birthday presents! And then wine, and more wine, some tunes, and then champagne, and the beginning of the New Year. Hmmm. And then tomorrow I'll recover.

Now Tom was ready. He also had to go to the bathroom. So

he got out of bed. Both of his roommates were away on vacation, so he did not bother with the formality of putting on a robe. He shuffled into the bathroom. The bathroom tiles were cold. Maybe we'll get that big snow they're talking about, he thought, and we can all get snowed in....

Mary's house was only four houses down from Tom's on Old Bristol Rd., so it was not long before Tom was walking up the old stone steps to the front porch. He knocked on the door to announce his presence, and then went inside.

"Hello, anyone home?" he called. The house smelled like bread baking. No one was in the living room, and the door to the study was closed, but he heard the TV going in the family room in the back of the house. He walked back.

"Hello, anyone home?" he called again.

When he got to the kitchen he was greeted by Louise, Mary's mother.

"Hi there, Tom."

"Hi Louise. How's things in the spirit world?"

"Fine, just fine. The resident clergyman is in the family room watching 'Mary Poppins,' Mary is upstairs and can't be interrupted right now, and Brian is... somewhere around here. And I'm making bread."

"What's Mary up to?"

"All I can say is I'll have to tell her you're here. Want to watch 'Mary Poppins?'"

Tom went into the family room. John, Mary's father, was sitting on the couch with his feet propped up on the coffee table, and did not yet know Tom was there. The movie had reached the part where Mary Poppins had been told that Bert's uncle was stuck on the ceiling again, and he needed Mary's help.

Tom decided to try a little joke.

"Hi Dad." he said.

John didn't even turn his head, but said, "C'mon in Tom, have a seat. You got here just in time for the tea party on the ceiling."

Tom picked a chair and sat down. Soon Mary, Bert, Bert's uncle, and the two kids were all floating around near the ceiling singing 'I Love to Laugh.' All too soon it was over, and there was a commercial about hair conditioner on.

Then John turned to Tom and, imitating the British Banker who employed Mary Poppins, said, "... but tea parties on the ceiling, I ask you, having tea parties on the ceiling....?"

They both laughed.

At that moment, Louise came back into the kitchen. "While you boys have been watching children's movies on TV, I found our four year old Brian sitting at his father's desk in his study, hard at work composing a very sophisticated theological argument." Brian stood next to her, holding a piece of paper.

"Following in his father's footsteps, is he?" said John, smiling.

"C'mon Brian," said Tom. "Let's see what you made."

So Brian came down into the family room, and showed them the watercolor painting he had made.

"This," he said, pointing to an area of white and blue paint smeared together, "is our house. And this," pointing to four long vertical brown streaks, "is the tree in the front yard."

"Beautiful." said Tom.

"This," Brian continued, pointing to a section of green along the bottom edge, "is our front yard-- this is you," pointing to a oblong purple area with some touches of orange at the top-- "this is mom;" pointing to a long vertical triangle of orange with a blue circle at the top-- "this is Mary," pointing to a small area of red and yellow smears-- "this is me," pointing to a small white and blue area-- "and this," pointing to an area of multicolored swirls and crisscrossing lines and smears, "is God."

"Wow," said Tom.

Then Louise said, "I thought maybe we could title it 'Heaven,'"

and frame it to put up over the fireplace. I'm going to take the bread out of the oven now, does anyone want any fresh bread?"

"Here Dad, this is for you," said Brian, handing his father the painting. Then he hurried into the kitchen. "Should I go up and tell Mary?" he asked his mother.

Then Tom spoke up, "Uh, Louise, can I interrupt her yet, or is she still busy?"

"She told me to tell you she was busy working on your birthday present, and she might not finish in time for the party tonight. She's kind of worried about not being able to finish it for the party."

"Do you think I should take off then?"

"She'd probably feel better if you weren't here."

"All right." Tom turned to John. He was watching "Mary Poppins" again. He still had Brian's painting in his hands. Brian had already gone upstairs to tell Mary that Louise was taking the bread out of the oven. Tom looked at Brian's painting again. "Nice painting." Then he got up to leave.

"Could you tell Mary," he said to Louise, "that I might go over to the Professor's early, around 7:00 p.m. or so, even though dinner isn't supposed to be until 8:00 p.m. I'm just going to hang around. She can come early or at 8:00 p.m., whatever she wants. Okay?"

"Fine, Tom, I'll tell her."

"And if we get snowed in....?" said Tom.

Louise smiled. "... then get snowed in at the Professor's."

"See ya Dad." Tom waved at John.

"Remember," said John, without turning his head from the TV, "no tea parties on the ceiling."

"Bye Tom," said Louise, as she got the butter out of the refrigerator.

Upstairs in Mary's room, Brian stood watching as Mary worked slowly and carefully on a painting of a place in the mountains that she was making to give to Tom for his birthday.

Clear Water had spent his first night away from the tribe in some woods near the mountain the tribe was now living in. By the light of a nearly full moon, he had quickly set up a temporary shelter, and then wrapped himself inside his bear skin robe, and so he had been protected from the cold mountain air. Staying warm and eating is not a problem now, he thought; but he had no idea how he was going to survive once he became visible to other living things. And so his mind remained unsettled, and he remained awake....

In the legends and stories of the little people of Yopitlaag, there was one story about big people that had been passed through many generations and still survived. Long ago, the story went, a big person and his donkey had been near the village of the little people during the summer, and the great returning comet had been within the orbit of the earth. One of the little people of Yopitlaag had been on a crystal ball quest, and had answered his question correctly. The people of Yopitlaag had then all participated in the ceremony called the Dance of a Child's Heart Playing. And since it was summer, the Dance had been held outside. The little people were as yet unaware that the time that they were visible to other living things coincided in some way with the great returning comet.

The big person had been near the place where the Dance was held that evening, and had noticed a small light that came down from the top of the mountain near the village. He was hidden by thick grass, and had remained hidden and unnoticed near the clearing at the base of the mountain. And so he had seen the Dance of a Child's Heart Playing. But on that night he chose not to make his presence known.

The next day, the big person had calmly but carefully walked

over to the place where the Dance had been held, and where ashes from the bonfire the night before still remained. The big person then called out to the little people, saying, "Little people, hear me. I know many fine big people, but I have been traveling alone this summer, looking for gold. Last night I saw a light. I watched its flight, and I saw it land here. I watched your Dance. I no longer desire to look for gold. I wish to join your tribe. If you will, answer me and tell me if I may live with you now, and for the rest of my life."

No one in the tribe remembered anything from the past that could help them decide what to do. This was the first time that a big person had become aware that the little people existed. The tribe knew, from the legends and stories of the tribe, that other animals had become aware that the little people existed; but each time the tribe had learned quickly that the animals needed the little people for food. And the people had easily agreed that in those cases, "give what you can, keep what you need" meant to give up your life to the safety of the mountain cave. But now, a large animal that wishes to join the tribe?

The little people of Yopitlaag. Their way: "give what you can, keep what you need." Surely they could give this big person a place in the tribe...but... they needed to all agree on this decision. They needed to have a village meeting. Together without speaking, the little people decided that at that moment, there was nothing they could say. The big person stood at the place where the Dance had been held for a long time. He waited and listened. But he heard nothing and he saw nothing. Finally, he walked away. Later, the big person and his donkey had left that place in the mountains and gone somewhere else.

Soon the little people of Yopitlaag had a village meeting. They all gathered around the tribal center lodge. Then they all became quiet.

Then the spirit healer spoke: "The people of Yopitlaag have a way of life that everyone agrees on. "Give what you can, keep what you need." What if big people come to us and we let them join the tribe, and then they try to make us live some other way, different than the way we know?

"The whole tribe must now make a decision that everyone agrees on. Or choose to live with disagreement.

"My question to everyone: If ever again another living thing asks to join our tribe, what can we give? And what do we need to keep?"

Silence.

Each person in the tribe knew the answer to these questions. All had known the answers since the day they were born. The answers: simply "give what you can, keep what you need." That was the way. But each person only knew how they as an individual lived the way. The question now: how does the tribe as a whole live the way?

No one in the village knew how to answer such a question, so no one spoke. The whole tribe was silent. The silence continued. Still no one spoke. In the legends and stories of the little people of Yopitlaag, no moment of silence longer than the silence that happened then.

Finally, the manager of the tribal center lodge spoke. "There are many needs that need to be answered today, and one of the needs is [REDACTED] Let's just agree to let Nature take its course, and agree not to worry about it."

The noise following this proposal left no doubt that, for the first time in the history of Yopitlaag, everyone in the tribe [REDACTED]

One month later, the big person and his donkey returned. Again he walked to the place where the Dance of a Child's Heart Playing had been held. And then he called out to the little people again, saying "Little people, hear me. I still wish to join your tribe. If you will, answer me, and tell me if I may live with you now, and for the rest of my life."

This time, when the little people of Yopitlaag heard the big person speak, they did not need a village meeting. Instead, they all silently in their own minds, decided that they needed to say yes to this big person. And then, after they decided to say yes, they looked over to the place where the Dance of a Child's Heart Playing had been held and, where once the big person had been, the little people of Yopitlaag now saw a little person with wings.

While lying awake in his temporary shelter, Clear Water had remembered this story, a story he had heard many times. Surely, the little people of Yopitlaag saw many big people in the mountains in recent years, but since the great returning comet was not within the earth's orbit, the big people did not see them. But in six days, the great returning comet would be within the earth's orbit. And Clear Water needed a place where he could be safe from living things that might need him for food. The little people of Yopitlaag had once taken a big person into their tribe. Maybe now the big people's tribe would take in a little person...

But, Clear Water thought, the big people do not come here during the winter, and I haven't the faintest idea where to look for them... I will have to travel by the wind....

...but traveling by the wind was not something the little people could easily manage, and consequently it was something

that they rarely tried. The problem was that, because the little people were so small, the wind often blew them in a direction they did not want to go. So even when there was just a steady breeze blowing, the little people still remained close to the ground when they flew. In this way, they were never carried far away by sudden gusts or updrafts, and consequently did not have to spend hours or days making long journeys simply to return to where they had been.

And so the little people had to be careful of the wind. However, the little people's small nature also worked to their advantage. For while the little people could easily be blown by the wind in a direction they did not want to go, only rarely did they ever experience serious accidents as a result.

The little people were so small that even strong breezes could not cause them to move at a dangerously high speed, especially if they had their wings folded in. Consequently, little people who were blown off course by the wind, could simply fold in their wings, cover their head, and glance off everything in their path, as if they were a small piece of tree bark, until they finally bumped into something that brought them to a halt. Even when someone did not fold their wings in soon enough, the little people's wings were strong but flexible, and were rarely damaged. Therefore, serious injuries only occurred when little people were blown off course by a unusually strong wind, and even then the little people were all right as long as they avoided getting blown into a collision with a rock.

Still, the little people seldom ventured into the air when a strong wind was blowing. The only exception was leaf riding. This was because leaves were heavier than the little people were and did not get blown very far away, even by a strong wind. But without leaves, a strong wind would easily carry a little person so far away from Yopitlaag that they would

lose sight of familiar landmarks, and never find their way back. The legends and stories of the little people related many instances of this happening to young, inexperienced flyers, with the results always the same: no one ever saw that person again....

...and now, the cold winter months... and what happens when my wings freeze?.... Then Clear Water shut his eyes. At the moment he was safe, and he was lying down wrapped in a warm bear skin robe. He felt tired. He felt himself fading, fading into sleep... his thoughts drifted... and again they drifted through the story of how the tribe decided to let a big person live with them, and how the big person then became a little person with wings. A good story, thought Clear Water as he drifted off to sleep....

... but, unlike all the other legends and stories that were passed through the generations of little people in the village of Yopitlaag, this story was one with an ending that had not yet been discovered. There were two pieces of information at the end of the story that had been left out. First, during the month between when the big person became aware of the little people of Yopitlaag and the big person's second visit to that place in the mountains where the little people had their village, the big person and his donkey had met another big person who was looking for gold, and the big person who knew of the little people had added one very interesting tale to the others collection of legends and stories about prospecting. And then, after the big person became a little person with wings, and had been gone awhile, the donkey that the big person had brought with him decided that his master had left for good, and began searching for food. The donkey eventually wandered away from

the place in the mountains where the little people of Yopitlaag lived. And in the saddlebag the donkey carried on his back, a map of that place in the mountains, a map drawn on a smooth deer hide with blood root dye.

The next morning, Clear Water woke up early. He poked his head out from inside the bearskin robe. The air was cool, but not cold. And he saw sunlight and blue sky outside his temporary shelter. I have been given a good day to travel, he thought. Maybe today I will find some big people.

Clear Water got up, rolled his bearskin robe into a bundle, tucked it under his arm, and stepped outside of his temporary lodge. Then he spoke aloud to the spirit that all the little people of Yopitlaag believed in.

"I am ready," he said, "let the winds that circle the earth carry me where they will." Then he flew up into the sky.

Soon Clear Water found himself getting carried over the mountains by a steady breeze coming from the south.

The sun was shining, and the sky was clear, except for a few scattered clouds. The air was cold while flying, but even after traveling for about twenty minutes Clear Water did not feel that his wings were going to freeze. Although Clear Water had ridden the leaves many times, he had never traveled by the wind intentionally. Now, as he coasted and floated in the cold morning air, he began to think that not only would he find big people on this day, but he might even enjoy the ride as well....

The professor was upstairs in his study, standing at his desk. He was puzzling over how to organize the experimental course he was working on, a course he hoped to teach during the fall semester. The title of the course: The Renewal of Spiritual Awareness: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches. Funny, thought

the professor, looking at all the folders that held information he had collected on this subject, nothing in all this material that will help me organize this course... And look at these ideas:

Moreover, the instincts are not vague and indefinite by nature, but are specifically formed motive forces which, long before there is any consciousness, and in spite of any consciousness later on, pursue their inherent goals.

In Zen there is nothing to explain, nothing to teach that will add to your knowledge. Just as the flower blooms out of its inner necessity, the looking into one's own nature must be the outcome of one's own inner overflowing. Zen calls this "returning to one's own home."

That's a nice title for a course, but I'm not sure what half of this stuff means... how am I going to teach it?...hmmm... inner overflowing?... Oh, my God!---the tub!!....

Earlier Kate had been in the upstairs bathroom cleaning the tub when the water had suddenly quit running. She had gone downstairs and checked some other faucets, and found that the water pressure had suddenly dropped off to near nothing. Something clogging the intake pipe at the reservoir, she thought, and she had gone out to check. But she had forgotten to open the drain in the tub where she had been cleaning. And she had forgotten to turn the faucet off. And then the kids had tagged along to go see the reservoir, and....

... suddenly the professor realized that Kate was still outside with the kids, but meanwhile the water had been running into the tub-- he had heard it-- and he had heard it filling up....

He dashed out of his study and into the bathroom. Whew! He turned off the faucet. The water, which was pale green and soapy from the Comet Kate had been using, had filled to within two inches of the top edge of the tub. Hah! the professor laughed. Even the safety drain wouldn't have been enough to keep it from

overflowing.... He clicked open the drain and then he went downstairs.

Kate and the kids were still outside, playing in the leaves. The professor noticed that the sun was now behind some clouds... maybe we'll get that big snow they're talking about, he thought, and we'll all get snowed in tonight...Hmmm... I suppose I ought to start cutting up some vegetables.... The professor was making dinner that night for ten people, to celebrate Tom's birthday, and it was already 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. But the professor was making tacos for dinner, so he was not worried. And dinner was not going to be until 8:00 p.m. anyway, he thought. Still, he decided to go into the kitchen and get most of it ready now. He went into the kitchen and turned on the light switch. The light came on for a brief moment, and then the bulb burned out.

The professor sighed. Then he went and got one of the chairs from the table, and got up on it to check the bulb. While he was unscrewing the little thing that held the glass part on over the bulb, his attention strayed for a moment to Kate and the kids, who he saw outside through the kitchen window, and the little thing dropped out of his hand on to the floor. And there was Muffin, their cat, sitting silently at the door to the kitchen, watching. "No, Muffin," said the professor, but the cat did not obey. Muffin now saw a neat little toy on the floor, and she wanted to play with it. She sprang over to it and covered it with both her paws. Then she began batting it around the kitchen floor. "No, I need that thing," meaned the professor, and he got down from the chair and, without setting down the glass part, tried to separate the cat from the little thing with his foot. But this strategy did not work. So he stopped momentarily at the counter to carefully set down the glass part. At that moment, Muffin batted the little thing with her right paw and it slid under the refrigerator.

When Kate and the kids came inside from the back door, they saw the professor lying on his stomach near the refrigerator, and poking around underneath it with the handle end of a fly swatter.

"Working on your new course, honey?" asked Kate.

"Ummph... uh...."

"What are you doing, dad?" asked Jennifer.

"That cat--" mumbled the professor, still busy....

"Jennifer," said Kate, "why don't you and Dylan take Muffin into the other room, and watch some TV?"

"Okay, mom."

"And could you get Dylan's coat off?"

"Uh, huh." Jennifer picked up Muffin and herded Dylan through the door towards the family room in the front of the house.

As they went out, Grandpa Jack came into the laundry room from the garage. "Hello, everyone!" he called out.

"We're in here, Jack," said Kate.

The professor had finally pushed the little thing out from under the refrigerator, and was back up on the chair screwing in a new lightbulb when Grandpa Jack came into the kitchen.

"Have a nice drive?" asked Kate.

"Wonderful," said Jack, "Saw some beautiful countryside, beautiful... but Kate, she's not running right, poor thing. I checked her plugs, she's getting fire all right... I'm not sure what's wrong...." He stood there, holding his driving cap with both hands.

"Okay, Jack, I'll take a look," said Kate. Then, turning to the professor, she said, "Alan, are you going to start getting dinner ready soon?"

"Yes, dear. Uh... could you hand me that glass part on the counter, and that little thing next to it?"

Grandpa Jack and Kate went out to the garage to look at Jack's old Plymouth Valiant. Meanwhile, the professor had the kitchen light on now, and was ready to cut vegetables. But how about some music? he thought. And maybe the kids will help me, instead of watching TV? So the professor went to the front of the house where the kids were watching TV.

Jennifer, Dylan, and even Muffin were sitting contently on the rug in front of the TV watching some kind of kids show. On the TV, there was a big person dressed up like a clown standing in front of nine little kids who were sitting in a circle. They were singing the French folk song "Alouette," and each kid was given a part of the bird's body to sing in the refrain:

"... Je t'y plumerai les ail's, je t'y plumerai les ail's,
et le cou, et le cou
et les yeux, et les yeux
et le nez, et le nez
et le bec, et le bec
et la tet, et la tet
Alouette, Alouette
O, O, O, O,
Alouette, gentille alouette...."

Fascinating, thought the professor. He sat down on the arm of the couch behind his kids and watched until the end of the song. Then there was a commercial.

"Hey you guys," said the professor.

Jennifer, Brian, and Muffin all turned their heads at the same time.

"Fell like helping me make dinner?"

"Yeah!"

"Well, turn off the TV and c'mon... and Jennifer, on your way in, could you go into the dining room and put that record that your mother just gave me for Christmas on the stereo. You know which one, right? Could you put it on Side A?"

And so, as the sky began to darken and cloud over in the late afternoon of December 31st, 1985, the professor stood in his kitchen cutting vegetables, and letting his kids put the diced parts into bowls, and Kate and Grandpa Jack stood in the garage over the engine of Jack's old Valiant fiddling with the plugs, while Bunny Berigan wailed on his trumpet from the dining room stereo, and sang his great smash hit from the swing era, "I Can't Get Started."