

Montclair Public Schools

Montclair High School

100 Chestnut Street ~ Montclair, New Jersey 07042

www.montclair.k12.nj.us

James N. Earle

Principal

To the Montclair High School Class of 2021:

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to Montclair High School and tell you about a summer reading enrichment experience your World Literature teachers have prepared for you. So much of your success as a high school student will depend on your active and careful reading, and we are convinced that your continued reading over the summer will support and enrich your learning as a ninth grader.

The World Literature summer enrichment reading invites you to take a walk in the worlds of people your age as they share important insights about their own lives and make pivotal, sometimes life-changing decisions. The two stories we are requiring you to read are from a book titled *A Walk in My World*. As you read them, pay careful attention to the way the main character of each story grows as a thinking person after facing a complicated problem. Following your reading, we ask that you do some writing to think more about your observations of each character. We also ask you to select and write about someone whom you know or have heard of and believe has matured over time. You also will need to make a creative cover that visually represents your world and how you see yourself as an individual.

Once you receive the assignment, read the instructions carefully, and if you have any questions about the requirements and expectations of the assignment, email Ms. Dorian at adorian@montclair.k12.nj.us. Ms. Dorian is the World Literature teacher who will reply to your questions throughout the summer.

If you would like to participate in a summer workshop with two World Literature teachers who will be providing support for the enrichment reading and writing, contact Ms. JoAnn McCullough from IMANI at info@imaniprograms.org or (973) 509-2822.

I hope you enjoy these stories from *A Walk in My World* and continue reading for your own interest and satisfaction throughout the summer.

Sincerely,

James N. Earle

Principal

Telephone: 973.509.4100 ~ Fax: 973.509.0892 ~ Email: jearle@montclair.k12.nj.us



imani
CREATING A CULTURE OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

& the Montclair Public Schools

Present: Transition to 9th Grade Summer Program

- Complete Summer Assignments
- Explore A Walk in My World
- Read & Interpret scenes from The Odyssey
- Sharpen & Evaluate Algebra I Skills
- Tour the High School
- Meet Important & Key staff
- Learn about extracurricular activities

Register by June 17th

Space is limited!

Cost: \$50

**Montclair High School
George Inness Annex
Date: July 5th–July 27th
Monday-Thursday
Time: 8:30-12 noon**

Registration-2017

Transition to 9th Grade Summer Program

Student Name: _____ Parent Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____ Middle School: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Tel Parent #: _____

Signature: _____

Any Questions call IMANI-College Advocacy Center 973-509-2822 www.imaniprograms.org info@imaniprograms.org

Mail to: 73 South Fullerton Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042

MONTCLAIR HIGH SCHOOL
English Department
World Literature Summer Enrichment Reading 2017

Note: This assignment is due on the first day of school to your World Literature teacher; not submitting it will result in a grade of ZERO. This work will be counted as your first homework assignment and will assist you in writing your first essay.

Required Reading:

Read "The Composition" and "Christmas Morning" from *A Walk in My World*, edited by Anne Mazer; as you read these stories, keep in mind the following prompt:

Prompt:

As we grow up, experiences lead us to see people, the world, and ourselves in new ways. This change in perspective can often make a person more mature. As you read the stories we've required, note ways the main character becomes more aware of life's realities. Find examples that show how this character's thinking and ways of behaving have developed through the story. Use the guide below to help you compose your responses. Write a total of four responses, one "before" and one "after" for both of the stories you have read. Also, write about a person (you can use yourself) whom you know or have learned about who has become more mature.

Directions: Type your responses to Parts I and II; consult the sample and "Helpful Tips and Reminders."

PART I:

Composing a "Before" Response for Each Story

- Quote a passage that reveals the character's less mature way of thinking.
- Explain how this passage reveals the character's less mature way of thinking.

Composing an "After" Response for Each Story

- Quote a passage that reveals the character's more mature way of thinking.
- Explain how this passage reveals the character's more mature way of thinking.

PART II: Making a Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, or Text-to-World Connection

Now think of an example of this theme outside of *A Walk in My World*. Write a paragraph in which you use specific details to explain how someone has developed from a less mature to a more mature individual. Take your example from your own life experience, reading, observations, as well as studies of history or current events.

Consider starting your paragraph with:

A person (or character) whom I believe has gone from being less mature to more mature is _____.

PART III: Create a cover for your work.

- Title your cover *A Walk in My World*.
- Design it to include a colorful and representative portrait of *your* world.
- Label the cover with your name and date.

A Sample Based on the Short Story “The Late Bud” by Ama Ata Aidoo

“Before” Response: Immature Thinking

Quote

“After all, our elders do not say anything interesting to themselves. It is their usual complaints about how difficult life is. If it is not the price of cloth or fish, then it is the scarcity of water. It is all very uninteresting. I will always play with my children when they grow up. I will not grumble about anything...” (Aidoo 31).

Response

Yaaba’s immaturity is clear in this passage as she is reflecting on her perception of the adults in her African village. She is immature because as a young child she likes to have fun by playing with friends, rather than doing the chores that her mother expects her to complete. This frequently gets her into trouble. In comparison to other girls in the village who are more obedient, Yaaba is rebellious. She thinks adults are bossy, boring, and unaware of children’s need to play and fully enjoy their young lives. Her immaturity is also shown at the end of this quote when she says she will do things differently once she is a mother. She desires to remain young at heart and play with her future children, but at her young age, Yaaba does not yet understand the burdens and obligations that come with becoming an adult.

Helpful Tips and Reminders:

- Include at least 1 quote (dialogue or narration) such as the one used in this sample.
- To help your reader better understand your ideas, be sure that your quote provides sufficient context (this is a brief explanation of the events surrounding your quote).
- Use proper MLA format to cite both quotes by putting the author’s last name and page number in parentheses; see sample above for proper formatting.
- Be sure your response contains analysis, which means your own ideas about what each quote from the text means; remember, do not use *I, me or my* in this type of literary analysis.
- Responses must be double-spaced and typed, using 12 point, Times New Roman font.
- If you do not submit this assignment on the first day of school, you will receive a ZERO.

Taken from A Walk in My World,
edited by Anne Mazer (1998)

THE COMPOSITION

Antonio Skármeta

CHILE

On his birthday, they gave Pedro a soccer ball. Pedro complained, because he wanted one made out of white leather with black patches, just like the ones the professionals use. This yellow one made of plastic seemed too light.

"You try to make a goal with a header, and it just takes off flying like a bird, it's so light."

"So much the better," his father said. "That way you won't scramble your brains."

And then he gestured with his fingers for Pedro to be quiet because he wanted to hear the radio. Over the last month, since the streets of Santiago had been filled with soldiers, Pedro had noticed that every night his dad would sit in his favorite easy chair, raise the antenna of the green appliance, and listen intently to news that came from far away.

Pedro asked his mother: "Why do you always listen to the radio with all that static?"

"Because what it says is interesting."

"What's it say?"

"Things about us, about our country."

"What things?"

"Things that are going on."

"And why is it so hard to hear?"

"Because the voice is coming from far away."

And Pedro sleepily looked out over the mountain range framed by his window, trying to figure out over which peak the radio voice was filtering.

In October, Pedro started in some great neighborhood soccer games. He played in a tree-lined street, and running through the shadows in spring was almost as pleasant as swimming in the river during the summer. Pedro imagined that the rustling leaves were the sound of an enormous grandstand in some roofed stadium, applauding him when he received a precision pass from Daniel, the grocer's son, and made his way, like Simonsen, through the big kids on defense, to score a goal.

"Goal!" Pedro would shout, and he would run to hug everyone on his team, and they would pick him up and carry him like a kite or a flag. Though Pedro was already nine years old, he was the smallest kid for blocks around, so they nicknamed him "Shorty."

"Why are you so small?" they would ask him sometimes, to pester him.

"Because my dad is small and my mom is small."

"And for sure your grandpa and grandma too, because you're itty-bitty, teeny-tiny."

"I'm small, but I'm smart and quick. When I get the ball, nobody can stop me. The only quick thing you guys have is your tongue."

One day Pedro tried a quick move along the left flank, where the corner flag would be if that had been a perfect soccer field, and not a dirt street in the neighborhood. When he got to Daniel, the store owner's son, he faked a move forward with his hips, stopped the ball so it rested on his foot, lifted it over Daniel's body, who was face down in the dirt already, and made it roll softly between the stones that marked the goal.

"Goal!" Pedro shouted, and ran toward the center of the playing field, expecting a hug from his teammates. But this time no one moved. They were standing motionless, looking toward the store. A few windows opened and eyes appeared, staring at the corner as if some famous magician or the Circus of Human Eagles with its dancing elephants had just arrived. Other doors, however, had been slammed shut by an unexpected gust of wind. Then Pedro saw that Daniel's father was being dragged away by two men, while a squad of soldiers was aiming machine guns at him. When Daniel tried to approach, one of the men stopped him by putting a hand on his chest.

"Take it easy," the man yelled at him.

The store owner looked at his son.

"Take good care of the store for me."

The jeep took off, and all the mothers ran outside, grabbed their kids, and took them back inside. Pedro stood by Daniel in the middle of the dust cloud raised by the departing jeep.

"Why did they take him away?" he asked.

Daniel stuck his hands in his pockets, and at the bottom he squeezed the keys.

"My dad is a leftist," he said.

"What's that mean?"

"That he's antifascist."

Pedro had heard that word before, the nights his dad spent next to the green radio, but he didn't know what it meant, and most of all, it was hard for him to pronounce. The "r" and the "s" rolled around on his tongue, and when he said it, a sound full of air and saliva came out.

"What does anti-fa-fascist mean?" he asked.

His friend looked at the long, empty street and told him, as if in secret:

"That they want our country to be free. For Pinochet to leave Chile."

"And for that they get arrested?"

"I think so."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

A worker came slowly toward Daniel and ran a hand through his hair, leaving it more mussed than ever.

"I'll help you close up," he said.

Pedro headed home kicking the ball, and since there was no one in the street to play with, he ran toward the next corner to wait for the bus that would bring his father home from work. When he arrived, Pedro hugged him around the waist and his father bent over to give him a kiss.

"Hasn't your mother come home yet?"

"No," the boy said.

"Did you play a lot of soccer?"

"A little."

He felt his father's hand take his head and hug it against his jacket.

"Some soldiers came and took Daufels's dad prisoner."

"Yes, I know," his father said.

"How did you know that?"

"They called me."

"Daniel is in charge of the store now. Maybe now he'll give me candy."

"I don't think so."

"They took him away in a jeep. Like the ones you see in the movies."

His father said nothing. He breathed deeply and stood looking sadly down the street for a long time. In spite of its being daylight and springtime, only men returning slowly from work were out in the street.

"Do you think it will be on TV?"

"What?" his father asked.

"Don Daniel."

"No."

That night the three of them sat down to dinner, and although no one told him to be quiet, Pedro didn't say a word, as if infected by the silence with which his parents were eating, looking at the designs on the tablecloth as if the embroidered flowers were in some far-off place. Suddenly his mother started to cry, without making a sound.

"Why's Mom crying?"

His dad first looked at Pedro, and then at her, and didn't answer. His mother said:

"I'm not crying."

"Did someone do something to you?" Pedro asked.

"No," she said.

They finished dinner in silence, and Pedro went to put on his pyjamas, which were orange, with a lot of drawings of birds and rabbits. When he came back, his mother and father were sitting on the sofa with their arms around each other, and with their ears very close to the radio, which was giving off strange sounds, made more confusing than ever by the low volume. As if guessing that his father would put his finger to his mouth and gesture for him to be quiet, Pedro quickly asked:

"Dad, are you a leftist?"

The man looked at his son, and then at his wife, and immediately both looked at him. Then he nodded his head slowly up and down, in assent.

"Are they going to take you prisoner, too?"

"No," his father said.

"How do you know?"

"You bring me good luck, kid," the man said smiling. Pedro leaned on the doorjamb, pleased that they weren't sending him directly to bed, like other times. He paid attention to the radio, trying to figure out what it was that drew his par-

ents to it every night. When the voice on the radio said "the fascist junta," Pedro felt that all the things that were rolling around in his head came together, just like when one at a time the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fit together into the figure of a sailing ship.

"Dad!" he exclaimed then. "Am I antifascist, too?"

His father looked at his wife as if the answer to that question were written in her eyes, and his mother scratched her cheek with an amused look until she said:

"You just can't tell."

"Why not?"

"Children aren't anti-anything. Children are simply children. Children your age have to go to school, study a lot, play hard, and be kind to their parents."

The next day, Pedro ate a couple of French rolls with jelly, got one finger wet in the sink, wiped the sleep out of his eyes, and took off on the fly to school so they wouldn't mark him tardy again. On the way, he found a kite tangled in the branches of a tree, but no matter how much he jumped and jumped, there was no way.

The bell hadn't stopped ringing when the teacher walked in very stiff, accompanied by a man in a military uniform, with a medal as long as a carrot on his chest, a gray moustache, and sunglasses blacker than the dirt on your knee. He didn't take them off, maybe because the sun was coming in the room like it was trying to set it on fire.

The teacher said:

"Stand up, children, and very straight."

The children got up and waited to hear from the officer, who was smiling with his toothbrush moustache below his dark glasses.

"Good morning, my little friends," he said. "I am Captain Romo, and I have come on behalf of the government, that is to

say, on behalf of General Pinochet, to invite all the children from all the classes in this school to write a composition. The one who writes the nicest composition of all will receive personally from General Pinochet a gold medal and a ribbon like this one with the colors of the Chilean flag."

He put his hands behind his back, jumped to spread his legs, and stretched his neck out, raising his chin slightly.

"Attention! Be seated!"

The children obeyed, scratching themselves as if they didn't have enough hands.

"All right," the officer said, "take out your notebooks. . . . Notebooks ready? Good! Take out a pencil. . . . Pencils ready? Write this down! Title of the composition: 'My home and my family.' Understood? In other words, what you and your parents do from the time you get home from school and work. The friends who come over. What you talk about. Comments when watching TV. Whatever occurs to you with complete freedom. Ready? One, two, three: let's begin!"

"Can we erase, sir?" one boy asked.

"Yes," said the captain.

"Can we write with a Bic pen?"

"Yes, young man, of course!"

"Can we do it on graph paper, sir?"

"Certainly."

"How much are we supposed to write, sir?"

"Two or three pages."

The children raised a chorus of complaint.

"All right, then, one or two. Let's get to work!"

The children stuck their pencils between their teeth and began looking at the ceiling to see if inspiration would descend on them through some hole. Pedro was sucking and sucking on his pencil, but he couldn't get a single word out of it. He picked his nose and stuck a booger that happened to come out on the

underside of his desk. Leiva, his deskmate, was chewing off his fingernails one by one.

"Do you eat them?" Pedro asked him.

"What?" his friend said.

"Your fingernails."

"No. I bite them off with my teeth, and then I spit them out. Like this. See?"

The captain approached down the aisle, and Pedro could see his hand, gilded belt buckle from just inches away.

"And aren't you working?"

"Yes, sir," Leiva said, and as fast as he could, he furrowed his brow, stuck his tongue between his teeth and put down a big "A" to start his composition. When the captain went toward the blackboard to talk with the teacher, Pedro peeked at Leiva's paper.

"What are you going to put down?"

"Whatever. And you?"

"I don't know."

"What did your folks do yesterday?"

"The same old thing. They came home, ate, listened to the radio, and went to bed."

"That's just what my mom did."

"My mom started to cry all of a sudden."

"Women go around crying all the time, didn't you ever notice?"

"I try not to cry ever. I haven't cried for over a year."

"And if I beat the shit out of you?"

"What for, if I'm your friend?"

"That's true."

The two stuck their pencils in their mouths and stared and stared up at an unlit bulb and the shadows on the walls, and their heads felt as empty as their piggy banks and as dark as a blackboard. Pedro put his mouth close to Leiva's ear and said:

"Listen, Skinny, are you antifascist?"

Leiva kept an eye on the captain. He gestured for Pedro to turn his head, and said, breathing into his ear.

"Of course, you dumb shit!"

Pedro scooted away a little bit and winked at him, just like the cowboys in the movies. Then he leaned toward his friend again, pretending to write on the blank paper:

"But you're just a kid!"

"That doesn't matter!"

"My mom told me that kids . . ."

"That's what they always say. . . . They arrested my dad and took him north."

"They did that to Don Daniel, too."

"I don't know him."

"The store owner."

Pedro looked at the blank page, and read his own handwriting:

"What My Family Does at Night," by Pedro Malbran, Syria School, Third Grade-A.

"Skinny," he said to Leiva, "I'm going to try for the medal."

"Go for it, man!"

"If I win, I'll sell it and buy a professional-size white leather soccer ball, with black patches."

"That's if you win."

Pedro wet the end of his pencil with a little spit, sighed deeply, and started writing without interruption.

A week went by, during which one of the trees in the neighborhood fell over just from old age, a kid's bike was stolen, the garbage man didn't come by for five days, and flies blundered into people's faces, and even got into their noses, Gustavo Martinez, from across the street, got married, and they gave big pieces of cake to the neighbors. The jeep came back and carried off Professor Manuel Pedraza under arrest, the priest refused to

say Mass on Sunday, Colo Colo won an international match by a huge score, and the school's white wall had a red word spread across it: "Resistance." Daniel got back to playing soccer and made one goal *de chileno* and another *de palomita*, the price of ice cream cones went up, and, on her eighth birthday, Malilde Schepp asked Pedro to kiss her on the mouth.

"You must be nuts!" he responded.

After that week, still another went by, and one day the captain came back with an armful of papers, a bag of candy and a calendar with the picture of a general.

"My dear little friends," he said to the class, "your compositions are very nice and the armed forces have been very pleased with them. On behalf of my colleagues and of General Pinochet I must congratulate you very sincerely. The gold medal didn't come to this class, but to another, somebody else got it. But to reward your nice work, I'm going to give each one of you a piece of candy, your composition with a note on it, and this calendar with a picture of our illustrious leader on it."

Pedro ate his candy on the bus, on the way home. He stood on the corner waiting for his father to get home, and later, he put his composition on the dining room table. At the bottom, the captain had written in green ink: "Bravo! Congratulations!" Stirring at his soup with a spoon in one hand, and scratching his belly with the other, Pedro waited for his father to finish reading it. His father handed the composition to his wife, and looked at her without saying anything. He started on his plate and didn't stop until he had eaten the last noodle, but without taking his eyes off her.

The woman read:

*When my dad gets home from work, I go
wait for him at the bus stop. Sometimes my mom
is in the house and when my dad comes in, she*

says to him hi, how'd it go today? Okay, my dad says, and how did it go for you? Okay, my mom says back. Then I go out and play soccer, and I like to try to make goals with headers. Daniel likes to play goalie and I get him all worked up because he can't intercept me when I spike one at him. Then my mom comes and says it's time to eat, Pedro, and we sit down to eat, and I always eat everything except the beans, which I can't stand. Afterwards, my dad and mom sit on the sofa in the living room and play chess, and I do my homework. And after that we all go to bed, and I try to tickle their feet. And after that, way after that, I can't tell any more because I fall asleep.

Signed: Pedro Malbran

P.S. If you give me a prize for my composition, I hope it's a soccer ball, but not a plastic one.

"Well," his dad said, "we'll have to buy a chess set, just in case."

—TRANSLATED BY DONALD L. SCHMIDT
AND FEDERICO CORDOVEZ

CHRISTMAS MORNING

Frank O'Connor

IRELAND

I never really liked my brother, Sonny. From the time he was a baby he was always the mother's pet and always chasing her to tell her what mischief I was up to. Mind you, I was usually up to something. Until I was nine or ten I was never much good at school, and I really believe it was to spite me that he was so smart at his books. He seemed to know by instinct that this was what Mother had set her heart on, and you might almost say he spell himself into her favor.

"Mummy," he'd say, "will I call Larry in to his t-e-a?" or "Mummy, the k-e-t-e-t is boiling," and, of course, when he was wrong she'd correct him, and next time he'd have it right and there would be no standing him. "Mummy," he'd say, "aren't I a good speller?" Cripes, we could all be good spellers if we went on like that!

Mind you, it wasn't that I was stupid. Far from it. I was just restless and not able to fix my mind for long on any one thing. I'd do the lessons for the year before, or the lessons for the year after: what I couldn't stand were the lessons we were supposed to be doing at the time. In the evenings I used to go out and play with the Doherty gang. Not, again, that I was rough, but I liked the excitement, and for the life of me I

CHRISTMAS MORNING

155

couldn't see what attracted Mother about education.

"Can't you do your lessons first and play after?" she'd say, getting white with indignation. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself that your baby brother can read better than you."

She didn't seem to understand that I wasn't, because there didn't seem to me to be anything particularly praiseworthy about reading, and it struck me as an occupation better suited to a sissy kid like Sonny.

"The dear knows what will become of you," she'd say. "If only you'd stick to your books you might be something good like a clerk or an engineer."

"I'll be a clerk, Mummy," Sonny would say smugly.

"Who wants to be an old clerk?" I'd say, just to annoy him.

"I'm going to be a soldier."

"The dear knows, I'm afraid that's all you'll ever be fit for," she would add with a sigh.

I couldn't help feeling at times that she wasn't all there. As if there was anything better a fellow could be!

Coming on to Christmas, with the days getting shorter and the shopping crowds bigger, I began to think of all the things I might get from Santa Claus. The Dohertys said there was no Santa Claus, only what your father and mother gave you, but the Dohertys were a rough class of children you wouldn't expect Santa to come to anyway. I was rooting round for whatever information I could pick up about him, but there didn't seem to be much. I was no hand with a pen, but if a letter would do any good I was ready to chance writing to him. I had plenty of initiative and was always writing off for free samples and prospectuses.

"Ah, I don't know will he come at all this year," Mother said with a worried air. "He has enough to do looking after steady boys who mind their lessons without bothering about the rest."

"He only comes to good spellers, Mummy," said Sonny. "Isn't that right?"

"He comes to any little boy who does his best, whether he's a good speller or not," Mother said firmly.

Well, I did my best. God knows I did! It wasn't my fault if, four days before the holidays, Flogger Dawley gave us sums we couldn't do, and Peter Doherty and myself had to go on the lang.* It wasn't for love of it, for, take it from me, December is no month for mitching,** and we spent most of our time sheltering from the rain in a store on the quays. The only mistake we made was imagining we could keep it up till the holidays without being spotted. That showed real lack of foresight.

Of course, Flogger Dawley noticed and sent home word to know what was keeping me. When I came in on the third day the mother gave me a look I'll never forget, and said: "Your dinner is there." She was too full to talk. When I tried to explain to her about Flogger Dawley and the sums she brushed it aside and said: "You have no word." I saw then it wasn't the langing she minded but the lies, though I still didn't see how you could lang without lying. She didn't speak to me for days. And even then I couldn't make out what she saw in education, or why she wouldn't let me grow up naturally like anyone else.

To make things worse, it stuffed Sonny up more than ever. He had the air of one saying: "I don't know what they'd do without me in this blooming house." He stood at the front door, leaning against the jamb with his hands in his trouser pockets, trying to make himself look like Father, and shouted to the other kids so that he could be heard all over the road.

*Larry isn't left go out. He went on the lang with Peter

*go on the lang: to play hockey, skip school

**mitching: playing hockey

Doherty and me mother isn't talking to him."

And at night, when we were in bed, he kept it up.

"Santa Claus won't bring you anything this year, aha!"

"Of course he will," I said.

"How do you know?"

"Why wouldn't he?"

"Because you went on the lang with Doherty. I wouldn't play with them Doherty fellows."

"You wouldn't be left."

"I wouldn't play with them. They're no class. They had the bobbies up to the house."

"And how would Santa know I was on the lang with Peter Doherty?" I growled, losing patience with the little prig.

"Of course he'd know. Mummy would tell him."

"And how could Mummy tell him and he up at the North Pole? Poor Ireland, she's rearing them yet! 'Tis easy seen you're only an old baby."

"I'm not a baby, and I can spell better than you, and Santa won't bring you anything."

"We'll see whether he will or not," I said sarcastically, doing the old man on him.

But, to tell the God's truth, the old man was only bluff. You could never tell what powers these superhuman chaps would have of knowing what you were up to. And I had a bad conscience about the langing because I'd never before seen the mother like that.

That was the night I decided that the only sensible thing to do was to see Santa myself and explain to him. Being a man, he'd probably understand. In those days I was a good-looking kid and had a way with me when I liked. I had only to smile nicely at one old gent on the North Mall to get a penny from him, and I felt if only I could get Santa by himself I could do the same with him and maybe get something worth while from

him. I wanted a model railway: I was sick of Ludo and Snakes-and-Ladders.

I started to practice lying awake, counting five hundred and then a thousand, and trying to hear first eleven, then midnight, from Shandon. I felt sure Santa would be round by midnight, seeing that he'd be coming from the north, and would have the whole of the South Side to do afterwards. In some ways I was very farsighted. The only trouble was the things I was farsighted about.

I was so wrapped up in my own calculations that I had little attention to spare for Mother's difficulties. Sonny and I used to go to town with her, and while she was shopping we stood outside a toyshop in the North Main Street, arguing about what we'd like for Christmas.

On Christmas Eve when Father came home from work and gave her the housekeeping money, she stood looking at it doubtfully while her face grew white.

"Well?" he snapped, getting angry. "What's wrong with that?"

"What's wrong with it?" she muttered. "On Christmas Eve!"

"Well," he asked truculently, sticking his hands in his trouser pockets as though to guard what was left, "do you think I get more because it's Christmas?"

"Lord God," she muttered distractedly. "And not a bit of cake in the house, nor a candle, nor anything!"

"All right," he shouted, beginning to stamp. "How much will the candle be?"

"Ah, for pity's sake," she cried, "will you give me the money and not argue like that before the children? Do you think I'll leave them with nothing on the one day of the year?"

"Bad luck to you and your children!" he snarled. "Am I to be slaving from one year's end to another for you to be throwing

it away on toys? Here," he added, tossing two half-crowns on the table, "that's all you're going to get, so make the most of it."

"I suppose the publicans will get the rest," she said bitterly.

Later she went into town, but did not bring us with her, and returned with a lot of parcels, including the Christmas candle. We waited for Father to come home to his tea, but he didn't, so we had our own tea and a slice of Christmas cake each, and then Mother put Sonny on a chair with the holy-water stoup to sprinkle the candle, and when he lit it she said: "The light of heaven to our souls." I could see she was upset because Father wasn't in—it should be the oldest and youngest. When we hung up our stockings at bedtime he was still out.

Then began the hardest couple of hours I ever put in. I was mad with sleep but afraid of losing the model railway, so I lay for a while, making up things to say to Santa when he came. They varied in tone from frivolous to grave, for some old gents like kids to be modest and well-spoken, while others prefer them with spirit. When I had rehearsed them all I tried to wake Sonny to keep me company, but that kid slept like the dead.

Eleven struck from Shandon, and soon after I heard the latch, but it was only Father coming home.

"Hello, little girl," he said, letting on to be surprised at finding Mother waiting up for him, and then broke into a self-conscious giggle. "What have you up so late?"

"Do you want your supper?" she asked shortly.

"Ah, no, no," he replied. "I had a bit of pig's cheek at Daneent's on my way up (Daneen was my uncle). I'm very fond of a bit of pig's cheek. . . . My goodness, is it that late?" he exclaimed, letting on to be astonished. "If I knew that I'd have gone to the North Chapel for midnight Mass. I'd like to hear the *Adeste* again. That's a hymn I'm very fond of—a most touching hymn."

Then he began to hum it falseho.

Adeste fideles

Solus dominus dagnus.

Father was very fond of Latin hymns, particularly when he had a drop in, but as he had no notion of the words he made them up as he went along, and this always drove Mother mad.

"Ah, you disgust me!" she said in a scalded voice, and closed the room door behind her. Father laughed as if he thought it a great joke, and he struck a match to light his pipe and for a while puffed at it noisily. The light under the door dimmed and went out but he continued to sing emotionally.

Dixie medeavo

Tutum tonum tantum

Venite adoremus.

He had it all wrong but the effect was the same on me. To save my life I couldn't keep awake.

Coming on to dawn, I woke with the feeling that something dreadful had happened. The whole house was quiet, and the little bedroom that looked out on the foot and a half of back yard was pitch-dark. It was only when I glanced at the window that I saw how all the silver had drained out of the sky. I jumped out of bed to feel my stocking, well knowing that the worst had happened. Santa had come while I was asleep, and gone away with an entirely false impression of me, because all he had left me was some sort of book, folded up, a pen and pencil, and a tuppenny bag of sweets. Not even Snakes-and-Ladders! For a while I was too stunned even to think. A fellow who was able to drive over rooftops and climb down chimneys without getting stuck—God, wouldn't you think he'd know better?

Then I began to wonder what that foxy boy, Sonny, had. I went to his side of the bed and felt his stocking. For all his spelling and sucking-up he hadn't done so much better, because, apart from a bag of sweets like mine, all Santa had left him was a popgun, one that fired a cork on a piece of string and which you could get in any huxter's shop for sixpence.

All the same, the fact remained that it was a gun, and a gun was better than a book any day of the week. The Dohertyys had a gang, and the gang fought the Strawberry Lane kids who tried to play football on our road. That gun would be very useful to me in many ways, while it would be lost on Sonny who wouldn't be let play with the gang, even if he wanted to.

Then I got the inspiration, as it seemed to me, direct from heaven. Suppose I took the gun and gave Sonny the book! Sonny would never be any good in the gang; he was fond of spelling, and a studious child like him could learn a lot of spellings from a book like mine. As he hadn't seen Santa any more than I had, what he hadn't seen wouldn't grieve him. I was doing no harm to anyone; in fact, if Sonny only knew, I was doing him a good turn which he might have cause to thank me for later. That was one thing I was always keen on; doing good turns. Perhaps this was Santa's intention the whole time and he had merely become confused between us. It was a mistake that might happen to anyone. So I put the book, the pencil, and the pen into Sonny's stocking and the popgun into my own, and returned to bed and slept again. As I say, in those days I had plenty of initiative.

It was Sonny who woke me, shaking me to tell me that Santa had come and left me a gun. I let on to be surprised and rather disappointed in the gun, and to divert his mind from it made him show me his picture book, and cracked it up to the sides.

As I knew, that kid was prepared to believe anything, and

nothing would do him then but to take the presents in to show Father and Mother. This was a bad moment for me. After the way she had behaved about the langing, I distrusted Mother, though I had the consolation of believing that the only person who could contradict me was now somewhere up by the North Pole. That gave me a certain confidence, so Sonny and I burst in with our presents, shouting: "Look what Santa Claus brought!"

Father and Mother woke, and Mother smiled, but only for an instant. As she looked at me her face changed. I knew that look; I knew it only too well. It was the same she had worn the day I came home from langing, when she said I had no word.

"Larry," she said in a low voice, "where did you get that gun?"

"Santa left it in my stocking, Mummy," I said, trying to put on an injured air, though it baffled me how she guessed that he hadn't. "He did, honest."

"You stole it from that poor child's stocking while he was asleep," she said, her voice quivering with indignation. "Larry, how could you be so mean?"

"Now, now, now," Father said deprecatingly, "'tis Christmas morning."

"Ah," she said with real passion, "it's easy it comes to you. Do you think I want my son to grow up a liar and a thief?"

"Ah, what thief, woman?" he said testily. "Have sense, can't you?" He was as cross if you interrupted him in his benevolent moods as if they were of the other sort, and this one was probably exacerbated by a feeling of guilt for his behavior of the night before. "Here, Larry," he said, reaching out for the money on the bedside table, "here's sixpence for you and one for Sonny. Mind you don't lose it now."

But I looked at Mother and saw what was in her eyes. I burst out crying, threw the popgun on the floor, and ran bawl-

ing out of the house before anyone on the road was awake. I rushed up the lane behind the house and threw myself on the wet grass.

I understood it all, and it was almost more than I could bear; that there was no Santa Claus, as the Dohertys said, only Mother trying to scrape together a few coppers from the house-keeping; that Father was mean and common and a drunkard, and that she had been relying on me to raise her out of the misery of the life she was leading. And I knew that the look in her eyes was the fear that, like my father, I should turn out to be mean and common and a drunkard.