

Sabriny, Dad & Co.

By Madeline Yale Wynne

PART ONE

“Yes, that’s right so fur as it goes; out of wood it is, but the burnin’ question is, what kind o’ wood. You see, little gal, there’s wood and wood. And so now, ef it is agreeable to my pardner, we’ll just knock off work fur a spell and have a business meetin’ to consider what kind o’ wood is most suitablest, all things considerin’, fur this ’ere chist.

“I’ll jest sort o’ stiddy my head with a dror at my pipe while I set the question fairly before ye.

“Now, speakin’ o’ woods, there’s gopher wood, that’s a kind o’ scripter wood and no mistake; but we don’t seem to have no great supply of that particular kind o’ timber on hand, not jest at present, that is. Therefore we’ll pass on to cedar of Lebanon; that’s scripter wood, too, and it always sounded to me, Sabriny, as ef cedar of Lebanon would hey a sweet sort of smell to it, like spice; now gopher wood, as I study on it, don’t seem as ef it would hey no sweet smell, but it would hey a nice dark colour to it. I should ev preferred, myself, to hey had cedar o’ Lebanon on account o’ the sweet smell, but it so happens that we ain’t got no supply o’ that on hand neither—we’re jest about out o’ that kind, leastwise there ain’t enough to make a chist out of. Can my pardner think of any other sort of wood that would be suitable fur the work we hey in hand?”

“Dad, how would pine do?”

“Shucks! Why, pine, of course, the very thing for this chist; and it happens that we hey got some pine, jest as dry as bone and exactly the right length. Now jest see the advantage of hevin’ a pardner!”

“Shouldn’t you have thought of pine, Dad?”

“I might, and then again I mightn’t. Of course I should hey come to it in time, but beginnin’ way back in the Bible fur the different kinds of wood it stands to reason thet I shouldn’t hey got round to pine till we’d wasted lots of time on the road. And now here we be, jest by one word spoke by my pardner. We’ve got some pine fur sure, and betwixt ourselves *and* the Co. it’s pine or nothin’ this time. Shall we call it pine?”

“Let’s make it of pine this time.”

“Pine it is then, and now, Sabriny, you know that this chist is to be the best chist that ever was made. No king couldn’t hey no better chist than this one that we’re makin’ at this very minute as ever was.

“Couldn’t a king have a *gold* chist, Dad?”

“Cert’in, *cert’in* he could, ef he hed a mm’ to; but the question *is*, would he like it, all things considered. Now on a cold mornin’ in March or mebbly in January, with the snow a-squeakin’ under foot, would he like to git up early in the mornin’ and leave his warm bed, to open the chist to git a plane or a dror-shave out, so as to ease up the queen’s door ef it had happened to hey sagged a mite so’s ’t it wouldn’t stay shet? Would he like to lay a-holt on a freezin’ cold gold chist and mebbly hey to fumble round to git the key into the lock till his fingers got so numb thet he couldn’t git the chist open, let alone handlin’ the

dror-shave? No, even a king would git riled at thet, I do believe. I kind o' think, all things considered, thet a pine chist is the best, even fur a king.

"So here goes! You best jest squint your eye along this 'ere piece of pine, pardner, to see ef it isa good piece for a starter."

"I think it is a splendid piece, Dad."

"All right then, now! One to begin, two to show, three to make ready, and four to go. I believe this day was jest made for Sabriny, Dad and Co., the rain sort of shets us in and shets other folks out."

"Ma, for instance?"

"Now, Sabriny, it isn't fur me to say I meant Ma, but it cert'inly *is* considerable damp fur her to come out here to the shop. Now I don't say she won't come, and I ain't sayin' that Sabriny, Dad and Co., don't *want* her to come; what I do say is, thet this 'ere rain is goin' to do the crops considerable good, and I'm not sayin' but what I am willin' to see it keep on a-rainin' this way all day long."

"Oh! Dad, what beautiful curls you are makin', I wisht my hair curled like them shavin's, all round my head."

"Sho, Sabriny! I don't wish no sech a thing. I don't believe I could work with no sech a curly-headed pardner round the shop, nohow. It would upset me dreadful. You see, when I selected a pardner it was as much as anything else because she hadn't no curls flyin' round loose and gittin' mixed up with the shavin's. You hey to be mighty sober and particular to be a pardner in a firm like ourn!"

"Dad, how do you stick the corners of the chest together?"

"We don't exactly stick 'em together, we jines 'em, and what Sabriny, Dad and Co. jines together no man can put asunder; they'll be jined as firm as them that enters holy matrimony. It's cling or bust, and you can't bust."

"What can't bust, Dad?"

"The corners of the chist, to be sure. As I was sayin', a chist is mighty like holy matrimony. It may be chuck full of edged tools, but it won't separate, not ef it's made by one of these three—Sabriny, Dad and Co. Well, I declare! Ef I ain't jest about got these ere pieces ready to jine."

"I thought a chist was a square box, Dad. What makes you make it that shape, bigger at the top?"

"This 'ere chist is peculiar, it's an invention of your ole Dad's. You jest watch, now, and see him Cut out these 'ere two little half-moons. Look out, Sabriny! Don't never tech a dror-shave; thet tool's sharper than all creation. Don't you never play with edged tools. As the Bible says, use 'em but don't never play with em. I swan to man, ef thet ain't the dinner bell a'ready and Ma hollerin' fur Sabriny! I calculate somebody'il hey to go in purty quick so's to pacify Ma. I guess it hed better be me, because it stands to reason thet ef it is too rainy fur Ma to come out here, it is too rainy fur Sabriny to go in, to say nothin' at all about her ever gittin' out again. So ef the heft of the firm till stay right out here in the shop, and mebbly jest curl down with her doll on them shavin 's her Dad'll fetch her out a piece o' pie or sumthin' or other; that is, ef Ma's willin'. Mind, he don't promise nothin' fur cert'in, only jest mebbly."

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“Wal, I do declare for’t, ef she ain’t jest fell fast asleep with them ‘ere shavin’s pinned to her head fur curls ! What cur’us things little gals is, anyway; I ’most wish they wouldn’t never grow up. I guess I’ll hey to flax round and git that peculiar chist of ourn done afore she wakes up. I do reely suppose I’d order hey set thet light o’ glass into the butt’ry winder by all rights, and mebbby it would ev been peacefuller all ’round ef I hed a-done it. But this ’ere chist has got holt on me and I guess I’ll jest let the butt’ry winder and Ma slide fur onct. As we useter say when we was children, ‘Scoldin’ don’t hurt none, lickin’ don’t last long, and kill me she dasn’t!’

“Awake, are you, little gal? Well, there’s your pie; you jest eat it like a nice little gal and then come over here and see the chist. It’s ‘most finished a’ready. There!”

“Why, Dad! It’s a cradle; it’s a doll’s cradle!”

“Land o’ Goshen! so it is, it’s jest an ordinary doll’s cradle, rockers and all! Who’d ’a’ thought it! And here your old Dad’s been flggerin’ on its turnin’ out to be a tool chist, all the time he’s been a—tinkerin’ on it. That’s a good one on the ole man, and the very first day, too, thet he’s worked fur Sabriny, Dad and Co. Keerless ole Dad!”

PART TWO

More particularly about the Co.

“Wal, I do declare! Ef that don’t take me back ten years an’ more, to see you, Sabriny, a-settin’ there on the end of that ‘ere bench, fur all the world jest as you did that rainy day when your old Dad made that peculiar chist that turned out to be a cradle, jest an ordinary doll’s cradle. Seems to me that you’re too fine to be a-settin’ on the bench with all them folderols a-bubblin’ and a-bilin’ over the end o’ the bench fur all the world like geese’s feathers a-comm³ out of a piller-slip. Come to look at ye, ye be, and again ye ben’t, the same little gal that wore the checkered apron; but you’ve got the same eyes, Sabriny, jest the same eyes the little gal had, that Dad made the cradle for.”

“This is my graduating dress, Dad. You’ll come over to the Academy and see me graduate, won’t you, Dad?”

“Wal, I dunno. You look as pretty as a clove pink, but I dunno as I want to see a hull garding full o’ pinks! I guess jest one pink is enough fur Dad.”

“Dad, what is that you’re making?”

“Not a tool chist this time; it’s only a hencoop fur the old speckle. The tarnation ole thing has gone and stole her nest ag’in, and come out unbeknownst to me with a hull brood of little chicks, and now she s a-tu:n round, oneasy like, coz there ain’t no coop waitin’ handy for her to move into. As ef coops came by nature as chicks do!”

“I wish it was a chest that you were making, Dad, and that it *was* wider at the top, and that when it was done it would turn out to be a coffin.”

“A coffin! Why, Sabriny! You mean a cradle, don’t ye?”

“No, Dad, not a cradle. I ain’t a child any more, I wish it was a coffin.”

“Sho! A coffin? What a notion that is, to be sure, to git into Sabriny’s head unbidden, as it were. Why! You don’t need no coffin no more than nothin’ at all. You ain’t a-goin’ to be dead, and ef you was you wouldn’t take no kind of comfort in it! What folks reely enjoy about bein’ dead is thinkin’ about it. When it comes to the real thing, as I figger on it, it ’ud be an empty sort of privilege. Wishin’ they was dead is the very breath of life to some folks.”

"I do, Dad, I wish that I was dead. I'm sick and tired of living and everything else."

"Now that seems cur'us to your dad, you jest a-graduatin' and mebbly with a prospect of a school of your own some time, and now you're a-wishin' you was dead. Why, Sabriny, when you was a little gal you was always a-wishin' that you hed curls, and nothin' would do but you must pin shavin's onto your head and pertend that they was curls; you fell asleep onct with them shavin' curls pinned on. And then you wanted a cradle, and I made that fur you, and now you think that you want a coffin. Dear me suz, wantin' a coffin! Now you jest tell your ole good-fur-nothin' Dad all about it—don't cry. Sabriny, I wouldn't cry ef I was you, I mean cry away ef it eases you any, it won't hurt nothin'. And here's my bandanner, the one you giv me at Christmas, that time you earned the money pickin' berries and saved it up fur the handkerchief. Here, you just tuck it under your chin so as not to spile them fine close. There! I ain't a-lookin' at ye, cry away! I've locked the door so's't the folks can't come in. And mebbly bimeby you kin tell it all to Sabriny, Dad and Co., confidential like, and p'raps you'll find that you don't need no coffin after all, only jest Dad's ole ear.

"Sabriny, did you ever think how many folks there is a-livin' on this earth this very minute? And I guess ef the hull truth was known most every one on 'em that drows the breath of life drows in some sorrow with it. They jest hey to grapple with it, unbeknownst to everyone else; and mebbly the next one right alongside of 'em don't never know nothin' about it. Is it your studies that bothers you, Sabriny? Algebray, mebbly?"

"Not altogether algebra, Dad; you see, Dad, when the new teacher came last fall he took a great interest in my studying algebra. He said I had a good mind, and as there wasn't anybody else to go into advanced mathematics he made a class just for me, and I have done splendid work, he says so himself."

"Sho, you don't say so! Wal?"

"And then last term Squire Jones's daughter she took a notion to study French—French of all things—and she don't know how to speak English hardly. And then he went and made a class in French, just for her, and she calls herself a 'special' and comes teetering in at eleven o'clock, and has a half-hour lesson all by herself

"Now go slow, Sabriny, you jest go slow so's't I kin follow. She comes in and I s'pose that she gits so much French mebbly that it kinder interferes with your gittin' enough algebray; there am 't enough left over for you, so to speak."

"No, Dad, of course that isn't it. Of course I can learn all I have a mind to, though he *did* change my hour just to suit her."

"Then mebbly—now mind I'm only s'posin'— mebbly there am t quite enough teacher to go round fur both on ye; is that it?"

"Oh, Dad! how can he like that silly little thing, she giggles all the time and her hair is frizzled all over her head till it looks like a hurrah's nest, and she sits and gets red like a baby when he speaks to her. I declare it makes me fairly mad to see the way she goes on; and now he's going away and—and—"

"Sh-sh-sh. There, don't cry—only jest enough to make you comfortable. I've got a cold in the head, myself, it bothers me dreadful when I go to speak! And now, Sabriny, I want to tell you somethin', it's a little story about your Aunt Lize. She's a pretty comfortable old body now, like your Dad; but when she was about eighteen—why, you're jest eighteen, too, Sabriny, that is you'll be eighteen come June. Now don't things come round sort o' cur'us!— wal, when your Aunt Lize was jest eighteen a new teacher he

come to town. He was a spry young feller, and he was only teachin' till he got a call to preach. There was a sort of revival of religion in our town when it was found out how this young man attended all the meet-in's, among the young folks especially. Lize she took to goin' to all the meetin's jest like all the other girls, and the young feller, that is the teacher, he used more often than not to see her home with another girl that lived up her way. Your Aunt Lize had always been dreadful easytempered up to this time, jest like a lamb to live with; you wouldn't ever have supposed that she and your Ma were of the same family, not of course but what your Ma's temper is all right, only it isn't jest the same kind as your Aunt Lize's. But now all of a sudden Lize turned sort of snappish, and she cried dretful easy ef anything crossed her, and she seemed to have a turrible time with her religion, till it almost seemed as ef there wa'n't no living with her, and then all at once she cleared up like a May mornin'; and bimeby it come out that she was goin' to marry the preacher, and so her troubles ended. I don't know 'z actly what all this has to do with yourn about your algebry, only it sort of popped into your old Dad's head; and now I guess you hed orter be a goin' over to the Academy. I thought I seen the teacher and a lot of folks a-goin' by, some time ago."

"Here's your bandanna, Dad. It ain't so very wet, but I'll hang it on this peg to dry, and I want you to know, Dad, that there ain't a human being in the wide world that I care a snap for, no not one snap—except just you.

"I guessed it all the time, Sabriny, I guessed it from the start. And now run along, and don't you never go and care fur no one else, so long as you've got your ole Dad."

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"Dad, has Ma gone to bed?"

"No, she's jest down suller for yeast."

"Come out here, Dad, just a minute, just *one* minute. Oh, Dad, I'm *so* happy."

"Not wantin' no coffin mebby."

"Not wanting any coffin or *anything*—*he's* waiting out at the gate. I've told him all about Sabriny, Dad and Co., and what do you think? He wants to be the *Co.*"

"Sho! Who'd 'a' thought it. Wal, run along, Sabriny, I hear Ma on the stairs."

"Curls and shavin's, and chists and cradles, and coffins and lovers; and mebby, bimeby, cradles and coffins ag'in. And then old Dad, he'll step out and t'will be jest Sabriny and Co. Useless old Dad!"