

## The Missing Shadow

by Judy G. Burford © 2013 (Spring Hill Writing Group)

Perke Sinclair lost her shadow. She needed to get it back, because without it she'd never be able to enter the shadow contest at the Mayberry fair. There were prizes for different categories: shortest, tallest, most interesting, funniest and scariest. Last year, Perke's cousin, Ben, won the prize for scariest shadow. Aunt Helen had spiked his hair and let him wear her inch long fake nails to get the scary effect.

Perke remembered what her mother had always told her about losing something. "Trace back in your memory to the last place you remember seeing it."

*Think, Perke, think. Where was the last place you saw the darned thing. Hmm, let's see. This morning I walked over to Aunt Em's to deliver the cherry pie that Mom baked for Cousin Eddy's bar mitzvah"*

Perke wasn't really sure what a bar mitzvah was, but Cousin Eden was having one, on Sunday, and all the other aunts, uncles, and cousins were attending. Even Uncle Carl, who everybody was always whispering about. Perke had no idea what they were saying, but she kept hearing his name come up.

*I must remember to listen carefully the next time the adults are together, she thought. Anyway, I know I didn't have my shadow when I left Aunt Em's. I wonder if that little dickens is hiding over there somewhere.*

Little dickens is what gramps always called her little brother, Tommy.

Perke decided to walk back over to Aunt Em's and have a look around. Aunt Em lived down the road about half a mile, In fact, no matter which way you turned you were sure to run into one of Perke's relatives. Five farms to the right and seven farms to the left belonged to the Sinclair clan. When Perke got to Aunt Em's, she opened the front door and stepped into the hall.

*Aunt Em calls it a vestibule, but I'm not sure why.*

"Aunty, it's me, Perke. I've come back to see if I left my shadow here. You haven't seen it have you?"

Aunt Em answered from the other room, "Why no, Perke dear, I haven't."

"Is it okay if I just look around?"

"Well of course, dear, but I doubt you'll find your shadow at this time of day."

*That just doesn't make any sense, thought Perke. This is when it's missing. When else would I find it?*

Perke looked in the broom closet, near the back door. That seemed like a pretty good hiding place. All she found in there was Aunt Em's broom, a dust pan, and the pail Aunt Em filled with Pinesol and warm water to wash the kitchen floor. Perke loved the smell of Pinesol. It reminded her of Christmas time, her favorite time of year.

"Let's see, where else could you be hiding?"

Perke scurried up two sets of stairs to Auntie's attic. She opened the door. SQUEAK! The shrill sound made Perke jump nearly an inch off the floor. She peered into the attic but wasn't about to venture inside until she could find the switch to turn on the light.

Click. Nothing. Click, click, click, click, click. Still nothing.

"Ohhh, I don't like dark places. Are you in there, shadow?"

There was no response, so Perke closed the door. This time she wasn't startled by the squeaking sound.

*Hmm. Where could you be? Where was I before I went to see Aunt Em? Oh, yeah, I went into the barn to feed Andy.*

Andy was Perke's pet goat. She got him for her seventh birthday. She'd begged her mom and dad for that goat ever since the neighbor's goat had kids last spring. What a wonderful surprise the morning of her seventh birthday. She padded into the kitchen, in her bare feet, and there was the sweetest little kid, wrapped in a blanket, sound asleep in the wood box beside the stove.

"I love him! I love him! Thank you, Mom and Dad. I love him," she shouted.

Running out of good hiding places at Aunt Em's, Perke decided to head back home. When she neared her house, she veered down the path toward the barn to see if that pesky shadow was there.

*Oh, it's almost dark I really don't like the dark, thought Perke, but I can see the light on, over the barn door, and I'm nearly there.*

She rushed along the path, reached for the handle on the barn door, and pushed her way through into the barn. The light shone in through the door and there, in front of her, was her missing shadow.

"I've found you at last," she said. "Now come with me you naughty girl, I was wondering where you'd gotten to."

Perke turned and stepped back through the barn door. Much to her surprise her shadow was in front of her once again. She hadn't even seen it come past her.

Then, the worst thing happened. As Perke proceeded toward the house, the light from over the barn door began to fade. Right before her eyes, her shadow disappeared!

“Where are you shadow? Where did you go? You come back here right this very minute,” she demanded.

But, try as she might, her efforts were in vain. As Perke neared the side door to her house, tears began to well up in her eyes.

“Mommy, mommy, my shadow has completely disappeared.”

Perke’s mother appeared in the kitchen doorway.

“Don’t you worry, my dear. It will be back again, tomorrow.”

Perke couldn’t understand how her mother could be so certain that would happen.