

Saturday morning was a dazzling day, with a bright December sun shining on a windy blue sea and on the sparkling snow. “Great day for coasting,” said James, as he and Lorinda trudged through the snow to the MacDermids’ store.

“Yes,” said Lorinda, “but not for us. We have to go straight from the MacDermids’ to the Himmelmans’, because it’s going to take me all morning to get dinner ready while you play with Glynis to keep her from bothering Mr. Himmelman. Mrs. Himmelman said he’d be doing his law work in his study because he’s got an important court case next week.”

James sighed. “Sure would like to go coasting,” he said.

“Oh, gosh,” said Lorinda. “Me too. And wouldn’t it be awful to be grown up and have to work all the time? We’ll be all finished on Christmas Day, but fathers and mothers have to keep on working forever. Just try to concentrate on Mummy and the vase. She’s the best mother in Blue Harbour. She tells great stories, and she always wants us to be happy and healthy. She worries a lot, which is a pain, but she’s almost never crabby. If she was crabby, I don’t think I could stand all this work.”

“Like Reginald Corkum’s mother,” said James. “She scolds him every time she opens her mouth, and you know what his father’s like. Sometimes I almost feel sorry for him.”

“Well *I* don’t,” said Lorinda. “If he’d try smiling for a

change, or if he'd do something a little bit *kind* for the first time in his life, I might feel different."

"I dunno," said James after a pause. "I don't know one single kid who likes him very much, and that would be enough to make almost anyone act pretty ugly."

"Which he does," said Lorinda, ending the discussion.

By now they had reached the MacDermids', and they were excited as they opened the door and heard the bell jingle. Mrs. MacDermid would be pleased with all the work they had done, and this time no one had anything to be cross about.

As soon as they were inside they could see that Mrs. MacDermid had a sign all ready on the corner table. It read *Handmade Hasty Notes by Blue Harbour Children*.

"Well, I'm a child, not a children," said Lorinda, stamping her feet to get the snow off, "but that sign sure looks good all the same. Here!" she announced, handing the bag of notes to Mrs. MacDermid as she came in from the back of the store.

Mrs. MacDermid took the notes out of the bag and looked at them. She did not speak and she did not smile. They were even worse than she had feared. The drawings were simply and roughly drawn, and some of the colours weren't even between the lines. "I guess you did these pretty quickly," she said, looking up from them, a line between her brows.

"Yes," said Lorinda, stiffly. "We did a hundred."

A hundred! thought Mrs. MacDermid bleakly. Why didn't she do ten and do them properly? Well, I can't tell her they're nice, because they're awful. But I can try to smile.

Oh, dear, thought Lorinda, who suddenly realized how tired she was.

Mrs. MacDermid took a deep breath and managed a cold, weak smile. "Thank you, Lorinda. Put them over there by the sign."

Lorinda could feel all the morning's excitement and pride seeping out of her, like the tide going out and leaving the sand damp and cold. She walked slowly over to the table and arranged the cards in two little fanlike groups of five. Then she went to the door and said, "Thank you, Mrs. MacDermid," and opened the door.

"Oh, and Lorinda," said Mrs. MacDermid as they prepared to leave, "don't make any more. I'm sure this will be quite enough. Good morning, dear. Have a nice day."

"A nice day!" mumbled Lorinda as they set off for the Himmelmans'. "James, she didn't say one single nice thing about all our work. She didn't even mention the packaging!"

James tugged Lorinda's sleeve. "I thought they were beautiful," he said. "Maybe she didn't say anything because she couldn't think of anything nice enough to say. She probably loved them."

Lorinda came upon a pop can in the middle of the road, and kicked it so hard she sent it flying across the road and right onto Mr. Morash's wharf.

"Don't be silly!" she snapped. "She did not *love* them. She *hated* them. You always think people are thinking nice things, James, but I know better. She doesn't want any more. Didn't you hear that? So even if we sell them all, we'll only get ten dollars, and don't forget we've already spent over five dollars on supplies. Do you know where that will get us? Right back where we started. Oh, good grief! Look who's coming!"

And there was Reginald Corkum walking along the road from the direction of the wharf.

"Oho!" he cried. "If it isn't the Dauphinees! How is the great red vase, the ugliest vase in Blue Harbour? Bought it for your mother yet?"

Lorinda looked straight ahead of her as she passed him. "Not yet," she replied, "but soon." To herself she thought, I think I'll be sick all over the road if I have to look him in the eye.

But they were almost at the Himmelmans', and Lorinda did not often hang onto her gloom for very long. If they could not make money at the MacDer-mids', they would make it at the Himmelmans'.