

Little Minnie McCloskey A story for girls, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Editor's Note—Not since Little Women have we had so moving a picture of girlhood hopes and dreams.

It was midnight in Miss Pickswinger's Select Seminary for Young Ladies (country location, hot and cold water, wrestling, bull-baiting and other outdoor sports; washing, ironing, and Bulgarian extra). A group of girls had gathered in a cozy room. There was going to be a midnight feast. Oh, goody! There was but little light, for, fearing to turn on the acetylene, they had built a bonfire on the table, and one girl was appointed to feed the faint flames with false hair and legs which she wrenched quietly from the chairs and tables. A saddle of venison for their little supper was turning over and over on a spit in the cooking stove in the corner, and the potatoes were boiling noiselessly in the steam radiator. Perched like a little queen on the armchair sat Louise Sangfroid the hostess, on the mantle-piece lay Mary Murgatroid in red and white striped pajamas while balancing on the molding sat Minnie McCloskey in a nightshirt of yaeger flannel. Other girls sat around the room, two on a trunk which they had ingeniously improvised as a chair, one on an empty case of beer and three on a heap of broken glass and tin cans in the corner.

Girls will be girls! Ah, me! They would have their little frolic; a cask of Haig and Haig, stolen from Miss Pickswinger's private stock, was behind the door and the mischievous girls had almost finished it.

Minnie McCloskey was the school drudge; she was working for her education. At three every morning she rose, made the beds, washed the dishes, branded the cattle, cut the grass, and did many other tasks. She was known affectionately to her companions as "Piggy" McCloskey (all the girls had nicknames. How they got them no one knew. Amy Gulps was called "Fatty," perhaps because she was fat; Mary Munks was called "Red" conceivably because she had red hair. Phoebe Cohop was called "Boils" possibly because—but enough, let us continue).

"Girls," said Bridget Mulcahey, a petite little French girl, whose father had been shot at Soissons (for deserting), "let's play a prank."

A chorus of ohs! and ahs! and girlish giggles greeted this suggestion.

"What shall we do?" asked Gumpsa LePage.

"Something exciting," said Bridget, "let's hang Miss Pickswinger." All assented enthusiastically except Minnie McCloskey.

"'Fraid cat," sneered the others, "'fraid you'll get punished."

"No," said Minnie, "but think of all she's done for me."

They struck her savagely with chairs, locked her in and rushed off. There was but one chance. Minnie quickly braided a rope out of rugs, lowered herself from the window, quickly weaved another rope out of grass, raised herself to Miss Pickswinger's window. They were not there. There was yet time to outwit them. Suddenly she gasped in horror.

A moment later the rollicking crowd of girls was confronted in front of Miss Pickswinger's door by a slender figure. It was Minnie.

"You cannot pass," she said sternly.

"Do you mean to say we cannot hang Miss Pickswinger if we wish?" cried Louise, indignantly.

Minnie shivered with emotion and sneezed with emotion. Then she spoke.

"There is no need. She has gotten one of her bedroom slippers in her mouth and choked to death."

The girls rushed off shouting "Holiday" and striking each other, playfully on the head with stones, but Minnie, in the room above, threw herself down upon the heap of glass in the corner and sobbed as if her heart would break.

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