have fairies happen to *me!*' he shouted.

'Yes,' said Miss Ware, 'it could n't have been funnier. And yet,' she said, 'I'm glad it happened.' 'Why do you say that?' he said. 'For your sake,' said Miss Ware. He looked at her steadily and said, 'And not at all — for yours?' 'Why not?' she said and put her hand on his and looked into his eyes. Then she got up. 'Now,' she said, 'you have seen *me* — as I am.'

Well, it may seem strange to you that Mr. Browne, who always had the last word to put the final flourish to a conversation, had nothing to say to that. He took her hand and together they walked out of the maze and down past the tennis players without seeing them, and they did n't get back until long after dinnertime.

I wish I could tell you that they were married and lived happily ever after and that Mr. Browne's laugh got into his next comedy and made it literally a howling success. But as a matter of fact, although they were married and did indeed live very happily, Mr. Browne never wrote any more comedies, for Miss Slocum died the next year and he and Mrs. Browne moved to California. And his laugh grew on him and began to be susceptible to even the most trivial stimuli, such as radio gags. They say he has now taken to making puns.

FRÈRE JACQUES

BY JOHN CHEEVER

Five minutes before she drove into the yard behind the camp, he could hear the car coming down the dirt road. Its sound was hard to distinguish from the sound of the wind that had come up that day at dark, brushing through the tops of the pines. Then the headlights swept the room like the drunken light of a hurricane lamp, and he heard the motor idle and stall. She whistled to him. Then she called to him through the screen door: —

'Open the door, please, Alex. I'm loaded down with bundles and Héloïse is cutting up.'

Her voice sounded tired. He opened the door and she came into the room. In the crook of one arm she was carrying a large bundle of fresh laundry, holding it against her breast as if it were a child. In the other arm she had a lot of small packages.

'Back so soon?' he said. He was Russian and he spoke with a slight accent. 'It did n't take you long. Did you get everything?'

'Kiss me,' she said.

He kissed her.

'Did you get everything?' he asked again.

'Yes,' she said. 'The *Times*, nails, the padlock, the laundry. The post office was closed, but I dropped our forwarding address in the mailbox. Oh, Alex, this business of moving gets me down. Look at my hands.' She held up her left hand to show him. It was trembling.

'Yes,' he said, 'I know. It makes me tired, too.'

'It's not that I've done anything,' she said. 'It's just the business of making the break. And this bloody weather. The way that wind blows up.'

'Yes, I know,' he said.

She handed him the *Times* and laid down all of the parcels but the laundry bundle. She still held that affectionately in the crook of her arm. She was tired and he noticed it. Her face was pale and slightly drawn, and her voice was tired. Her yellow hair was trussed up simply at the crown of her head, and it made her look younger than her twenty-two years and accentuated the tiredness and restlessness of her features. He lit a lamp and sat down to read the paper. He was interested in the Spanish trouble and he was anxious to find who was holding Madrid.

'Mrs. Wiley said she was sorry to see us go,' she said. 'She has n't swindled anyone on a laundry bill the way she swindled us for years. And I said goodbye to the butcher and the garage man for you. It's surprising how many people you can get to know in two weeks. And I bought an ice cream for Héloïse.'

'You're telling me,' he said, without looking up from the paper. 'It's all over her face. Chocolate?'

'Yes,' she said, 'chocolate. If you have a handkerchief I'll wipe it off.'

He reached into his pocket and took out a large, clean handkerchief. He always had clean handkerchiefs. She took the handkerchief and daubed at the face of the laundry bundle with it as if she were wiping the ice cream from a child's mouth. The joke of the laundry bundle was an old one. Every bundle of salt, sugar, corn meal, flour, or laundry that she had carried, during the two years they had lived together, she had called Héloïse, and they had talked lightly and facetiously over it as if it were their child. She was very young and this strained talk was some of the tenderest that had gone between them. But he was ten years older than she and he often tired of it. He was tired of it on that evening, and it was a strain for him to keep it up.

'Any better?' she asked, holding up the bundle for him to see.

'Much better,' he said. 'Did honey like the ice cream?'

'Tell Daddy how good the ice cream was,' she said, jogging the bundle tenderly on her arm.

'Has the little girl lost her tongue?' he said. He was bored and irritated by it, but he kept it up for her sake.

'Oh, well,' she said, 'she's as tired as we, and we can't expect her to talk all the time. I do wish we could bring her up in the country, Alex. She'd be a brighter baby.'

'Money,' he said.

'Yes, darling,' she said, 'I know. Back to Bank Street for you, Héloïse.'

He went back to his paper and she stood at the open door, looking out on to the lake. The oppressive clouds were filling in with dark, like sailcloth, and the lake was beginning to chop under a northeast wind. The clouds and the wind and the dark were all bearing up from the narrows, and in the gray light the lake seemed to have something as hostile and defenseless about it as the seaboard.

'There's nothing more to do?' she asked.

'No,' he said. Her persistence in talking while he tried to read irritated him. 'We can leave the keys here. We ought to get to bed soon. I want to start early in the morning. I'd like to get back to the city before dark.'

'That outboard sounds like a hornet,' she said.

The single sound above the chopping of the waves was the droning of an outboard, way up beyond Basin Bay.

'What did you say about hornets?'

'That outboard,' she said; 'it sounds like a hornet.'

'Oh,' he said.

'Want to go swimming?' she said. She stood with her back to him, looking out over the lake. She was still holding the laundry bundle.

'It's too cold,' he said.

'No, Alex, it's not too cold. And it's our last chance to go swimming until

next summer. And when you come out the air seems warmer.'

'You know what the doctor said.'

'To hell with the doctor.'

'Well, go swimming if you want. You'll have to go alone.'

'I don't want to go swimming alone,' she said quietly.

'Why don't you sit down and enjoy yourself?' he said. 'It's your last chance.'

'I am enjoying myself,' she said. 'Héloïse and I are having the time of our lives, are n't we, Héloïse? Just a couple of bugs in a rug. See the gull?'

'Where?' he said, putting down his paper again.

'Right over there.'

'Oh, yes.'

A gray gull, a shade lighter than the overcast sky, rode above the water, hunting.

'I did n't know gulls liked fresh water,' she said.

'They come down the Saint Lawrence,' he said, 'and then down Champlain.'

'I'll bet they get homesick for the ocean,' she said.

For a long time neither of them spoke. He thought she had left the room, but when he looked up she was still standing there. The room had grown dark, but her white *espadrilles* and her dress seemed to hold the light. He could still see them distinctly.

'Can we have a fire, Alex?' she said.

'It's not cold enough.'

'Oh, I don't want it for that. It's just that it would be a nice evening to have a fire. This is the kind of weather to have fires. It makes me feel lonely — the noise of that wind.'

'Anyhow, there is n't any wood,' he said. 'We burned it all last night.'

'Well, let's do something,' she said. 'Let's play double Canfield.'

'I'm too tired,' he said.

'You get tired easier than I.'

'I'm older than you.'

'Love me, Alex?'

'Sure, but I'm tired.'

'I don't know why I'm so restless,' she said. 'I hate moving and I hate autumn. When I was nine years old, Grandfather took me up to Boston to buy some school clothes and we stayed at an old hotel and it smelled just like this camp. I had to get out of bed to go to the bathroom and I was terrified. I can still remember it.'

He wished she would stop talking.

'Well, Héloïse,' she said, patting the bundle, 'maybe some day we'll have money and we can have a house in the country. We'll live in the same place year in and year out and do all of those things that Mother remembers. Oh, living on Bank Street, honey, would n't give you the faintest idea of what a life can be — a life without Mrs. Weiner and Mrs. White and Mrs. Deutsch and Daddy's drinking companions ringing the doorbell all the time. Sometimes you think you've just dreamed it or imagined it, sweet, but it actually exists. The trucks don't take your sleep away. It's quiet at night. Daddy can hunt and Mummy can have a horse. "Bye-low, baby bunting," she sang, cradling the bundle, "Daddy's gone a-hunting, to get himself a rabbit skin, to wrap his baby bunting in."'

She hesitated and bent over the bundle. She was very good at mimicry, and the angle of her arms and shoulders and the tone of her voice were absorbed and affectionate.

'Is n't that sweet?' she whispered. 'She's fallen asleep. The poor little tyke is tired. She's such a good egg, Alex. Here we've dragged her off to the country and now we're dragging her back to the city, and not one word of complaint. Some babies would squall; but not Héloïse. She looks a lot like you when she's asleep. Something about the eyes. Don't you think?'

'Yes,' he said. He tried to show in the tone of one word how tired he was of her talk.

'We'll have to have her photographed,'

she went on. She spoke in a low voice, as if she were afraid she would wake the bundle. 'We must keep a record of her golden months. I'll get in Honnegen-Hunné. Both of our mothers were Boston women.'

'Please,' he said, 'I'm trying to read.'

'All right,' she said.

He was sorry to have spoken shortly and he looked over to where she was standing. He thought he heard her cough.

'That wind is cold, darling,' he said. 'You'd better put a sweater on.'

She did n't answer him. Then he saw that she was not coughing, but that she was crying. She was sobbing like a runner who is tired and short of breath.

'Now what's the matter?' he asked.

'Nothing much,' she said quietly. 'I want a child.'

'But why bring that up now? You know we can't afford one.'

'Yes, I know. But I want one, I want one, I want one!' she cried hotly, turning to him. Her face was shining with tears. 'I'm sick of this, Alex; I'm sick to my heart of this.'

'But why do you get yourself excited about it? You know there's nothing we can do now.'

'Or ever.'

'But why do you get yourself excited by it?'

'There are some things we could do.'

'What?'

'You might marry me.'

'What difference would that make?'

'A great difference for me,' she said. 'A human difference.'

'Don't get sentimental.'

'Mother is sentimental, Héloïse,' she said. 'Comfort your sentimental mother. Reassure her. She feels as if she were falling.'

'Please,' he said tiredly, 'don't begin that.'

He put his hand on her shoulder, but she twisted quickly out of his reach.

'Father does n't understand us at all,' she said. She had stopped sobbing then and she was speaking to the bundle with great confidence.

'Father does n't understand us at all,' she repeated, 'not at all. *Mais ça ne fait rien, chérie. Pas du tout, pas du tout. "Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,"*' she crooned.

'Stop it,' he pleaded, 'please.'

'"*Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous? Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines.*"'

He was frightened, then, for if they had been frankly separating in a cold depot, on a rainy pier, in the doorway of a restaurant, if she had been screaming and crying and drumming her heels on the floor, her words could n't have held more finality and estrangement than the simple, persistent words of that song.

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