

**Dead men tell no tales—
until now....**

**The Riddle
★ of ★
Penncroft
Farm**

Dorothea Jensen

A Shade in the Window

"Penncroft Farm isn't *really* haunted, is it? You told me there are no such things as ghosts," I spluttered.

"Well, if it makes you feel any better, Lars, I swear that *I* never saw anything supernatural there," my mother replied. "It was George who swore the place was loaded with ghosts. But then, my brother always did love to tell tall tales."

Mom was sitting in the front seat of our car and I was stuck in the back as usual, so I couldn't see her face. But I could guess her expression from the sound of her voice. It had the sad tone she always used to talk about Uncle George.

"I wish you wouldn't mention ghosts, Sandra," Dad protested. "Penncroft can be a *very* spooky spot when the wind moans through that old orchard at night. And you know the house was built

before the American Revolution. I'll bet a lot's happened there."

"I suppose George Washington slept there," I scoffed.

"No, I'm afraid not, honey," Mom said, "much to Aunt Cass's eternal regret. Of course, he did spend a winter at Valley Forge, which is only a stone's throw away."

I leaned forward eagerly. "Valley Forge? Is that an amusement park like Valley Fair back home?"

"Lars! Don't tell me you've never heard of Valley Forge! Didn't you study the Revolutionary War in school?" Mom exclaimed.

"Give me a break! We've been doing Minnesota history—you know, explorers like Zebulon Pike. Geez, I hope I don't have to learn a bunch of stuff about Pennsylvania. It's not fair having to learn two state histories just because I have to move."

Dad humphed. "You'll change your mind when we get into Philadelphia and see the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. Too bad we don't have time today."

"Don't care if I ever see 'em," I muttered.

"He's still upset about moving, Erik," said Mom. Dad's voice deepened. "I know it's tough, but

he'll get over it once he makes some new friends and meets your aunt Cass."

Mom twisted around to look at me, although it was getting too dark to see much of anything. "When George and I spent summers at Penncroft Farm, he used to play tricks on Aunt Cass. Cass called it *bamboozling*—that's one of her favorite words. It means fooling someone."

"What did she do to get back at him?" I asked.

Mom chuckled. "Among other things, she apple-pied his bed. That's the old-fashioned name for short sheeting—probably comes from folding the sheet in a triangle like a piece of pie."

"Like Peter used to do to me?" I thought of how my older brother folded my sheets and tucked them tight so I couldn't get into bed. That reminded me that Peter got to stay in Minnesota because he was in college.

"I'll bet *you* were the best bamboozler, Sandra," Dad teased.

"Not me! I had better things to do. But Lars, you bamboozled Aunt Cass thoroughly the last time we came, even though you were only two. Whenever she'd go out to hang up the wash, you'd pull in all the latchstrings and strand her outside."

Lars Olafson moves with his parents to the old family farm near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to live with aged Aunt Cass. Lars is lonely and miserable—until he meets Geordie, whose tales of the Revolutionary War are as exciting as those of an eyewitness.

Lars soon discovers that Penncroft Farm is full of riddles. There's the old "riddle" in the barn, and the puzzle of Geordie and his family. And when Aunt Cass dies suddenly, Lars faces an extraordinary mystery linked all the way back to the Revolutionary War—and Geordie's ghostly stories are his only chance of solving it.

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HARCOURT, INC.
www.HarcourtBooks.com
Printed in the United States of America
Ages 10 to 14

