

Ode to Joy



Chapter One – by Kay Hively

Ten-year-old Alice Palmer propped her chin on her arm and looked out through the car window. All she could see was sand and rock and cactus plants. It was hot riding in the back seat of her father's car, but Pa had told her they would soon be at the trading post. Alice was eager to see the trading post because that was where she and her family would live for two whole years, 1935 and 1936.

The Arizona desert was more beautiful than Alice had thought it would be. The sand and rocks had interesting shapes and the sun made the sand dunes change colors.

Off in the distance, Alice could see hills. Pa had said the trading post was near those big red hills. He said the hills were called buttes. As Alice looked out her window, she could see the sun would soon be dropping down behind the buttes. When that happened it would be dark.

But there was still a bit of light in the sky when Pa stopped the car in front of a big building. A man who was lighting a lantern on the front porch of the building turned and looked at the car as Pa opened his door. In the light of the lantern, Alice could see the man's handsome face.

Pa shook hands with the man on the porch then beckoned for everyone to get out of the car. Mother quickly climbed the two porch steps and shook hands with the man. Then Pa introduced Alice to Mr. Blackhorse. Alice gathered up her skirt and made a curtsy. The handsome Indian man smiled at her and said he hoped they would be friends. He said that Alice and her parents should call him Thomas.

Pa got two big suitcases out of the car and came back to the porch. Then Thomas opened the trading post door and ushered everyone inside. When Alice stepped inside, she found herself in a swirl of many colors. She thought she must be dreaming. All around the room were stacks of beautiful blankets, and shelves were covered with colorful clay pots. On the floor were piles of hand woven rugs. On one side of the room were racks of bright colored clothing and glass cases filled with shiny silver and turquoise jewelry.

The room seemed to glow as lamp light fell on the colorful blankets and glistened on the gleaming silver bracelets and buckles. Alice just stood perfectly still and gazed around the room. She made no effort to move. It was like she was glued to the floor. Gently, her mother gave Alice a little nudge and moved her down one of the aisles in the trading post.

Thomas stepped behind the clerk's counter and opened a big door. He motioned for the Palmer family to come with him. Alice followed her mother through the open door. Once again, Alice's eyes popped wide open and a big wide smile crossed her small happy face.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri.
Copyright 2005, Missouri Press Foundation.

Things to Think About and Do

- Using a dictionary, learn the definition of these words: buttes, curtsy, lantern, turquoise, dunes, ushered and desert. Once you know the definition, learn to spell each word.
- Alice is going to live in a trading post in Arizona. On a United States map, find Arizona and then make a list of all the other states that border Arizona.

Next Week: Chapter Two – A New World