

My Town

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Chapter 9

"Sing the butter verse again," I said, sitting in the backseat with Chloe, traveling down the highway. Mom, Dad, Chloe and I all raised our voices.

*I went down to Old Joe's house,
He invited me to supper.*

*I stumped my toe on the table leg
And stuck my nose in the butter.*

"I wonder how many times we've sung *Old Joe Clark* this past week," Dad said, laughing.

"At least 800 since we left the festival," Mom answered.

The past weekend, our family had spent the day at the Appalachian Harvest Festival in Renfro Valley, otherwise known as "Kentucky's Country Music Capital." We saw antique tractors, a wagon train, and molasses made from a mule-drawn press. We also saw handmade products and heard live music. The highlight was when Chloe sang Old Dan Tucker at the Renfro Valley Barn Dance. Lucky for her, I had my harmonica and could join the band. Before leaving the festival, we took an art class.

"You're a gifted artist," the teacher said when she saw Chloe's painting.

When I showed the teacher my art, she studied it before finally speaking, "Your art is very unique, Woody." I blushed and thanked her for the compliment.

"I see a squirrel in the top of that maple tree," I said, as we entered Mount Sterling. Weeks ago, I'd made a conscious decision to be more aware of my surroundings – and to enjoy the journey instead of wishing we would hurry and get there.

"Welcome to Court Days – *Kentucky's Oldest Festival*," I said, reading the banner hanging on a rock wall. "I wonder why it's called Court Days."

"I can explain," a lady at the main entrance answered. "Court Days started back in 1794. Once a year, the Circuit Judge would come to town and try criminals.

During this time, folks would come from miles around to sell crops, trade livestock and tools, and visit with friends. Over 200 years later, it's still going strong. Court Days always starts on Friday and ends on the 3rd Monday of October. It's incredible to think over 200,000 people come to Mount Sterling to buy wares from over 1,500 vendors. In fact," she continued, "it's become so large that both Flemingsburg and Owingsville have their own Court Days a few days prior to this one."

We thanked her for the information and entered the festival. Immediately, I smelled the most wonderful aroma.

"I know, you're hungry," Mom said, reading my mind. "Since we're at the food vendors, let's use our vouchers and get a snack,"

"Four funny cakes, please," I said to the teenager in the food truck. Chloe and I had never eaten a funny cake. We couldn't wait to taste it.

"They're actually called funnel cakes," he laughed, handing each of us an enormous treat covered in powdered sugar. Mom also ordered each of us a country ham biscuit and Kentucky's own *Ale 8* soft drink.

Mom paid for the biscuits and drinks while I handed over the last vouchers from our *My Town Prize Package*.

"This is the most delicious meal I've ever eaten," I said, once we dug in.

"You look like a dalmatian! There's more powdered sugar on you than on the funnel cake," Mom replied. "It's good you don't have a magic show. I don't think we could get you clean."

I'd missed the deadline to register. I was sad, but the food eased my disappointment. Besides, my magic set was in the car in case they needed me to perform.

"Make sure you throw away your trash," Dad instructed as we left our table, "and

remember, there are thousands of people so pay attention. If for some reason we get separated, go to the main entrance and wait. Don't go looking for us and under no circumstances are you to accept a ride, food, or drink from anyone, no matter what. Understood?"

"Yes sir," Chloe and I answered in unison.

"I've never seen so many people and so many things for sale," I said, overwhelmed. Chloe and I held on to each other's paw.

"Let's play *The Alphabet Game* with what's for sale," I suggested. Chloe and I took turns going through the alphabet naming items we saw, starting with *accordion*. We made it all the way to *kettle corn* when I noticed Chloe admiring an art set, complete with paint, brushes, markers and glitter. I could tell by looking that she would love to have it.

"How much is the art set?" I asked the seller.

"Five bucks," he replied. I wanted to get it for Chloe. She was such a terrific artist and an even better sister. Unfortunately, I didn't have five dollars.

I noticed a sign in the booth that said "*Buy or Trade*." Immediately I knew what I had to do.

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