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A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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By SHIRLEY SARGENT

ON ACCOUNT of being the oldest in a big family, I've been baby sitting longer than I remem ber. Since I was twelve-that'd be four years now that I'm within hinting distance of my sixteenth birthday-I've been sitting for other people for pay. I've always welcomed jobs but tonight what I'd welcome is a date-so what happens? Four times I'm called to our wall phone and four times I have to turn people down 'cause I already promised the Laytons The Laytons are kinda old to have Jennie, four, and Jimmy, six, but they planned it so their first two would be grown-up before they had any more.

Anyway, nobobdy calls me for a date, not that anyone does very often, so I'm off for an evening of fun and hilarity. Baby sitting, haw! They aren't babies, and try and sit with those two. For example, Jennie gnaws a fruitcake while I'm helping Jimmy with his train, they have two fights, Jimmy turns on all the lights as fast as I turn them off and finally Jennie knocks the Christmas tree over It was a big tree with a standard and all, but she catches it with her jump rope.

Quick-like I run in and pull out the plug, thanking my stars that no fire started, then herd them up to bed. Three stories later they're both asleep and I hurry down to wash the dishes.

Tired now, I'm thinking of the good time my friends are having and wondering again why I don't have more dates. The hall mirror shows the same old reflection.



"Oh, please," his face is all eager, "stay. I hate to be alone."

Short brown hair, brown eyes and a big mouth that hides my crooked teeth, if I don't forget and grin.

Soon's I have a little more money.
I can afford braces.

Jennie yells and I wake her from a nightmare. By the time I'm back downstairs, it's nearly ten o'clock and I've still got that darned tree to set up. Like I say it's a beautiful big tree, ceiling high, loaded with decorations. There I am half under the tree trying to hold it straight and keet the globes on at the same time when I hear the front door opensomebody yells, "Anybody home?"

I'm so startled I let the tree sway, so this voice yells, "Time!" and a long arm grabs for

Looking up between the branches, I see a tall, dark-haired boy, neither handsome nor home ly "Thanks," I'm a little breath less.

"I'm Oliver Layton," he ex plains, "isn't that a heck of a name?"

Pine needles are thick in the air. "Not so awful," I laugh back "I'm Margie, the sitter. You folks are out."

"I know. Look here, can't we do something about this tree?"

A few minutes later we collaps into chairs, staring at the still 'ovely tree. "Thanks so much. Can I get you something to eat or any thing?"

"Say, that'd be keen. Would you?"

Well, of course, I do and, while Oliver eats, he tells me how he's staying at a friend's this vacation but decided to come home and take his girl to a dance. "So I called her and came clear in by bus, but she didn't wait. She went with somebody else. Heck," he grins, "now I'm sorta glad she stood me up."

"I'd better be on my way now that you're here to baby sit," I say reluctantly.

"Oh, please," his face is all cager, "stay. I hate to be all alone."

Back in the living room then, he asks me all about the kids and about me until, to hear us talk vou'd think we were old friends. I like the way he talks, slow and quiet, and the way his grin lights up his whole face. He tells me about boarding school and his friends and what he wants to do Suddenly, he jumps up. "Let's

dance. We can roll up the rug . . ."

It turns out we're both such sad dancers we have to take our shoes off so's not to hurt each other. But we laugh a lot and the radio sounds fine and I fit right into Oliver's arms. At midnight, he kisses me lightly on the cheek.

Well, it's the happiest sitter's eve I've ever spent and, from the look in his eyes, I can tell it's going to be a Happy Holiday.

Make it merry... have plenty of Coke



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