

Passages

Reading Level 7



Title: Belle Prater's Boy

Author: Ruth White

Sample From The Book

Around 5:00 a.m. on a warm Sunday morning in October 1953, my aunt Belle left her bed and vanished from the face of the earth.

“When I heard her get up, I figgered she was going outside to the toilet,” her husband, my Uncle Everett told the sheriff. “So I dozed off back to sleep. When I came awake again, I’d say maybe a half hour had passed, and she wasn’t back, so I says to myself, ‘Reckon I better go check on Belle, see if she’s okay.’ So I did.

Uncle Everett, a coal miner, and Aunt Belle, along with their boy, Woodrow, lived way far in the head of a long, isolated holler called Crooked Ridge, near the town of Coal Station, Virginia, where the Appalachians are steep and rugged. In those days the roads were narrow and rocky, barely passable in bad weather. They had an old Ford, and that morning it was parked on the slope with the key in the ignition like always. Their nearest neighbors, the Sloans, who lived almost a mile down the road, told the sheriff they hadn’t seen or heard a thing out of the ordinary.



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