

## Giants

By Vicki Antle

### Excerpt

One evening when I was already in bed dad decided to take us out for a drive. He picked me and rolled me in a flannel blanket and carried me out to the truck where the boys were waiting. I had been sleeping and did not understand what was happening. “Is everything okay?” I asked. “Where’s Mom?”

“Your mother’s fine” he said. “She’s at club with Mrs. Warren. She’s getting to know the other moms.”

“Where are we going?”

“Dad’s got some work to do. We’re going to feed the bears.”

The boys had already been informed. They sat waiting in the backseat dressed in their darkest clothes. The road that leads to the dump is dark and winding. Dad has the headlights on full-blast as we wind our way deeper and deeper into the woods. I turn to look back at Pete and expect him to be frightened. But he isn’t. He is kneeling up against the window, looking out into the darkness, his face pressed against the glass with anticipation. I crane my neck to see Johnny behind me in exactly the same pose. They appear as often is the case, in perfect symmetry. Dressed identically they look like bookends. I turn to Dad who is attentive to the curves in the road.

“You got to be careful driving at night. Lots of wildlife in these parts.”

Finally we arrive at a clearing and Dad stops the car. He leaves the headlights on and motions to us to stay where we are as he lays a box of garbage near the edge of a large mountain of bags and cast-off items. Then he goes to the cab in back and lifts out a large cardboard tray of eggs. There must have been at least sixty of them. He motioned to the boys to join him and they began to throw them one by one at a green overstuffed chair near the front of the hill of garbage.

“Got it” cried Pete as he reached in the tray for another egg.

“Nice one boy, now try for something smaller. Try for the paint can.”

Pete tried and he tried but he could not hit it. Johnny scored a hit against the box that Dad had left behind.

“You want to try?” Dad asked as I watched, cocooned in my blanket in the front seat. He came over and lifted me from the seat leaving the blanket behind. The night air was cold against my exposed skin.

He handed me an egg from the tray and I let it drift into the darkness. I could not see what it hit but could hear a faint splat from the shadows. Johnny let the last of the eggs fly as we scampered back in to the truck.

We locked the doors and Dad turned off the engine. He wrapped the blanket tightly around me.

“Just wait now” he said softly.

And we waited. I had almost fallen asleep again when he whispered “See” and then out from the trees came a large, dark figure, over eight feet tall. I could barely make it out but as it moved away from the trees into the clearing the form became more

defined. There in the light of the pale moon and the stars stood a bear. It began to move clumsily through the heaps of trash and was soon joined by another bear. We watched in dumb amazement as the two giants waded through bags and boxes of our rejects.

“The eggs, Dad. We should have given them the eggs.”

“They’ll find what they need.”

And so we watched as they swung around with large, lumbering gestures, turning over and over the waste of the small town. The chill began to set in and Dad started up the engine again. He flicked on the lights and the bears stared blindly into the glare of the high beams. They began to scurry off into the shadows, these gigantic, wild creatures, frightened by the light of our truck. Slowly, Dad backed out and made a half turn and righted the truck. By now our eyes were accustomed to the darkness and I squinted as we made our way back into town, the road illuminated before us as if it was daylight. As we pulled into the driveway Dad said, “Not a word of this to your mother, all right.”