

then look out!"

"But she did drop," argues a persistent one. "She was on the ground when Jake found her."

The oracle screws his eyes and squints off appraisingly:

"If Jake hadn't come along at exactly that moment, I betchu anything I got that kid wouldn't been alive today."

Farmer Merritt himself, grave and stern, his hair grizzled grey since the night in the bogs, puts out his jaw stubbornly:

"I don't know anything about coyotes, but I ain't going to stand by and let no man say one word against my neighbor, Jake Watson. He's a man!"

Mrs. Merritt, whose high cheek bones have recovered their color, and whose tongue fails her not now, smiles around the circle:

"Talking of Jake! We all got exempted because we was raisin' crops, so didn't have to go across the water to fight the Germans as Jake did. If we didn't get exempted because we was farmers, then we had squint eyes or flat feet. When Jake went down to enlist at first they told him his feet were flat as pancakes and that he wouldn't be no good fighting Germans, but he kept at them and he kept at them, and he got took, and no one thought anything more about his flat feet when he was chasin' after Germans, and neither did them same feet bother Jake when he was trampin' ten miles through the marshlands, with the rain just pounding down upon him, and that baby wrapped up snug in his old army coat and himself soaked to the bone."