

*Author of A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN*

*Betty Smith*

*Joy in the  
Morning*

*A Novel*



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Morning*

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*Betty Smith*

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# Epigraph

*Weeping may endure for a night,  
but joy cometh in the morning.*

**-Psalm 30:5**

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# 1

*It was an out-of-date town hall in an up-to-date progressive college town in a midwestern state. The corridor was long and dark with narrow benches at intervals against the wall, and a brass cuspidor by each bench.*

Although the year was 1927 and few men chewed tobacco any more, no one had the authority to get rid of the cuspidors. So they stood there. Each morning the janitor polished them and put a fresh half inch of water in each as janitors had done before him for the past fifty years.

One of the benches was occupied by a boy named Carl and a girl named Annie. There was a small, red, very new suitcase on the bench next to the girl. She gave it a possessive pat from time to time. The boy chain-smoked, which made him seem nervous even though he wasn't.

Although he was known as Carl Brown, the boy had started life as Carlton Braun—the Carlton after the father's boss. Mr. Braun had worked for Mr. Carlton since the age of twelve. The work was hard, the hours long, the pay low, and the raises scarce.

Whenever he asked the boss for a raise, Mr. Carlton would put his arm around Mr. Braun's shoulder and tell him in a mellow voice, not to worry, son. He'd be taken care of, son. When he, Mr. Carlton, passed away, there'd be some bonds in that there safe, made out to William Braun.

So when the baby was born, they named him Carlton so the boss would be sure to remember the bonds. When the boy was six years old, Mr. Carlton died. When they opened the safe, there were no bonds for William Braun, son. The disappointed father reduced the boy's name to Carl.

During the war, when people were running around hollering, "Down with the Kaiser!" and changing sauerkraut to liberty cabbage, Mr. Braun, by due process of law, had his name changed to Brown. Although he had been born in Germany, he wanted no one to mistake which side he was on.

Thus evolved the name Carl Brown.

There was no complication about the girl's name, Annie McGairy. She had been christened Annie after her German-born maternal grandmother, and the McGairy, of course, was donated by her father, who had been born in Dublin, Ireland.

Carl was a handsome boy—tall, blond, and with a manly look of maturity which made him seem older than his twenty years. His clothes were cheap, but he wore them so well that they looked expensive. He was neat in a casual way. Altogether, he was an attractive young man whom one couldn't help but notice.

Annie was eighteen but looked like a child of fourteen who had borrowed her sister's clothes for the day. She was small, slender but well made, and had long, pretty light-brown hair which she wore in a knot at the back of her head. She had nice clear skin, a mobile mouth, and sad gray eyes. She wasn't a girl you'd notice especially except when she spoke. Then you'd *have* to notice her.

They sat close together on the bench, holding hands and waiting to be married. From time to time there was a little hiss as Carl threw a half-smoked cigarette into the cuspidor. At each hiss Annie squeezed his hand and said, "Nervous?" Each time he squeezed back and said, "No. You?" Each time she said, "A little." Then they squeezed hands together.

A woman clerk came toward them and Carl started to rise. "Keep your seat," said the woman pleasantly.

"Will we have to wait much longer?" asked Carl, looking at his watch. "We don't want to miss the game."

"Judge Calamus doesn't usually come in on a Saturday," said the clerk. "But he's making an exception in your case. We got in touch with him at his home and he'll be over in a few minutes."

"Good!"

"Now: You have the license?" Carl started to get it from his inside coat pocket. "Oh, I don't need to see it. Just checking," she said. "Where you folks from?"

"Brooklyn," he said.

"Both of you?"

Carl nodded. "But I've been here a year."

"He goes to college here," said Annie proudly.

"Med school?" asked the clerk.

"Law school," he said.

“That’s nice,” she said vaguely. She turned to Annie. “And how long have you been here?”

“Two hours,” said Annie.

“She came in on the night train from New York,” explained Carl.

“Then our Middle West must seem strange to you,” she said to Annie.

“Oh, no. I had an idea what it would be like. I read books that were laid in the Middle West—like *Winesburg Ohio* and *Main Street* and *Sister Carrie*. And to me the Middle West didn’t seem much different than where I lived. Why, *Sister Carrie* could have been laid in Brooklyn as well as in Chicago.”

Carl pressed Annie’s hand in warning and she stopped talking. Annie noticed the clerk was staring at her in a strange way.

“Oh! Yes, well . . .” The clerk sounded confused. She started back to her office, saying over her shoulder, “The judge will expect a little something for his trouble, you know.”

“I understand,” said Carl.

“Carl, did I say something wrong?” Annie asked anxiously.

“No, sweetheart.”

“Then why did you want me to stop talking?”

“I didn’t want her hanging around.”

He didn’t want to tell Annie that the clerk had been astonished by Annie’s accent. Carl had a slight Brooklyn accent, but Annie’s was broad, complicated by an intruding Irish brogue.

“Well, she talks funny too,” said Annie suddenly.

It was uncanny how at times Annie seemed to know Carl’s thoughts. It made him uneasy. “Oh, you’ll get used to the way they talk,” he said, “the way they’ll get used to the way you, I mean *we*, talk.”

“I know that sometimes I don’t say things right, but I’ll learn, Carl. You’ll see. I’m a person who learns very quick.”

“Quick-ly!” His correction was automatic.

She had been about to say: Don’t ever be ashamed of me. She changed it to: “Don’t you worry about me.”

“Worry? Never! Why, you’re smart, Annie. You just don’t know how very smart you are.”

“No, Carl. I only went to school up to the eighth grade.”

“You’re as smart as most college graduates.”

“You’re just saying that.”

“No, sweetheart. I mean it.”

“I’ll learn, Carl. You’ll see.”

“Don’t learn too much now. I don’t want my wife to be a big shot.”

“Nothing like that. I’m not ambitious or anything. But I certainly want to know enough so you won’t be ashamed of me when you get to be a great lawyer or maybe a governor.”

“Why not President?” he said jokingly. “I guess you don’t have much faith in me.”

“You know what I mean, Carl.”

“I know, sweetheart. But I love you just the way you are.” He kissed her cheek.

“This waiting makes me nervous. What time is it by your watch?” she said.

“Ten after eleven. Damn it, the game starts at one-thirty and I’ve got to get rid of your suitcase and we have to have lunch and . . .”

“And I’d hate to miss the game,” she said. “I never saw a football game, and I’m all ready for it.” She touched the yellow chrysanthemum with its ribbon bow of the college colors, which Carl had pinned to her coat when she stepped off the train, and held up the little blue pennant he had put into her hand, waved it, and whispered, “Rah! Rah! Rah!”

The clerk came and said the judge had arrived and would they follow her? And take the suitcase along. Not that anyone would actually steal it, she explained, but you never could tell with so many strangers in town for the game.

The name was on the door: *Willis J. Calamus*. Under it *Justice of the Peace* and down in the corner *Notary Public*. Carl made a snide remark about a notary calling himself judge, and Annie said, sh-h, he might hear you.

The judge seemed to take up all the space in the small office—his stomach was so fat. Annie expected he would be wearing a robe as judges did in the movies. Instead he wore roomy pants with lots of seat to them, a clean but carelessly ironed shirt and an unbuttoned alpaca coat, which rode up in the back and sagged down in the front as though the pockets were full of iron filings.

The judge sent the clerk out to dig up a certain Miss Vi for the other witness. He took the license from Carl and went behind the counter to read it. First he patted himself while he looked in the air. That was how he