

## Two-year Old

She stood, by herself, a little uncertainly. Her balance was pretty good, not excellent yet, like it was with the grown-ups. There were no grown-ups in her line of sight, but strangely, she didn't think that that was odd, even though she was so little. She was just standing there, in the little store, wearing a coat and looking around. There was so much for a person who is new to the world, to see. She could hardly drink it all in. Near her there was a pot-bellied stove, the kind that would have been used in about 1949 or 1950. It was brown, maybe black, and it was warm. It was warm in the store, it felt good after coming in from outside, even though she was bundled up so much that her arms stuck out from her sides a little bit.

Right in front of her, almost at eye-level, a big round carton sat on one of the grocery shelves. Later on in her life she would learn that cartons like this contained Quaker Oats. Right now it was the Quaker on the front of the package that she stared at, almost transfixed by his kindly gaze. He was smiling at her! He looked so kind, as if he wanted to reach out and touch her. His hair was long and white, curly and soft-looking. His cheeks were rosy, as if he were merry. But the main thing was, he seemed to be beaming at her. She almost felt warmth coming from his eyes, his smile. She couldn't stop looking at the kind man on the package.

She noticed, at the same time, that there were beams of sunlight falling across the floor where she stood. Sunlight was coming through the little windows in the little grocery store. She felt a sense of wonder at all the new things she was seeing, the shelves, the cans, the hardwood floor, the way the sun came through the windows, the pot-bellied stove. But especially, the kindly gaze of the man on the carton of Quaker Oats.

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