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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Box-Car Children: Ginseng (12/17)

What Dr. McAllister ever did before Henry began to work for him would be hard to guess.

There were certainly as many duties always waiting for him as he had time to do. And it made no difference to the industrious boy what the job was. Nothing was too hard or too dirty for him to attempt.

One day the doctor set him at the task of clearing out his little laboratory. The boy washed bottles, pasted labels, and cleaned instruments for one whole morning. And more than one broken flask on its way to the rubbish heap was carefully carried up the hill to the hidden family.

While Henry was busy carefully lettering a sticky label, he noticed a young man in the outer office who was talking with the doctor.

"Can you tell me if this is real ginseng?" Henry heard him say.

"It certainly is," returned Dr. McAllister. "They will give you two dollars a pound for the root at any of the drug stores."

Henry ventured to steal a peep, and found he could readily see the plant the man was holding. It was about a foot high with branching leaves and a fine feathery white flower. Henry knew it was exactly the same white

puffball that he had noticed in Violet's vase that very morning.

When the young man had gone, Henry said, "I know where I can find a whole lot of that plant."

"Is that so?" replied the doctor kindly. "It's only the root, you know, that is valuable. But any one who wants the bother of digging it up can sell any quantity of that."

When Henry went home at noon he related enough of this incident to set his sisters to work in good earnest. They started out with both knives and two strong iron spoons, and the kettle. And with Benny to run about finding every white flower he could, the girls succeeded, with a great deal of hard digging, in finding enormous quantities of ginseng root. In fact that first afternoon's work resulted in a kettle full, not counting a single leaf or stem. Henry was delighted when he saw the result of their work, and took it next day to the largest drug store, where he received three dollars for the roots.



Without any hesitation Henry paid a visit to the dry-goods store, and came home with a pair of new brown stockings for Benny. That was a great day in the woods. Benny gave them no peace at all until they had admired his wonderful new stockings, and felt of each rib.

There had been one other thing that Benny had given them no peace about. On the night when the children had crept so quietly away from the baker's wife, Jess had forgotten to take Benny's bear. This bear was a poor looking creature, which had once been an expensive bright-eyed Teddy-bear made of brown plush. But Benny had taken it to bed every single night for three years, and had loved it by day, so that it was not attractive to any one but himself. Both eyes were gone, and its body was very limp, but Benny had certainly suffered a great deal trying to sleep in a strange bed without his beloved bear.

Jess, therefore, had plans on foot, the moment she saw Benny's new stockings. She washed the old brown stockings with their many neat darns, and hung them up to dry. And early in the afternoon she and Violet sat with the workbag between them, each with a stocking. With Benny sitting by to watch proceedings, Jess mapped out a remarkable Teddy-bear. One stocking, carefully trimmed, made the head and body, while the other furnished material for two arms, two legs, and the stuffing. Jess worked hard over the head, pushing the padding well into the blunt nose. Violet embroidered two beautiful eyes in black and white, and a jet black nose-tip.

"You must make a tail, too, Jessy," said Benny, watching her snip the brown rags.

"Bears don't have tails, Benny," argued Jess—although she wasn't exactly sure she was right. "Your old bear didn't have any tail, you know."

"But this bear has a tail, though," returned Benny, knowing that Jess would put on two tails if he insisted. And it was true. His bear finally did have a tail.

"What kind of tail?" asked Jess helplessly at last.

"Bushy, long and slim, or cotton-tail?"

"Long and slim," decided Benny with great satisfaction, "so I can pull it."

"Benny!" cried Jess, laughing in spite of herself. But she made a tail, long and slim, exactly as Benny ordered, and sewed it on very tightly, so that it might be "pulled" if desired. She fastened on the legs and arms with flat hinges, so the bear might sit down easily, and added at last a pair of cunning flappy ears and a gay collar of braided red string from a bundle.

"What's his name, Jessy?" inquired Benny, when the wonderful bear was finally handed over to him.

"His name?" repeated Jess. "Well, you know he's a new bear; he isn't your old one, so I wouldn't call him Teddy."

"Oh, no," said Benny, shocked. "This is not Teddy. This has a pretty tail."

"Of course," agreed Jess, trying not to laugh. "Well, you know we sold that ginseng to pay for your new stockings. And if you hadn't had your new ones, we couldn't have made this bear out of your old ones."

"You want his name to be Stockings?" asked Benny politely.

"Stockings? No," answered Jess. "I was thinking of 'Ginseng.'"

"Ginseng?" echoed Benny, thinking deeply. "That's a nice name. All right, I think Ginseng will be a good bear, if Watchie doesn't bark at him." And from that moment the bear's name was Ginseng as long as he lived, and he lived to be a very old bear indeed.