

COVER PAGE

# **The Tale of Tadpole McFee**

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~ 493 words

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*Printed December 3, 2006*

## **The Tale of Tadpole McFee**

Shorty McFee was kind of a schemer and maybe a bit daft. I knowed him since first grade, the year we met Clara Johnson and her sister, Eunice. Eunice resembled a gunny sack packed with lard and was vain as a peahen and wouldn't talk to nobody. She was in fifth grade, and Clara, blonde and pretty but skinny as a rail, was in fourth. Anyway, for some reason Shorty got all cow-eyed over Clara even though she was a good foot taller and way older than we was and naturally she didn't want nothing to do with him.

One Sunday in church he managed to set himself down next to her, who was next to her stuck-up sister Eunice and their Ma and Pa.

In his coat pocket Shorty had a few wriggling greenish-brown tadpoles he'd scooped out of his Pa's pond for the occasion, and during the first hymn he plucked one of them out, which I could see from where I was standing right behind him, and nudged Clara, and when she glanced over he popped the critter into his mouth and swallowed hard. She turned kind of ashen, but she couldn't say nothing on account of where we was, so she just looked straight ahead and sung "with the cross of Jesus" as loud as she could.

After the preacher talked awhile we all stood for another hymn, and you could tell Clara was bracing herself for whatever might happen this time, and sure enough pretty soon Shorty nudged her again and displayed another slimy tadpole in the cup of his hand.

This time, though, she eyed him like he was sheep dip on a dinner plate and whacked him with her elbow, and that tadpole went a'flying.

It happened so fast nobody saw where the thing had got to, but we heard pretty quick from sister Eunice, who was suddenly thrashing around wildly and shrieking at the top of her lungs and slapping herself repeatedly across the broad expanse of her

bodice as if the devil himself had taken up residence there. Which of course was exactly what the good people of the congregation, gaping at her in mute amazement, were imagining for themselves.

Somehow in all this commotion the tadpole must've slipped down her dress and fallen out again onto the floor or something, because nobody ever found it, and Clara never said nothing, and Shorty was never positively made out as the culprit.

Clara and Shorty eventually became friends after that, and not too many years later, when height and age didn't matter so much, they got hitched. About a year past that, when in the solemn circumstance of a bright spring morning the preacher christened their firstborn son Thaddeus "Tadpole" McFee, eyebrows went up among the people in the pews, and knowing looks were passed, as if to say the mysterious goings-on of that long-ago Sunday might finally be explained.