

Whistle Down The Wind

Mary Hayley Bell

The village children are taught in their Sunday School that one day Jesus will return to the world. A criminal is on the run in the area, and 12-year-old Swallow finds a sick and hungry man in her father's barn whom she believes to be Jesus. In this scene in the barn she tells some of the local children about the man. Her sister, Brat, says that Swallow is rather bird-like, 'skimming low over ponds or flying with speed and grace'. She's also a capable, kind girl, who has looked after her brother and sister since their mother's death. . . . This novel was first published in 1958 and made into a very popular film in 1961; and later into a stage production.

SWALLOW. Can you keep a secret? A really big secret? You've got to hold up your hand and do the 'See this wet' routine:

See this wet, see this dry,

Cut my throat if I tell a lie

This is a great and fabulous secret known to none but those within these walls. You have to join a society to be allowed to know the secret, and all who know must swear never to divulge. Will you absolutely swear? If you ever breathe a word something ghastly will happen to you. . . . Alright. . . . That's Jesus. . . . We have proof. We were in here messing about. There was a sort of knock on the door and I opened it. He stood there smiling at us, and said, 'Knock on the door and it shall be opened unto you.' . . . And I said, 'Who are you?' and he stood staring round this place, not answering at once, and then suddenly said, rather loud: 'JESUS' . . . just like that. . . . His legs were all cut,

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and his boots and socks crammed with mud and he kind of lurched. I asked Him if I should get someone and He said 'Don't tell them till I've recovered' He's ill . . . too ill to talk. He's been asleep for six hours! . . . In the daytime! . . . The grown-ups may not believe . . . suppose they try and take Him away . . . after all they did last time. . . . But we can have a gigantic meeting, we can tell them all . . . swear them all to secrecy. There's hundreds of children around here and every child knows other children. We can bring them a few at a time to see Him and hear His words. Little by little we can spread the news to children all over the country that the first people to know Jesus has come back will be the children. And . . . if the grown-ups try to take Him away again, we'll defend Him. . . . Hundreds of us!

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