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## Reading Article GP2

### **Article #15: Excerpt from "In The Shadow of the Pines"**

*by Karen K. Newell*

Grandpa Bud had one of the only sugar cane mills in the area one eighth of a mile north of his house. Friends and neighbors would gather and work together during the long days of the sugar cane harvest.

Mama chose not to go the sugar cane harvest this year. But Velma was eager to go and woke up Alfred and Prentice.

"I wanna to go too," said Kenneth, as the three were starting towards their grandfather's

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the pole turning the drums, all it could do was walk in a circle. As the stalks were squeezed by the turning drums, their juice flowed into wooden barrels.

Velma was working at the copper vat which sloped down-hill from the drums.

The vat was a long rectangle, 12 foot by 5 foot, with small sliding gates every twelve inches. Beneath the vat was a stone pit where pine knots were burnt to create a fire to cook the syrup. Velma operated one of the gates in the copper vat that let the syrup move from one part of the vat to the next as it cooked. Experienced women worked at the furthest gates, to make sure the last part of the cooking process was done correctly. It was an art to know the exact moment when the syrup had cooked to perfection. Aunt Dora was considered the greatest expert, and oversaw the entire process.

As the syrup cooked, a green film was ladled off the top and poured into wooden barrels.

"Make sure you seal those barrels, or you know what happens," Aunt Dora was telling a neighbor.

"What happens?" asked Alfred.

Grandpa Bud chuckled. "The green stuff ferments and changes into alcohol as it ages. Then the cows and pigs get into it. Since we have an open range here, the neighbor cows and pigs also get into it and get drunk. Then they all get hangovers and headaches and bellow for days."

"That would be fun," said Prent. "I can't wait to see a drunk pig."

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