

An abstract painting featuring a central, white, layered structure that resembles a mountain range or a series of steps. This structure is set against a dark, swirling background of deep blues, greens, and browns. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of depth and movement. The colors are vibrant and contrast sharply with the dark background.

***EMILY
CARR***

***THE HOUSE
OF ALL
SORTS***

The painting depicts a dense, colorful forest scene. In the center, a prominent white structure, possibly a house or a large tree trunk, stands out against the darker, more vibrant greens and blues of the surrounding foliage. The brushwork is expressive and textured, capturing the intricate details of the forest. The overall composition is dynamic and layered, with various shades of green, blue, and brown creating a rich, atmospheric setting.

***EMILY
CARR***

***THE HOUSE
OF ALL
SORTS***

Emily Carr

The House of All Sorts

EAN 8596547040644

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I. THE HOUSE OF ALL SORTS

Foundation

Friction

Sounds and Silences

Old Attic

Attic Eagles

Brooding and Homing

Space

First Tenant

Dew and Alarm Clocks

Money

Direct Action

Cold Sweat

A Tyrant and a Wedding

A Visitor

The Doll's House Couple

Dogs and Cats

Matrimony

Life Loves Living

Brides

Always Something

Mean Baby

Bachelors

Bangs and Snores

Zig-Zag...Ki-Hi

Blind

[Snow](#)

[Arabella Jones's Home](#)

[Awful Partic'lar](#)

[Gran's Battle](#)

[Peach Scanties](#)

[Sham](#)

[Mrs. Pillcrest's Poems](#)

[Unmarried](#)

[Studio](#)

[Art and the House](#)

[Men Called Her Jane](#)

[Furniture](#)

[Making Musicians](#)

[John's Pudding](#)

[How Long!](#)

[PART II. BOBTAILS](#)

[Kennel](#)

[Punk](#)

[Beacon Hill](#)

[The Garden](#)

[Sunday](#)

[Puppy Room](#)

[Poison](#)

[Naming](#)

[Meg the Worker](#)

[Basement](#)

[Night](#)

[The Dog-Thief](#)

[Selling](#)

Kipling

Lorenzo Was Registered

Sissy's job

Min the Nurse

Babies

Distemper

Gertie

The Cousins' Bobtails

Blue or Red

Decision

Loo

Last of the Bobtails

THE END

PART I. THE HOUSE OF ALL SORTS

[Table of Contents](#)

Foundation

[Table of Contents](#)

THE HOUSE OF ALL SORTS could not have been quite itself in any other spot in the world than just where it stood, here, in Victoria, across James' Bay and right next to Beacon Hill Park. The house was built on part of the original property my father had chosen when he came to the new world and settled down to raise his family. This lot was my share of the old cow pasture. Father's acreage had long ago been cut into city lots. Three houses had been built in the cow yard, more in the garden and others in the lily field. The old house in which I was born was half a block away; one of my sisters still lived in it, and another in her little schoolhouse built in what had once been the family vegetable garden.

Bothers cannot be escaped by property owners and builders of houses. I got my share from the very digging of the hole for the foundation of the House of All Sorts. But the foundations of my house were not entirely of brick and cement. Underneath lay something too deep to be uprooted when they dug for the basement. The builders did not even know it was there, did not see it when they spread the cement floor. It was in my memory as much as it was in the soil. No house could sit it down, no house blind what my memory saw—a cow, an old white horse, three little girls in pinafores, their arms full of dolls and Canton-flannel rabbits

made and stuffed with bran by an aunt, three little girls running across the pasture to play "ladies" in the shrubberies that were screened from Simcoe Street by Father's hawthorn hedge, a hedge now grown into tall trees, flowering in the month of May.

I remembered how I had poked through the then young bushes to hang over those old rotted pickets, now removed to permit the dumping of the lumber for my house. I remembered how I had said to Bigger and Middle, "Listen, girls, see if you can tell what sort of person is coming up the street by the kind of tune I blow," and I put the harmonica to my lips and puffed my cheeks. But a gentle little old lady passed, so I played very softly. She stopped and smiled over the fence at the three of us, and at the dolls and foolish, lop-eared, button-eyed rabbits.

"Eh, dearies, but how you are happy playing ladies in this sweetie wee grove!"

And now my house was built in the "sweetie wee grove," and I was not playing "lady," but was an actual landlady with tenants, not dollies, to discipline. And tenants' pianos and gramophones were torturing my ears, as my harmonica had tortured the ears of Bigger and Middle. The little old lady had made the long pause-she would not come that way again.

Ah! little old lady, you, like cow, horse, dolls and rabbits, contributed a foundation memory to the House of All Sorts.

Friction

[Table of Contents](#)

FRICITION quickly scraped the glamour of newness from my house-even from the start of its building. My Architect was a querulous, dictatorial man who antagonized his every workman. He had been recommended to me by an inlaw; like a fool I trusted and did not investigate for myself, making enquiry of the two Victoria families he had built for since coming out from England. Always impatient, as soon as I decided to build I wanted the house immediately.

I drew up a plan and took it to the Architect asking what roughly such a building would cost. He took my plan, said it was "concise and practical"-if I would leave it with him a day or two he'd look it over and return it to me with some idea of the cost so that I could decide whether I wanted to build or not.

"A very good little plan," the man said. "But naturally I could make a suggestion or two."

In a few days he returned my drawing so violently elaborated that I did not recognize it. I said, "But this is not the house I want." He replied tartly that I would have to pay him two hundred dollars whether I accepted his plan or not because of the time he had spent mutilating it unasked! I made enquiry from the other people he had built for, finding out he had been most unsatisfactory. I was too inexperienced to fight. I knew nothing about house building; besides, I was at the time living and teaching in Vancouver. I could not afford to pay another architect as well as this one for his wretched plan. It seemed there was nothing to do but go on.

The man hated Canada and all her living. He was going to show her how to build houses the English way. He would

not comply with Canadian by-laws; I had endless trouble, endless expense through his ignorance and obstinacy. I made frequent trips up and down between Vancouver and Victoria. Then the man effected measles and stayed off the job for six weeks, babying himself at home, though he lived just round the corner from my half-built house.

I had hundreds of extra dollars to pay because of the man's refusal to comply with the city by-laws and the building inspectors' ripping the work out. It was a disheartening start for the House of All Sorts, but, when once I was quit of the builders and saw my way to climbing out of the hole of debt they had landed me in, I was as thrilled as a woman is over her first baby even if it is a cripple.

The big boom in Victoria property tumbled into a slump, an anxious shuddery time for every land-owner. There had been no hint of such a reverse when I began building. Houses were then badly needed. Now the houses were half of them staring blankly at each other.

Tenants were high-nosed in their choosing of apartments. The House of All Sorts was new and characterless. It had not yet found itself—and an apartment house takes longer to find itself than do individual private houses.

I had expected to occupy the Studio flat and paint there, but now the House of All Sorts could not afford a janitor. I had to be everything. Rents had lowered, taxes risen. I was barely able to scrape out a living. Whereas I had been led to believe when I started to build there would be a comfortable living, all the rentals together barely scraped out a subsistence.

The House of All Sorts was at least honest even if it was not smart. People called it quaint rather than that. It was an average house, built for average tenants. It was moderately made and moderately priced. It had some things that ultra-modern apartments do not have these days-clear views from every window, large rooms and open fire-places as well as furnace heat. Tenants could make homes there. Lower East and Lower West were practically semidetached cottages.

It takes more than sweet temper to prevent a successful Landlady from earning the title of "Old Crank." Over-awareness of people's peculiarities is an unfortunate trait for a Landlady to possess. I had it. As I approached my house from the street its grim outline seemed to slap me in the face. It was mine. Yet by paying rent others were entitled to share it and to make certain demands upon me and upon my things. I went up a long, steep stair to my door. The door opened and gulped me. I was in the stomach of the house, digesting badly in combination with the others the House of All Sorts had swallowed, mulling round in one great, heavy ache. Then along would come Christmas or the signing of the armistice, or a big freeze-up with burst pipes, an earthquake, a heat wave—some universal calamity or universal joy which jumped us all out of ourselves and cleared the atmosphere of the house like a big and bitter pill.

Sounds and Silences

[Table of Contents](#)

SOMETIMES I rented suites furnished, sometimes unfurnished, according to the demand. Two things every tenant provided for himself—sound and silence. His own personality manufactured these, just as he stamped his imprint on every inch of his environment, placing his furniture just so, hoisting and lowering his window blinds straight or crooked. Even the boards of the floor creaked differently to each tenant's tread, walls echoed his noises individually, each one's hush was a different quiet.

Furniture is comical. It responds to humans. For some it looks its drabbest, for others it sparkles and looks, if not handsome, at any rate comfortable. And heavens! how tormenting furniture is to a guilty conscience—squeaking, squealing, scrooping! Let someone try to elude rent day or contemplate a fly-by-night. That man the furniture torments.

Old Attic

[Table of Contents](#)

THE ATTIC was no older than the rest of the house. Yet, from the first to me it was very old, old in the sense of dearness, old as the baby you hug and call "dear old thing" is not old in years, but just in the way he has tangled himself round your heart, has become part of you so that he seems always to have existed, as far back as memory goes. That was the way with my attic. Immediately I came into the house the attic took me, just as if it had always "homed" me, became my special corner—the one place really my own. The whole house, my flat, even my own studio, was more or less public. People could track me down in any part of the

house or even in the garden. Nobody ever thought of tracking me up to my attic.

I had a fine bedroom off the studio, but I kept that as a guest room, preferring to sleep in my attic. A narrow, crooked little stair in one corner of the studio climbed to a balcony, no more than a lower lip outside the attic door. If people could not find me about house or garden, they stood in the studio and shouted. Out I popped on the tiny balcony, high up on the studio wall, like a cuckoo popping out of a clock.

In the attic I could wallow in tears or in giggles; nobody saw.

There was an outer hall and front door shared by the doll's flat and my own. If the doorbell rang while I was in my attic, I stuck my head out of the window in the gable without being seen, and called, "Who? Down in a second!"

That second gave me a chance to change my face. Those experienced in landladying told me, "Develop the 'landlady face,' my dear-not soft, not glad, not sorry, just blank."

Attic Eagles

[Table of Contents](#)

THE SLOPE of my attic roof rose in a broad benevolent peak, poking bluntly into the sky, sinking to a four-foot wall. At one end of the gable were two long, narrow windows which allowed a good view to come into the room, a view of sea, roof tops and purple hills. Directly below the windows spread a great western maple tree, very green. Things about my place were more spready than high, myself; my

house, the sheep-dogs, and Dolf, the Persian cat, whose silver fleece parted down the centre of his back and fluffed wide. Even my apple trees and lilacs grew spready.

In the wall, opposite the windows of my attic, was the room door with a tiny landing before it. Off this landing and over the studio was a dark cobwebby place, tangled with wiring, plumbing, ventilation and mystery. The plaster had oozed up through the lathing on the wrong side of the ceiling and set in bumpy furrows. I had a grim dislike of this place but the high studio ventilated through it, so the little square door had to be left ajar. I painted an Indian bear totem on this white-washed door.

On the generous slope of the attic roof I painted two Indian eagles. They were painted right on the under side of the roof shingles. Their great spread wings covered the entire ceiling of the attic. The heads of the eagles tilted upwards in bold, unafraid enquiry. I loved to lie close under these strong Indian symbols. They were only a few feet above my face as I slept in this attic bedroom. They made "strong talk" for me, as my Indian friends would say.

When, after twenty years, people bought my house and turned it into a fine modern block, they did not require the attic, so they took away the little stair leading from the studio, they removed the door and windows, but they could not remove my eagles without tearing the roof off the house. The eagles belonged to the house for all time.

Old eagles, do you feel my memories come creeping back to you in your entombed, cobwebby darkness?

