BEDTIME
IN
PEAPICKIN CROSSROADS™:

LITTLE TOM

The folks of Peapickin Crossroads, like most of us, have their daily rituals. In the happy home where Tom and his daughter, Thomasina, live, their favorite time of day is bedtime.

Thomasina is called Little Tom for two reasons: Thomasina is such a big name for such a little girl and because Thomasina has followed her daddy around like a shadow since she was old enough to crawl. For several months, Big Tom and Little Tom have done the same things before Little Tom's bedtime of 8:00 every night. At 7:45 Little Tom follows Big Tom into the bathroom where she pulls a little stool out from under the sink, climbs up, and watches him as he shaves. He lets her wash off any shaving cream he might have missed around his ears. In Little Tom's bedroom, Stitches, the life-size bear that Little Tom's mother sewed from scraps of Big Tom's shirts, waits patiently to be tucked in the bed beside Little Tom. Big Tom helps her into her nightgown made from the same fabric as one of his shirts. Little Tom picks out a favorite bedtime story, often one of Big Tom's childhood favorites. She sits in his lap looking at the pictures as he reads to her, calling out words that she has memorized. Big Tom gives Little Tom and Stitches each a kiss and a great big hug and tucks them snugly under the covers. As he turns out the light, he hears Little Tom's soft "I love you, Daddy" in the dark. "I love you, too, sweetheart," he answers softly back.

Big Tom knows that one day his little girl may prefer "Thomasina" to "Little Tom" and lacy night gowns to ones made from his shirts. She will not be available to wash off the shaving cream he missed around his ears   She will outgrow the need to have Stitches sleeping beside her. Her bedtime stories might be romance novels instead of his childhood books. Maybe "Daddy" will be replaced with "Dad". But he prays that he will always have done his best as her father so that she will never, ever want to hold back the words "I love you".