That afternoon the wind blew fiercely and it was cold. Ma called Mary and Laura into the house. She built up the fire and drew her rocker near it, and she sat rocking Baby Carrie and singing softly to her…

Laura heard a little crackling in the chimney. Ma stopped singing. She bent forward and looked up the chimney. Then she got up quietly, put Carrie in Mary’s arms, pushed Mary down into the rocking-chair, and hurried outdoors. Laura ran after her.

The whole top of the chimney was on fire. The sticks that made it were burning up. The fire was roaring in the wind and licking toward the helpless roof. Ma seized a long pole and struck and struck at the roaring fire, and burning sticks fell all around her.

Laura didn’t know what to do. She grabbed a pole, too, but Ma told her to stay away. The roaring fire was terrible. It could burn the whole house and Laura couldn’t do anything.

She ran into the house. Burning sticks and coals were falling down the chimney and rolling out on the hearth. The house was full of smoke. One big, blazing stick rolled on the floor, under Mary’s skirts. Mary couldn’t move, she was so scared.

Laura was too scared to think. She grabbed the back of the heavy rocking-chair and pulled with all her might. The chair with Mary and Carrie in it came sliding back across the floor. Laura grabbed up the burning stick and flung it into the fireplace just as Ma came in.

“That’s a good girl, Laura, to remember I told you never to leave fire on the floor,” Ma said. She took the water-pail and quickly and quietly poured water on the fire in the fireplace. Clouds of steam came out.

Then Ma said, “Did you burn your hands?” She looked at Laura’s hands, but they were not burned, because she had thrown the burning stick so quickly.

Laura was not really crying. She was too big to cry. Only one tear ran out of each eye and her throat choked up, but that was not crying. She hid her face against Ma and hung on to her tight. She was so glad the fire had not hurt Ma.

“Don’t cry, Laura,” Ma said, stroking her hair. “Were you afraid?”

“Yes,” Laura said. “I was afraid Mary and Carrie would burn up. I was afraid the house would burn up and we wouldn’t have any house. I’m - I’m scared now!”

Mary could talk now. She told Ma how Laura had pulled the chair away from the fire. Laura was so little, and the chair was so big and so heavy with Mary and Carrie in it, that Ma was surprised. She said she didn’t know how Laura had done it.

“You were a brave girl, Laura,” she said. But Laura had really been terribly scared.

“And no harm’s done,” Ma said. “The house didn’t burn up, and Mary’s skirts didn’t catch fire and burn her and Carrie. So everything is all right.”