

The Pringler Hat



Edith was *so* excited! After camping out all night in front of Dinklaker's Department Store, she was first in line as the great double doors slid open punctually at eight-thirty the next morning. Clutching her all-plastic handbag, she ignored the elevator and raced up the stairs two at a time, arriving at the third floor Millinery Department way ahead of everyone else. Neatly arranged on a display table at the front of the room were a dozen of the most fashionable hats Edith had ever seen! She ran her fingers lovingly over the Delphinium Derby ("vintage velvet delphiniums on straw base with musk-scented parsisal brim"), the Crimson Cloche ("narrow brimmed soft felt hat crowned with scores of musk-scented red feathers"), and the Violet Hamster Toche ("for the daring gal, violet velour fur felt brimless toque topped with an animated, musk-scented hamster"). Ahh, but these were mere trifles when compared with the *pièce de résistance*, the Pringler Light Hat. ("You'll surely light up the room with one of these sitting jauntily atop your noggin!") There were only five of them in the whole store – and that included the one that Mr. Pringler, the hat's designer, always wore. And there he was now, stepping from behind the sales counter! Edith felt a thrill as he approached her and handed her a box. "Isn't this what you want, young lady?" he inquired in a squeaky voice that reminded her of muskmelon. It certainly was! She had hankered after a genuine Pringler ever since her Uncle Lars had worn a prototype in the Muskegon Copper Mine during his long career in that extractive industry. For more than 30 years, his hat's lights had never once failed! As she accepted the gaily wrapped package, a photographer from the local newspaper materialized. "Could you hold that pose, please?" he asked, and then he snapped the picture that would adorn the Pringler Light Hat box for years to come. Kind of amazing, really, since the photo clearly showed that Mr. Pringler's own lights had burned out!